

Ramsey County perspective: *Parks and Recreation*

By: Commissioner Jim McDonough

If you're at all like me, you love your local park, but you may have little idea who takes care of it or where the taxes come from to keep them looking so good. In Ramsey County nearly 3-million people took advantage of our parks resources last year.

Ramsey County Parks are some of the most outstanding amenities offered to east metro residents. (I say "East Metro" because our parks draw many customers from across Minnesota and Western Wisconsin). Among other things you can find within our more than 6-thousand acres of parkland are many miles of trails—including the lighted cross-country ski trail in Battle Creek, several tournament quality golf courses, 10 indoor ice arenas, and the Tamarack nature interpretive center to touch on just a few.

The Parks and Recreation Department provides a full range of parks, recreation and leisure services. This is accomplished by preserving, developing, maintaining and managing a system of natural resource based parks, open space and special use areas. Although the primary thrust of the department is management of areas and facilities, the department does provide program services in the form of nature interpretation through Tamarack Nature Center and outdoor recreation programming in the areas of skill development and special events. Because the parks are such a large operation, the management of them is divided into 6 divisions.

REGIONAL PARKS

Ramsey County is responsible for five regional parks and five regional trail corridors of more than 4,350 acres. Funding for acquisition and development of these properties comes via the Metropolitan Council through the state and metropolitan area bonds. The state of Minnesota provides limited supplemental funding to assist in the operation and maintenance of these regional park units.

Regional Parks

Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes
Battle Creek
Keller
Long Lake
Vadnais-Snail Lakes

Regional Trail Corridors

Birch Lake
Bruce Vento
Highway 96
Rice Creek North
Rice Creek West

COUNTY PARKS

The department manages 11 county parks. Generally, these are lakefront properties offering a variety of outdoor recreation facilities, such as boat launches, picnic areas (including shelters), play areas and swimming beaches.

*Beaver Lake
Lake Gervais
Island Lake
Lake Johanna*

*Lake Josephine
Lake McCarrons
Lake Owasso
Turtle Lake*

*White Bear Lake
Poplar Lake
Snail Lake Marsh*

GOLF COURSES

The department is responsible for the operation of three 18-hole golf courses: *Goodrich, Keller and Manitou Ridge*; and one 9-hole golf course: *The Ponds at Battle Creek* (a joint venture with the Community Corrections Department). *Keller* is a tournament quality golf course, which once hosted the PGA Championship and has a rich history of pro tournament play.

ARENAS

The department operates ten indoor ice arenas (eleven ice sheets) that provide a variety of ice activities, including hockey, figure skating, long blade/speed skating and broomball. Aldrich Arena, with its spectator capacity of 3,500 people, annually hosts more than 100 high school hockey games, and is the home for the Maplewood Figure Skating Club programs. Aldrich is also available for rent year-round for events such as trade shows, exhibitions and meetings. Pleasant Arena is the year-round home of the St. Paul Figure Skating Club. Artificial turf has been installed at Shoreview Arena for indoor sports activities, such as LaCrosse, soccer and baseball/softball.

We could go on with more Ramsey Parks descriptions including the nature conservation resource that is Tamarack Nature center and other preservation of open space. Ramsey County Parks and recreation make our communities better, greener and more fun.