

WALK-THROUGH OF THE 2005 MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE MASTER PLAN

VISION FOR MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE:

A pristine trout stream ecosystem with little sign of human intervention and sparse, primitive facilities for human use. Viewsheds and the surrounding park landscape are protected from development and agricultural impacts, to preserve the quality of the Trout Brook and to convey the notion of wilderness.

OVERARCHING CONCEPT FOR THE MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE MASTER PLAN:

Wilderness Experience: hike, picnic, camp in a dramatic landscape with remarkable natural resources.



OVERVIEW OF THE PARK

Miesville Ravine is a rare and unique landscape in the central Minnesota region, defined by its agricultural surroundings, dramatic topography, spring-fed trout stream, native habitat and rugged Cannon River frontage. The park reserve is at the southern edge of Dakota County in Douglas Township, a few miles south of Miesville, Minnesota and about 50 miles southeast of St. Paul. Portions of the park also extend into Goodhue County, to the south and east. Miesville Ravine has been a regional park reserve since 1985.

The defining features of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve are the Trout Brook (a pristine, spring-fed trout stream), over a mile of Cannon Riverfront, and a dramatic ravine landscape with steep slopes and rocky bluffs rising 150 feet above these two water courses. High quality native plant communities and a high degree of ecological integrity add to the park reserve's status as a unique and irreplaceable regional resource.

Acquisition Status: 83 percent of the land within the park boundary is in County ownership.

Last Master Plan: 1985.

Current Recreational Uses: Hiking, Picnicking, Bird Watching, Fishing, River Recreation.



GOALS FOR THIS PLAN

The Miesville Ravine Park Master Plan reflects the site history, geographic setting, and recreational needs of the region, and the natural and cultural resources of the park itself. The plan sets a vision for the park and guides its physical development for appropriate and enriching recreational use. The planning process specifically sought to:

- ✓ Strike a sustainable and respectful balance between environmental preservation and visitor use / enjoyment of the park.
- ✓ Stabilize and protect natural resources through invasive species control, habitat restoration, strategic acquisitions, and stewardship outreach.
- ✓ Better accommodate the current park uses with ecologically sensitive, architecturally significant, rustic facilities.
- ✓ Focus outdoor education on the rustic wilderness experiences that make Miesville Ravine highly unique within the Dakota County park system

The master plan is the first step in realizing the vision created for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.



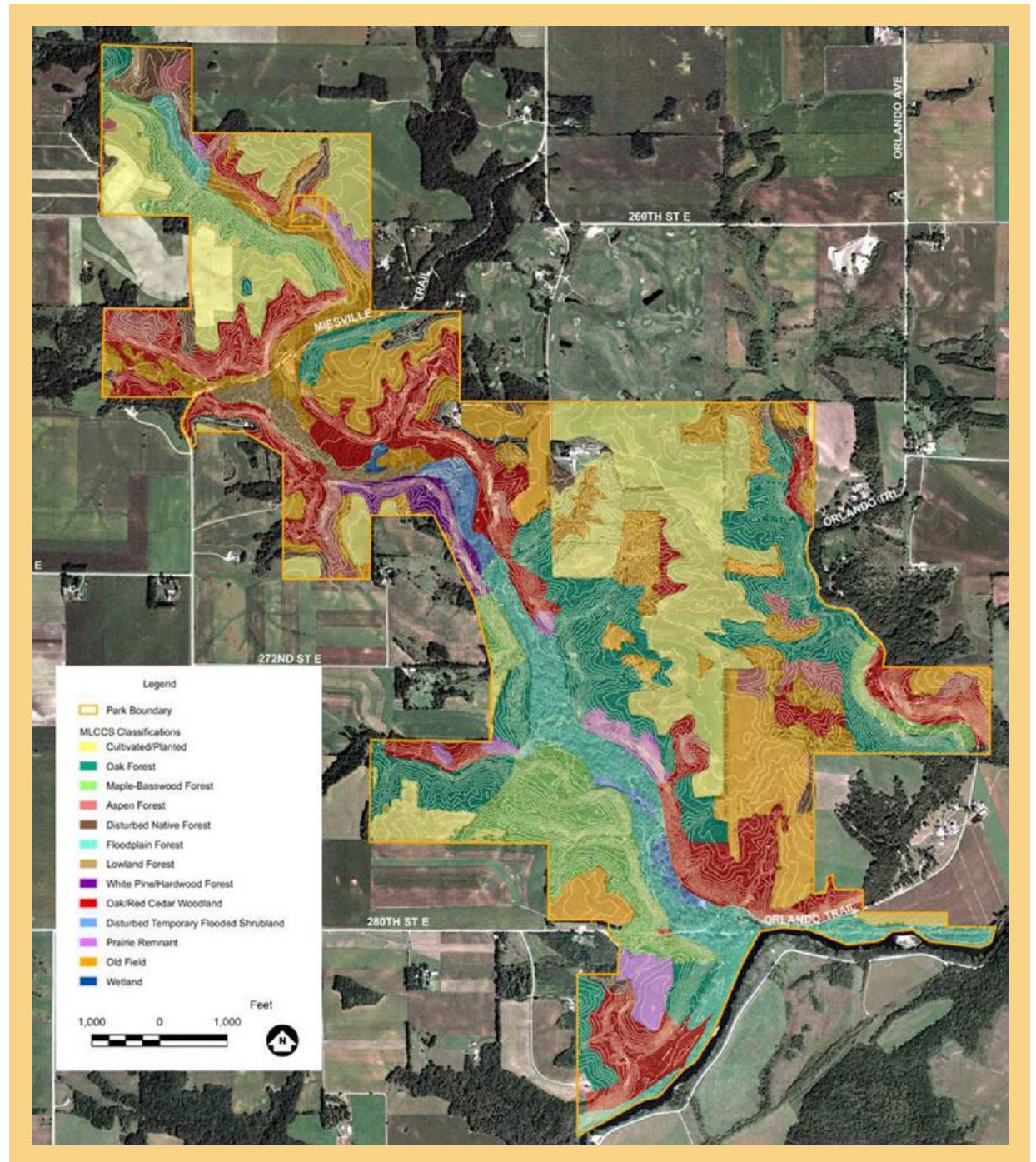
NATURAL RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS

Inventory: The plan reviews and reports on park ecosystems, toward gaining a better understanding of the park's overall "health." Existing plant communities include:

- Oak Forest
- Maple-Basswood Forest
- Aspen Forest
- Disturbed Native Forest (Boxelder/Green Ash)
- Lowland Forest
- White Pine-Hardwood Forest
- Floodplain Forest
- Oak/Red Cedar Woodland
- Prairie Remnant
- Cultivated/Planted
- Old Field
- Disturbed Temporary Flooded Shrubland

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is a uniquely valuable public amenity, with high ecological integrity. Being surrounded by agricultural lands has kept Miesville Ravine somewhat isolated from forces that tend to degrade native plant communities. This isolation has allowed the landscape to evolve naturally even in the face of dramatic human intervention such as logging and grazing. Because few invasive plant species have reached the park reserve, many native plant communities have been able to survive disturbances without losing significant native plant diversity. Some areas are degraded, with colonization by invasive species such as buckthorn. Quick action will be critical to control invasive species and sustain the native habitat.

Trout Brook meanders through Miesville Ravine Park Preserve and is the force that shaped the ravine. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources classifies it as a Class-1A trout water, which is given the highest protection under state water quality rules. Ecological assessments of the Trout Brook consistently show that water quality is good, even though snow melt events and large summer rain events lead to high flows and increased turbidity. Trout Brook drains 26.7 square miles (17,107 acres) of watershed and enters the Cannon River within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.





Trout Brook

Stewardship: Includes these priorities:

- **Conduct targeted plant community restoration:** including prairie, savanna and wetland. Focus on expansion of current restoration zones and current high quality plant communities
- **Control Invasive species:** Buckthorn, Prickly , Cedar, and invasive weeds not yet present, such as garlic mustard and spotted knapweed. Consider returning recently grazed lands back to stop old field succession.
- **Convert croplands within the park reserve to perennial cover:** such as grasses, to stop erosion to ravine ecosystems. Consider a 50-foot grassland buffers at the down slope edges of tilled fields and create grass waterways where water flow is concentrated. Croplands can be converted to perennial cover with native prairie establishment or grass cover.
- **Stop old field succession on non-cultivated grasslands:** by yearly or bi-yearly mowing & clearing or burning.
- **Beaver dam management:** control when beaver dams threaten adjacent high-quality habitats.
- **Coordinate a surface and groundwater hydrology study:** to address impacts of surrounding land uses on Trout Brook.
- **Write a detailed habitat management plan:** to further protect one of the most pristine ecosystems close to the Twin Cities metro area.

CULTURAL RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS

The history of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is a story of natural resource use and preservation. The defining topographic feature of the park—the dramatic valley of Trout Brook—has attracted people in search of food, water, health, and recreation for thousands of years. Today, Trout Brook and related resources continue to draw visitors to the park where natural and cultural landscapes combine to provide a sense of the long history of the lands that make up the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.

The planning process drew on research into the park’s past as another element in building an overall understanding of the park. The plan’s cultural resource stewardship chapter provides an historical/archaeological overview of the park area, discusses known cultural resource sites within the park; establishes cultural resources zones for avoidance, preservation, interpretation, and additional research; and presents potential interpretive themes.

Suggested interpretive themes for the park are:

Theme 1 - Valley of Plenty - Trout Brook Valley and the Native Americans of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve: evidence from known archaeological sites along the Cannon River just south of the park and on terraces just east of the park indicates that the area was used by Native American cultures for thousands of years.

Theme 2 - Family Farms and Trout Farms - Trout Brook and the Euro-Americans of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve: As settlers began to plow the land and harvest timber, they altered the landscape surrounding the valley. Woods that once covered all of the uplands surrounding Trout Brook were reduced until the remaining trees were those on the steepest hillsides. The railroad, for a time, plowed its path through the southern portion of the future park. Yet, throughout this period, Trout Brook Valley remained largely unaltered: While its precipitous topography rendered it attractive in the physical sense, it kept the valley itself from being an attractive location for farming or settlement.

Theme 3 - Conservation and Recreation - Recent Designations and Interactions with the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve: Within the last 50 years, public efforts to reverse landscape and resource impacts in southeastern Minnesota have included the creation of the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, within which the entirety of Miesville Park is located. Another effort was the designation of Trout Brook as a trout stream by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The protection by the state of the resources of Miesville Park ensures that modern-day park visitors can gain a sense of the landscape and activities as they occurred in the past and, in doing so, both relate to and become a part of its history.



Euro-Americans began farming areas surrounding Miesville Park in the mid nineteenth century



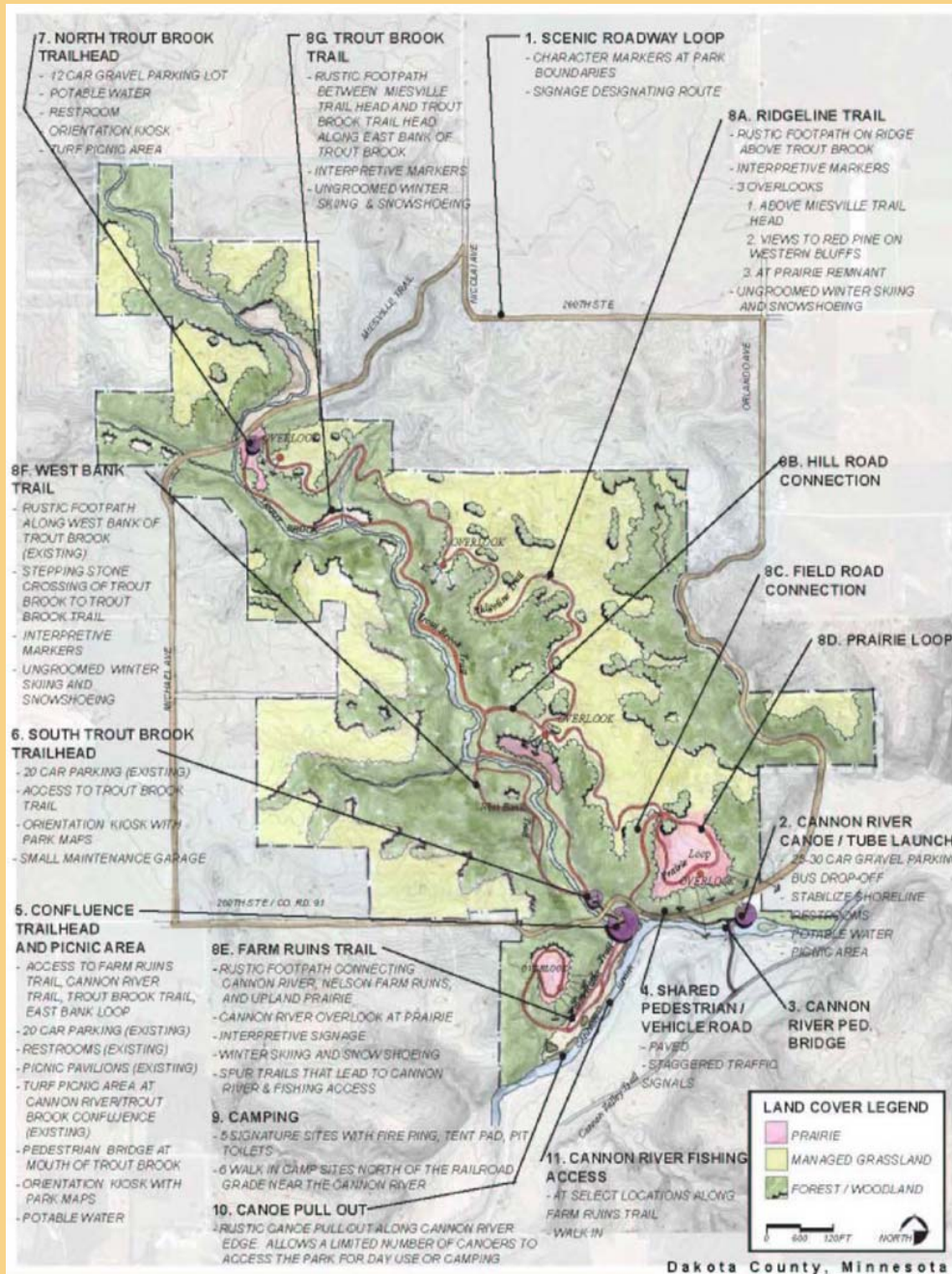
Nelson Farm Ruins

DEVELOPMENT PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

The development plan is based on the park's natural and cultural resource analyses, public input on desired activities, and analysis of regional recreation needs. In view of Miesville Ravine's remarkable natural resources, the development plan overall uses a light touch in placing recreational development, taking advantage of the scenic opportunities provided by this rugged landscape while carefully working within its constraints.

Recreational trails are a unifying developmental feature for the park, linking upland, bluff, valley floor, and riverfront landscapes while connecting five minimally developed visitor areas: the North Trout Brook Trailhead (7 on map at left), the South Trout Brook Trailhead and Confluence Trailhead-Picnic Area (6), Cannon River Campsites (9), and the Cannon River Canoe-Tube Launch (2). The 11-mile system of rustic trails will include loops of varying lengths, predominantly on the eastern side of the main Trout Brook Valley. All trails will be built using sustainable trail principles to minimize erosion.

Because the visitor experience begins on approach to the Park, access roads will be designated as a scenic roadway loop. Signage and native roadside plantings will delineate this route, with markers indicating park boundaries.



North Trout Brook Trailhead: primary access for northern part of park.

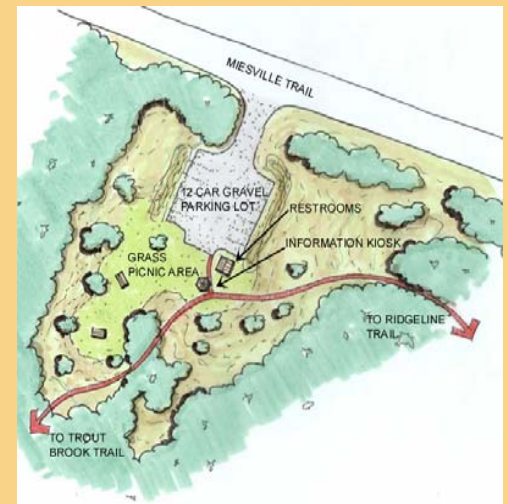
Gravel parking lot for 12 cars

Orientation kiosk with park maps, information on park facilities, programs, trails, and policies, and an emergency phone

Grass picnic area with picnic tables

Restrooms

Water Pump/drinking fountain



Confluence Trailhead & Picnic Area: *picnicking, access to short hiking trails and camping along the Cannon River*

20 car gravel parking lot

Park kiosks and signage: with park maps and information and an emergency phone

Restrooms (existing)

Drinking fountain located near the restroom building

Bicycle parking

Picnic shelters (existing) - two shelters can accommodate large groups

Riverside lawn (existing) - with picnic tables, a fire pit and a lawn for informal games. The shore of the Cannon River will be stabilized with native vegetation.

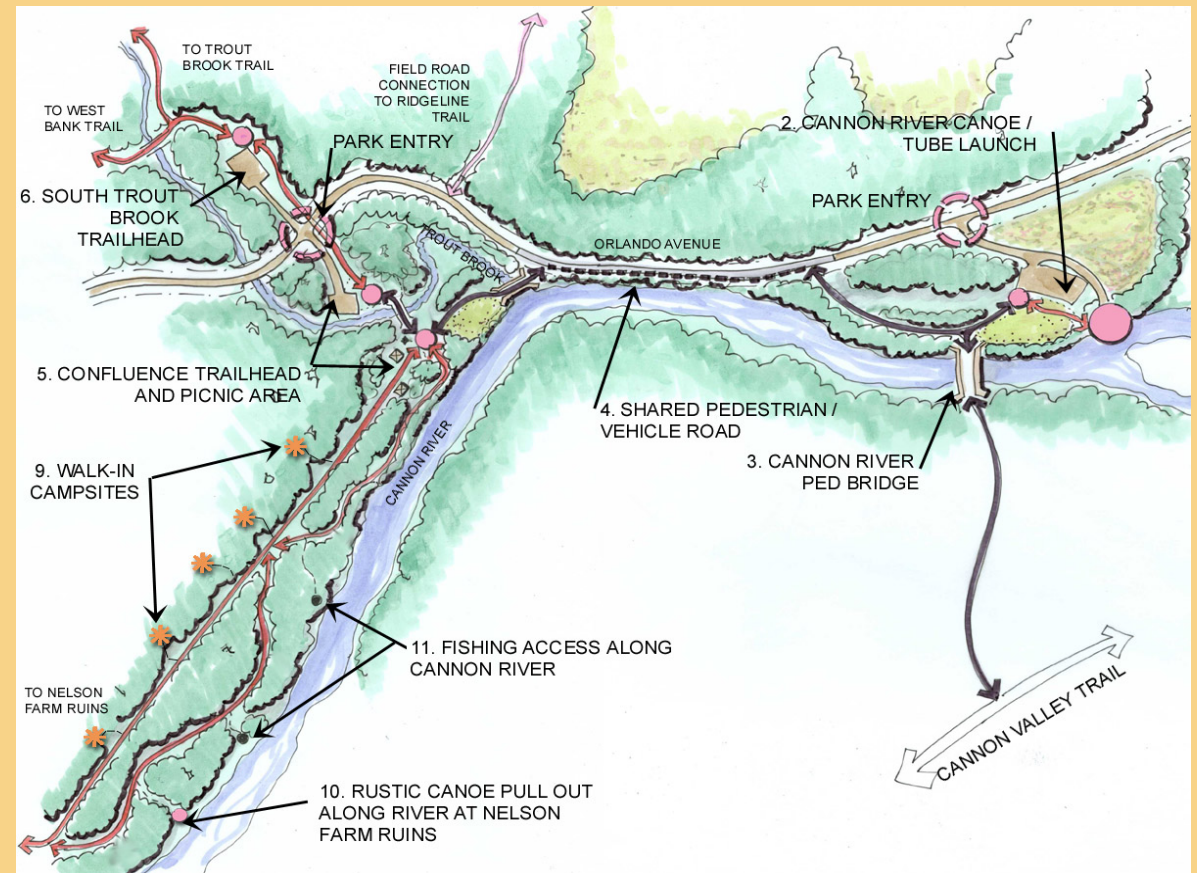


Cannon River-Trout Brook confluence



Existing picnic shelter

Cannon Riverfront Areas: expands current visitor use areas near the Cannon Riverfront.



Cannon River Canoe / Tube Launch: *new facility for recreational access to the Cannon River*

Gravel entry drive and 25-30 car gravel parking lot

Orientation kiosk, restrooms, potable water, and bike parking: Includes an emergency phone.

Canoe/tube launch: For individual users and buses shuttling canoeists and tubers.

Picnic area at the Cannon River: grass lawn with shade trees, a picnic shelter, and a few picnic tables.

A proposed pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the Cannon River will connect Miesville Ravine Park Reserve to the regional Cannon Valley Trail on the south side of the river.

Development Priorities:

The plan's top development priorities for early stage implementation are:

1. Confluence Trailhead improvements
2. South Trout Brook Trailhead improvements
3. New Cannon River canoe/tube launch area
4. North Trout Brook Trailhead improvements
5. Cannon River rustic campsites
6. Valley trails
7. Farm Ruins Trail
8. Stabilization of farm ruins
9. Signage and orientation

Suggested Outdoor Education Opportunities:

Cultural Themes

Valley of Plenty
 Family Farms, Trout Farms
 Conservation and Recreation

Nature/Stewardship

Naturalist Hikes
 Stargazing
 Plant Communities Hike
 What's Upstream?
 Evolving Landscapes
 Beaver Dams
 Fly Fishing
 Leave No Trace

Recreation

Orienteering
 Rustic Camping
 Snowshoeing
 Back Country Skiing
 Canoeing



Estimated Costs:

Inholding Acquisition (based on assessed values)*	\$4,315,694
Park Development	\$3,360,024
Natural Resource Stewardship	\$2,632,344
Total Implementation Cost	\$10,308,062

** Figure does not reflect potential boundary expansions based on purchasing land from willing sellers to protect natural resources within the park.*

PLANNING PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS

The master plan update for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve began in early 2004. The planning team included Hoisington Koegler Group, Inc. as the primary consultants and park planners, Ingraham and Associates as park planners, Barr Engineering and as ecological consultants, and The 106 Group as archeological and cultural resource consultants. The project management team included staff from the Dakota County Office of Planning and the Parks Department. Members of the Dakota County Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PARAC) participated throughout the process. Natural and cultural resource experts from local, state, and federal agencies generously contributed their time and shared their knowledge at a series of workshops and with review of the plan. The Dakota County Board of Commissioners adopted the 2005 Master Plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve on July 12, 2005.



The plan is available at Dakota County Libraries and online at www.co.dakota.mn.us/parks

Please direct e-comments to: DC2020@co.dakota.mn.us (that's DC 2 zero 2 zero@...),
 or mail comments to: Dakota County Office of Planning, 14955 Galaxie Ave., Apple Valley, MN 55124.
 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve – Dakota County