Maintenance and Operations Plan
13.1 Stewardship

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is the steward of a nationally-acclaimed park system. Since 1883 this independently elected, semi-autonomous body has provided high-quality parks and programs relevant to residents of Minneapolis, the region, and beyond. Park facilities and programs attract millions of visitors each year.

The Minneapolis park system is essential to the character of the City and quality of life of its citizens. The system's founders understood the role that parks play in a healthy and livable city. Through its policies and practices, the Park Board has remained committed to providing high-quality recreational facilities and services while protecting and restoring natural and cultural resources within its system.

MPRB's 2007-2020 Comprehensive Plan affirms this commitment to stewardship:

Natural resources such as land, trees, and water are the foundation of the park system and require long-term investment and care. Parks are protected to benefit the entire city; therefore, all residents have a stake in the future of these resources and bear responsibility for their stewardship. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is committed to providing leadership in natural resource management, connecting people to their natural environment, and fostering a sense of stewardship. (p. 3)

The Comprehensive Plan further articulates policies, goals, and strategies for management of the park system's natural and cultural resources, and for the development of partnerships that will further this mission. The Comprehensive Plan identifies stewardship strategies that will guide implementation of the Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska-Harriet Master Plan:

• Communicate the importance of preserving and properly managing natural resources for health, water and air quality, and general environmental benefit.
• Be a resource for residents and visitors seeking information about the regional park’s natural resources and the urban forest.
• Establish and strengthen public and private partnerships that enhance the MPRB’s management of natural areas, waters, and urban forest; and sponsor programs and events that promote exploring, protecting, and enhancing these resources.
• Engage partners and volunteers in the restoration, maintenance, and preservation of the park system's natural and cultural resources.
• Strengthen existing and create new opportunities for research, cooperative exchange of information, and teaching with universities, state and federal agencies, research institutes, and recognized experts.

The Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska-Harriet Master Plan is in line with the MPRB’s Comprehensive Plan. Implementation of the master plan will further the goals articulated in the Comprehensive Plan and will sustain and improve the park system as a whole.
13.2 Ordinances and Regulations

The MPRB has adopted a set of ordinances which define the rules and regulations for Minneapolis Parks. These ensure safe and peaceful use of parks and corresponding facilities and provide educational and recreation benefits for the public’s enjoyment. Ordinances also help protect and preserve property, facilities, and natural resources and ensure the safety and general welfare of the public.

A copy of the ordinances may be obtained from the MPRB website (www.minneapolisparks.org/about_us). Rules and regulations are posted throughout Minneapolis Parks’ properties and facilities. Posted information includes park hours, permitted and prohibited activities, fees, maps of parks and/or trails, and whom to contact in case of an emergency.

The MPRB requires a permit for any construction project affecting its property. In addition, the City of Minneapolis reviews all construction projects within parks and parkways for compliance with city zoning ordinances and permit requirements, such as erosion control. Any development that may impact stormwater runoff and water quality may also trigger review and/or permitting by the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD). MCWD facilitates the long-term management of water within its jurisdiction, of which the entire Chain of Lakes is a part, and associated land resources. It does this through the development and implementation of projects, programs, and policies that respect ecosystem principles and reflect changing community values.

Other agencies that may have jurisdiction over activities and development projects in the Chain of Lakes include:

- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) – regulates and administers funding programs for remediation of contaminated land, regulates stormwater management policies through the Clean Water Act;
- MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – regulates public waters, shoreline vegetation, aquatic vegetation, beaches and public water access/boat launch management and construction;
- City of Minneapolis – governs land-use guidance and zoning; regulates and permits buildings and site improvements involving grading/drainage and erosion control, tree preservation, and stormwater management;
- Minnesota Historic Preservation Office (MnHPO) – identifies, evaluates, registers, and protects Minnesota’s historic and archeological properties, and assists government agencies in carrying out their historic preservation responsibilities;
- Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) – manages the regional sanitary sewer system, portions of which run close to or through the Chain of Lakes. MPRB and MCES have coordinated on projects in the past, and all future projects will be reviewed by MCES staff to determine any impacts to the regional sanitary sewer system.
13.3 Partnerships

Many partnerships strengthen stewardship at the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park.

**Water Quality:** The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) provides significant funding and technical expertise for improving stormwater management, expanding habitat, and restoring shoreline. It owns and maintains the SW Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska ponds, as well as the Cedar Meadows at Cedar Lake. MCWD was a major partner in the original Clean Water Partnership and contributed significant funding.

**Parkways:** In 1999 the Park Board and the City of Minneapolis established a joint services agreement whereby the City of Minneapolis Department of Public Works (DPW) maintains and improves parkway roadways, parkway storm sewers, and parkway lighting.

Minneapolis Public Works also maintains the storm sewer system of the City of Minneapolis, including outlets into Lake Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Lake Harriet. City staff requested that the master plan recommendations include:

- Existing BMPs be maintained and their performance optimized;
- Cost-benefit analyses be prepared for any existing and proposed stormwater treatment facilities, including maintenance.

13.4 Operations, Maintenance, and Public Safety

As steward of the parks of Minneapolis, the MPRB is responsible for providing daily and long-term maintenance and operations for all parks, including the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park. The MPRB budgets funds and provides oversight for facility operations, recreation, and educational programs. Staffing levels are increased in the summer, and as needed, through the employment of seasonal staff. MPRB officers and agents, along with City of Minneapolis police, regularly patrol all park property and trails on foot, horse, bicycle, and by motor vehicle, providing public safety services.

Most typical park maintenance activities are the responsibility of MPRB’s Environmental Stewardship Division, which is divided into three departments:

- **Asset Management,** whose responsibilities include daily and seasonal maintenance operations such as mowing and snow plowing, debris removal, lighting, restroom maintenance, cleaning, repairs, etc.
- **Environmental Management,** whose responsibilities include maintenance related to the park system’s natural resources including water quality and natural area management.
- **Forestry,** whose responsibility is the maintenance, management, and enhancement of the urban forest, including park trees.

Other operational and support services to the parks include administrative services (such as revenue handling and finance, human resources, marketing and communications, customer service), planning and development, and recreation.
MPRB will continue to maintain and operate Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Harriet as it has in the past. Capital replacement of site facilities and equipment will be scheduled as needed and as funding allows. Operation and maintenance (O&M) expenditures throughout Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Harriet are and will be funded by the MPRB’s annual operations and maintenance budget with supplementary funding from the State appropriations that are passed through the Metropolitan Council to regional park implementing agencies for operations. Revenue generated by parking fees, special events, or programs are normally placed in the MPRB’s general revenue budget and typically do not fund O&M in its regional parks. Certain projects that include habitat restoration efforts or significant water quality improvements may qualify for additional State funding programs, such as the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment or federal funding programs.

**Trail and Road Maintenance:** MPRB’s maintenance of trails and parking lots includes mowing, trash removal, sweeping, plowing (bicycle trails and parking lots), and other routine operations. Less routine maintenance includes occasional replacement of park and trail (not parkway) lighting, signs (as needed), and striping. As in its other regional parks, the MPRB inspects bicycle and pedestrian trails annually and completes repairs such as bituminous overlays, crack-sealing, etc. Bituminous surfacing of parking lots and trails typically has a life cycle of 20 – 25 years. With a good base and regular crack sealing and seal-coating (which MPRB has not historically done), bituminous surfacing can last much longer. In its Capital Improvement Plan, the Park Board provides for rehabilitation of trail and parking lot surfaces at the end of their life cycles. Currently, through an agreement with the MPRB, the City of Minneapolis Department of Public Works maintains and improves parkway pavement, lighting, and storm sewers including capital replacement.

**Habitat and Natural Areas:** The master plan includes many areas of restored and constructed habitat that will require specialized maintenance. As in other MPRB regional parks, routine maintenance will be performed by MPRB staff, while contractors, agency partners, seasonal youth programs, and volunteers will perform the majority of the unique ecological services needed in habitat areas. Based on recent contracts, typical costs for maintenance of habitat areas similar to those proposed in this plan approach $2,000 per acre per year.

Restored shoreline requires very little regular maintenance following proper establishment, however, establishment has proven difficult in these popular parks. Seasonally, MPRB staff removes litter and debris, and mows to control invasive species as needed. This practice will continue as shoreline restoration expands around both lakes.

**Staffing:** Other MPRB staffing such as maintenance and operations and Park Police must also grow in response to new park development. This does not include staffing needs for special events, which are usually funded by the vendor through permit fees.

**Waste Management:** Solid waste such as litter or garbage is collected by MPRB staff from park lands and from waste containers on a scheduled basis throughout the regional park. MPRB’s outdoor recycling program is a co-mingled program where users can recycle plastic, glass, and aluminum in a single blue recycling container indicated with “Recycle Here” signs. MPRB delivers waste and recyclable materials to appropriate City and County facilities.
New facilities envisioned in the master plan will require an increase in operational funding and staffing. Currently, MPRB does not track maintenance expenditures for Lakes Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Harriet separately from the overall Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park. Based on a general per-acre cost of maintenance for regional parks as a whole, current maintenance expenditures for Calhoun/Bde Maka Ska and Harriet can be estimated at $2.036 million. Based on a capital cost for full build-out of $126 million (See chapter 5), the estimated annual maintenance at full build-out would be $12.6 million, assuming an average amortized 10-year replacement cost for all facilities.

The annual maintenance cost with full master plan built out, therefore, is estimated to increase by approximately $10.6 million. With this estimate, it is important to keep in mind that the entire master plan will not be implemented all at once. The annual maintenance costs, therefore, will change gradually over time, as projects are completed. In addition, some master plan elements may in fact reduce maintenance. Conversion of manicured lawn areas to naturalized areas, modification of trails to ameliorate flooding and degradation, and reduction in the amount of roadways could lead to cost savings to MPRB.

Nevertheless, creating a park area that better serves the people of the state, region, and city will require additional maintenance funding. Almost since the inception of the regional parks system, the state has failed to fully fund its statutory obligation to regional parks operation and maintenance, and this has led to a severe rehabilitation and maintenance backlog throughout the regional system. More must be done to ensure that all people—regardless of race, ethnicity, or ability—are welcomed into and able to access regional parks. But more must also be done to ensure people can experience high quality, well maintained facilities once they arrive.
13.5 Master Plan Assessment

The master planning process assessed current maintenance practices and staffing levels. It then envisioned the human and economic resources needed if practices and staffing levels were enhanced to reflect the Chain of Lakes’ stature as the most heavily visited park in Minnesota and as an iconic component in a world-renown park system. Finally, if and when improvements proposed in the master plan are constructed, impacts to staffing levels and operational costs were determined.

1. Current operations costs and staffing levels to maintain existing conditions:

   Existing staffing levels and funding keep up with daily operational needs such as AIS inspections, mowing, plowing, trash removal, and cleaning but do not allow for enhanced maintenance practices that would remediate resource damage resulting from heavy use such as soil compaction, turf decline or shoreline erosion. All maintenance work, with the exception of bathroom facilities, preparation and clean up for permitted events, is done in-house. This assessment is based on information per MPRB Maintenance and Operations Staff, dated 2013. See Appendix for detailed summary.

   Existing staffing levels:
   - Two (2) crew leaders
   - Six (6) full-time crew members
   - Operations budget: $303,281

2. Practices and staffing levels necessary to improve existing conditions without major program changes or new facilities:

   Proposed staffing levels to improve existing conditions: Double the current effort.
   - Four (4) crew leaders
   - Twelve (12) full-time crew members
   - Operations budget: Approximately $650,000*

   *This number does not include aquatic maintenance efforts. If efforts for aquatic maintenance is included to combat invasive plants, consider an additional 50-100% increase ($900,000 - $1.2 million).