

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Designation Application

General Section

Designation Application #: 16-033D Date Submitted: 04/26/2016

Park or Trail Name: Milford Mine Memorial Park

District #: 2 Map Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude): Latitude: 46.5363 Longitude: -93.9707

Location Description:

Section 23, T.47-R.29 (Wolford Township-Crow Wing County) 4 miles north of Crosby, MN on State Hwy. 6. Turn Left on Co. Rd. 30 (0.3 miles). Turn Left on Milford Lake Drive. Follow Milford Lake Drive to entrance of Milford Mine Memorial Park.

Lead Applicant Organization: Crow Wing County

Lead Contact First Name: Bryan Last Name: Pike

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Joint Applicant #1 Organization:

Joint Applicant #2 Organization:

Joint Applicant #3 Organization:

Joint Applicant #4 Organization:

Describe other project supporters:

The Cuyuna Chamber of Commerce located in nearby Ironton, MN supports the park project and will promote the outdoor recreational opportunities found within the park by providing the public with information (Chamber web-site, information packets at local businesses, etc) specific to the outdoor recreational opportunities within the park. The Crosby-Ironton School District (ISD #182) supports this park development project for outdoor education opportunities and for students to learn of the history of the Milford Mine and the role this mine had on the Cuyuna Iron Range and the surrounding communities (see letters of support in attachments). The Cuyuna Historical Society located in Crosby, MN supports the park project and will provide information to the public (Historical Society web-site, etc.) concerning the significance of the Milford Mine site and other historical aspects.

Description Section

Regional Significance Statement: Milford Mine Memorial Park is a special feature outdoor recreational park facility with statewide and national significance. It is the site of Minnesota's worst mining disaster

where 41 miners died as a direct result of an underground mine collapse in 1924. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2011. Outdoor recreation and site interpretation in and around Milford Lake are part of the Master Plan currently going forward.

Classification: Special Recreational Feature Park

Total proposed acreage: 300 acres

Overview/Description of Park or Trail:

The Milford Mine Memorial Park has statewide significance because of the Milford Mine accident-the worst mining accident in Minnesota history-that claimed the lives of 41 miners when the underground mine collapsed and flooded on February 5, 1924. The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to 2010, the site of the tragedy was unmarked, relatively remote and difficult to access (underground mine shaft locations and mine site infrastructure are on the western side of Milford Lake). In 2007, Crow Wing County initiated and developed a conceptual site development plan for the Milford Mine Memorial Park. The plan identifies different phases of development. Phases 1 and 2 have been developed recently and Phase 3 is being planned for summer of 2016. Crow Wing County has exhibited the desire to protect and restore this historically significant site and provide educational, interpretive and outdoor recreation opportunities to the public. The park project will not only pay tribute to the fallen men but also will provide historical, educational and outdoor recreation experiences to visitors. Crow Wing County and its residents will benefit from an opportunity to promote local tourism to the park, enjoy the natural resources within the park while showcasing the rich history, culture and heritage of this area that can be enjoyed by current and future generations. Crow Wing County has obtained full ownership of the mine site and the surrounding properties to make for a large natural park setting that includes nearly the entire shoreline of the 70 acre Milford Lake. The Crosby-Ironton School District (ISD 182) superintendent supports this park development project for outdoor education classes (see attached letter of support).The park is located within the school district boundaries and will provide excellent educational opportunities for students to learn about the history of the Milford Mine site, the history of the local mining industry and natural resource education. Field trips to the park location would be planned for history, geography, biology, elementary grade science classes and a host of other opportunities for the local school district and other various organizations that have been traditional under-served. Annually, over 100,000 visitors, tourists and seasonal residents come to the region for quality outdoor recreation within the nearby Cuyuna State Recreation Area (CSRA) for quality mountain biking, road biking on the Cuyuna State Trail and many other outdoor recreation pursuits. Milford Mine Memorial Park is located 4 miles from the CSRA and will provide unique opportunities for additional outdoor recreation in a rapidly expanding area for outdoor recreation. The Cuyuna Lakes Area which includes the CSRA area is quickly becoming a outdoor recreation destination drawing many visitors from across the state and beyond. Existing or planned park features include: 2 picnic shelters, several picnic tables and cooking grills, 500 foot long upland and over-water boardwalk, interpretive trails and displays, memorial wall of the lost miners, 2 canoe launching and fishing platforms all within a natural and scenic park setting.

What is the Acquisition and Development Status?

- New Park or Trail (no land acquired or developed)
- Existing Park or Trail
 - Land Acquisition
 - Status: completed
 - Percentage of Land Acquired: 100%
 - Development Status
 - No Development
 - Some Development, but more Proposed
 - New Facilities Proposed
 - Existing Facilities to be Upgraded
 - Fully Development

Facility Listing Section

Classification: Special Recreational Feature Park	
Existing Facility List	Proposed Facility List
Picknicking and picnic shelters, Hiking Trails (natural), Lake Access for power boats, Canoeing Facilities, Fishing Piers, Nature Center/Interpretation Trails, Roads and Parking Areas, 500' long upland and over-water Boardwalk, Park Benches, Bike Rack, Cooking Grills.	Restrooms/sanitation building, Secondary Picnic Shelter

Master Plan Status Section

Master Plan Status: Existing Master Plan is Available (but needs to be updated to meet strategic plan)

Describe Other Supportive Information:

Master Plan map and Phasing Plan map have been developed previously and are part of the attachments. A 500' foot long pedestrian boardwalk that will gain access to the actual mine site is currently under construction (see photo attachments). Completion of the boardwalk, canoe launching and fishing platforms (Phase 2) will be complete in May 2016. Development and construction of additional walking trails and site interpretation in and around the mine facility areas (Phase 3) are being planned for summer of 2016.

Classification Details Section

Classification: Special Recreational Feature Park

Criteria #1 Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience: The park development plans specifically took into account the outdoor recreation opportunities the site has to offer from fishing, canoeing and kayaking the lake and shoreline areas, picnicking, and walking and interpretive trails. The 500 foot long boardwalk (currently under construction with railings to be installed in the weeks ahead--see attachment) with 300 feet over open-water areas of Milford Lake is a very high quality feature of the park offering quality lake views and fishing opportunities. The boardwalk has two large platform areas for seating, additional fishing, wildlife viewing areas and site interpretation. In addition to the boardwalk and included in the master plan are two canoe launching/fishing platforms on two points on the 70 acre Milford Lake which is classified as a natural environment lake. Phases of Milford Mine Memorial Park includes the completion of the boardwalk and construction and development of the following: Hiking and interpretive paths, interpretive displays, canoe/kayak launching areas, on-shore fishing platforms, additional outdoor picnic shelter, vaulted toilet, additional picnic area sites, benches and landscape trees. Great canoeing, kayaking, fishing, picnicking, nature study and hiking opportunities will exist within this historically significant and nationally recognized historic site and park development area (see attachment letter from the Minnesota Historical Society/MHS acknowledging the success Crow Wing County obtained in having the site listed on the National Register of Historic Places).

Criteria #2 Provides a Natural and Scenic Setting Offering a Compelling Sense of Place: Milford Mine Memorial Park is located in a natural and scenic area and encompasses the area in and around Milford Lake. Milford Lake is a 70 acre lake and is classified as a natural environment lake. The north and western areas where the park is being developed is 200 acres in size. The eastern and southern areas adjacent to Milford Lake total 140 acres and are in public ownership managed by Crow Wing County and are open to the public. The public areas in and adjacent to the park total 410 acres. See photos in Attachments Tab of the view of Milford Lake from the existing picnic shelter location. The boardwalk being constructed brushes over the general area of the underground mine and will offer a very compelling sense of place and opportunities for reflection of the incident that occurred over 92 years ago. Special Feature: The park development site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a significant place in Minnesota's mining history where a devastating tragedy occurred where 41 miners died in an underground mine collapse on February 4, 1924. Park visitors will get a sense of place and learn of the terrible tragedy that occurred on February 5, 1924 and also learn of the sites rich mining history through many interpretive displays identifying the cultural features still present and visible today. This natural and scenic landscape combined with the very historical site is "one of a kind" and not found in many recreational park settings in greater Minnesota.

Criteria #3 Well-located to Serve a Regional Need and/or Tourist Destination: This park is on the outskirts of several nearby communities. The nearby towns (all within 4-8 miles of the park entrance) within the Cuyuna Iron Range include the towns of Crosby, Ironton, Deerwood, Cuyuna, Trommald and Riverton. These communities all have a rich Cuyuna Iron Range history and owe much of their existence to the mining operations that began over 90 years ago. Brainerd and Baxter are located 22 miles away. This park development project will allow Crow Wing County and the State of Minnesota to preserve and showcase a portion of the rich history the Cuyuna Iron Range once exhibited. With the Cuyuna Mountain Biking Trail system on the outskirts of Crosby and Ironton, tens of thousands of biking park enthusiasts and other visitors to the area will look for additional outdoor recreational opportunities and

Milford Mine Memorial Park will serve that population of outdoor enthusiasts looking for a quiet and peaceful recreational facility. According to data from the Cuyuna Recreation Area web-site, the State Recreation Area boasts 118,484 annual visits and 3,098 overnight visits. Thousands of other visitors make the Brainerd and Cuyuna Lakes Area a regional outdoor recreational destination for fishing, golfing, resorting and the like. These seasonal residents and visitors to the region will have nearby opportunities for additional outdoor recreational experiences at Milford Mine Memorial Park. On August 10, 2011 the site of Milford Mine Memorial Park (also referred to as the Milford Mine Historic District) has been accepted and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Ancestors of the deceased miners and other visitors will finally have the opportunity to set foot and visit the actual site of the mine shafts and visit the remains of the mining town site where the tragedy occurred.

Criteria #4 Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region: Milford Lake has no fully developed public boat access point. Phase 2 and 3 will provide carry in access points to the lake and provide the public fishing, canoeing and kayaking opportunities. Interpretive trails and displays are planned and the park development project will allow current and future generations the opportunity to learn about the region's mining history and the role miners played in building the Cuyuna Iron Range communities of Crosby, Ironton, Deerwood, Cuyuna, Trommald and Riverton. Crow Wing County has many lakes classified as general recreational lakes that provide many motorized boating activities and most of those have heavy private development and limited public shoreline areas. Milford Lake shoreline is almost entirely public land and managed by Crow Wing County and this park will provide a non-urban recreational facility with outdoor recreation opportunities without the threat of private development. Crow Wing County continues to attract people of all age groups. Crow Wing County completed a Comprehensive Plan in 2004 in response to rapid development, changing land use patterns and increasing pressure on ever more scarce resources. At virtually every community meeting held during the development of the Comprehensive Plan the protection of natural resources, easy access to recreational opportunities and preservation of rural character and open space were listed as the top goals. The development of Milford Mine Memorial Park will allow Crow Wing County to achieve these goals while preserving and allow residents the opportunity to learn the historical significance of the Milford Mine site. Milford Mine Memorial Park will provide for a tranquil and peaceful outdoor recreational experience and will fill a gap that is not generally found in the region.

Attachment List Section (only lists up to 10 documents)

Type	Description
Master Plan	Map of Master Plan
Letters of Support	Cuyuna Lakes Chamber
Photo	Picnic site along Milford Lake
Photo	Boardwalk (currently under construction)
Other	Example of Interpretive Display-layout of info
Master Plan	Map of Phasing Plan
Location Map	Park Location Map

Letters of Support	ISD 182
Photo	Bench at picnic shelter (4 loons on water)
Other	Map of Phase 2 and 3 Features