



General

This section provides the basic information about the park or trail and the organizations responsible for it.

Last Update

06 May 2021 10:07:53

Park or Trail Name

Phelps Mill County Park

District

3

Location Description

Phelps Mill County Park is located in Maine Township, in central Otter Tail County, approximately eight miles northwest of the City of Battle Lake. County Road 45 runs along the southeast edge of the park. The Otter Tail River flows along the western edge of the park. Phelps Mill County Park is situated in the middle of Otter Tail County and is eight miles from Glendalough State Park to the southeast and ten miles from Maplewood State Park to the northwest.

Park/Trail Address

29035 County Highway 45

City

Underwood

Park/Trail State

Minnesota

Zip

56586

Latitude

46.381588

Longitude

-95.816474

Map of Park/Trail

Description: Aerial Image of Park

[13058PhelpsMillAerialUpdate_39dbd1.png](#)

Facility Website

<https://ottertailcountymn.us/building/phelps-mill/>

Organization

Otter Tail County

Lead Contact Person

Charles Grotte

Title

County Engineer

Mailing Address

505 South Court Street, Suite 1

City

Fergus Falls

State

Zip

Minnesota

56537-2757

Phone

218-998-8475

Email

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Joint Applicants

Joint Applicant #1

Otter Tail County

Upload Resolution

[Phelps Mill Application for Regional Designation Resolution 3bc11c.pdf](#)

Joint Applicant #2

Joint Applicant #3

Joint Applicant #4

Other project supporters

Description

This section provides the basic information about the park or trail and the organizations responsible for it.

Regional Significance Statement

Phelps Mill County Park provides incredible outdoor recreation experiences with frontage on the Otter Tail River and rolling hills and fields of central Minnesota, and it has a regionally and nationally significant historic site that includes the Phelps Mill, dam and several preserved buildings including a General Store.

Classification

Special Recreational Feature Park

Overview/Description of Park or Trail

Otter Tail County acquired 55 acres and the facilities of Phelps Mill County Park in 1965 to create a recreation site and to protect an important element of the areas local history. The park includes Phelps Mill Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2019, Otter Tail County purchased 72 acres of land on the parks northern boundary as well as the General Store which will more than double the size of the county park.

Total Acreage or Mileage

127

Acquisition and Development Status

Existing Park or Trail

Additional Land Acquired

57 acres in 2019

Development status

Some development, but more proposed

Facility Listing

This section provides an overview of existing and proposed site facilities and general site characteristics .

Existing Facilities

- Picnicking and picnic shelters
- Canoeing Facilities
- Fishing Piers
- Play areas, with an outdoor theme
- Restrooms/sanitation building
- Roads and Parking Areas

Proposed Facilities

- Camping-cross-section of camper types
- Non-electric campsites
- Tent only sites

- Picnicking and picnic shelters
- Walking Trails (paved)
- Hiking Trails (natural)
- Biking Trails (paved)
- Cross-country Skiing Trails
- Canoeing Facilities
- Fishing Piers
- Play areas, with an outdoor theme
- Restrooms/sanitation building
- Roads and Parking Areas

Existing Facilities Other Information

Historic buildings

Proposed Facilities Other Information

Festival/large gathering facilities

Improved historic buildings

Native landscape restoration

storm water bmps

General Site Characteristics

Phelps Mill County Park is situated in Central Otter Tail County, Minnesota, an area full of lakes, wetlands and rolling hills, indicative of a landscaped shaped by glaciers. The otter tail river is a key feature of the area and forms the western boundary of the park. The river provides opportunities for fishing and non-motorized boating within the park. The river is classified as a State Water Trail due to its slow moving current and meandering, making it ideal for canoeing and kayaking. Five wetlands are within Phelps Mill County Park and range from .25 acres to 9.5 acres. While these wetlands provide habitat and scenery, they also show evidence of invasive species and nutrient loading.

The park supports a variety of existing infrastructure that is utilized by many different park users. Several standard park amenities are provided at Phelps Mill County Park such as playground areas, picnic tables, picnic shelters, no-water restrooms, and parking. There are two developed areas of the park that include the Historic Mill District and Farmstead. The mill district includes several historic structures which include the Phelps Mill, Phelps Mill Dam, General Store, Phelps Mill Bridge, Thomas House, and Phelps House. Approximately mile northeast of the historic district along County Road 45 is the Farmstead which includes a farmhouse, small barn, metal storage shed and several outbuildings.

Site characteristics upload

Description: Historic Bridge

[20210525154912_0c34fa.jpg](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Existing Mill

[DSCN0136_543ea7.JPG](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Existing Landscape

[DSCN0130_cec253.JPG](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Existing Mill

[DSCN0077_861581.JPG](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Existing Picnic Facility

[20210525153833_c52554.jpg](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Existing Playground and Parking

[20210525153829_d82ff5.jpg](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Existing River Access

[20210525154220_392cbe.jpg](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Interior Mill Image

[20210525154356_3dd4b2.jpg](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Historic Mill Front Side

[20210525154850_81cb9d.jpg](#)

Site characteristics upload

Description: Field Landscape Image

[20210525155407_3f679a.jpg](#)

Master Plan

Master Plan Status:

Master Plan meeting requirements of strategic plan is available

Upload Existing Master Plan

Master Plan

[13058_MasterPlan_210420_195083.pdf](#)

Additional Supportive Information:

In 1984, the Phelps Mill Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

Phelps Mill and the other contributing structures are protected as a symbol of the rural life in Otter Tail County in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Phelps Mill was a flour mill that was built in 1888-1889 by William E. Thomas, a local entrepreneur who owned businesses in Fergus Falls. His mill was powered by a wooden dam and was designed to produce up to 75 barrels of flour each day. A General Store was opened across the street. The Historic District includes several structures in addition to the mill, dam and store. These include the Phelps Mill Bridge, Thomas House and the Phelps House. The facilities create a great opportunity to provide interpretation of the way flour and other grains were milled before the railroads, electricity and highways were in use. In order to maintain a high-quality experience at the park, maintaining the structures, operations and retail sales will be important to the success of the park. To gain a better sense of the level of effort needed to manage the natural resources amenities on site, additional field work will need to be conducted. The vision of Phelps Mill County Park that is outlined in the master plan is extensive and will need to happen over a period. Phasing improvements over time and as funding is acquired will be necessary to fully develop the park. The master plan outlines at least 4 phases to realize the overall vision. It is anticipated that additional public involvement will be needed to implement many of the initiatives identified in the master plan.

Additional Supportive Documents:

Phasing plan

[13058_Phelps Mill Park Master Plan Phasing_3d61cd.pdf](#)

Classification Details

Special Recreational Feature Park Classification

Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience

Several elements have been identified through the master planning process that will increase opportunities for public use of the entire park and provide interpretation of the parks unique attributes. The primary elements include: Enhanced water access on the Otter Tail River for canoes, kayaks and fishing, improved picnic and restroom facilities with parking, expanded natural play area, large gathering area, camping facilities, ecological restoration.

Criteria #1 Images

Phelps Mill Park Plan

[5_phelps mill county park site plan_no leaders-REV_1c4197.jpg](#)

Provides a Natural and Scenic Setting Offering a Compelling Sense of Place

Phelps Mill County Park, at 127 acres in size, is situated in central Otter Tail County, just west of Otter Tail Lake in a part of Minnesota that has hundreds of lakes, wetlands and rolling hills, indicative of a landscape shaped by glaciers. A key natural feature of the area is the Otter Tail River, which flows northwest from Otter Tail Lake and forms the western boundary of the park.

Criteria #2 Images

Existing Site Ecologies

[6_existing land cover map_6e8ad6.pdf](#)

The Otter Tail River is Minnesotas eighth longest river and was named after the lake just upstream from the

park. The river originates in Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge and winds through southern Becker County and Otter Tail County before depositing in the Red River of the North at Breckenridge, Minnesota. Early French explorers, called it the Lake of the Otters Tail. The river borders the park for of a mile on its western boundary. The dam at Phelps Mill creates a physical barrier but also a unique scenic feature of the river and there are several ways to view the dam and mill components. The Phelps Mill Bridge is closed to vehicle traffic but offers views of the upstream side of the dam and below the dam, the shoreline is gentle and provides views of the dam, the mill, and the river downstream.

Well-located to Serve a Regional Need and/or Tourist Destination

Established in 1965, Phelps Mill County Park is located in Maine Township, in central Otter Tail County, approximately eight miles northwest of the City of Battle Lake. County Road 45 runs along the southeast edge of the park. The Otter Tail River flows along the western edge of the park. Phelps Mill County Park is situated in the middle of Otter Tail County and is eight miles from Glendalough State Park to the southeast and ten miles from Maplewood State Park to the northwest. The Central Lakes State Trail is located 15 miles south of the park. The unique historic features of Phelps Mill County Park make the site a nice compliment to other state parks and trails in the County.

Criteria #3 Images

Otter Tail County Parks Map

[1_Otter Tail County parks and trails map-REV_471cfd.pdf](#)

Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region

The proposed camping, picnicking and river activities and the large group gathering area will fill a gap in an underserved area of the County.

Regionally, Phelps Mill County Park serves several important roles. The Parks preserved and historic mill, bridge, General Store, and period homes provide unique opportunities for visitors to experience history in a natural setting. Additionally, Phelps Mill County Park provides direct access to the Otter Tail River, has the potential to provide camping, boat rentals and a unique setting for the Phelps Mill Festival, an annual celebration of local art, food and entertainment. As such, Phelps Mill County Park provides unique opportunities that are not available at other parks in the region.

Criteria #4 Images

Regional Location

[2_park location map_6fba6d.pdf](#)

Attachments

Doc Name	Description	Url
Additional Attachment	Commissioners Letter	GMRPTC Phelps Mill OTC Board of Commissioners Letter 307f03.pdf
Additional Attachment	App A: Arch History Report	Appendix A (Architecture-History Report by Sue Granger and Scott Kelly of Gemini Research) ef7ee6.pdf
Additional Attachment	App C: Historic Building Assessment - Mill	Appendix C (Historic Building Conditions Assessment - Phelps Mill) 81ce2a.pdf
Additional Attachment	App D: Historic Building Assessment - General Store	Appendix D (Historic Building Conditions Assessment – General Store) 01cbca.pdf
Park Trail Map	Aerial Image of Park	13058PhelpsMillAerialUpdate_39dbd1.png
Additional Attachment	App B: County Strategic Plan	Appendix B (Otter Tail County Strategic Plan) 430ce2.pdf
Additional Information Upload	Phasing plan	13058_Phelps Mill Park Master Plan Phasing_3d61cd.pdf
Spcl Recreational Ftr2 Upload	Existing Site Ecologies	6_existing land cover map_6e8ad6.pdf
Spcl Recreational Ftr3 Upload	Otter Tail County Parks Map	1_Otter Tail County parks and trails map-REV_471cfd.pdf
Spcl Recreational Ftr4 Upload	Regional Location	2_park location map_6fba6d.pdf
Spcl Recreational Ftr1 Upload	Phelps Mill Park Plan	5_phelps mill county park site plan_no leaders-REV_1c4197.jpg
Regional Map Uploads	Regional Map	2_park location map_1bc235.pdf
Site Characteristics Upload	Historic Bridge	20210525154912_0c34fa.jpg
Economic Development Tourism Upload	Themed Interpreters at The Landing in Shakopee, MN	The_Landing_f83f70.jpg
Economic Development Tourism Upload	Water Lab at Mill City Museum, Mpls, MN	waterlabmillcitymuseum1280x960_0e1662.jpg
Site Characteristics Upload	Existing Mill	DSCN0136_543ea7.JPG
Site Characteristics Upload	Existing Landscape	DSCN0130_cec253.JPG
Site Characteristics Upload	Existing Mill	DSCN0077_861581.JPG
Site Characteristics Upload	Existing Picnic Facility	20210525153833_c52554.jpg
Site Map Upload	Existing Conditions	7_existing conditions map_e1e3c8.pdf
Public Involvement Summ Upload	Public Engagement Survey_01	4_Otter Tail County Phelps Mill County Park Survey

		Summary_200622_5076cc.pdf
Public Involvement Summ Upload	Public Engagement Survey_02	5_Otter Tail County Phelps Mill County Park Second Survey Summary_220127_1c2b8f.pdf
Development Acquisition Plan Upload	Phelps Mill Master Plan Concept with Labels	labeled_masterplan_9a8813.pdf
Ecological Land ResPlan Upload	Existing Land Cover	6_existing land cover map_629428.jpg
Ad Phasing Plan Upload	Phasing plans	13058_Phelps Mill Park Master Plan Phasing_6b5779.pdf
Maintenance Operations Plan Upload	Projected Operational and Management Expenses	Projected Operational and Management Expenses_f5c252.pdf
Existing Master Plan	Master Plan	13058_MasterPlan_210420_195083.pdf
Regional Map Uploads	Nearby Regional and State Parks	nearby_parks_map_bf9910.pdf
Regional Map Uploads	Nearby Parks Activity Matrix	nearby_parks_matrix_65d13c.pdf
Site Characteristics Upload	Existing Playground and Parking	20210525153829_d82ff5.jpg
Site Characteristics Upload	Existing River Access	20210525154220_392cbe.jpg
Site Characteristics Upload	Interior Mill Image	20210525154356_3dd4b2.jpg
Site Characteristics Upload	Historic Mill Front Side	20210525154850_81cb9d.jpg
Site Characteristics Upload	Field Landscape Image	20210525155407_3f679a.jpg
Economic Development Tourism Upload	Phelps Mill website	Phelps Mill website_grab_2a552c.pdf
Development Feature Upload		20210525153812_2c184d.jpg
Development Feature Upload		parking_example_0d6826.JPG
Development Feature Upload		boardwalk_overlook_5af91b.JPG
Development Feature Upload		crystal_mac_boardwalk_no_rails_62980e.JPG
Development Feature Upload		accessible_trails_d023b9.jpg
Development Feature Upload		SpencerMtnLanding200939_71be96.jpg
Development Feature Upload		trail1_dd5a6b.jpg
Development Feature Upload		perdidoriverkayaklaunch545x409_e2f161.jpg
Development Feature Upload		natureplay1_ba27b9.jpg
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Development Feature Upload		Elm_Creek_XC_Skiers_b7ef8f.jpg
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Development Feature Upload		Snowshoeing1015_c5eb89.jpg
Development Feature Upload		adaptive_hiking_555d7c.jpg
Development Feature Upload		trail1_73115b.jpg
Development Feature Upload		RedRiverSpecialthreshingmachine_db89d3.jpg
Development Feature Upload		festival_1_16ade4.jpg
Development Feature Upload		typical_trail_sectionindependent_7710cb.pdf
Development Feature Upload		unnamed_fe5809.png
AcqDev Cost Projections Upload	Cost estimate summary and phases	13058_Phelps_Mill_MP_Estimate_s210408_ccf4fc.pdf
Maintenance Operations Plan Upload	2021 park operations budget	Phelps_Mill_Park_2021_Operational_Budget_e6ea3d.pdf
Additional Attachment	App E: Park Master Plan Phased Budget	Appendix_E_(Phelps_Mill_Park_Master_Plan_Phased_Budget)_980427.pdf
Maintenance Operations Budget Upload	App E: Master Plan Phased Budget	Appendix_E_(Phelps_Mill_Park_Master_Plan_Phased_Budget)_137134.pdf