



Update on the Dakota County Land Protection and Natural Systems Plan

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Physical Development Committee Division Meeting
January 13, 2026

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Overview



- Purpose
- Progress to date on land protection and natural resource plans
- Proposed revisions to Natural Systems Plan objectives and strategies
- Next Steps

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Purpose



Combine the 2017 Parks Natural Resources Management System Plan (NRMSP) with the 2020 Dakota County Land Conservation Plan (LCP) to:

- Build from the 2050 Parks Vision Plan
- Update objectives, strategies, priorities, targets, and timeframes
- Streamline content

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NRMSP to Date



Dakota County
Natural Resource Management System Plan
May 2017



2017 NRMSP

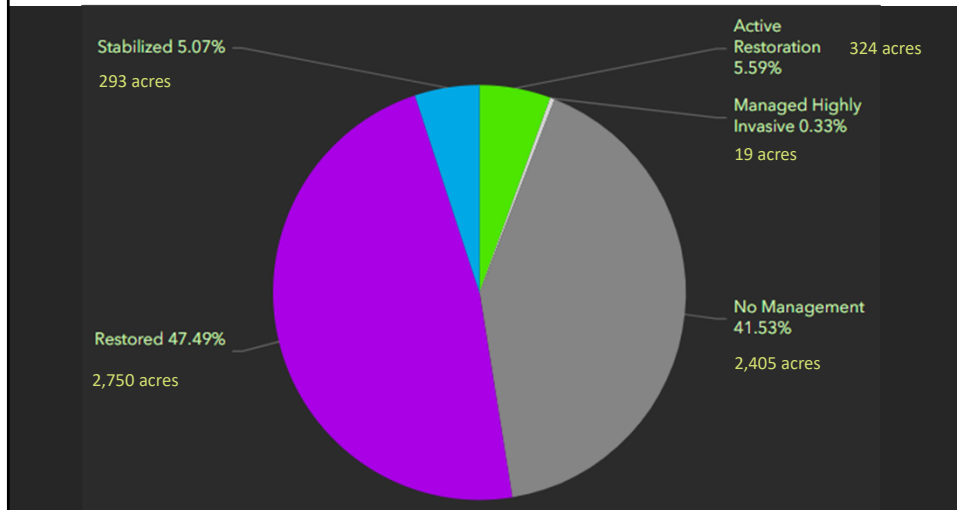
- Increased investment in Parks natural resources
- Guided restoration of half of the Park System to-date

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NRMSP to Date



Current Status: Parks, Greenways, Natural Area Easements, and Selected Service Centers and Libraries



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NRMSP to Date



Highlights: Wildlife

- Bison Reintroduction
- Cliff Road Wildlife Tunnel
- Saw-Whet Owl Banding



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NRMSP to Date



Highlights: Plants

- Rare species discovered or rediscovered



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NRMSP to Date



Highlights:

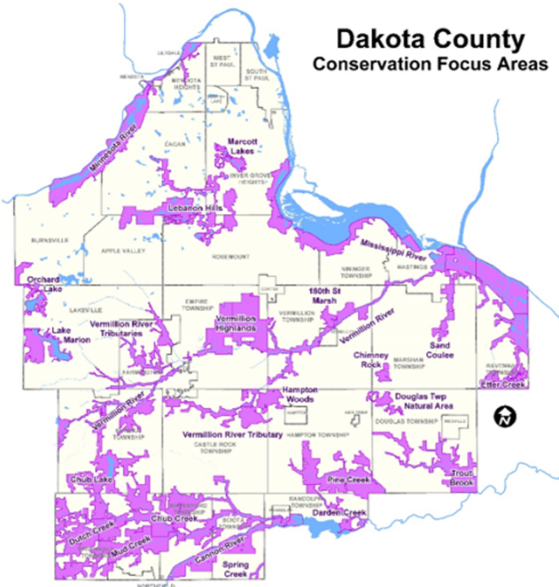
- Active volunteer participation
- Greenhouse for propagation
- New partnerships



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Land Conservation Plan <i>Dakota</i> COUNTY	
<p style="text-align: center;">Land Conservation Plan for Dakota County</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Adopted on November 17, 2020 <i>Dakota</i> COUNTY</p>	<p>2020 LCP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritized land protection within Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs) • Guides the County Land Protection program

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Land Conservation Plan <i>Dakota</i> COUNTY	
<p style="text-align: center;">Dakota County Conservation Focus Areas</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74,863 acres are in CFAs • More than 10,000 acres have been protected by the Land Conservation Program

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Land Conservation Plan to-Date



- 10 Natural Area easements acquired since 2020 update, protecting 243 acres
- 3 County Park Conservation Area acquisitions, 188 acres

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New County Board Direction



2050 VISION PLAN

DAKOTA COUNTY PARKS, GREENWAYS, AND NATURAL SYSTEMS

Nature Protected, Community Reflected, All Are Connected

ADOPTED BY THE DAKOTA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JULY 29, 2025



2050 Parks Vision Plan

- Updated the Parks vision with emphasis on the interconnectedness of nature and people
- 15 Goals, including natural systems stewardship and land protection

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New County Board Direction



2050 Vision Plan Areas to Incorporate:

- New protection and resource goals
- Outreach and partnerships
- New park search areas
- Climate mitigation and resilience
- Engagement of Tribal communities in traditional ecological knowledge
- Supporting natural resource career pathways
- Seeking permanent funding for natural systems stewardship

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Project Approach



Merge the LCP and NRMSP into one document with Land Protection and Natural Systems Stewardship sections

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Draft Objectives



Land Protection Chapter

LCP Goals become objectives (mostly unchanged)

1. Prioritize ecologically important areas for protection.
2. Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.
3. *Natural resource quality is improved and sustained.*
(moved to stewardship section)
4. Use CFAs as a framework for restoring and sustaining biodiversity.
5. Inform and engage the public in natural resource protection and management.
6. Enhance nature-based recreational access to conservation lands.

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Draft Objectives



Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

Objectives restructured
from NRMSP

1. Manage natural systems
on protected lands in a
comprehensive and
sustainable manner



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Draft Objectives



Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

2. Manage systems to improve resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.
3. Improve ecological quality in County Parks, on other public lands and permanently protected private lands.

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Draft Objectives



Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

4. Manage permanently protected land to improve surface and groundwater quality.
5. Manage habitat to sustain native and rare species, increase biodiversity, and enhance ecosystem health on permanently protected lands

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Draft Objectives



Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

6. Expand capacity for natural systems management by building and sustaining effective partnerships and supporting the efforts of others.

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Next Steps



1. Stakeholder Engagement
2. Build Out Priorities and Targets
3. Draft Plan
4. Planning Commission

Draft document in second quarter of 2026

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Next Steps



Questions?

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Thank you

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