

ANNUAL REPORT

2004



STEARNS COUNTY PARKS

STEARNS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Larry Haws - District 1
Mark Sakry - District 2
Vince Schaefer - District 3
Leigh Lenzmeier - District 4
Don Otte - District 5

STEARNS COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

Prentiss Foster, - District 1
Jim Graeve–District 2
John Peck - District 3
Ed Bouffard, **Chair** - District 4
Joan Bredeck, **Vice Chair** - District 5
Lowell Olson; Planning Commission Member
Mark Sakry; County Commissioner Member

STEARNS COUNTY PARKS STAFF

James Burke, Park Maintenance II
Christine Flugga, Quarry Park Caretaker
LeRoy Gapinski, Park Maintenance II
Paul Wirth, Park Maintenance III
Wendy Hute, Technical Assistant II
Peter Theismann, Park Technician
Charles Wocken, Park Director & Secretary to the Park Commission

Report submitted by: Charles B. Wocken

Front Cover: Observation Deck at Quarry Park & Nature Preserve

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PLANNING:

MISSION STATEMENT OF STEARNS COUNTY:

The mission of the County of Stearns is to provide quality public services as determined by law and citizen needs, through innovative leadership and the teamwork of its people, officials, and employees. Services shall be provided in a fair, respectful, and professional manner consistent with available human, natural, and economic resources.

MISSION STATEMENT OF PARK DEPARTMENT:

To secure sufficient outdoor recreation area and open space, and conserve the natural resources of the County (features which make Stearns County a pleasant place to live); to maintain parks to be safe, scenic and functional for the public; and to maintain all support facilities and equipment.

GOALS FOR 2004

1. Lake Wobegon Trail extension from Holdingford to Morrison County Line: contract out design & engineering.
2. Move Park Operations into new building at Quarry Park & Nature Preserve.
3. Update county Park Ordinance to accommodate “payable violations schedule.”
4. Implement County Parkland Dedication Fee statute (Chapter 95)
5. Continue Comprehensive Plan implementation

OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 2004

Upon motion by Ms. Bredeck and second by Mr. Sakry, Mr. Bouffard was unanimously elected Chair.

Upon motion by Mr. Bouffard and second by Mr. Sakry, Ms. Bredeck was unanimously elected Vice-Chair.

PARKS ADMINISTERS SNOWMOBILE GROOMER GRANTS:

Parks Staff is administering two grants, The Koronis Hills Snowmobile Club has received \$50,000 and the Roving Hillbillies \$56,000 for trail groomers. The grants were from the National Recreation Trail program and funneled through the DNR.

TEA-3 TRAIL FUNDING (ENHANCEMENT) PROJECTS PRIORITIZED:

At the January 27 County Board meeting, the three trail projects proposed will be: The “Lake Koronis Trail;” Rockville Bikeway/Pedestrian project; and the Lake Wobegon Trail-Sauk Centre to the Todd County Line segment. There will be a representative present for each project. Each project is about \$300,000. The Park Commission recommended the Lake Koronis Trail take priority. Former Region 7W recommended the Lake Koronis Trail as the only T-21 enhancement project.

MILLER SITE USED FOR COUNTY SATELLITE OFFICE:

Mr. Sakry indicated a new county satellite office will be built near the Miller Landing. It will share the parking lot for the canoe landing. There will be a new road going in. It should enhance the landing, with clean water available, as well as restroom facilities. A suggestion was made that perhaps part of the development could include a picnic shelter.

TREE FARM DESIGNATION:

On Tuesday, January 20, the County Board accepted a designation from the DNR for a 30-acre pine plantation in Warner Lake Park as a tree farm.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES:

The MN Park and Trail Council proposed a bill with \$29 million worth of trail projects. Senator Sams included all the projects in a trail-bonding request. It included \$1.3 million for the Glacial Lakes State Trail from Hawick to Richmond. It also included \$3 million for Greater MN Regional Trails. Senate file is #1629. The Governor's plan didn't allow any money for trail projects. House file #1852 by Representative Knobloch asked for operations and maintenance money at 40% for regional parks and trails outside the metro area, and equal distribution of any funds the Met Council receives for parks and trails be with Greater MN Regional parks and Trails.

Senator Sams proposed a ¼ cent dedication of sales tax money for conservation and outdoor recreation projects. He included Greater MN Regional Parks as an identified entity. This would create \$9 million for greater Minnesota. The Met Council was asking Mr. Wocken for support on "land banking". Mr. Wocken talked to the governor about parks and trails funding when he was at Freeport, and asked for his support. He also visited with legislative members on the issues.

QUARRY PARK TOILET/BATHROOM PROPOSED:

Upon motion by Mr. Sakry, and second by Mr. Graeve, the Park Commission would like to explore the option of getting a heated bathroom/shelter in Quarry Park.

PARK DEPARTMENT RE-CONFIGURATION:

The Park Department has been re-configured to allow more delegation of responsibilities. There are now two divisions; Operations Division and Maintenance Division. The Operations Coordinator is Mr. Theismann. He will be in charge of overseeing gatekeepers, park patrol, volunteers, Park Technical Assistant, Nature Center attendants and caretakers at Mississippi Park, Warner Lake Park, and Spring Hill Park. The Maintenance Coordinator is Paul Wirth, he will oversee the full-time maintenance staff, temporary maintenance staff and Quarry Park caretakers. These are non-supervisory union positions. They will have some supervisory authority to take care of the daily problems. Mr. Wocken will continue to be the supervisor of everyone.

CITY OF ST. JOSEPH SUBDIVISION PROVIDING ACCESS TO SAUK RIVER:

The Park Commission recommended to the City of St. Joseph that a canoe access be provided within the subdivision plan for the property next to the County Road 121 bridge.

LAKE WOBEGON TRAIL: HOLDINGFORD/MORRISON COUNTY SEGMENT OPEN HOUSE APRIL 14, 2004 at HOLDINGFORD HIGH SCHOOL.

There was a public meeting at 7:00 PM at Holdingford High School on April 14, 2004. Only two comments were made by the half-dozen citizens attending the meeting.

LAKE WOBEGON TRAIL: ST. JOSEPH – AVON DEDICATION

The dedication of this new segment of the trail was held Friday, April 10, 2004. About 200 people attended. Legislators were not able to attend. Mr. Gene Merriam, DNR Commissioner was in attendance. Lake Wobegon Trails, Inc. gave away 100 caps and 100 shirts. The band played. Brian Sweeny from Burlington-Northern Railroad was in attendance. He also received plaques for Rich Batie and Jerry Johnson. Bob Rickert from MN/DOT also attended. The Farmer's Market was also there and will continue to be there on Friday nights. There was a lot of spontaneous trail use during the ceremony.

DERRICK REMOVAL:

The Liberty Derrick was moved May 11 and May 12 to the site where it will eventually be erected. It's resting on granite boulders donated by Cold Spring Granite. It cost \$2,500 to lower the derrick. It was done by Landwehr Construction of St. Cloud.

QUARRY PARK VIDEO DONATED BY TEL-A-VISION

Quarry Park video was developed and donated by Tel-a-Vision of St. Joseph. It will be used for public broadcast at breaks in the County Board meetings and sent to the Convention and Visitor Bureau. The Park Commissioners thought it was well done.

NOBLE CUSTOM HOMES QUARRY DONATION – UPDATE:

Steve Noble, who will be developing an area south of the Persian Club in St. Cloud wanted to donate some quarries within the development. The site will be developed for private homes. The City had said "no" to him. He hoped Stearns County would manage the Quarries as a swimming area. He also proposed to donate a couple of lots for parking. There would be 900-1,000 residents. *Upon motion by Mr. Graeve, and second by Mr. Olson, the Park Commission thanked the developer, but the County didn't see this in the prospects of the parks right now.* Motion passed unanimously.

TRAIL RESEARCH: ST. JOSEPH – COLLEGEVILLE STATION

Mr. Theismann indicated a college student named Jenny Stevenson, a Senior at St. Ben's, wanted to do something related to the environmental field. She surveyed use of the dual treadway

between Collegeville and County Rd. #3. She and some other students spent 34 ¾ hours counting users between January 23 and finished on March 12. They counted 60 snowmobiles and 66 people. There were 36 non-motorized uses, including walkers, joggers, cross-country skiers and bikers. There were 66 motorized users, all being snowmobiles. There were 2 snowmobiles for every non-motorized user. There were no complaints from any users. St. John's plowed 7-8 times. The snowmobilers, for the most part, stayed off the plowed trail.

ST. WENDEL TAMARACK BOG SUPPORTED AS SNA:

The Park Commission supported the State's plan to establish a Scientific & Natural Area (SNA) in the bog and swamp complex just north of the City of St. Joseph. ***Upon Motion by Mr. Graeve, and second by Mr. Olson, the Park Commission moved to support the St. Wendel Township in giving the swamp to the DNR, with the DNR to re-invest that value in some adjacent properties.*** Motion passed unanimously.

REGIONAL RAIL AUTHORITY TAX LEVY:

The Park Commission suggested taxing enough to match state and federal funds to continue the Lake Wobegon Trail system to the Mississippi River. The project would cost approximately \$3 million. ***Upon motion by Mr. Graeve, and second by Mr. Olson, the Park Commission suggested the Regional Rail Authority Tax should be asked to match the portion of the amount needed to complete the Lake Wobegon Trail from St. Joe to the Mississippi River.*** Motion passed unanimously.

BEAVER ISLAND TRAIL EXTENSION: LYNDEN TOWNSHIP MEETING OF MAY 3, 2004.

Ann Ackerman, Township Supervisor, was assigned by Lynden Township as a liaison to the Beaver Island Trail project. The township is in support of the Beaver Island Trail project. Lynden Township also wants the trail to get from Clearwater to Warner Lake Park.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARK USE FOR HOUSING MITIGATION:

A home next to the park was given a building permit, and was being built in a wetland. The property owner had begun building in a protected wetland. The County put a stop work order on the building as soon as the area was determined to be a wetland. The fill was removed from the wetland. The building site would be moved to the upland. ***Upon motion by Mr. Olson, and second by Mr. Foster, the Park Commission recommended to use the designated section of Mississippi Park for flooding mitigation based on the recommendations of the experts in developing a rain garden.***

GRANITE COUNTRY USA: INITIATIVE, VIDEO & FESTIVAL:

The Park Commission was informed of this Industry-related coalition of granite producers. The Park Department will be involved. A 20-minute high definition video was prepared by the group and previewed by the Park Commission.

BLACK BEAR IN QUARRY PARK:

Mr. Wocken received a call from a neighbor about a sighting of a black bear. A couple visiting the SNA also reported to the Caretaker they had seen a bear in the park.

ROCK CLIMBING AT QUARRY PARK: & NATURE PRESERVE:

On August 3, 2004, the County Board unanimously approved general public rock climbing. A "Climbing Guidelines" brochure is being designed with input from the County Attorney's office. Climbers will sign a permit stating they agree to take responsibility for their actions as outlined in the Guidelines. There will be warnings that rock climbing is inherently dangerous. Several people have stopped and called for permits. Minors will need to have parents sign their permits.

GREATER MN REGIONAL PARKS LCMR EFFORTS

Highlights of the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) regional park survey were reviewed. The following criteria were being used to define a "regional park" in Greater Minnesota.

1. The site has to be 100 acres or larger.
2. Use: 40% must come from outside the taxing jurisdiction. Quarry and Warner Lake Parks have studies that show at least 40% of their visitors come from outside the county. The Met Council set these guidelines with the State Legislature many years ago.
3. Type of recreation resources offered: It has to be natural resources related.
4. Special features: A unique geological or historical feature such as a zoo is an example of a special feature park. It has to have some historical, natural or cultural specific value.
5. Park supplies a Natural Resource base, something that's otherwise not available in a reasonable distance.

BASS TOURNAMENT PROPOSED FOR MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARK:

The Park Commission reviewed a request to host a smallmouth bass tournament at Mississippi Park. It would include about 60 boats and 120 people. Dave Trobec, the event organizer proposed to use his catering license which allows him to sell foods and beverages. This event was partially a fund raiser for Fire Fighters. He proposed giving County Parks 10% - 20% of the gross profits. The event was never finalized. *Upon motion by Mr. Olson and second by Mr. Sakry, the Park Commission agreed to a one-year trial with agreement by Mr. Trobec if he agreed to do all the cleanup the night of the tournament, have proper insurance certification, check with the DNR in reference to the effect on the fish with a second tournament in the same area, he cooperates with the County Sheriff, obeys all Park Ordinances, and agrees to pay the Parks Department 20% of gross.*

TRIATHLON PROPOSED FOR WARNER LAKE PARK

Phil Rogosheske proposed to host a Triathlon at Warner Lake Park. He would donate some of the profits to Quarry Park. He'd like to run it from 7:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. It would include swimming, running and biking. After approval to proceed from the Stearns County Board the proposal was withdrawn until a later year. ***Upon motion by Mr. Olson and second by Mr. Peck, the Park Commission approved a one-year trial run with an agreement to clean up the day of the run, provide proper insurance certification, provide the appropriate volunteers to handle the traffic, obey all Park Ordinances, cooperate with the Sheriff and promise the Parks Department at least 20% of the profits.***

POTENTIAL PARK SITE: REED PROPERTY FOR BEAVER ISLAND TRAIL:

William Reed proposed to sell 9 acres of his property to the County, which is former railroad corridor along County Road 75. Three acres are in the City of St. Cloud. Six acres are in Lynden Township. The Commission recommended pursuing acquisition of the parcel jointly with the City of St. Cloud Park Department.

RAILS WITH TRAILS:

Mr. Theismann indicated the County Board authorized seeking access to the rail corridor west of the Mississippi. Mr. Theismann sent a letter to Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to initiate discussions. Rail corridor is proposed to be considered for the alignment of the Lake Wobegon Trail extension from St. Joseph to the Mississippi River, with the trail alignment on the outside edge of the corridor. Similar "rails-with-trail" projects are in place throughout the country.

ROCORI TRAIL:

The Park Commission was informed of a local trail initiative between the Cities of Richmond, Cold Spring and Rockville. The three cities want to create a trail connecting them together. A "rails-with-trails" concept is being considered as the chief alignment strategy.

DEVELOPMENT:

Park Maintenance constructed an observation platform at the top of the rock pile east of Quarry #10 at Quarry Park & Nature Preserve.



FUNDING:

OVERALL COUNTY BUDGET:

STEARNS COUNTY'S TOTAL BUDGET \$87,009,989

PARK DEPARTMENT BUDGET:

PARK DEPARTMENT BUDGET (Fund 18)	\$ 629,658
DEBT SERVICE FOR PARK BOND (Fund 35)	<u>256,238</u>
Total Park Budget	\$ 885,896

PROPERTY TAX FOR PARK PROGRAM:

PARK FUND LEVY	\$ 560,858
DEBT SERVICE ON PARK BOND (yr.5 of 15)	<u>\$ 256,238</u>
Total Property Tax levy for Parks	\$ 817,096

Estimated county population for 2004 = 140,841. *The 2004 cost of the Stearns County Park program was \$5.80/capita (\$0.48/ person/ month)* (\$6.08/capita in 2003; \$6.26/capita in 2002) The last bond payment is due Dec. 1, 2013.

DONATION: FROM PHIL ROGOSHESKE'S WARNER LAKE TRAIL RUN FOR QUARRY PARK.

This was the fifth year Mr. Rogosheske donated to Quarry Park. This year's amount was \$410. He had 160 participants.

DONATION: TREE TRIMMING AT HEIMS MILL CANOE ACCESS:

Funds totaling \$10,000 were donated to help trim up and thin trees at the Heims Mill Canoe Access.

FEE SCHEDULE

Shelter Permits.....	\$40.00/day when no caretaker on duty
Monday-Thursday.....	\$45.00/day when caretakers on duty.
Friday-Saturday.....	\$50.00/day when caretakers on duty.
Nature Center Rental.....	\$50 per person deposit. 50% surcharge for weddings. \$100.00/first four hours. \$ 20.00/hour each additional hour. (50% discount for nonprofits first four hours)
Quarry Park & Nature Preserve Permits.....	\$4.00 Daily \$14.00 Annual
Bus Parking Permit.....	\$15.00/daily. Pre-approved school groups free parking.

TAX-FORFEIT PROPERTY REVENUE: \$863.73

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

Summer maintenance activities included mowing, rodent control, noxious weed control, forest management, prairie management, building maintenance and repair, grounds maintenance and improvements, trail maintenance, public safety inspections, and a host of other activities related to the hospitality mission of county parks were accomplished.

SNA Trail improvement by Parks:



Lake Wobegon Trail Drainage Repairs:



Warner Lake woodlot thinning:



WEATHER:

The Summer of 2004 was the 4th coldest in St. Cloud's history. August was the 2nd coldest in 123 years of St. Cloud temperature records (St. Cloud Times: 9/2/04).

LAKE KORONIS REGIONAL PARK: This park is owned and operated through a Joint Powers Agreement. Meeker County provides the supervision and shares costs 50-50 with Stearns County.

FAIRHAVEN MILL: This park is owned by Wright County but continues to be managed by under a shared-cost agreement between Wright County and Stearns County

GRANT-IN-AID SNOWMOBILE & SKI TRAILS: There are about 600 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in Stearns County which are maintained for public usage by the Stearns County Snowmobile Association. The 6-mile Wildwood Ski Trail is groomed and maintained by a similar agreement with the Nordic Ski Club. The trails are established by a permit from the private landowner to Stearns County with the Club or Association providing the day-to-day care. Dedicated trail funds are provided by the State for the maintenance of the trails.

STAFFING:

- 3 permanent park maintenance staff
- 1 permanent Quarry Park caretaker
- 2 park maintenance aides
- 4 seasonal caretakers
- 3 gatekeepers
- 4 Green View, Inc. contract caretakers/attendants at Warner Lake

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY - 2004

- | | | |
|---|-----|-------|
| • Ski Patrol at Quarry Park (38 volunteers) | 87 | hours |
| • Ski Patrol at Warner Park (5 volunteers) | 12 | hours |
| • Ski Patrol at Mississippi Park (3 volunteers) | 4 | hours |
| • Tree planting along Lake Wobegon Trail (24 volunteers) | 119 | hours |
| • Monitoring Lake Wobegon Trail use and traffic counters (26 volunteers) | 89 | hours |
| • Fence Clearing at Quarry Park (12 volunteers) | 12 | hours |
| • Lake Wobegon Trail cleanup (32 volunteers) | 159 | hours |
| • Trail trimming and trash cleanup Warner Park (6 volunteers) | 36 | hours |
| • Tree transplanting at Warner Park (13 volunteers) | 90 | hours |
| • Tree transplanting from Warner Park to Two Rivers Park site (17 volunteers) | 105 | hours |
| • Bluebird house construction for Quarry Park (14 volunteers) | 41 | hours |
| • Quarry Park trail trimming and trash pickup (26 volunteers) | 126 | hours |
| • Moonlight walk/ski at Warner Park (14 volunteers) | 52 | hours |

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS = 230

TOTAL HOURS 932

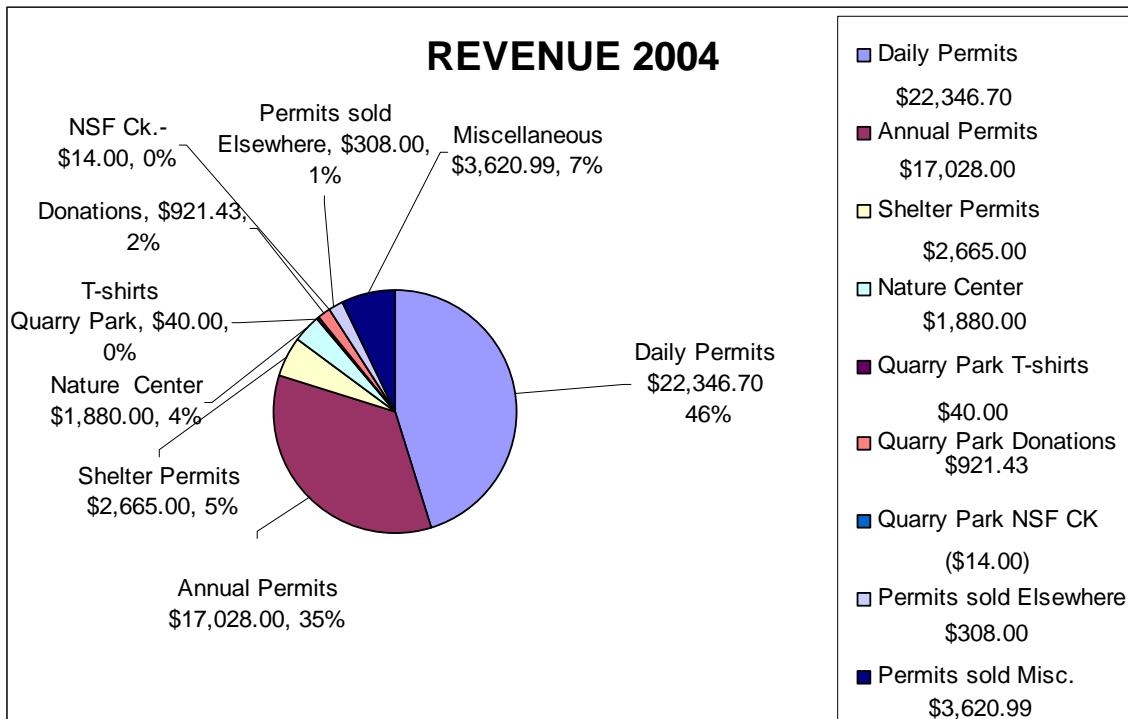


Figure 3

TOTAL REVENUE: \$48,796.12 (\$55,754.63 in 2003)

Daily Parking Permit Revenue:

2003: \$25,962.60 / 6,673 daily permits.

2004: \$22,346.70 / 5,586 daily permits.

Annual Parking Permit Revenue:

2003: \$17,234.00 / 1,891 annual permits.

2004: \$17,028.00 / 1,211 annual permits.

Total Parking Revenue:

2003: \$43,196.60 / 8,564 total parking permits.

2004: \$39,374.70 / 6,797 total parking permits.

U S E R S H I P

PUBLIC EVALUATION OF SERVICES:

The public is given opportunities to comment on park and trail facilities through comment boxes in parks and along trails. The following is a comment at Quarry Park & Nature Preserve from November 11, 2004:

“Loved the deck!!! Couldn’t wait to return to this tranquil and beautiful park: thanks.”

Comments are also received through the county web page. The following is one related to the Lake Wobegon Trail received from Plymouth, Minnesota on April 12, 2004 – 6:45 a.m.:

“Just a note to say THANK YOU for the Lake Wobegon Trail!! We live in Plymouth,MN, but use trails all over the Midwest. We support the towns that the trails go through, resorts, restaurants, gas, shuttle services, etc. The rails to trails is the way to go. THANK YOU. Charlie & Michelle

ROCK CLIMBING PERMITS: Permits began to be issued in the Fall. Total permits issued were: 68.

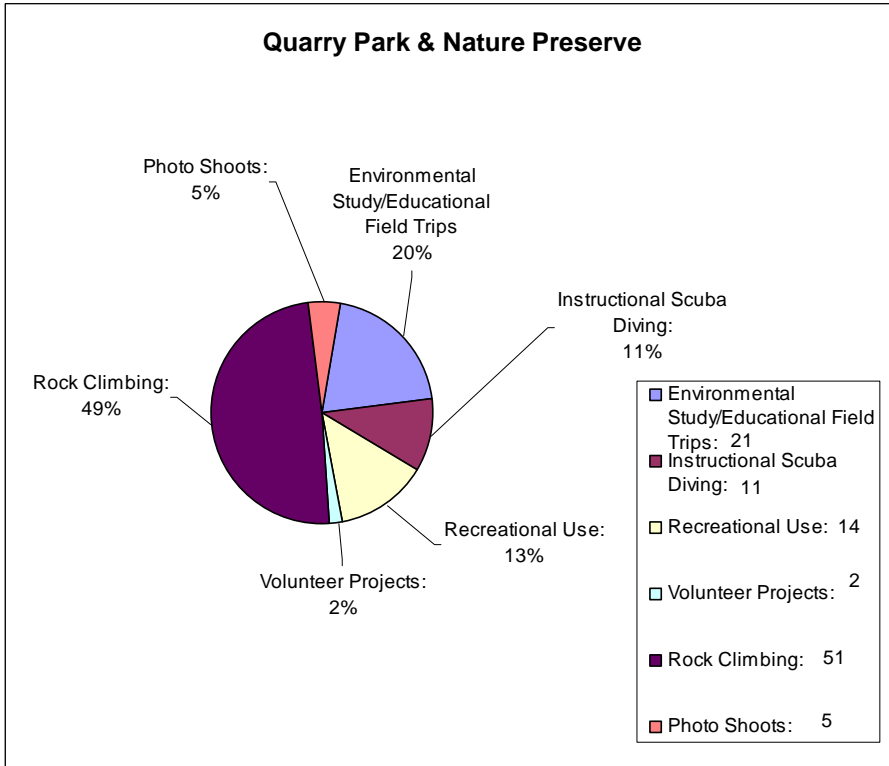


Figure 4

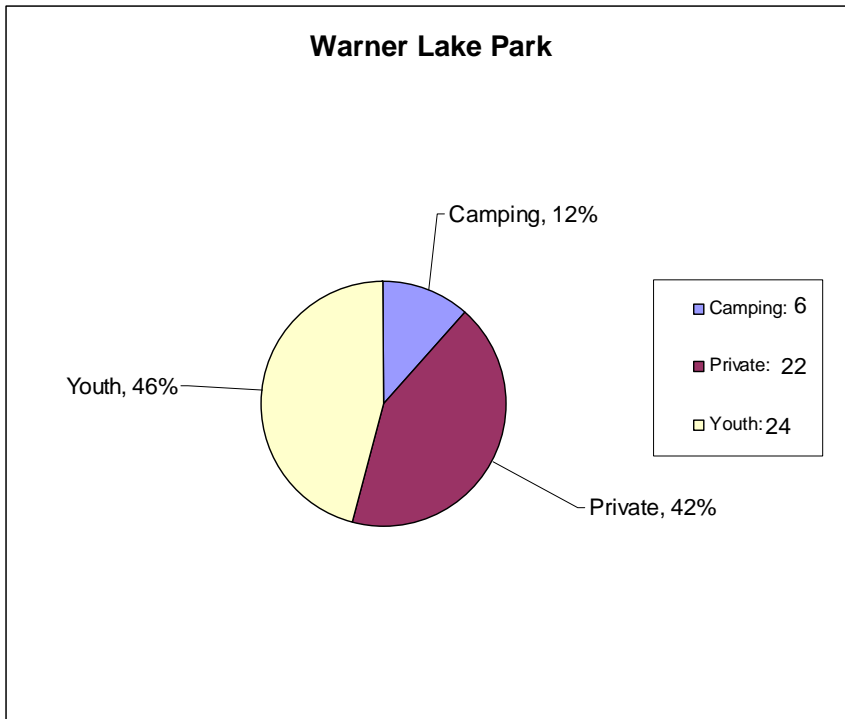


Figure 5

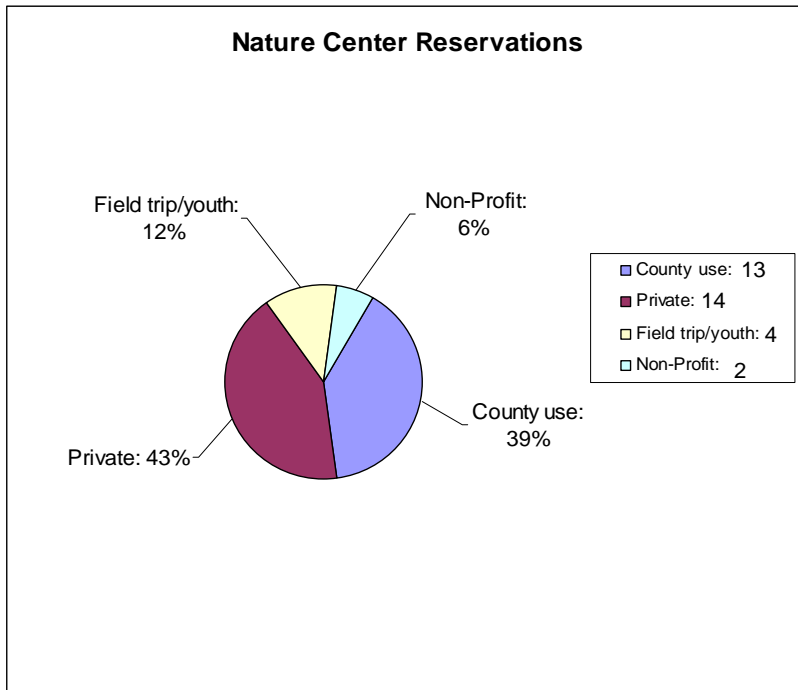


Figure 6

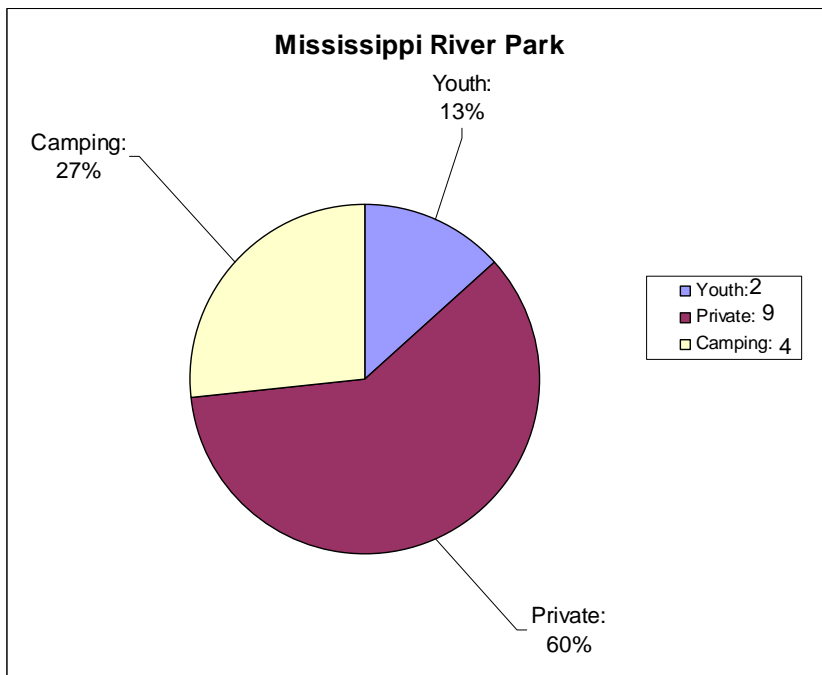


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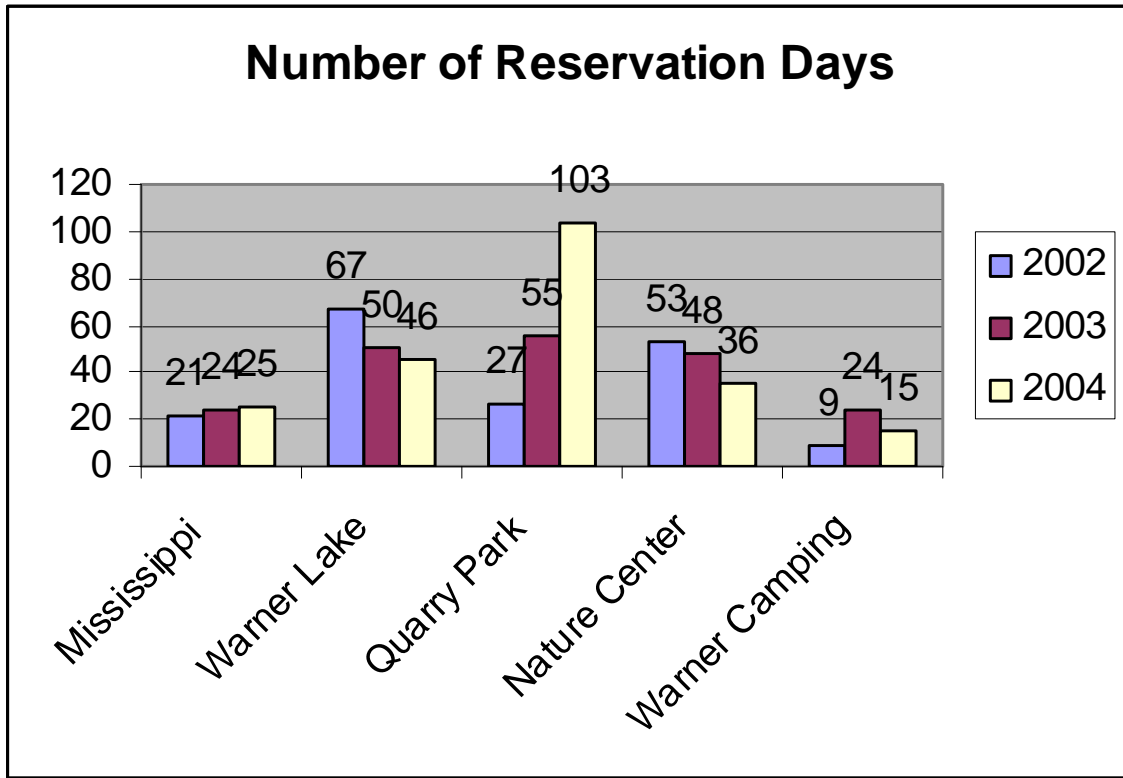


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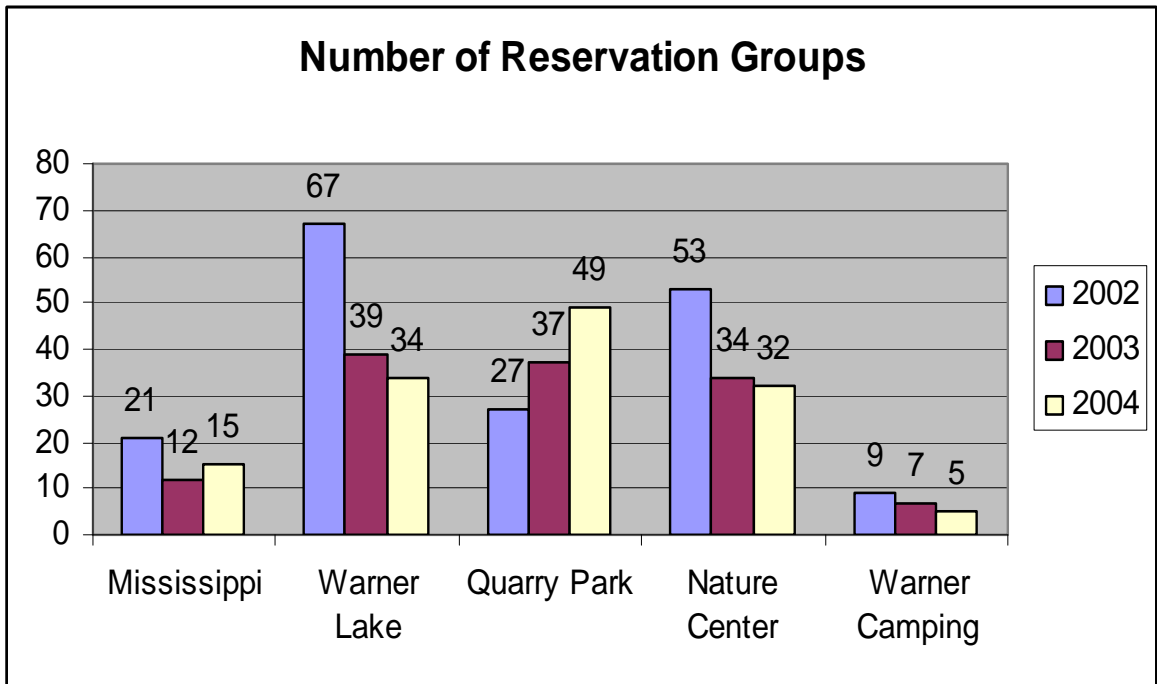


Figure 9