

# Parks, Trails, Open Space, and Recreation Policy Analysis

## For Todd, Morrison, Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena Counties

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Region Five Photos at <http://s1184.photobucket.com/home/mnregionfive>

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# Introduction

The following document analyzes Todd, Morrison, Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena County policies relating to parks, trails, open space, and recreation. This document is one piece of a larger analysis that addresses the five counties' policies regarding topics of land use, transportation, housing, economic development, parks, trails, open space, and recreation, water and natural resources, intergovernmental coordination, and healthcare. To ensure clarity, each topic is analyzed separately in its own document. Research and analysis was undertaken to provide the Region Five Development Consortium with a clearer understanding of how current policies relate and differ from each other across counties. The following analysis will be helpful for workgroups to develop regional policies and recommendations, which will be adopted by the full consortium to guide the future growth and development of Region Five in a sustainable manner.

# Methodology

The following policies were taken from Todd, Morrison, Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena County's most recent Comprehensive Plans. This document addresses the similarities, differences, and potential conflicts between county policies regarding parks, trails, open space, and recreation. Due to the uniqueness of each plan, not all counties addressed similar issues around the topic at hand. For this reason, policies were only included if at least two of the five counties addressed the issue. To see what county policies were included or dismissed in this analysis please refer to Appendix E (separate document). Additionally, each county's policies are written at a different level of specificity making it difficult to compare/contrast a detailed policy with a vague policy. For the purpose of this analysis, policies were considered similar to each other even when they differ on the level of detail.

For this analysis, sub-topics were created to guide the reader throughout the document. For example, this document contains sub-topics of maintenance and development of parks, trail systems, open space, recreation opportunities, and so forth. Under each sub-topic, similarities, differences, and conflicts between county policies on an issue were analyzed and grouped into categories. Categories are listed as follows: Very Similar, Similar, Somewhat Similar, Unique/Potentially Conflicting, and Unique. Policies in the Very Similar category are ones that relate to each other at a clear level of specificity; policies under the Similar category are ones that relate in vision but not in detail; policies under the Somewhat Similar category relate to each other more similarly than uniquely; policies under Unique/Potentially Conflicting category are in potential disagreement with other policies pertaining to the same issue; and policies that are considered unique have some relationship to the issue at hand but are not similar to each other. Due to policies relating to more than one sub-topic, it is possible that the same policy will be included across sub-

topics and categories. It is also possible that not all categories were used in this document, depending on how county policies relate to each other.

All five counties addressed land use in their Comprehensive Plan. Since many counties' policies also addressed issues of housing, transportation, and economic development in the land use section of their Comprehensive Plan, they may not be included in this document. However, more detailed analyses regarding these issues will be located in separate documents.

To make it clear to understand, each policy has been assigned a color that corresponds with a county. The county color code can be seen in the footer of each page. Additionally, text that is bolded and highlighted signifies the relationship between policies under a category. Furthermore, a sources list is included below in this methodology section to provide readers with links to each county's most updated comprehensive plan.

## Sources

### 1) Todd County 2030 Comprehensive Plan:

[http://www.co.todd.mn.us/HTML\\_Files/Departments/Documentation/ToddCounty2030ComprehensivePlan.pdf](http://www.co.todd.mn.us/HTML_Files/Departments/Documentation/ToddCounty2030ComprehensivePlan.pdf)

### 2) Morrison County Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2005):

<http://morrisonmn.govoffice3.com/vertical/Sites/%7BC8FCCAFF-AECD-45DC-91B1-016A998EB4A8%7D/uploads/%7B77B3A859-82C4-4E06-AC2D-04350EE16357%7D.PDF>

### 3) Cass County Comprehensive Plan (2008-2012):

[http://www.co.cass.mn.us/esd/pdfs/comp\\_plan.pdf](http://www.co.cass.mn.us/esd/pdfs/comp_plan.pdf)

### 4) Crow Wing County Comprehensive Plan (2003-2023):

[http://www.co.crow-wing.mn.us/planning\\_zoning/ordinances/docs/2004\\_COMPREHENSIVE\\_PLAN.pdf](http://www.co.crow-wing.mn.us/planning_zoning/ordinances/docs/2004_COMPREHENSIVE_PLAN.pdf)

### 5) Wadena County Comprehensive Plan (1999):

<https://r5dcscrp.basecamphq.com/projects/7032816/file/85211367/WadenaCountyCompPlan.pdf>

# Findings

## I. Maintenance and Improvement of Parks

Todd and Morrison County both have very similar policies regarding maintenance and improvement of parks. They both agree that existing parks and recreation facilities should be maintained and improved. Similarly, Cass County also agrees that existing recreation facilities should be enhanced. However, they do not say that existing parks should be enhanced. Crow Wing and Wadena County do not address this issue.

## II. Development and Expansion of Parks and Recreational Facilities

Both Todd and Crow Wing County have similar policies regarding the development and expansion of parks and recreation facilities. Although these policies differ slightly in vision, they both support the expansion of recreational facilities. For instance, Todd County supports the expansions of existing recreation facilities while Crow Wing County says that areas for future expansion, connections, and provision of recreational facilities should be identified.

Regarding the development of future parks, both Todd and Morrison County have similar policies. Both county policies promote the development of future parks. Additionally, Todd County promotes the development of new recreation facilities. Both county policies also agree that the development of future parks should be based on need. For example, Todd County's policy reads "promote the development of new public parks and recreation facilities in the County to accommodate existing and future population needs." Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena County do not address this issue.

## III. Private Parks

No policies among counties are similar to each other regarding private parks. Todd County promotes the development of private parks in the County to enhance recreational opportunities. They also promote the development of private recreational opportunities on private lands. Morrison County believes that developers, in appropriately large developments, should be required to reserve a percentage of total acreage for parks and open space. For more information on unique policies regarding this issue please refer to IIA1 below. Cass, Crow Wing, and Wadena County do not address this issue.

#### **IV. Park and Recreation Departments**

Todd and Morrison County both have similar policies regarding park and/or recreation departments in their county. Todd County supports the continuation of the Todd County Parks and Trails Board while Morrison County explores the possibility of maintaining a Morrison County Parks and Recreation Department to maintain all County parks and trails within the County as well as other cultural resources. Somewhat similarly, Todd County encourages active and ongoing participation and partnership among local units of County government to plan and implement public and private recreation.

#### **V. Recreational Use Conflicts**

No policies among counties are similar to each other regarding recreational use conflicts. Cass County would like to reduce recreational conflicts on road rights-of-way by encouraging corridor use. Crow Wing County simply states they would like to reduce the potential for recreational use conflicts. Todd, Morrison, and Wadena County do not address this issue.

#### **VI. Recreational Funding**

Todd and Crow Wing County have somewhat similar policies regarding recreational funding. Todd County encourages the wise expenditure of public funds for recreation and open space projects through the County's capital improvement program process. Crow Wing County believes that a recreation improvement and expansion fund should be established. Similarly, Todd County states they would like to leverage outside and grant funding for projects. Morrison, Cass, and Wadena County do not address this issue.

#### **VII. Equal/Diverse Recreational Opportunities for All**

Both Cass and Crow Wing County have very similar policies regarding recreational opportunities. They both agree that their recreation system should provide diverse recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors while protecting natural areas. Crow Wing County is slightly more detailed saying that recreational opportunities should be accessible to people of all ages and abilities. For more information on these policies please refer to VIIA1 below. Todd, Morrison, and Crow Wing County do not address this issue.

#### **VIII. Trail Systems**



Todd and Crow Wing County have somewhat similar policies regarding public/private trail systems. They both promote the development of trail systems in their county.

Todd County explicitly states they support the expansion of the existing public trail system and facilities. Similarly, Todd County supports the study and development of new public trails and facilities. They also promote the development of private trails in the County. Crow Wing County promotes the enhancement and development of foot, biking, snowmobile, and ATV trails. However, they do not state whether these trails would be public or privately owned or both. Similarly, Cass County would like to establish a network of destination ATV trails. Uniquely, Cass County wishes to establish corridors on public land used exclusively for recreation destination travel year round. Morrison and Wadena County do not address this issue.

## **IX. Open Space**

Similarly, Morrison, Crow Wing, and Wadena County all state that they should preserve open space. Relating to this, Morrison and Wadena County specify they should preserve the rural character of the county and that open space is a way to do so. Morrison, Crow Wing, and Wadena County also state that they should protect and preserve the County's environmentally significant areas such as high quality natural areas, woods, and streams. Wadena County also says they should preserve the County's woods and streams.

Additionally, Wadena County is the only county that says how to preserve the rural character, farmland, woods, streams, and open space: by directing development to growth areas. Relating to the preservation of open space, Morrison and Cass County say they encourage the use of cluster development. Uniquely, Morrison County says they should use open space as a buffering tool between incompatible land uses. Todd County does not address this issue.

## **X. Intergovernmental Coordination**

Regarding trail coordination, Cass and Wadena County both have somewhat similar policies. They both agree that a trail system should be established. However, each county has different municipalities or groups that they believe should work cooperatively. Cass County states that ATV clubs, users, and the Cass County Land Recreation Advisory Committee should work together while Wadena County states that there should be a cooperative effort between the county, county municipalities, and townships. Somewhat similarly, Todd County supports the efforts and continuation of the Todd County Parks and Trails Board. Morrison County says they explore the possibility of maintaining a County Parks and Recreation Department. Additionally, Wadena County encourages the development of a county-wide tourism plan to incorporate the municipal tourism efforts with the county recreation areas. Crow Wing County does not address this issue in any form.

Todd and Wadena have somewhat similar policies regarding recreation coordination. Todd County states that they encourage participation and partnership among local units of County government to plan and implement public and private recreation. Wadena County also encourages cooperation between the County and municipalities to link recreation opportunities. They also state that public and private partnerships should be encouraged to enhance recreation opportunities and services. For more information on these policies as well as unique policies please refer to XA1 and XA2 below. Todd, Cass, and Crow Wing County do not address this issue.

## Policy Analysis

### I. Maintenance and Improvement of Parks

#### A. Maintenance and Improvement of Parks

##### 1. Very Similar

- a) **Protect and enhance the existing park and recreation facilities in Todd County.**
- b) **The currently existing parks and recreation system should be maintained and improved** and a system of parks and recreational areas and facilities appropriate to the needs of the County should be encouraged.

##### 2. Similar to Above (IA)

- a) **Enhance existing recreation facilities.**

### II. Development and Expansion of Parks and Recreational Facilities

#### A. Development/Expansion of Parks and Recreational Facilities

##### 1. Similar

- a) **Support the expansions of the existing public parks and recreation facilities** in Todd County.
- b) **Identify all of the County's recreational resources and determine**

**areas for future expansion, connections, and provision of recreational facilities.**

## **B. Future Parks**

### **2. Similar Within and to Above (IIA1)**

- a) **Promote the development of new public parks and recreation facilities in the County to accommodate existing and future population needs.**
- b) The **development of future parks should be based on need** and commonly accepted recreation standards.

## **III. Private Parks**

### **A. Private Parks**

#### **1. Unique**

- a) **Promote the development of private parks** in the County to enhance recreational opportunities.
- b) **Promote the safe and harmonious development of private recreational opportunities on private lands** that are consistent with local land-use planning policies and requirements.
- c) **Developers, in appropriately large developments, should be required to reserve a percentage of total acreage for parks and open space.**

## **IV. Park and Recreation Departments**

### **A. Park and Recreation Departments**

#### **1. Similar**

- a) **Support the efforts and continuation of the Todd County Parks and Trails Board.**
- b) Explore the possibility of **maintaining a Morrison County Parks**



**and Recreation Department** to maintain all County parks and trails within the County as well as other cultural resources.

## 2. Somewhat Similar to Above (IVA1)

- a) **Encourage active and ongoing participation and partnership among local units of County government to plan and implement public and private recreation.**

# V. Recreational Use Conflicts

## A. Recreational Use Conflicts

### 1. Unique

- a) Reduce conflicts on road rights-of-way by encouraging corridor use.
- b) Reduce the potential for recreational use conflicts.

# VI. Recreational Funding

## A. Recreational Funding

### 1. Somewhat Similar

- a) Encourage the wise expenditure of public funds for recreation and open space projects through the County's capital improvement program process.
- b) Establish a recreation improvement and expansion fund.

### 2. Similar to Above (VIA1)

- a) Leverage outside and grant funding for projects.

# VII. Equal/Diverse Recreational Opportunities for All

## A. Equal/Diverse Recreational Opportunities for All

## 1. Very Similar

- a) Develop an integrated green space and recreation system within Cass County that **provides diverse, developed and undeveloped, recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors while protecting unique scenic and natural areas.**
  - i. **Maintain a diversity of recreational opportunities.**
- b) Maintain and enhance parks, recreation, and open space for Crow Wing County residents and visitors by **providing diverse recreational opportunities that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities, while preserving the County's high quality natural areas and open space.**

## VIII. Trail Systems

*Notes: Although Morrison County has no explicit trail policies, they do have a trail implementation plan and map of types of future desired trails.*

### A. Trail Systems

#### 1. Somewhat Similar

- a) **Support the expansion of the existing public trail systems** and facilities.
- b) **Promote the development of private trails in the County to enhance recreational opportunities.**
- c) **Promote the enhancement and development of** other forms of transportation, including **foot, biking, snowmobile, and ATV trails** and sidewalks.

#### 2. Similar to Above (VIII A1)

- a) **To establish a network of destination ATV trails.**

#### 3. Similar to Above (VIII A1a)

- a) **Support the study and development of new public trails and facilities.**

#### 4. Unique

- a) To establish corridors on public land used exclusively for recreation destination travel year round.

## IX. Open Space

### A. Open Space

#### 1. Similar

- a) **Preserve open spaces** for uses permitted by ordinance and statute, including hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, biking, etc., as well as reasonable spaces for recreating on motorized vehicles such as ATVs, snowmobiles, etc.
  - i. **Protect and enhance the existing open spaces that are already present** in Todd County.
- b) **Preserve open space** within Morrison County to protect and enhance the rural character and atmosphere of the County and require buffers between agricultural and residential uses.
  - i. **Identify environmentally significant or critical open spaces or green spaces within the County and protect those spaces from future development.**
- c) Maintain and enhance parks, recreation, and open space for Crow Wing County residents and visitors by providing diverse recreational opportunities that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities, while **preserving the County's high quality natural areas and open space.**
- d) **Preserve Wadena County's rural character, farmland, woods, streams, and open spaces** by directing development to growth areas.

#### 3. Somewhat Similar to Above (IXA1)

- a) **Promote the use of cluster development** in any rural residential development.
- b) **Encourage cluster development** as an alternative in environmentally sensitive areas.

#### 4. Unique

- a) Use open space as a buffering tool between incompatible land uses.
- b) To focus on long-term preservation and conservation of land and open space along the Protected Waters within Morrison County including, but not limited to first, second and potential third tier development.

## X. Intergovernmental Coordination

### A. Trail and Park Coordination

#### 1. Somewhat Similar

- a) **Work with ATV clubs, users, Cass County Land Recreation Advisory Committee to define and establish trail network.**
- b) **Promote a cooperative effort between the county, county municipalities, and townships in designing and implementing a county trails system.**

#### 2. Somewhat Similar to Above (XA1)

- a) Support the efforts and **continuation of the Todd County Parks and Trails Board.**
- b) Explore the possibility of **maintaining a Morrison County Parks and Recreation Department** to maintain all County parks and trails within the County as well as other cultural resources.
- c) **Encourage development of a county-wide tourism plan to incorporate the municipal tourism efforts with the county recreation areas.**

### B. Recreation Coordination

#### 1. Somewhat Similar

- a) **Encourage active and ongoing participation and partnership among local units of County government to plan and implement public and private recreation.**
- b) **Encourage cooperation between Wadena County and municipalities if efforts to link recreation opportunities.**
- c) **Public/Private partnerships should be encouraged and developed to enhance recreation opportunities and services.**
  - i. Create a network of business and organizational providers of recreation, leisure and cultural opportunities in the County in order to coordinate seasonal calendars of activities, expand services, and create viable business opportunities in areas of need.

## 2. Unique

- a) County should transfer ownership of existing sites to federal or state.
- b) County should develop a uniform enforcement plan with state, federal, and tribal input to minimize confusion and cost.
- c) To implement a county strategy for enforcement of non-game recreation laws.