

Community Assistantship Program

...a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)

Minnesota River Valley Partners Project

Prepared in partnership with

Center for Changing Landscapes, Conservation Corps Minnesota,
Renville County Parks Department, Tatanka Bluffs Corridor

Prepared by

Elissa Brown

Research Assistant

University of Minnesota

2012

CAP Report # 177

*This report is available on the CURA website:
<http://www.cura.umn.edu/publications/search>*

Center for Urban and
Regional Affairs (CURA)

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover™

CAP is a cross-college, cross-campus University of Minnesota initiative coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). Funds for CAP were generously provided by the McKnight foundation and the Blandin foundation.

This is a publication of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), which connects the resources of the University of Minnesota with the interests and needs of urban communities and the region for the benefit of all. CURA pursues its urban and regional mission by facilitating and supporting connections between state and local governments, neighborhoods, and nonprofit organizations, and relevant resources at the University, including faculty and students from appropriate campuses, colleges, centers or departments. The content of this report is the responsibility of the author and is not necessarily endorsed by CAP, CURA or the University of Minnesota.

© 2012 by The Regents of the University of Minnesota.

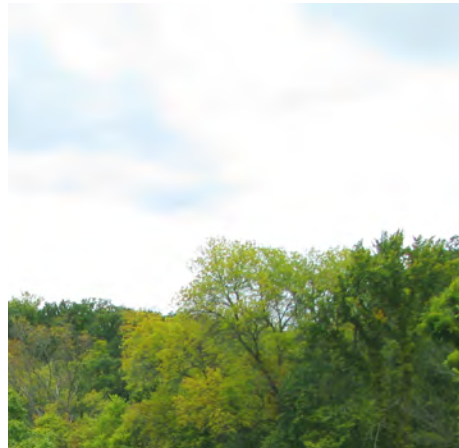
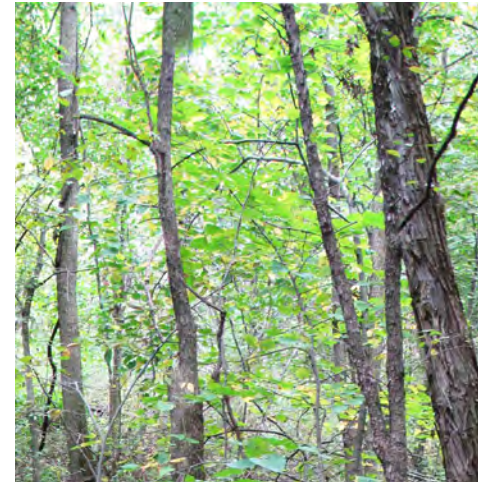
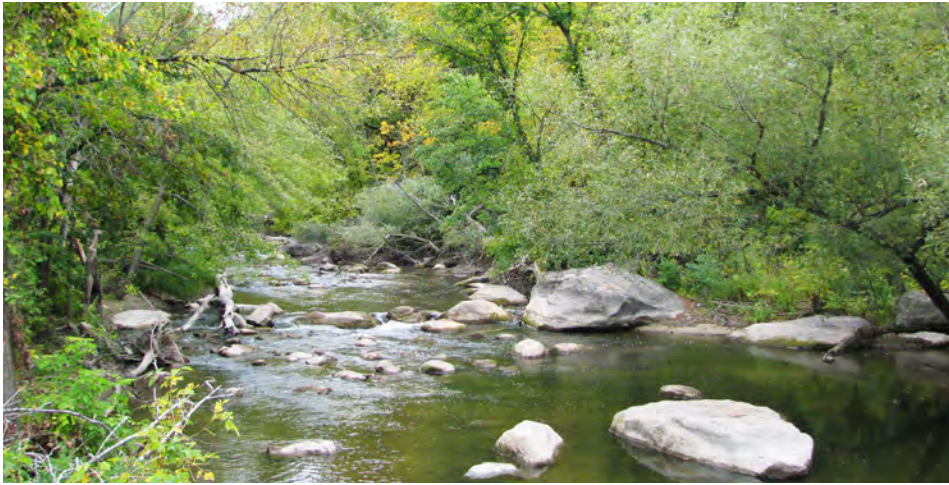


This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA. Any reproduction, distribution, or derivative use of this work under this license must be accompanied by the following attribution: "© The Regents of the University of Minnesota. Reproduced with permission of the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)." Any derivative use must also be licensed under the same terms. For permissions beyond the scope of this license, contact the CURA editor.

This publication may be available in alternate formats upon request.

Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)
University of Minnesota
330 HHH Center
301--19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
Phone: (612) 625-1551
Fax: (612) 626-0273
E-mail: cura@umn.edu
Web site: <http://www.cura.umn.edu>

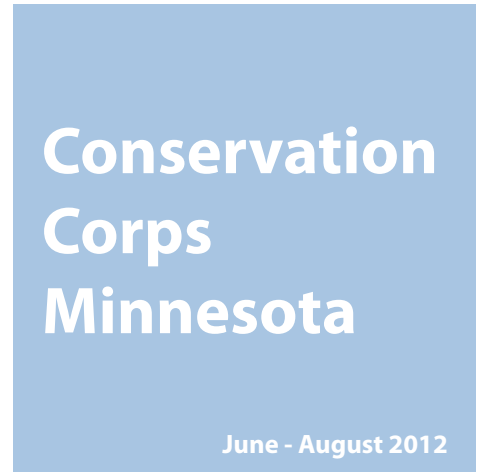
The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.



**Minnesota River Valley
Partners Project**

June - August 2012





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was produced and completed by The Center for Changing Landscapes, College of Design, and College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences at the University of Minnesota.

Funding for this project was received from Blandin Foundation and the Community Assistantship Program (CAP), a program of the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA).

Project Team:
Mary Vogel, Co-Director
Roger Martin, Senior Research Fellow
Egle Vanagaite, Research Fellow
Emily Lowery, Research Fellow
Elissa Brown, Research Assitant

Project Partners:
Eric Antonson, Conservation Corps Minnesota
Mark A. Erickson, Renville County Division of Environment and Community Development
Bradley H. Cobb, Green Corridor, Inc
Loran Kaardal, Tatanka Bluffs Corridor
Andy Lang, Renville County Parks Supervisor
Bob Knutson, Renville County Parks
Julie Rath, Redwood Area Development Corporation
Pat Dingels, Redwood Area Development Corporation

Conservation Corps Minnesota Crew Members:

Erinn Moriarty , Crew Leader	Corinne Murillo , Crew Leader	Anna Jefferson , Crew Leader
Keith Doane , Crew Leader	Mark Reber , Crew Leader	Janine Schug , Crew Leader
Omar Uraga , Youth Leader	Patrick Stupca , Youth Leader	Sam Holmstrom , Youth Leader
Lauren Allin	Hamila Al-Kamooneh	Jacob Hickey
Burhan Esse	Angelique Cason	Andie Jurcoi
Dylan Menne	Ed Eubanks	Kee Lee
Jasmine Rademacher	Austin Mueller	Joy Miarmat
Mo Taylor	May Yang	Colton Thelen

Special thanks to Renville County Parks Staff for their preparation work and support throughout the project.

This publication is available at <http://ccl.design.umn.edu/>.
 For alternative formats, direct requests to:

Center for Changing Landscapes
 151 Rapson Hall
 89 Church Street
 Minneapolis, MN 55455
 612.624.7557



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6 - 7
Project Partnerships	6
Scope of Work	7
Project Goals and Objectives	7
MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY: BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK	9 - 28
Minnesota River Valley Brief Overview	10
The Beaver Falls County Park Strategy	11
Beaver Falls County Park	12 - 13
The Southern Section of Beaver Falls County Park Design	14
The Southern Section of Beaver Falls County Park Master Plan	15
Work Tasks and Construction Schedule Phase I, II & III	16 - 21
The Southern Section of Beaver Falls County Park Master Plan Phase I, II & III	22 - 24
The Southern Section of Beaver Falls County Park Prairie Visitor Center Master Plan	25
Prairie Visitor Center Construction and Work Tasks Plan	26
Prairie Visitor Center Planting Plan	27
Design Elements: Council Ring	28
Design Elements: Viewing Bench	29 - 32
Trail Construction Elements	33
Post-Work Photographs	34
APPENDICES	35 - 57
Appendix A: Site Drawings	37 - 45
Appendix B: Works Tasks and Process	47 - 48
Appendix C: Conservation Corps Minnesota Crew	49 - 54
Appendix D: Project Evaluation	57

INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota River Valley, the Greater Whole: Weaving Assets Together Through Regional Citizen Leadership and Partnerships for a Regional Outdoor Recreation Based Economy and Youth Development.

Project Description

The Minnesota River and its valley define the region. It connects all the communities, and its natural and cultural resource base has encouraged many citizen-lead partnerships to enhance and develop the region with an eye to its future.

The partnership of Tatanka Bluffs, Green Corridor, Center for Changing Landscapes (CCL), and the Conservation Corps of Minnesota (CCM) received funds to:

- Build on the citizen-led initiatives and CCL’s work by creating additional designs that will connect all the Valley’s individual initiatives such as the county trail system, the Minnesota River State Trail, the Minnesota River Scenic Byway, the Minnesota River Water Trail, the acquired natural resource lands, and the historic initiatives into a seamless natural resource and cultural-based amenity system,
- Provide resources for the building of these designs by CCM, and
- Extend the impact of the Blandin Leadership Program graduates regionally by engaging graduates in a mentoring program with CCM youth members.

This integrated approach to developing the natural and cultural resource based recreation economy in the Minnesota River Valley builds on the strengths of its partners and work already accomplished to move the Valley communities forward together.

Conservation Corps Minnesota, Summer Youth Corps

Conservation Corps youth crew members work and live outdoors for eight weeks during the summer, restoring our natural resources. AmeriCorps crew leaders mentor youth in hard work, community service and environmental stewardship. All are well trained, well equipped and ready for projects on public lands throughout Minnesota.

Summer Youth Corps Participation in Blandin Sponsored Minnesota River Valley Project:

- Blandin leadership graduates will recruit volunteers from the community to work under the leadership of Summer Youth Corps crew leaders on natural resource, public access and park improvement projects,
- Blandin leadership graduates will work with youth crews on projects to share their knowledge and civic experience and to mentor youth, and
- After work educational and social events led by Blandin graduates and local community members will include presentations by Summer Youth Corps participants on the importance of environmental stewardship.

Project Partners

Tatanka Bluffs Corridor

This organization evolved from the Blandin Community Economic Advantage (CEA) model in 2006. The Tatanka Bluffs Corridor (TBC) identified the natural history and ecological resources of the Mid-Minnesota River Watershed as the region’s most underutilized assets with economic potential. The group organized regionally and developed a vision of making the “Tatanka Bluffs Corridor” a competitive regional outdoor recreation destination for camping, ATV parks, hiking, biking, horse trail riding, canoeing, snowmobiling, birding, fishing, hunting and ecological, cultural and historical interpretation. This corridor stretches from the Upper Sioux Agency State Park in Yellow Medicine County to the Fort Ridgely State Park in Nicollet County, along the Minnesota River. The width of the corridor includes all of Redwood and Renville Counties and their 26 communities. Through cooperative collaborations the economic impact of this recreation economy extends along the Minnesota River from Ortonville to Mankato.

Center for Changing Landscapes

The Center for Changing Landscapes (CCL) was established in 2003 as an interdisciplinary research and outreach center in the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture and the College of Natural Resources, University of Minnesota. It continues as a center in the recently reconfigured College of Design and the College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Sciences.

The Center is an interdisciplinary research and outreach center; its cross-scale work combines design/planning expertise with natural resource expertise and knowledge to support land use and community form decision-making at the site, district, and regional scales to protect, preserve, and enhance Minnesota’s landscapes and their related cultural and natural resources in the face of changing development patterns, resource use, demographics, recreational patterns, economic initiatives, and environmental degradation.

Conservation Corps Minnesota

Conservation Corps Minnesota traces its roots to the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided natural-resource jobs to unemployed young people so they could support their families during the Great Depression. When federal support for conservation corps ended in 1981, the Minnesota Conservation Corps was created by the Minnesota Legislature to offer youth and young adult programs through the Department of Natural Resources. In 1999, the Friends of the Minnesota Conservation Corps was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which assumed operations in 2003.

Conservation Corps Minnesota provides hands-on environmental stewardship and service-learning opportunities to youth and young adults while completing valuable conservation and natural-resource management projects, as well as

emergency response work, throughout the region. Its goals are to help young people from diverse backgrounds become more connected to the environment, engaged in natural-resource conservation, involved in the community and prepared for future employment. These goals are accomplished through a variety of programs, including the Summer Youth Corps, an eight-week residential program for teenagers ages 15-18. Youth begin at a base camp in St. Croix State Park, then spike camp throughout the region working in 13 crews of 6 youth led by 2 well-trained AmeriCorps members per crew. Youth corps members and their young adult leaders receive a living allowance for their service. As AmeriCorps members, the leaders also receive an education award at the end of their service.

The Partners and their Roles

The project focuses on the strengths of the Tatanka Bluffs and Blandin Community Leadership Program graduates, the Center for Changing Landscapes of the University of Minnesota, and Conservation Corps Minnesota on the design and construction of natural resource based recreational projects in the Minnesota River Valley to advance the development of an outdoor resource based tourism economy in the Valley by:

- Involve community graduates of the Blandin leadership program in a focused regional effort to develop the area’s economy, (Tatanka Bluffs lead),
- Address the design/planning needs of the many projects that are under way including the over 8 million dollars of recent land acquisitions, an effort led by the Green Corridor nonprofit, (Center for Changing Landscapes lead),
- Create designs that link the variety of citizen-led efforts within the Valley together into a synergistic recreational system, (Center for Changing Landscapes),
- Build projects that support the outdoor recreation economy, Conservation Corps Minnesota lead), and
- Enhance the civic dimension of Conservation Corps Minnesota youth development program. (All three partners).

Scope of Work

The project partnership team brings together a range of skills and offers a wide range of perspectives. It brings together those that are working on economic development projects in the Minnesota Valley, engages economically challenged and minority youths from urban, suburban, and rural backgrounds; and community-driven design skills.

The project brings an opportunity to weave the individual economic development efforts together into a larger, connected whole by building on and enhancing local leadership to create regional leadership, identifying and designing specific physical projects, and building those projects through youth

and community efforts that enrich the Corps’ youth development program and bring the Valley’s economic development efforts to the next level.

Project Goals:

- Advance the Valley’s separate economic developments efforts to create an outdoor-based recreation economy by linking them together into a synergistic recreational system,
- Build on local work in progress, create an effective model of regional citizen-engaged leadership linked to physical development projects by demonstrating the power of site projects as vehicles to energize community/regional development through a Blandin-trained local community leaders regional network/Center for Changing Landscapes/Conservation Corps Minnesota partnership in the Minnesota River Valley, and
- Enrich the civic dimension of Conservation Corps Minnesota youth development efforts by engaging local community leaders in mentoring individual Corps members.

Project Objectives:

- Build on the community-based leadership training individuals living in the Minnesota River Valley have received from the Blandin’s Community Leadership Program, apply principles taught by the Program to create a regional leadership network, and
- Plan/design a regional project that creates a greater whole out of the many individual initiatives within the Valley by linking the region’s natural, historic, and cultural resource and community development projects together into a synergistic system that strengthens the effectiveness of the region’s current activities and moves them to the next level of funding and implementation.

The regional project will have many individual site projects that are part of the whole:

- Identify the specific designed/planned on-the-ground site projects that link the individual initiatives together as priority projects for implementation in the first phase of the regional project,
- Further the youth development objectives of Conservation Corps Minnesota’s Summer Youth Corps by linking youth to members of the Blandin-trained regional network,
- Build the projects through the partnership with the regional leaders, the Center, and Conservation Corps Minnesota, and
- Position the projects for funding from the Legacy Funds.

MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK

MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY BRIEF OVERVIEW//
THE BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK STRATEGY//
BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK//
WORK TASKS & CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE//
THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK //
PRAIRIE VISITOR CENTER //
DESIGN ELEMENTS//
TRAIL CONSTRUCTION ELEMENTS//
CCM CREW AT BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK//

MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY BRIEF OVERVIEW



Glacial Impact

Glaciers that periodically moved across the landscape formed the basis for the current topography of the Minnesota River Valley region. Rocks left by the glaciers are found throughout the landscape.

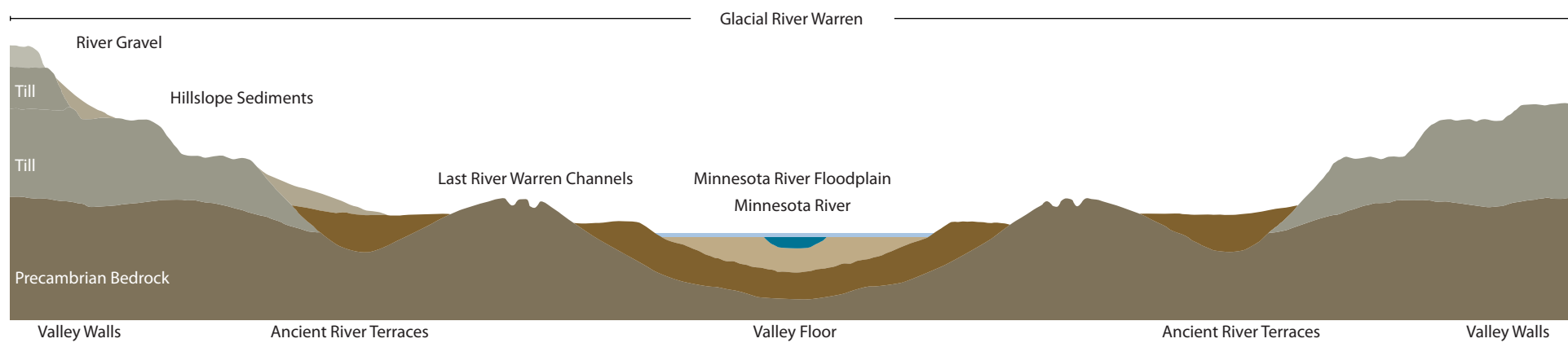
Glacial River Warren

Glacial Lake Agassiz formed around 12,000 years ago; it was created from melt water from receding glaciers. When the ice dam broke at Brown's Valley and released melt waters from Lake Agassiz, the mighty River Warren, the predecessor to the Minnesota River was created. Today the large riverbed created by the torrent of melt waters is now the Minnesota River Valley within which the present much smaller Minnesota River flows. Large chunks of ice left by the glaciers created the region's wetlands and lakes.

Bedrock Geology

Deep layers of glacial till bury the region's bedrock. The bedrock is most visible in rock outcroppings where the glacial till was eroded away by the Glacial River Warren and years of prairie winds. The different types of exposed bedrock reveal the story of the region's shifting bedrock geology.

In the Redwood Falls area, Morton Gneiss outcroppings are extensive. Morton Gneiss or Rainbow Granite is considered one of the oldest rocks at 3,600 million years old (Ojakansas and Matsch). Morton has an active mine of this famous architectural stone that is operated by the Cold Spring Granite Company. Local rock offers an opportunity to use it in interpretive elements.

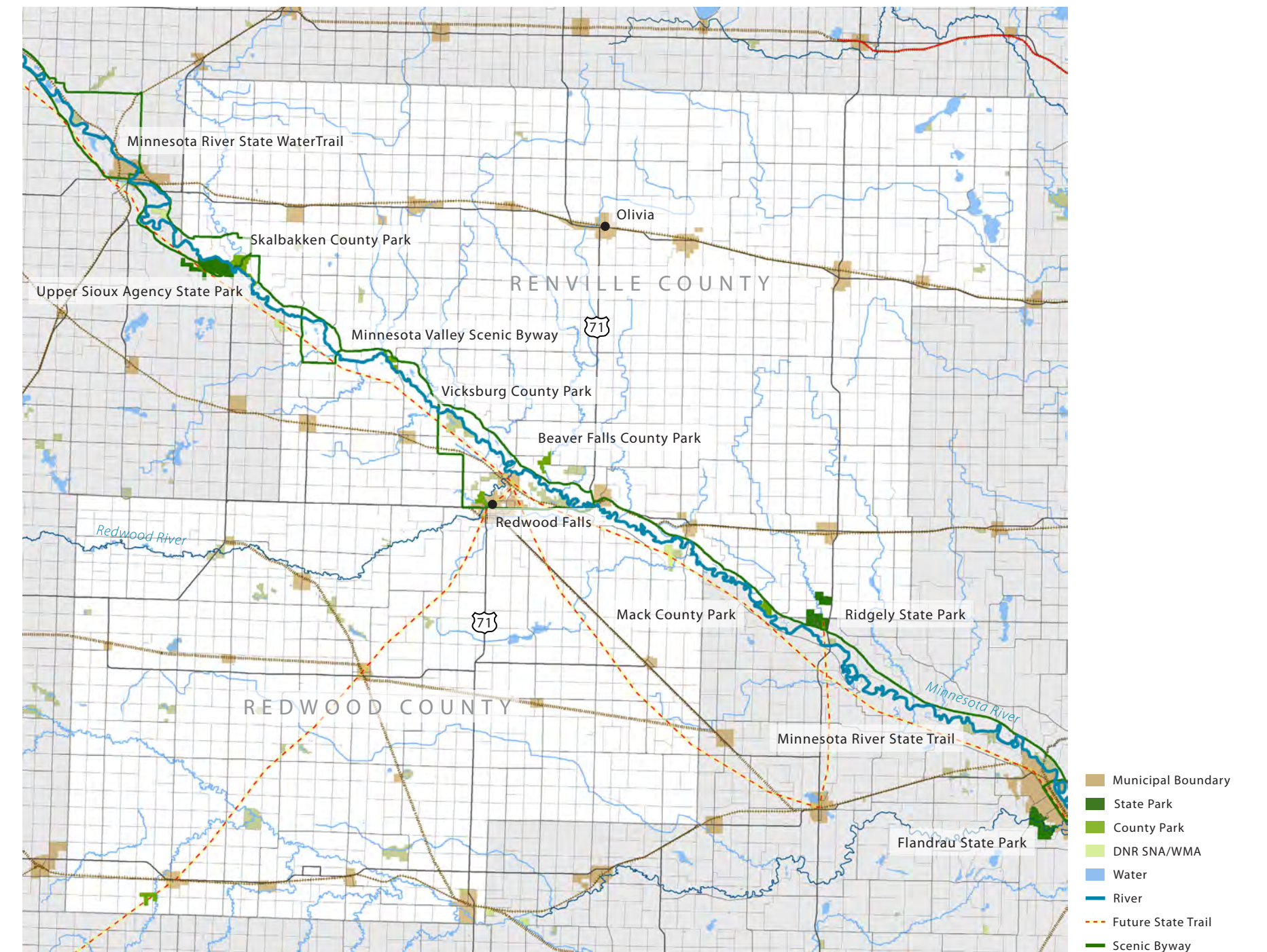


Adapted from *Minnesota's Geology*

The Beaver Falls County Park Strategy

The Beaver Falls Park Strategy: Attracting Outdoor Enthusiasts to the Minnesota River Valley. The Beaver Falls County Park enhancement project is part of a citizen-non-profit-local government-led regional partnership that is using a "community economic advantage" model to make the "Tatanka Bluffs Corridor," a competitive regional outdoor recreation destination that interprets and celebrates its unique ecological, cultural, and historical assets while providing opportunities for camping, ATV riding, hiking, biking, horse trail riding, canoeing, snowmobiling, birding, fishing, and hunting. Stretching along the Minnesota River from the Upper Sioux Agency State Park in Yellow Medicine County to the Fort Ridgely State Park in Nicollet County, the width of the corridor includes all of Redwood and Renville Counties and their 26 communities. Although the park is not located on the Minnesota River as are most of the other Renville County parks, scenic Beaver Creek forms the park's spine as it flows through it to the Minnesota River just a short distance beyond its borders.

THE BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK STRATEGY ATTRACTING OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS TO THE MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY



Beaver Falls County Park

Beaver Falls is a 302-acre county park south of Danube and Olivia and just north of the Minnesota River. The scenic Beaver Creek gently tumbles its way south to the Minnesota River through a rock-filled streambed and is joined by the much smaller Rock Creek. A hardwood forest, scenic views, picturesque ravines, walking and horse trails, and historic ruins characterize the park. County Road 2 bisects the park into a northern section that has number of facilities including a horse camp and a southern section that accommodates rustic camping along Beaver Creek. The county recently has been awarded a Parks and Trails Legacy grant from the State of Minnesota to expand and enhance the park.

Currently the park is not connected to any trails. The county trail system does not go directly to the park, but the future Minnesota River State Trail is to provide access to the Park. It will enter Beaver Creek from the east and the west on an alignment parallel to County Road 2. The county trail goes south from Danube along County Road 1 and south from Olivia along Highway 71 to meet the future state trail at County Road 2.

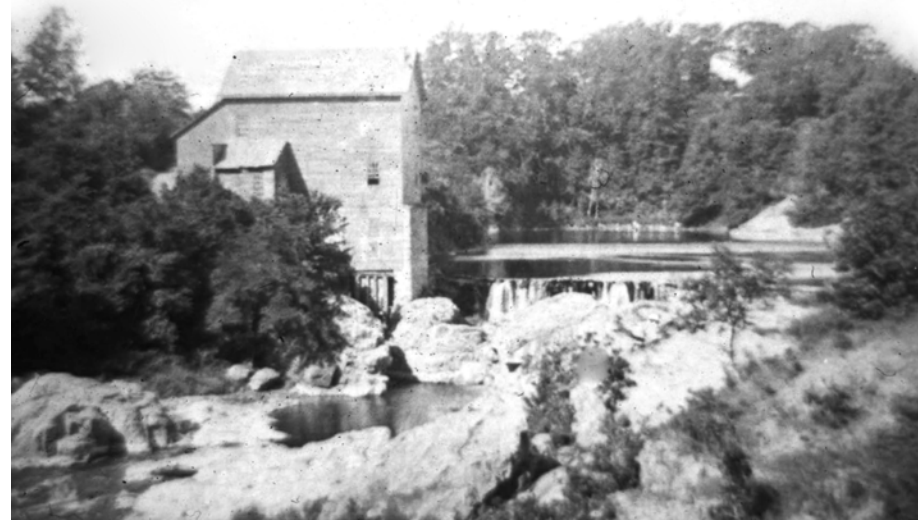
Background

Beaver Falls County Park is located near the former city of Beaver Falls which was once the Renville County seat with a flour mill, hotel, blacksmith shop, merchandise store, bank, school, saloon, implement and hardware store, lumber sawmill, and brewery. After the county seat was moved to Olivia, the town was abandoned. Today Beaver Falls has a few residents, a cemetery, and a county park.

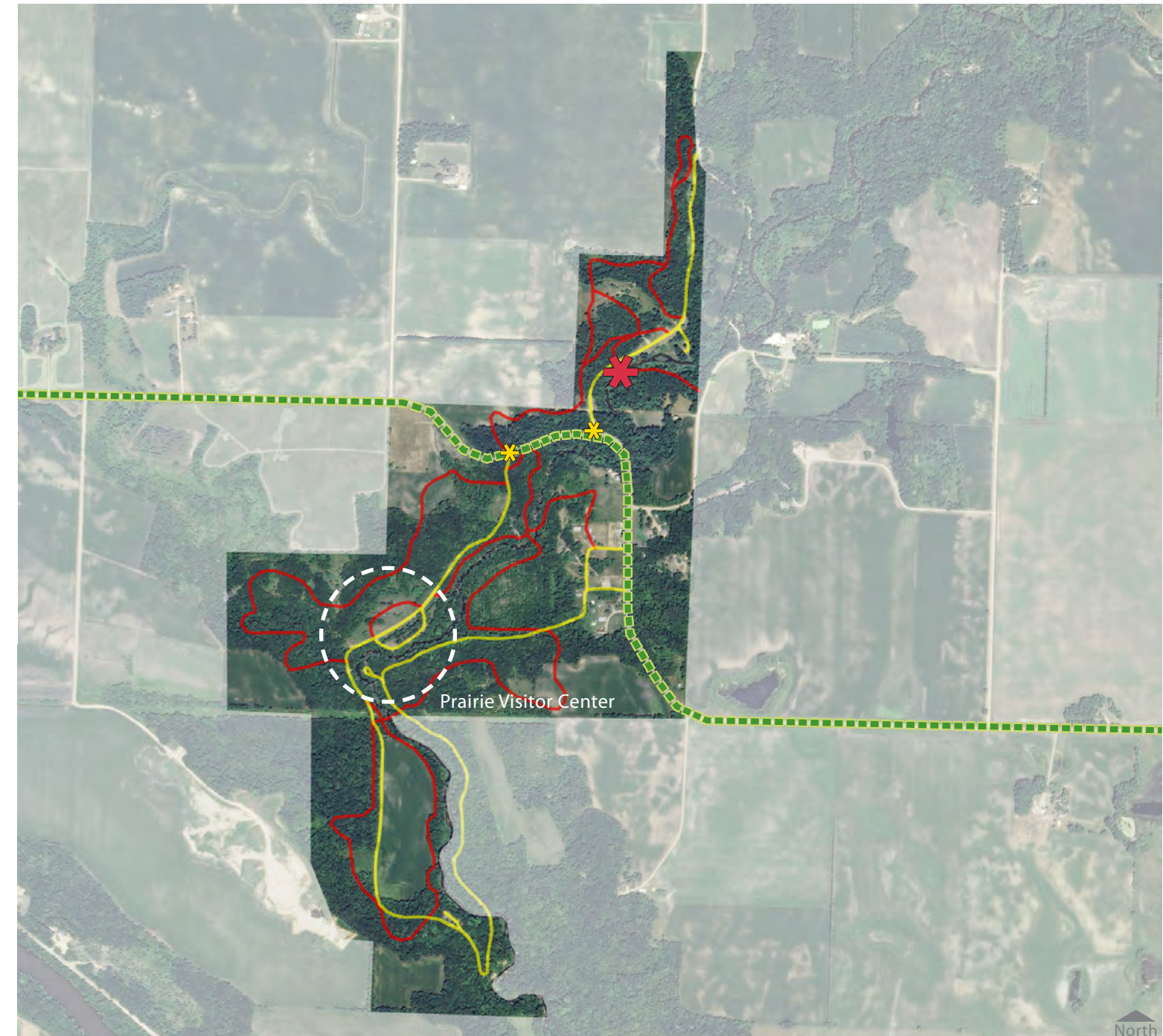
Source: Mark A. Erickson, Renville County Parks



Beaver Falls Village Historic Photo Source: Mark A. Erickson, Renville County Parks



Beaver Mills Historic Photo Source: Mark A. Erickson, Renville County Parks



- Future State Trail
- Park Entrance
- Park Trails
- Park Roads
- Proposed Trailhead

The Southern Section of Beaver Falls County Park

Design

This work enhances the southern section of the park transforming it into a prairie visitor center and improving the park's camping opportunities.

Prairie Visitor Center

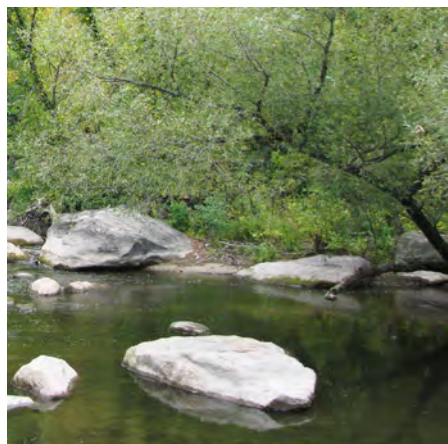
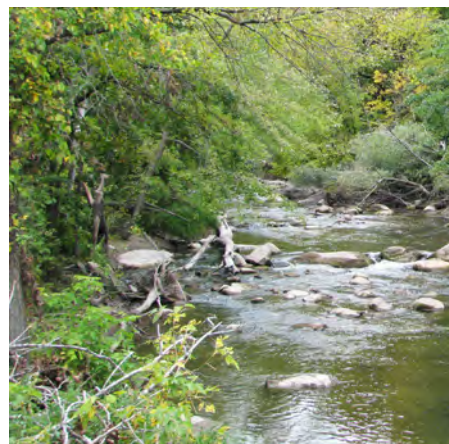
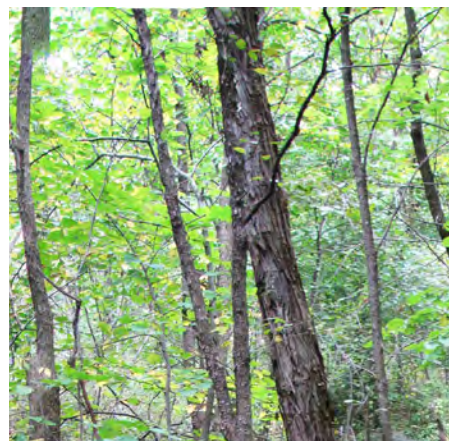
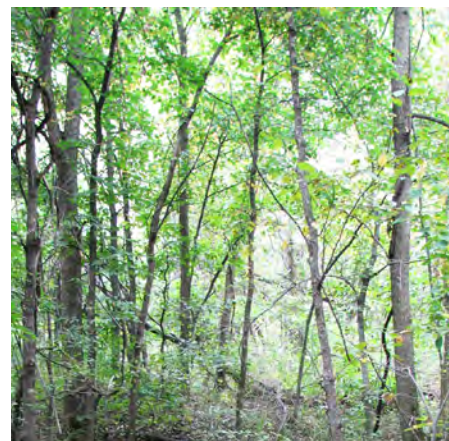
The center's features include the following:

- A restored prairie meadow with interpretive signs describing the native plants, the prairie restoration process, and native plants' benefits to wildlife;
- A new picnic shelter;
- Two benches providing views to the restored prairie landscape;
- A new outhouse;
- A new parking area of five regular parking spaces and one for people with handicaps paved with local granite gravel;
- A trail loop around the restored prairie meadow connecting it to the new parking area and new picnic shelter;
- A Rock Creek Trail connecting the Prairie Trail to Rock Creek;
- A children's boulder landscape play area by Rock Creek;
- Colorful native bush honeysuckle shrubs by the picnic shelter complement the restored prairie landscape;
- Colorful native bush honeysuckle shrubs and Indian grasses set off the Prairie Center sign; and
- A council ring of large local boulders provides a place for an outdoor classroom and group conversations.

Beaver Creek Camping Site

The camping site's features include:

- Six campsites with an accessible picnic table and a fire ring are separated by vegetation for privacy,
- Two benches provide views to Beaver Creek, The parking road's southern loop is converted into a trail along Beaver Creek that connects to the Prairie Trail, and
- A footbridge over the Beaver Creek creates access to the existing campsites on its southern bank.



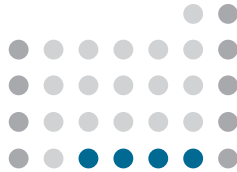
Beaver Creek

Rock Creek

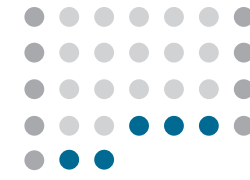




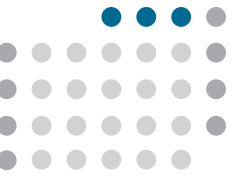
JUNE	WORK TASKS
20	CCM crew on site. Kick-off Meeting. Project introduction and overview. On-site demonstration and project walk-through. Short pre-project survey. Construction begins at Beaver Falls County Park, Renville County. Construction of the parking lot near the shelter. Start of trail edge preparation, trench digging.
21	Continue the work on trail edging and the parking area. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trails: crowned gravel 4" surface.
22	Continue the work on trail edging and the parking area. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trails: crowned gravel 4" surface. Begin work on Prairie Trail (east section) from the shelter area.
25	Continue the work on trail edging and the parking area. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trails: crowned gravel 4" surface. Continue work on Prairie trail (east section) from the shelter area.



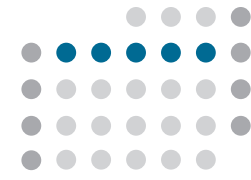
JUNE	WORK TASKS
26	Continue work on trails. Construct two benches in the shelter area. Dig footings for two benches and signs in designated locations. Assemble benches (2) on site. Pour the concrete bench footings and sign footings. Place metal straps in bench & sign footings.
27	Continue work on trails. Stain/paint shelter, toilet, picnic tables and benches (back-up plan in case finished early). Plant shrubs around the shelter area. Add mulch to plantings and water thoroughly.
28	Complete the work on trails. Stain/paint shelter, toilet, picnic tables and benches. Assemble more benches if needed. Project wrap-up and Supper Celebration (4 pm).
29	Last day for CCM crew on site. Finish up tasks.



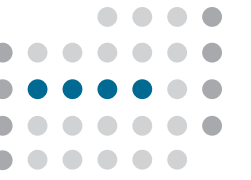
JULY	WORK TASKS
25	CCM crew arrives on site. 10:00 am. Kick-off Meeting. Project introduction and overview. On-site demonstration and project walk-through. Short pre-project survey. Phase II construction begins at Beaver Falls County Park, Renville County. Continue the work started by Phase I. Start of trail edge preparation, trench digging to implement the west section of the Prairie trail.
26	Continue the work on the Prairie trail. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trail: crowned gravel 4" surface.
27	Continue the work on the Prairie trail. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trail: crowned gravel 4" surface. Construct the 20' diameter Council Ring. Place boulders in circular manner for seating. Lay down the crushed granite gravel as a surface for the council ring. Place the fire pit in the middle of the council ring. Place small boulders around the fire pit. 28th - 29th Olivia Corn Capital Days!
30	Continue the work on the Prairie trail. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trail: crowned gravel 4" surface.
31	Continue the work on the Prairie trail and begin work on the Rock Creek trail. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trails: crowned gravel 4" surface.



AUGUST	WORK TASKS
1	Continue work on trails. Construct one bench to be placed along Beaver Creek. Dig footings for the bench in the designated area along Beaver Creek. Assemble one bench on site. Pour the concrete bench footings. Place metal straps in bench footings.
2	Continue the work on Prairie and Rock Creek trails. Stain/paint shelter, toilet, picnic tables and benches (a back-up plan in case finished early). Plant Bush honeysuckle shrubs around the shelter area. Add mulch to plantings and water thoroughly. Lunch/survey (when CCL staff arrive) Short interviews with crew members (while others continue working) Project wrap-up and Supper Celebration (4 p.m.).
3	Complete the work on trails. Last day for CCM crew on site. Finish up tasks.



AUGUST	WORK TASKS
	CCM crew arrives on site. Continue the work started by Phase II.
	Continue the work on the Beaver Creek trail. Start of trail edge preparation, trench digging to implement Beaver Creek trail. Start of trail edge preparation, trench digging to implement Beaver Creek trail. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trail: crowned gravel 4" surface. Finish up the work around the shelter area.
	Continue the work on the Beaver Creek trail. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trail: crowned gravel 4" surface. Finish up the work around the shelter area.
	Continue the work on the Beaver Creek trail. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trail: crowned gravel 4" surface. Seed over the old park road.
	Continue the work on the Beaver Creek trail. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trail: crowned gravel 4" surface. Seed over the old park road.

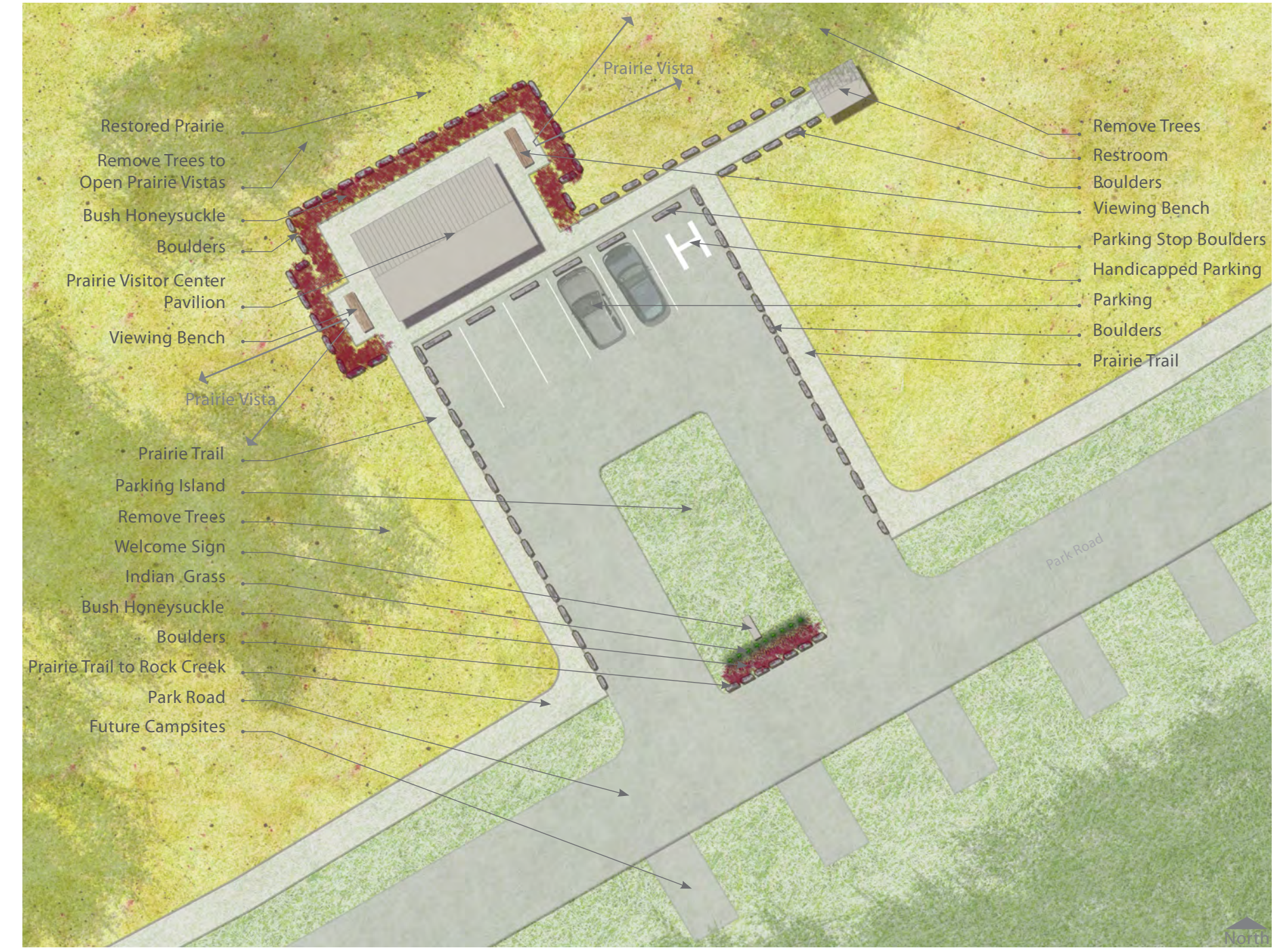


AUGUST	WORK TASKS
	Continue the work on the Beaver Creek trail. Lay down the crushed granite gravel surface on the trail: crowned gravel 4" surface. Construct the rest of the viewing benches along the Beaver Creek. Dig footings for the bench in the designated area along the Beaver Creek. Assemble one bench on site. Pour the concrete bench footings. Place metal straps in bench footings.
	Continue the work on trails. Stain/paint shelter, toilet, picnic tables and benches (a back-up plan in case finished early). Plant Bush honeysuckle shrubs around the shelter area and around the welcome sign area. (If phase II group did not plant). Add mulch to plantings and water thoroughly.
	Continue the work on Beaver Creek trail. Stain/paint shelter, toilet, picnic tables and benches (a back-up plan in case finished early). Plant Indian grass in the welcome sign area. Add mulch to plantings and water thoroughly. Lunch/survey (when CCL staff arrive) Short interviews with crew members (while others continue working) Project wrap-up and Supper Celebration (4 p.m.).
	Complete the work on trails. Last day for CCM crew on site. Finish up tasks.

THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK MASTER PLAN PHASE III



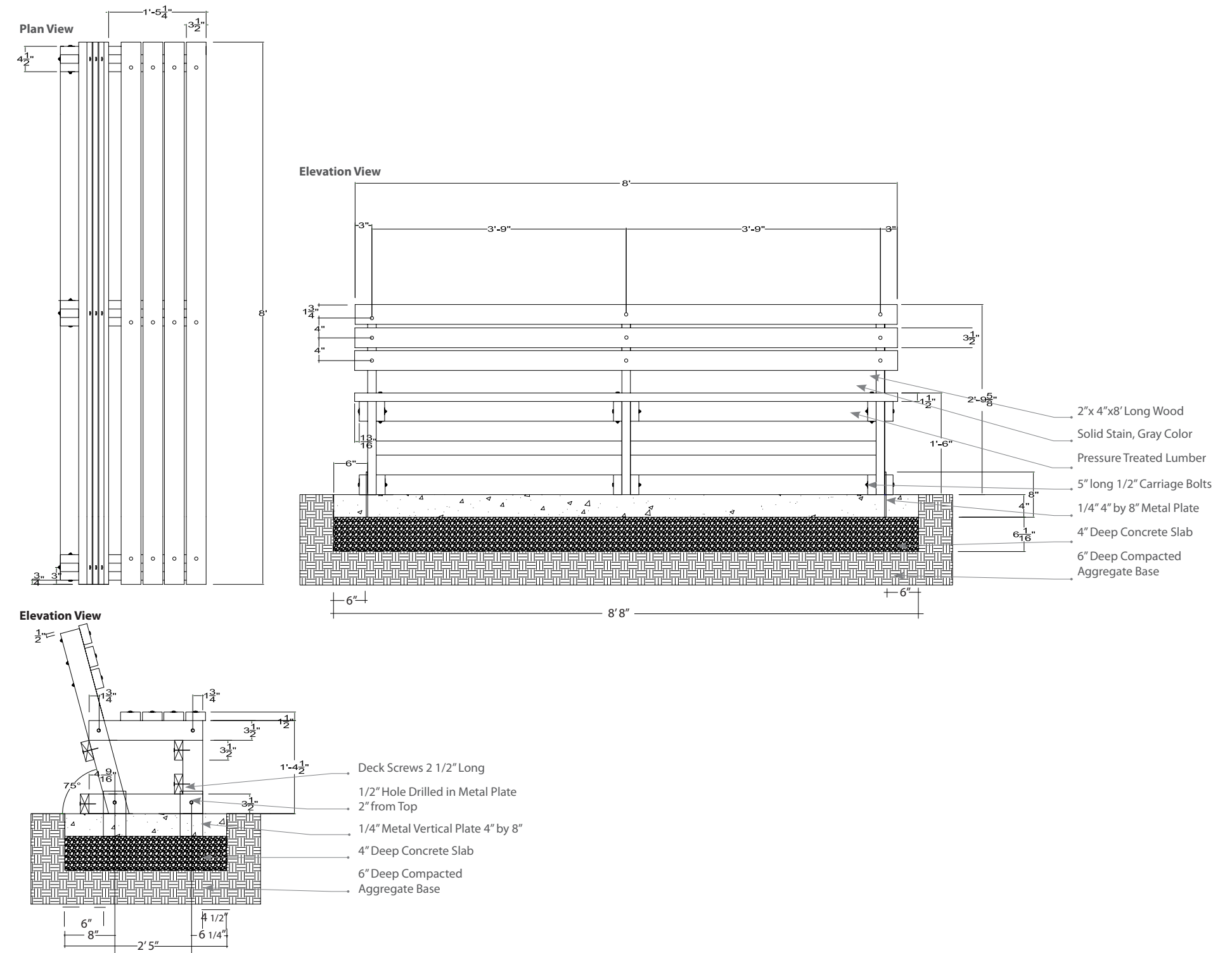
THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK PRAIRIE VISITOR CENTER MASTER PLAN

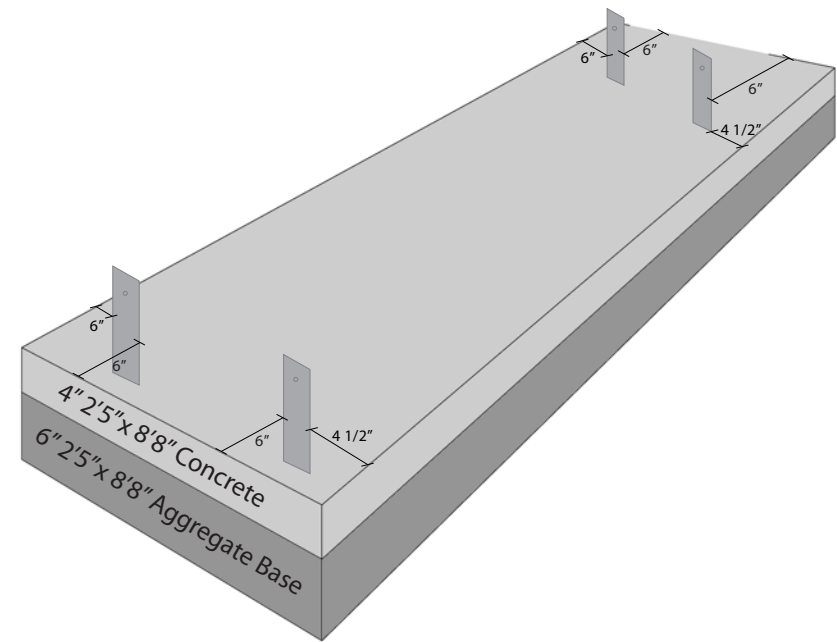


THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK DESIGN ELEMENT: COUNCIL RING



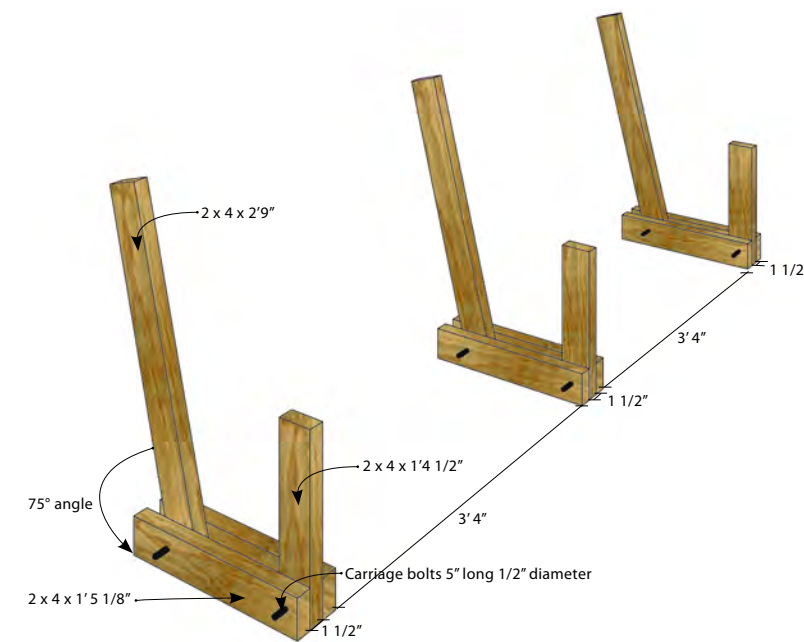
THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK DESIGN ELEMENT: VIEWING BENCH





STEP 1

- Dig out 12" deep 8'8" wide aperture
- Set in the form work for the concrete
- Add 6" of compacted aggregate base
- Pour in 4" of concrete
- Cast in the 4 metal vertical plates at 4 1/2" distance from the front of the concrete edge and 6" away from the concrete edge on the sides and the back
- Wait until the concrete firms



STEP 2

- Place 6 (2 x 4 x 1' 8 1/8") horizontal members
- 1 1/2" Distance between the two members
- 3' 4" Distance between the each pair
- Set in the vertical supports:
 - 3 (2 x 4 x 2'9") at a 75 degree angle
 - place in 3 carriage bolts
 - secure the connections with flat washers and flange nuts
 - 3 (2 x 4 x 1'4 1/2") at a 90 degree angle
 - place in 3 carriage bolts
 - secure the connections with flat washers and flange nuts



STEP 3

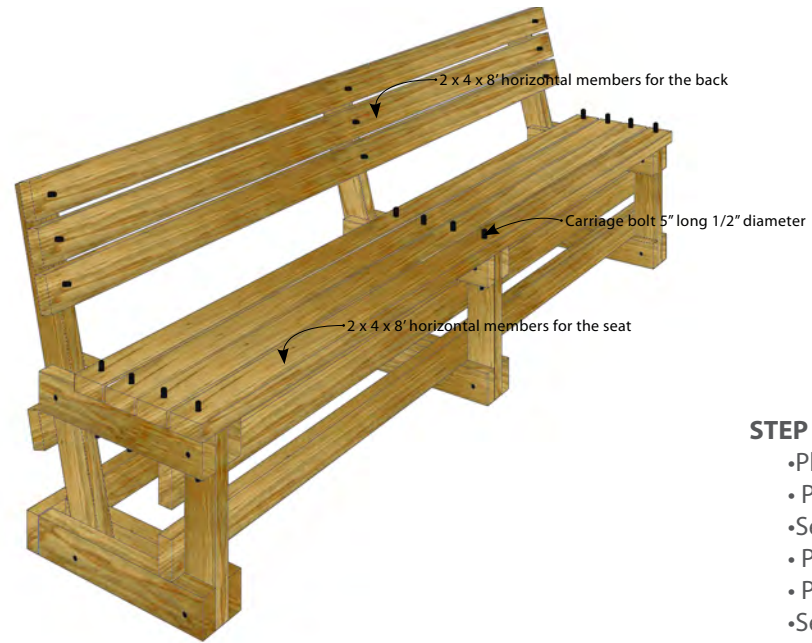
- Set in the 6 (2 x 4 1'8 1/8") lateral bases, horizontal members
- Place in 6 carriage bolts
- Secure the connections with flat washers and flange nuts



STEP 4

- Add 4 (2 x 4 x 8) horizontal wood members
- Secure the connections behind the frame with the 12 (2 1/2" long) deck screws

THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK DESIGN ELEMENT: VIEWING BENCH



STEP 5

- Place in 4 (2 x 4 x 8) horizontal wood members for the seat
- Place in 12 carriage bolts
- Secure the connections with flat washers and flange nuts
- Place in 3 (2 x 4 x 8) horizontal wood members for the back
- Place in 9 carriage bolts
- Secure the connections with flat washers and flange nuts

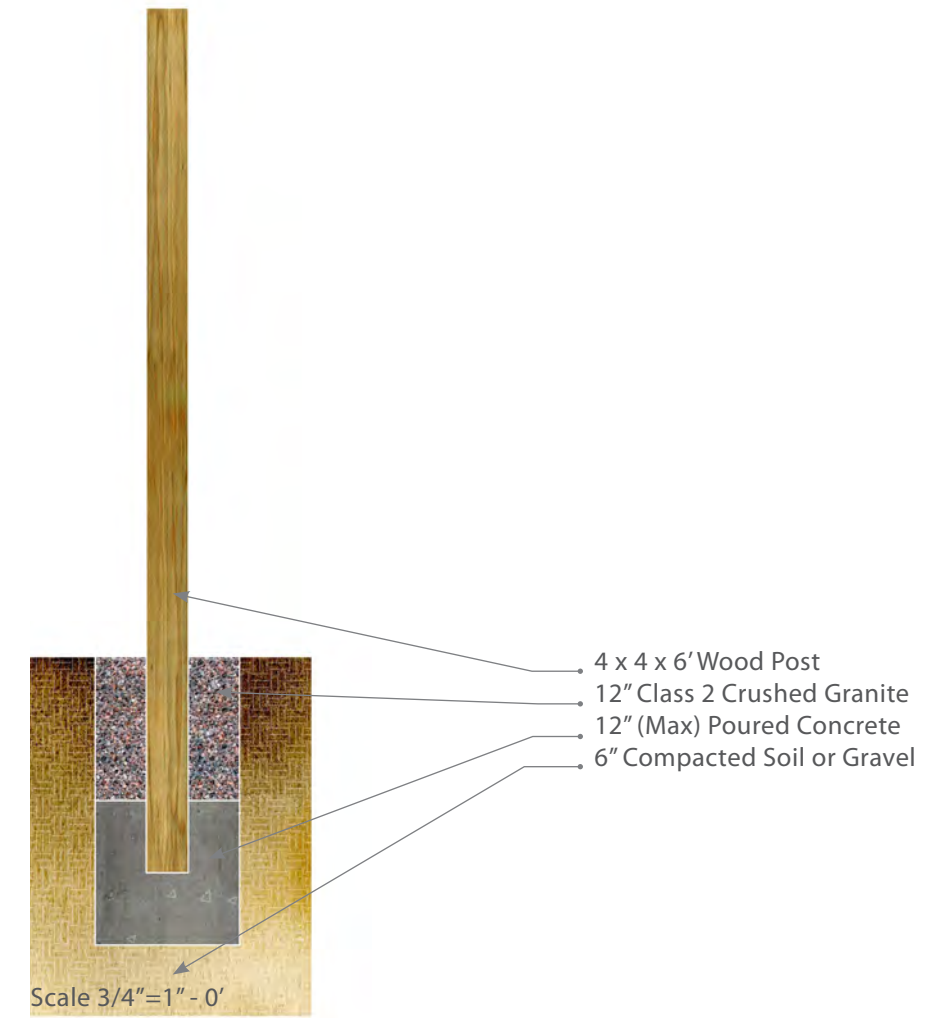


STEP 6

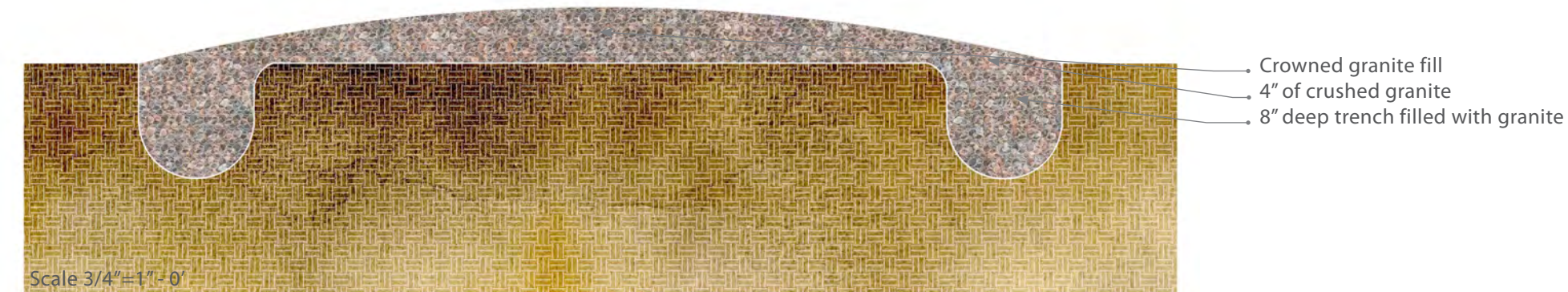
- Set the bench in place on the concrete base
- Secure the connections with 4 metal plates
- Stain the bench with gray color solid stain.

THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK DESIGN ELEMENT: TRAIL

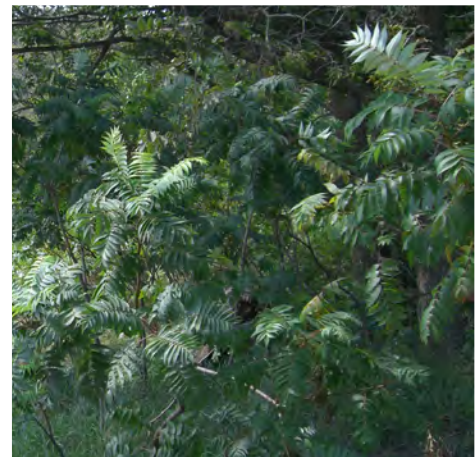
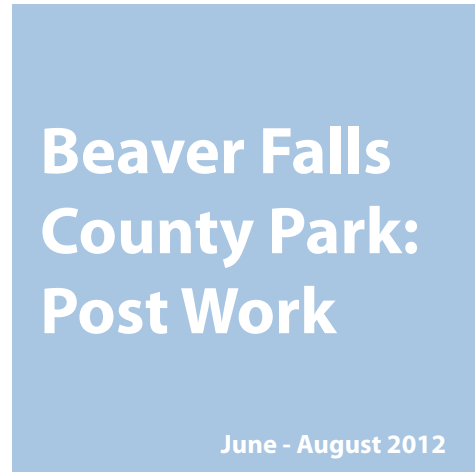
Trail Sign Post, Section View



Trail Trench, Section View



APPENDICES



APPENDIX A: SITE DRAWINGS//
APPENDIX B: WORK TASKS & PROCESS//
APPENDIX C: CCM CREW//
APPENDIX D: PROJECT EVALUATION//

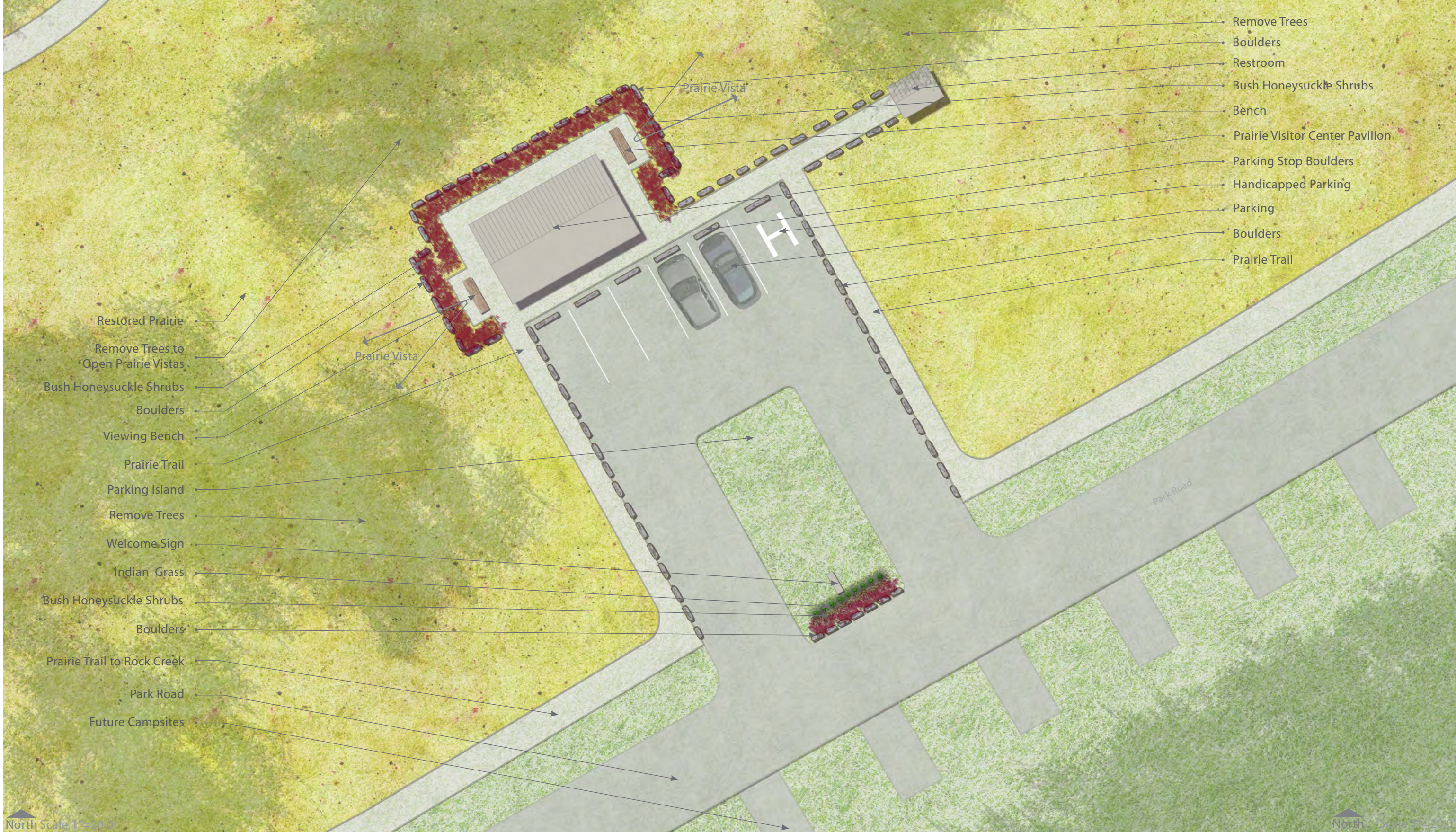
THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK MASTER PLAN



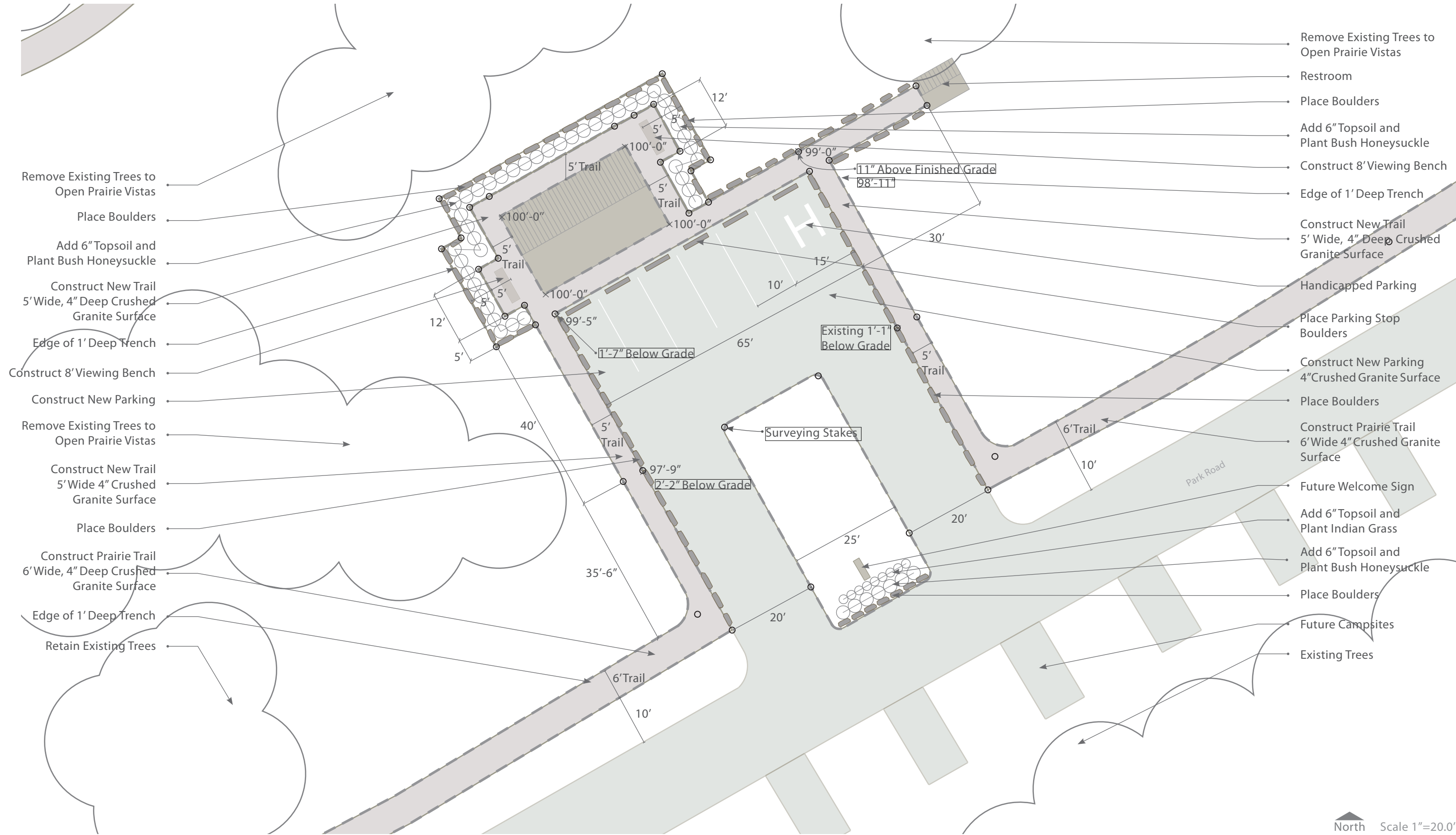
- Existing Trail
- Existing Forest Edge
- Construct Council Ring
- Construct Prairie Trail
- Stake Locations
- Retain Existing Sumac
- Edge of 1' Deep Trench
- Remove Existing Trees to Open Prairie Vistas
- Place Boulders
- Plant Bush Honeysuckle
- Prairie Welcome Center Shelter
- Construct Trail
- Construct Viewing Bench
- Place Parking Stop Boulders
- Construct Parking Area
- Place Boulders
- Retain Existing Trees
- Restored Prairie

- Remove Existing Trees
- Existing Vegetation
- Restroom
- Construct Viewing Bench
- Seed over Existing Road
- Parking Island
- Future Welcome Sign
- Plant Indian Grass
- Plant Bush Honeysuckle
- Future Campsites
- Edge of 1' Deep Trench
- Stake Locations
- Construct Beaver Creek Trail
- Construct Viewing Benches
- Existing Restroom
- Existing Fire Pit
- Existing Picnic Table
- Forest Edge

THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK PRAIRIE VISITOR CENTER MASTER PLAN



THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK PRAIRIE VISITOR CENTER CONSTRUCTION & WORK TASKS PLAN

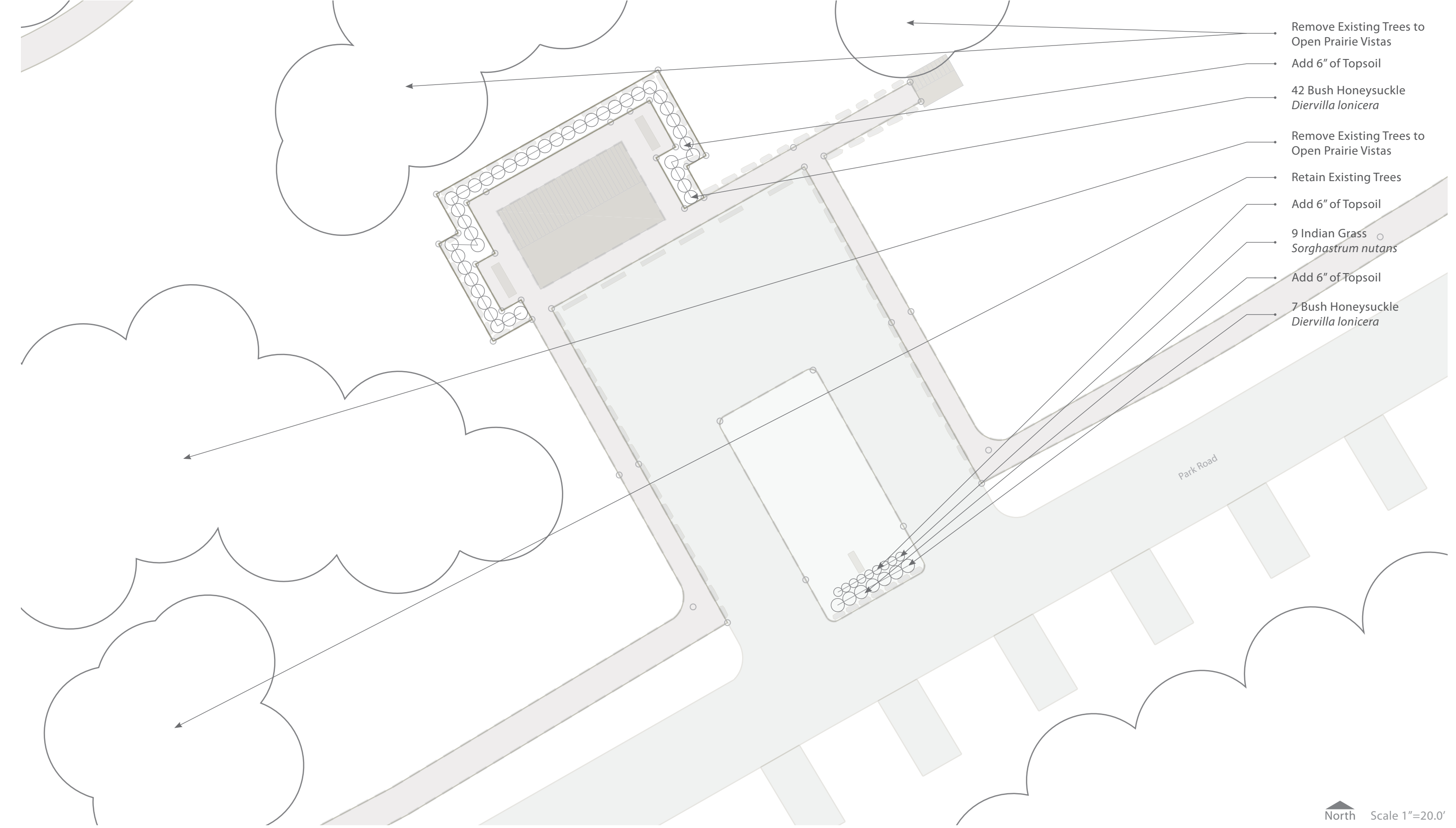


- Remove Existing Trees to Open Prairie Vistas
- Place Boulders
- Add 6" Topsoil and Plant Bush Honeysuckle
- Construct New Trail 5' Wide, 4" Deep Crushed Granite Surface
- Edge of 1' Deep Trench
- Construct 8' Viewing Bench
- Construct New Parking
- Remove Existing Trees to Open Prairie Vistas
- Construct New Trail 5' Wide 4" Crushed Granite Surface
- Place Boulders
- Construct Prairie Trail 6' Wide, 4" Deep Crushed Granite Surface
- Edge of 1' Deep Trench
- Retain Existing Trees

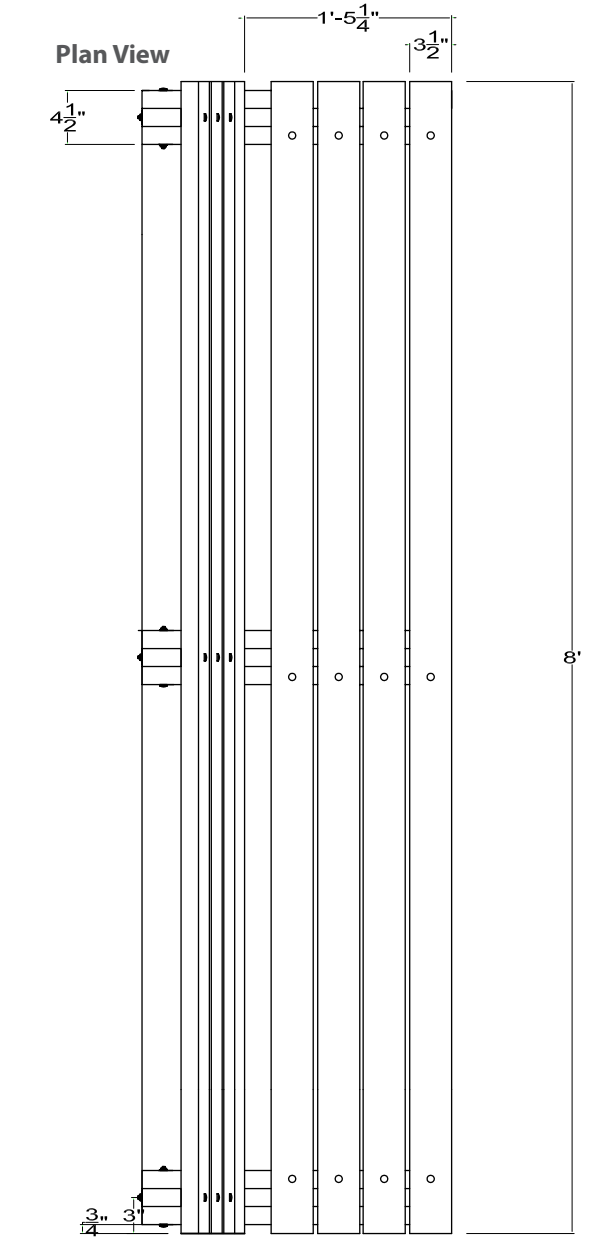
- Remove Existing Trees to Open Prairie Vistas
- Restroom
- Place Boulders
- Add 6" Topsoil and Plant Bush Honeysuckle
- Construct 8' Viewing Bench
- Edge of 1' Deep Trench
- Construct New Trail 5' Wide, 4" Deep Crushed Granite Surface
- Handicapped Parking
- Place Parking Stop Boulders
- Construct New Parking 4" Crushed Granite Surface
- Place Boulders
- Construct Prairie Trail 6' Wide 4" Crushed Granite Surface
- Future Welcome Sign
- Add 6" Topsoil and Plant Indian Grass
- Add 6" Topsoil and Plant Bush Honeysuckle
- Place Boulders
- Future Campsites
- Existing Trees

North Scale 1"=20.0'

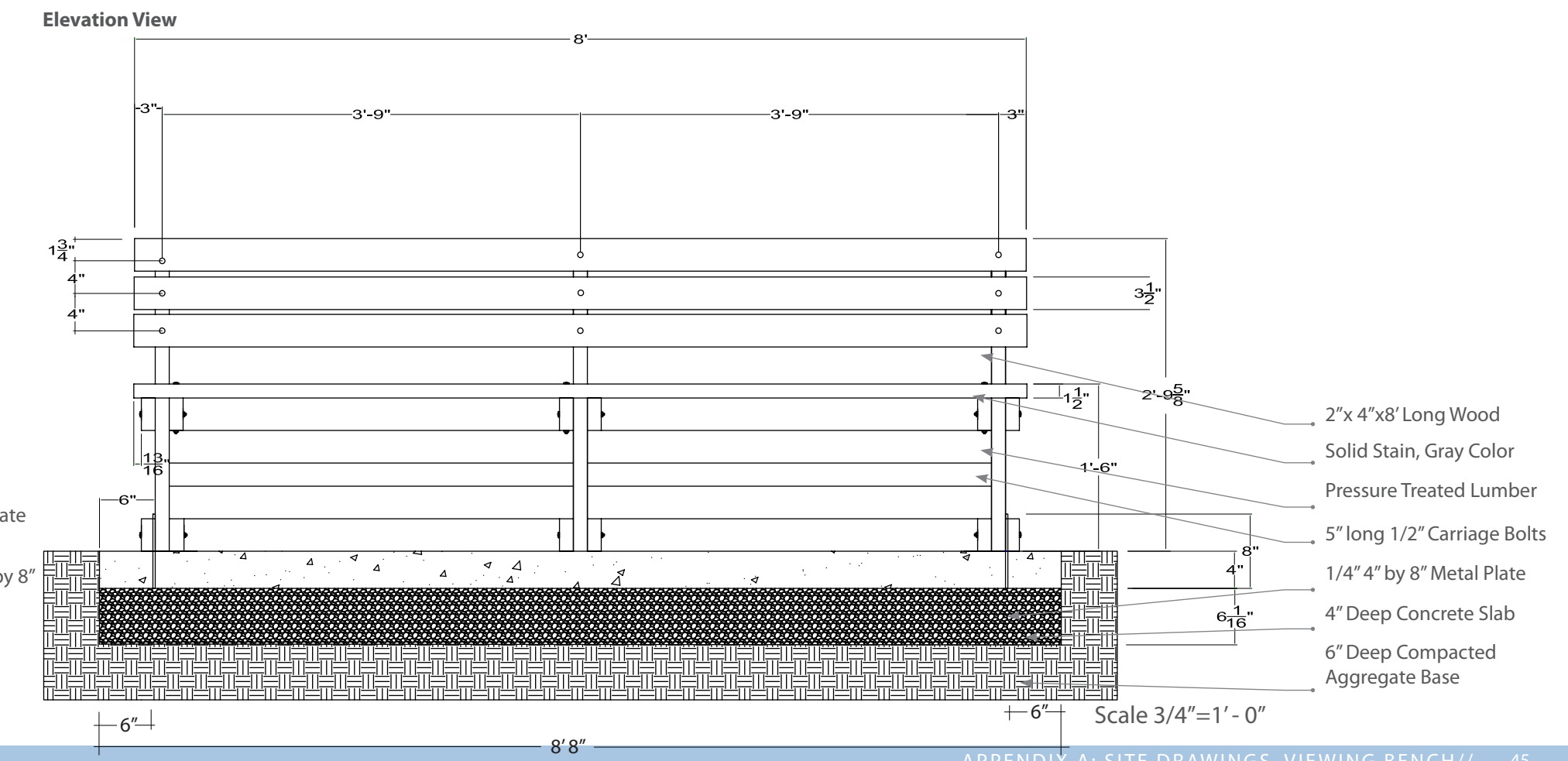
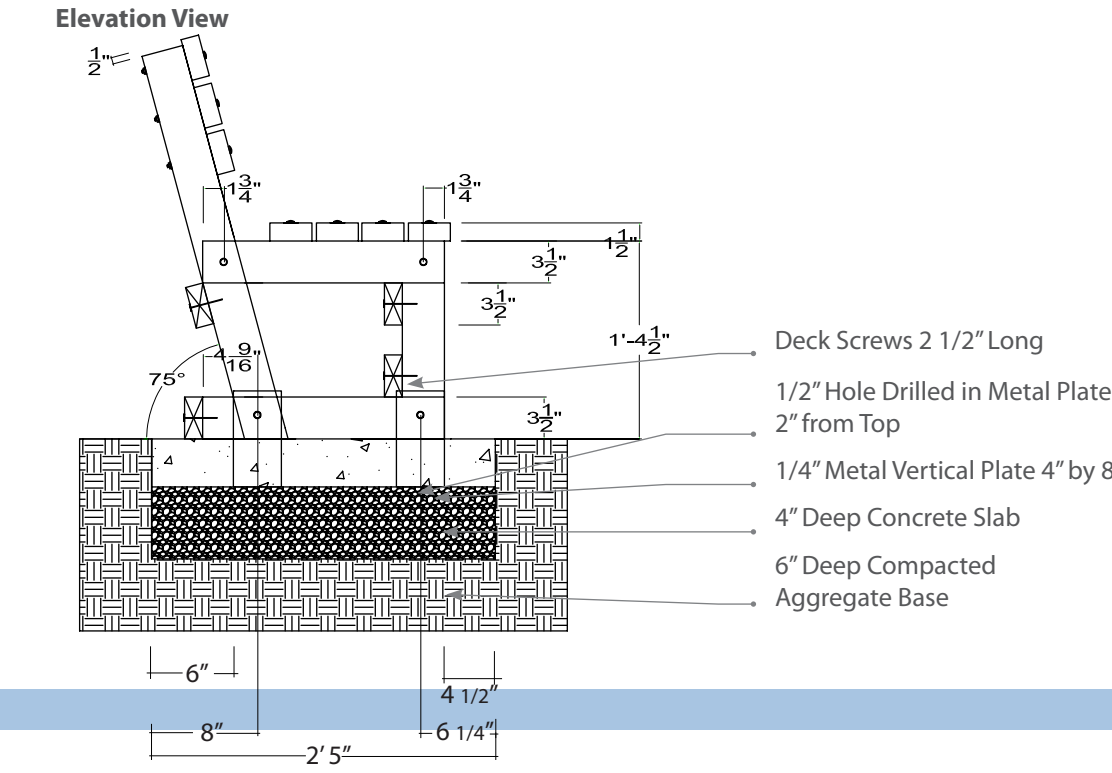
THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK PRAIRIE VISITOR CENTER PLANTING PLAN



THE SOUTHERN SECTION OF BEAVER FALLS COUNTY PARK DESIGN ELEMENT: VIEWING BENCH



- 8' Foot Bench with Back**
- Pressure treated lumber
 - (11) 2"x 4"x 8' Horizontal studs
 - (3) 2"x 4"x 3' Vertical support pieces
 - (18) Carriage Bolts 5" long and 1/2" diameter, flat washer and flange nuts
 - 12 Deck screws 2 1/2" long
 - 4 1/4" metal vertical plate 4" by 8" or 4 pier caps with anchors to hold the wood in place
- 2 x 4 x 8' Wood Needed per Bench**
- 15 full pieces
Includes 2 extra per bench
- Other Supplies**
- Gray color solid stain
 - Drill
 - Cement
 - Bucket or water hose



- Deck Screws 2 1/2" Long
- 1/2" Hole Drilled in Metal Plate 2" from Top
- 1/4" Metal Vertical Plate 4" by 8"
- 4" Deep Concrete Slab
- 6" Deep Compacted Aggregate Base
- 2"x 4"x 8' Long Wood
- Solid Stain, Gray Color
- Pressure Treated Lumber
- 5" long 1/2" Carriage Bolts
- 1/4" 4" by 8" Metal Plate
- 4" Deep Concrete Slab
- 6" Deep Compacted Aggregate Base

WORK TASKS & PROCESS

Work Tasks for CCM:

- Place (if missing) the surveying stakes according to the drawing,
- Construct the parking area near shelter,
- Construct and stain the picnic tables,
- Erect walking trail signage,
- Stain shelter and toilets,
- Plant around the shelter,
- Plant shrubs around the shelter,
- Plant shrubs and grasses in the welcome sign area,
- Place crushed granite surface on the designated trails, and
- Trail Tasks include:
 - Pruning should be done sensitively, so that the trail appears natural, prune to the collar of any branch for the health of the shrub and a more natural looking result,
 - Remove seedlings from the designated trail corridor,
 - Remove roots and stumps in the trail to clear a zone that is parallel with the tread, if roots are perpendicular to the tread and not a tripping hazard, leave them, and
 - Remove rocks if necessary in the trail clearing area.

Building Crushed Granite Gravel Trails:

- Mark the centerline of the trail with surveyor's stakes,
- Dig out the path to the depth of 4",
- Dig a 12" deep trench along the edges of the 7' trail,
- Fill the path and the trench with gravel, and
- Compact the stone base with shovels.

Planting Shrubs:

- Place each potted shrub on the ground in the desired location,
- The shrubs should be spaced at 3 foot on center intervals (measure the distances between the centers of the plants with a tape measure),
- To achieve the optimal growth dig out a large hole and make sure that the back soil is well worked,
- Use a shovel to dig a hole that is three times as wide as the roots of the potted plant,
- Till the soil deeply before planting, add compost to increase the organic matter,
- The hole has to be shallow enough that the entire trunk of the shrub will sit above the top of the soil,
- Remove the potted shrub from the pot and insert into the hole,
- Fill in the hole with soil until all of the roots are covered and the shrub stands upright,
- Water each shrub with 1 to 2 inches of water,
- Place a 1 to 2 inch layer of mulch (organic material) around the base of each shrub to help retain moisture and prevent weed and grass growth around the shrub, and to provide an even moisture level and insulation for the roots from winter cold and summer heat.
- In compacted clay soils partially fill a large planting hole with loose backfill soil for proper plant establishment, and
- Water plants carefully few times a week after installment.

Planting Grasses:

- Place each potted grass on the ground in the desired location,
- The grasses should be spaced at 2 foot intervals (measure the distances between the center of the plants with a tape measure),
- Use a shovel to dig a hole that is two times as wide as the roots of the potted plant,
- Till the soil deeply before planting, add compost to increase the nutrient matter,
- Carefully remove the potted plant from the pot and insert into the hole, and
- Squeeze the container to loosen the compacted rootball inside.



Erinn Moriarty (Crew Leader)



Keith Doane (Crew Leader)



Omar Uruga (Youth Leader)



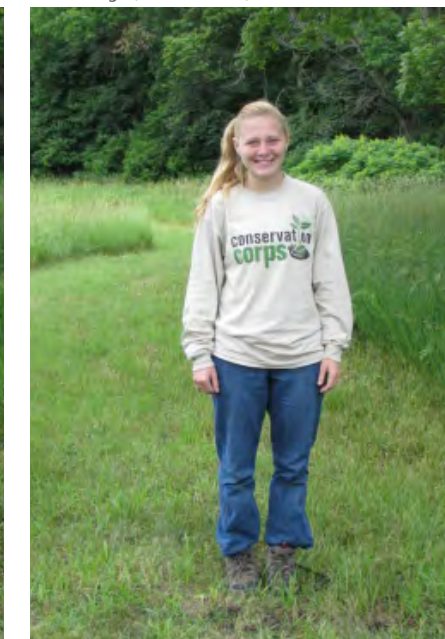
Lauren Allin



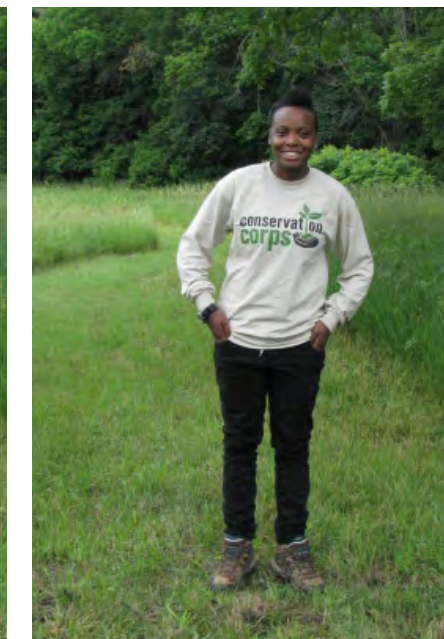
Burhan Esse



Dylan Menne



Jasmine Rademacher



Mo Taylor

CONSERVATION CORPS MINNESOTA CREW PHASE I



CCM Crew at Beaver Falls County Park, June 20th, 2012

CONSERVATION CORPS MINNESOTA CREW PHASE II



Corinne Murillo (Crew Leader)



Mark Reber (Crew Leader)



Patrick Stupca (Youth Leader)



Hamila Al-Kamooneh



Angelique Cason



Ed Eubanks



Austin Mueller



May Yang

CONSERVATION CORPS MINNESOTA CREW PHASE II



CCM Crew at Beaver Falls County Park, July 25th, 2012

CONSERVATION CORPS MINNESOTA CREW PHASE III



Anna Jefferson (Crew Leader)



Janine Schug (Crew Leader)



Sam Holmstrom (Youth Leader)



Jacob Hickey



Andie Jurcoi



Kee Lee



Joy Miarmat



Colton Thelen



CCM Crew at Beaver Falls County Park, August 7th, 2012

PROJECT EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT EVALUATION// 3

THE PARTNERS & THE PARTNERSHIP// 5

DESIGN & PLANNING// 8

IMPLEMENTATION & CONSTRUCTION// 10

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & IMPACT// 15

CONCLUDING REMARKS// 17

CCM SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES// 19

PROJECT EVALUATION INTRODUCTION

This evaluation of the Minnesota River Valley Partners Project was conducted and authored by Elissa Brown, Research Assistant, University of Minnesota.

This project was supported by the Community Assistantship Program (CAP). CAP is a cross-college, cross-campus University of Minnesota initiative coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). Funds for CAP were generously provided by the McKnight Foundation and the Blandin Foundation.

This is a publication of CURA, which connects the resources of the University of Minnesota with the interests and needs of urban communities and the region for the benefit of all. CURA pursues its urban and regional mission by facilitating and supporting connections between state and local governments, neighborhoods, and nonprofit organizations, and relevant resources at the University, including faculty and students from appropriate campuses, colleges, centers or departments. The content of this report is the responsibility of the author and is not necessarily endorsed by CAP, CURA or the University of Minnesota.

© 2012 by The Regents of the University of Minnesota.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA. Any reproduction, distribution, or derivative use of this work under this license must be accompanied by the following attribution: "© The Regents of the University of Minnesota. Reproduced with permission of the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)." Any derivative use must also be licensed under the same terms. For permissions beyond the scope of this license, contact the CURA editor.

This publication may be available in alternate formats upon request.

Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)
University of Minnesota
330 HHH Center
301 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
Phone: (612) 625-1551
Fax: (612) 626-0273
cura@umn.edu
<http://www.cura.umn.edu>

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

INTRODUCTION

This evaluation of the Minnesota River Valley Partners Project was requested by the project's partner organizations as a way to assess their approach as they conclude their second year together. The intention of the evaluation was to discover what is effective in this project, what needs improvement, and what recommendations can be proposed to strengthen it for the future.

All information included in this report was obtained through interviews, surveys, and observation on site at Beaver Falls County Park during the summer of 2012. The following representatives from each of the Minnesota River Valley Partners Project partner organizations should be recognized for their cooperation in providing their unique perspectives on this project:

Mary Vogel and Egle Vanagaite
Center for Changing Landscapes

Eric Antonson, Austin Andrews, and Jonathan Goldenberg
Conservation Corps Minnesota

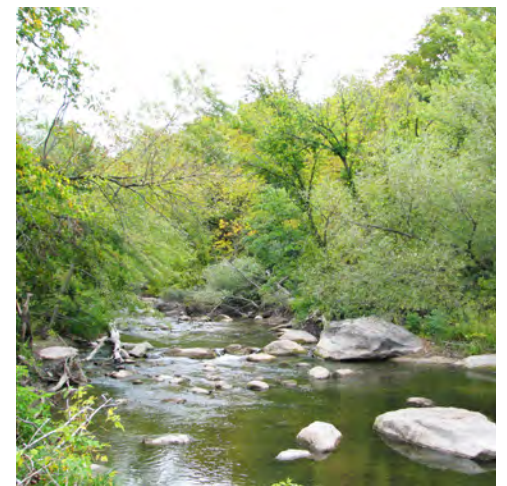
Mark Erickson, Andy Lang, and Bob Knutson
Renville County Parks

Loran Kaardal and Julie Rath
Tatanka Bluffs Corridor

Conservation Corps Minnesota crew members were interviewed on their first and last days of work at Beaver Falls, and they also completed surveys at the end of their project experience. A visual summary of the survey questions asked and the responses given can be found at the end of this report. CCM crew members included:

Erinn Moriarty	Corinne Murillo	Anna Jefferson
Keith Doane	Mark Reber	Janine Schug
Omar Uraga	Patrick Stupca	Sam Holmstrom
Lauren Allin	Hamila Al-Kamooneh	Jacob Hickey
Burhan Esse	Ed Eubanks	Andie Jurcoi
Dylan Menn	Austin Mueller	Kee Lee
Mo Taylor	May Yang	Joy Miarmat
		Colton Thelen

All information, opinions, and recommendations contained in this evaluation came directly out of interactions between the researcher and the individuals listed above. All participants in this project should be recognized for their insightful contributions and commitment to moving this project forward.



THE PARTNERS & THE PARTNERSHIP

On the surface, this project could simply be about improving parks in the Minnesota River Valley. Last year it was Skalbakken's turn, and this year it was Beaver Falls. But the implications go much, much deeper. The Minnesota River Valley Partners Project ties together a visionary approach to regional economic development with recreational opportunity, environmental stewardship, youth mentorship, community outreach, and more. Organizations from across the state of Minnesota have come together to further the mission of each in a way that would not be possible without all working together in collaboration. So far, they have been extremely successful, and there is great potential as this partnership continues into the future.

The Partner Organizations and their Missions

Tatanka Bluffs Corridor aims to create a vibrant, prosperous corridor stretching along the Minnesota River and across Redwood and Renville Counties that teems with economic, cultural, and recreational opportunities because citizens repeatedly join hands to strengthen and share its unique assets. Tatanka Bluffs was founded when local leaders made the choice to pursue economic development in the region and came up with the grand vision through which to make it happen.

Renville County Parks aims to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, while protecting the natural resources of Renville County, for the use, enjoyment, and education of present and future generations. They also have a strong stake in providing mentorship opportunities for young adults.

The Center for Changing Landscapes (CCL) is an interdisciplinary research and outreach center through the College of Design and the College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Sciences at the University of Minnesota. CCL aims to protect and enhance the natural and cultural environment of Minnesota through design and science by bringing landscape architecture to rural and urbanizing communities and engaging in work that reflects community aspirations and values.

Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) aims to provide hands-on environmental stewardship and service learning opportunities to youth and young adults, while accomplishing conservation, natural resource management, and emergency response work. Their values include youth and young adult development, engaging in projects that are for the public good and for the benefit of the environment, and leaving a legacy to improve the state of Minnesota for future generations.

Project Roles and Responsibilities

To summarize greatly, Tatanka Bluffs Corridor and Renville County Parks provide the visionary approach, local impetus, and grant development for the project. Their commitment is strong, which is important, as they will be the ones who continue this project's legacy through providing local support and maintenance into the future. CCL develops the design of the park improvements in collaboration with Renville Parks, and also provides supporting materials that are used by Renville Parks and CCM crew members during their time working on site. Renville Parks provides supervision and assistance with construction during the implementation. Tatanka Bluffs provides opportunities for community engagement and mentorship with the CCM crews, organizing educational and social activities in the community at the end of the work day.

The Essentials that Make This Project Work

Each partner organization plays a different role and has specific organizational conditions that should be met in order to pursue their responsibilities successfully. Some are necessary conditions, while some are merely ideal. Financial support is of course critical for all. Others that are especially noteworthy are covered here.

Tatanka Bluffs Corridor is the visionary behind this project, and their grand vision is what brought all the partners together to the Minnesota River Valley. Their commitment and passion drive the project, and must be

maintained into the future. Since they are largely responsible for finding funding for this project, they also need to keep up their grant-writing work to continue bringing in money. The Blandin grant that funded the first two years is now ending, so more grants, including Legacy funding, are being sought to continue this project into the future. Tatanka Bluffs also needs people on board who are able to organize community engagement events, including the educational and social activities and the closing ceremony for each CCM crew. This year there were some extenuating circumstances, and activities were not planned in time for the first CCM crew. Since this is a key component of the project, and was actually required through the Blandin grant, there needs to be a backup plan so that this problem is not encountered again (for more on this, see Community Engagement & Impact, p15). Overall, it is obvious that the members of Tatanka Bluffs that were most directly involved with this project this season –Loran Kaardal and Julie Rath – have strong commitment and passion for it. Perhaps in the future, more members of Tatanka Bluffs could be directly involved.

Renville County Parks has already taken steps to better prepare themselves for the extra responsibilities that come with this project. Since the first year at Skalbakken, Mark Erickson, Renville County's Director of Environment and Community Development, as well as park system manager, has put the Parks Department through major adaptive restructuring, with excellent results. During the Skalbakken implementation, Mark had to be on site every morning and into the day to lead his staff and the CCM crew. Mark came to understand that in order to be successful, he needed the Parks Department to be organized enough to get projects done, and he needed to surround himself with confident, competent people that can work with youth crews. With the restructuring that has taken place, Mark is able to focus on his other responsibilities, and this season he was able to stay away from the site entirely except to celebrate with each CCM crew. Andy Lang has moved into the role of Park Supervisor, and Bob Knutson was available to work with the CCM crew as well. Andy and Bob did extremely well working with the youth and leading the crews this season, and they were skilled enough to confidently improvise design changes as necessary, reducing the need for a burdensome reliance on CCL in day-to-day work (for more on this, see Implementation & Construction, p10). Mark hopes to restructure even a bit more for next year by hiring another part time employee for a

longer portion of the season, which will help relieve some of the pressure that they feel in keeping up with responsibilities outside of this project. It has been extremely helpful that the Renville County board has been so supportive throughout this process; they have not been afraid to try new things, even if it means committing to needing more people and equipment to maintain the revitalized parks into the future.

It goes without saying for all of the partner organizations involved in this project that the stronger each is alone, the easier this project becomes for the others together. This is especially true for the **Center for Changing Landscapes** (CCL), whose job it is to provide thoughtful design and planning to help achieve their partners' goals. For CCL's civically engaged model of design to be truly successful, they need partners that are actually deeply engaged in the project. It helps immensely to have partners that come with a vision they are invested in, that can communicate in the language of design, and that have the skills and resources to carry a project through from design to completion. CCL is lucky to have found such strong partners in the Minnesota River Valley, and even more fortunate that all partners are interested in continuing to improve. There are also a number of other conditions that can help make the design process and implementation more manageable for CCL, including strong communication and commitment, beginning a project with accurate site data, and being able to count on a skillful crew (for more on this, see Design & Planning, p8 and Implementation & Construction, p10). More internally, CCL recognizes the need for a staff that is interested in and dedicated to this type of work. And to be successful, CCL staff must also be skilled in both design and design communication, and must have personal skills that allow them to relate well both to the partners and to the CCM youth throughout the project.

Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM) provides the youth crews that do the implementation work for the project, so first and foremost, they need their project sponsors (in this case, Renville Parks) to be ready with work for the crews when they arrive. The Minnesota River Valley Partners Project goes far above and beyond in this respect than most because of all of the design work and planning that has gone into the project before the summer even begins. During the design process, consideration has to be given to including enough components that CCM crews can build

while adhering to rules that limit the kinds of work they can do. Though crew leaders are trained to lead crews on their own if necessary, it helps immensely if the project sponsor can provide help on those components that are beyond CCM's capabilities, as well day-to-day supervision to keep the project on track (for more on this, see Implementation & Construction, p10). CCM strongly values youth development, and though the youth will gain from doing the work alone, it is also preferable if there is a focus on youth development through educational activities and community mentoring. It is very much appreciated that this project places such an emphasis on that aspect (for more on this, see Community Engagement & Impact, p15). Participating in a project like this, with its design-build aspects and so many partners involved, is new for CCM, so there were some uncertainties at first, and coordinating this project's crews has taken a bit more time and planning on their end. But this evaluation will show that it is worth it for CCM to continue in this direction and pursuing more projects like this one: the extra investment by all partners in the Minnesota River Valley Partners Project has so far has paid off with a richer experience for the CCM youth.

DESIGN & PLANNING

Site Design

During the Blandin grant writing process, Tatanka Bluffs Corridor approached Mark Erickson, Renville County’s Director of Environment and Community Development, in search of specific projects in the Minnesota River Valley. Mark, as the manager of Renville County’s park system, developed the vision and concept for Beaver Falls County Park, along with a sketch for where the trail system was going to weave throughout the site. The Center for Changing Landscapes (CCL) became involved as a partner towards the end of the grant writing process, and they solidified that sketch into the final site drawing that was submitted along with the grant. Once the grant was accepted, Mark and CCL had meetings about expectations and design considerations. Following that period, Mark acknowledges that the design process stalled, as far as pushing the design forward and incorporating new ideas.

CCL took the final site drawing from the grant proposal and focused on creating rendered versions to include in the instructional design booklets given to the CCM crews. While the design booklets were generally very much appreciated, were used by all three crews as a guide for their work, and were worthwhile from an educational standpoint, CCL perhaps placed too much emphasis on their creation at the expense of the actual park design. As of the end of Beaver Falls’s first season under construction, the park’s design did not reach much beyond the original vision and sketch proposed by Mark at the beginning of CCL’s involvement with the project, and it did not include detailed renderings. Many of the decisions concerning specific details were made by Renville Parks Department staff while they were on site supervising the construction being done by CCM crews.

It is hoped that the design for future parks will be more nuanced and less generic, with CCL providing more of their professional insight throughout both the visioning and design processes. This would include putting more effort into the development of the site’s programming and flow, plus taking into greater consideration the site’s layout and topography, the design details for specific elements like seating areas and plantings, and the educational, cultural, and

historic interpretive elements that will give Renville County Parks a distinctive and memorable visitor experience. Any private sector landscape architecture firm would be asked to push the design forward, and any private sector contractor would be required to submit details of all project design elements. CCL should be held to the same standard. (It should be noted that CCL has now begun designing the interpretive elements for Beaver Falls, and there may have been a misunderstanding between CCL and Renville Parks on the timeline of the project. Beaver Falls was the first two-year project undertaken by the partners, so this was a factor that was not experienced or tested last year at Skalbakken.)

From the beginning, an issue that inhibited the design process from CCL’s point of view was the absence of a professional site survey. CCL staff worked from aerial photographs and had to reconcile those inherent inaccuracies and lack of detail with actual site conditions later, when they made a site visit to conduct their own rudimentary survey. Their ability to work out design details back at the office was limited by the lack of budgeting for further site visits before the implementation phase of the project began. Everyone agrees that it has been beyond the project’s budget to hire a professional surveyor. According to Egle Vanagaite at CCL, *“It’s definitely cheaper to do it ourselves, but it puts a burden on us. It’s more labor intensive, very time intensive for us, and far less accurate.”* She went on to say that in agreeing to take on the design of these larger sites, having the budget to hire a surveyor could be a deciding factor. Mark believes it would be possible to work in that added cost to future grant proposals. *“If that’s what is needed, then that cost should be included [in our budget].”*

Planning the Implementation Season

Once the site has been chosen and CCL and Renville Parks have a good idea of the scope of the project and its major components, CCM and Tatanka Bluffs should become involved in the project’s planning. At this point, a rough schedule for the summer can be determined, CCM can begin planning the crew needs for the project, and Tatanka Bluffs can begin coordinating local events and activities. The earlier in the

year this can happen, the better, as the closer it gets to summer the busier each partner organization becomes.

Communication is critical in planning a project with so many components and people involved, and all of the partners agreed that communication could stand to be improved. Last year, when the project centered around Skalbakken Park, communication was more frequent and regular. The partners had monthly conference calls or meetings to keep everyone on the same page as the project led up to the two-week implementation in the summer. Last year, the project was new and untested, and they knew it could only be pulled off with strong communication. This year, as everyone was more comfortable after last year’s success, communication became less of a focus. There was not a single meeting or conference call leading up to the implementation at Beaver Falls that included all of the partners. And there were a few consequences: dates were confused, and Tatanka Bluffs was unprepared to lead community activities for the first CCM crew. Just as strong communication was integral to the success at Skalbakken as this project began, it was necessary this year at Beaver Falls, and it will be important to continue as the project progresses into future years.

Suggestions for Future Consideration:

- Involve CCL earlier in the visioning and design process. Earlier collaboration could help to better balance everyone’s stake and participation in the project’s design development.
- Create a contract between Renville Parks and CCL that specifies the project’s design deliverables. This list could include the development of the park’s vision and concept, a site master plan, detailed planting and construction documents for specific areas and interpretive elements, rendered versions of the above, a materials list and schedule, as well as standards as to just how detailed the plans and renderings should be, and who is responsible for designing any changes that become necessary during construction. With a contract, an agreement can be reached at the beginning so that the goals, expectations, and timeline are,

without a doubt, understood by all involved.

- Develop a communication schedule to be sure to keep in touch during the design process. Decide on the minimum number of in-person meetings you think you will need to agree upon and finalize the content of the design deliverables. Communication is key in any situation that involves one party creating something to meet the needs and wishes of another.
- Consider adding a site survey to the project’s budget request. A surveyor will cost more, but can also provide more detailed, accurate information about the site that CCL can use to push their design forward, and make construction more seamless. A site survey could also become an educational (as well as money-saving) opportunity if you can find a student surveyor who is interested in participating in this project.
- Agree upon a communication schedule for the months leading up to project implementation. As the design plans begin to take shape early in the year it may be less important for CCM and Tatanka Bluffs to be directly involved, but as the summer approaches all partners need to be in communication. Going back to the strategy for Skalbakken, perhaps plan on communication happening at least once a month, either by in-person meeting, conference call, or email conversation.

IMPLEMENTATION & CONSTRUCTION

This Project is Different

The Minnesota River Valley Partners Project is the only design-build project that CCM currently participates in, and it is also unique in the way that each phase is part of constructing a larger regional vision for the future. A lot of time and thought is put in by so many people before the implementation can even begin, and it definitely makes a difference for the CCM crews, right from the presentation on their first day.

Those crew members that have had previous experience with other spikes were immediately and particularly impressed. One crew leader explained, *“Some of the projects just kind of throw something at you when you get there, and it’s hard because there are no goals, you have no larger understanding, and you have to ask so many questions to pry anything out of them. And here you were so open: here’s what’s happening, this is the big picture, this is what you’re doing, this how it fits into this whole project and vision. We’re just this small piece, like a puzzle piece, and it really makes a difference to know that. The project was really well-explained, and everyone understood what we’re doing and why we’re doing it. That shows us a lot of support.”* Another crew leader added, *“Here, everything is so thought out, already planned. Day by day by day, you tell us, ‘Here is exactly what’s going to happen, and this is how you’re going to do it.’ That’s really setting us up for success. Everything’s already clear, and now we just need to put it into action. It’s very impressive.”*

By sharing background information at the introductory presentation, and the design booklets as a guiding resource, the partners are able to provide a better educational experience, and a more inclusive one for all crew members. A leader explains, *“I really enjoyed that the youth were included as equals – providing them with the background and the plans, showing them the details. A lot of the time, project sponsors look at the youth as children and only speak directly to the leaders. But they’re young adults, and it’s a job experience, and they need to be learning while they’re doing it too, so I think it’s really cool that they’re included so thoughtfully throughout this project.”*

The presentation and booklets are even more important when

considered in the context of CCM’s commitment to deaf and hearing-impaired youth. When asked what this project could do to be more inclusive for deaf and hearing-impaired crew members, Austin Andrews, CCM’s head interpreter, responded, *“You’re already providing the books, and you’re already having an introduction to the project. That’s huge. Absolutely huge, because on some other spikes, there is no explanation. I’ve literally gone in and asked people, ‘Why are you doing this project?’ ‘I don’t know.’ ‘What’s your goal here?’ ‘I really don’t know.’ And they definitely wouldn’t say that here. I can’t overstate how hugely important providing the books and the introduction is. You’re doing fantastic already.”* One deaf crew leader said, *“I love the book because I’m a very visual person. English is not my first language, so it was very, very helpful to be able to visualize the project and everything we were working towards. This fit my learning style well.”*

This project is not only planned and explained more thoroughly than other CCM projects, but it also involves a different kind of work. Many CCM projects focus on trail maintenance, or removing invasive species, but few provide opportunities for youth to be involved in new construction and actual creation of something. That is a really powerful component. A crew leader elaborated, *“When you explained at the beginning that we can come back in twenty years and we know that we started this whole project, that’s big. How many people can say that? That’s something that we can be very proud of. Maybe for other projects you can’t be as proud of your work, because you’re doing things that need to be done again every year. The work is still appreciated, but this is something that makes an immediate difference and is going to be here forever.”*

This project also provides a unique opportunity for the CCM youth in that it *“exposes them to a wide variety of environmental jobs and careers,”* says Eric Antonson, Program Director with CCM. *“There are a lot of youth on the crew whose passion may not be working outside, hands-on, like they are here. But if they understand the reason for this project and then see a different job here that is related to making sure this project happens, I think that can be a really powerful thing. Whatever their interest, be it drawing, computers, advertising, engineering, etc., all of those could fit into green collar jobs, it just depends on what organization they work for.”*

In this project, the CCM youth have the opportunity to learn about landscape design and the field of landscape architecture from the presentations and materials provided by CCL. Youth reported a greater understanding of landscape design and the design drawings at the end of their experience than at the beginning, but crew leaders though there could be more of a focus on understanding the design process. One said, *“I don’t think there was as much of a focus on teaching about landscape architecture as there could’ve been. I think that may have been partly us as crew leaders, not stressing the design booklets enough, but I’m not sure. I think the presentation that CCL did on the first day was helpful, but I don’t know if we really got an idea of why we were building it this way. The youth were asking a lot of questions: ‘Why are the campgrounds here? Why is it not prairie over there?’”* CCL could take some more time while walking the crews through the booklets to explain the design that they will be constructing: not just what is happening where, but why, and how those decisions were made. This can be an educational opportunity for the youth to learn more about the landscape design process and what a landscape architect does.

The Design Booklets

The design booklets made by CCL were highly appreciated by all three CCM crews and are a unique addition to a CCM project. One crew leader explained excitedly, *“No other project sponsors have ever done design drawings, and this is my third summer [with CCM]. No one has ever pulled out drawings and let us see what we’re doing.”* The design booklets help provide everyone – youth, leaders, and Parks Department staff – with the same understanding of the project’s goals and work plan and serve as a detailed reference throughout the project’s implementation.

The booklets were used by all three crews to varying extents. Each crew found their own balance between using the booklets and using the Parks Department staff as guidance throughout their work on each of the tasks required. The booklets were referenced most often for the more detailed tasks of planting and bench building. One crew leader explains, *“When we got the hang of [building the trail], we didn’t really need the book, but any time we were doing something different, or we*

didn’t know something, we always referenced back to it. We were planting plants one day: ‘Where do the plants go? Well, around this little strip, but how close together?’ There’s so much detail in that book that you don’t have to guess. You can figure it out by going back to the book and looking at how it’s supposed to be done.” The books were also used occasionally to make sure trails were turning at the correct places, and even to map out where to place a couple of linking trails that weren’t in the original design.

Even though few youth or leaders had ever used design drawings previously, the booklets generally were considered easy to read, understand, and follow, though a few crew members disagreed and offered suggestions. One leader recommended, *“Simplify. Some of these maps and drawings look really busy with all the arrows and labels and numbers. It’s easy for the youth to get lost because there’s just too much information that’s not necessary.”* Another reported, *“The bench drawings were confusing – just full of too much information, which made it hard to find what you needed to know. We wound up actually missing pieces during the construction.”* There is a delicate balance between too much information and too little, too many labels and not enough. The drawings should be examined carefully in future designs to reduce the information to essentials, and the bench drawings should be revised and significantly simplified.

Supervisory Structure

Last year at Skalbakken, one of the challenges was handling changes as they became necessary during project implementation. As Egle Vanagaite of CCL explains, *“There was a desire for CCL design staff to be on site more frequently, to supervise the crews and be available to make decisions quickly in case design changes were needed. Considering that it’s a financial burden for us to be on site every day, how involved do we really have to be?”* This year at Beaver Falls showed that CCL does not have to be physically on site during construction, as long as there are competent Parks Department staff supervising the CCM crews. Andy Lang and Bob Knutson did extremely well working with the youth and leading the crews this season, and they were skilled enough to confidently improvise design changes as

necessary. An erosive section of trail was improved by adding a culvert, a couple of linking trails were added, and the benches next to the creek were enhanced by a mulched planting, all without needing to consult CCL (CCL approves of this approach, as *“the main purpose of this project is that we work with the community to find what works best for them.”*).

Everyone is in agreement that some daily supervision and assistance from the Parks Department is necessary for the CCM crews to be able to do their best work. Mark Erickson, manager of Renville County’s parks system, believes it is necessary to have two staff members on site – one to supervise and help make decisions, and one to use the heavy equipment. *“If we would’ve hired a private contractor, we would even be out here watching to make sure they did it correctly, so my expectations weren’t that the two CCM crew leaders would have pressure beyond their role of being leaders for the youth.”* Mark, Andy, and Bob do agree that there are some times when their supervision isn’t necessary, for example, if they have discussed the plan for the day, everything is laid out, and the crew is moving forward on a longer task without questions. The idea is not to get in the way of the crew working, but to be available to answer questions, provide product, and assist with machinery as needed.

CCM crew leaders agreed to varying extents that the help and supervision from Renville Parks was completely necessary, but it was always appreciated. One leader said, *“It’s always possible to try to do a project, but I think the extent to which we were able to complete the project, and the quality, would have suffered without the help.”* Another said, *“If you were still to explain the project, with the introductory presentation and the design booklets, I think we could do it without so much support from the parks staff. As a leader, I would feel comfortable with that, because if you are able to understand the project, then you’re really just executing it. But having the machinery assistance helps a lot of course.”* One leader considered that the design booklets *“were kind of like a supervisor in paper form.”* But ultimately, as another leader put it, *“having the booklets and having people that we work with daily is just a good combination.”* The booklets were helpful for giving a framework for the work itinerary and direction on how and where work was to be done, but, especially as changes became necessary due to unexpected

site conditions or scheduling adjustments, Andy and Bob were the ultimate resource.

Site Preparation

This year at Beaver Falls, and last year at Skalbakken, CCL staff were responsible for visiting the site before CCM crews arrived to stake out trail centers, bench locations, and other important element locations as per the design plans. Renville Parks staff still believes this is a necessary site visit for CCL because they haven’t had experience doing staking themselves on such a large scale before, and it also gives them a chance to clarify the design with CCL in person and at the site prior to construction beginning. For example, Bob was able to make sure his interpretation of which way the benches should face was correct.

At some points during implementation, the stakes weren’t as helpful as they could have been in conjunction with the design plans. One crew member said of their experience working near the shelter, *“Laying the gravel and the mulch got confusing. It was just like, these are all pink, and these are all stakes. It would have been helpful if the stakes were color-coded or labeled differently.”*

Work Tasks

The primary work task at Beaver Falls for all three crews was building trails. Digging trenches and laying gravel, even with the help of the skid-steer loader, is hard, repetitive work, and it was a concern that there would be too much of it required in this project. Most crew members acknowledged that it was indeed difficult, but only a few said that it felt like too much, and many said it was their favorite part. While most agreed that if necessary, they could have worked on only trails for their entire time on site, all appreciated that some variety of tasks were provided.

Besides trail-building, the CCM crews did a small amount of planting and mulching, and each constructed at least one bench, including its

concrete foundation. The planting specified in the design was minimal, and the delivery was delayed, so only the second and third crews got to do any. But for them, it was an educational experience, as one crew leader described: *“We pulled out the booklets for planting the shrubs, and had the youth count out where they should be and where they should end. And they really enjoyed that, figuring out exactly where things go from being able to read the design drawings.”*

The bench-building experience was more controversial, as the youth were limited in their participation by not being able to use power tools. A couple of crew leaders thought that building the bench was a waste of time because the youth had nothing to do, but many youth and other crew leaders disagreed. As an educational experience, building the bench was valuable because it exposed the youth to a different kind of construction and they were able to practice translating a detailed drawing into a real-life object. Most crew members had never laid concrete either, and also enjoyed participating in that process. One youth said, *“I learned a lot by doing the benches, because I really had never done carpentry or concrete before... I actually liked watching, but at the same time, I’m a hands-on kind of person, so it was frustrating.”* Another explained that, actually, she was very able to participate hands-on through *“smoothing the concrete, measuring, holding pieces, watching the tools being used, and painting.”* The third crew solved the problem of too much downtime in the bench-building process by dividing up steps and multitasking with other jobs around the site at the same time.

When CCL and Renville Parks were planning the design and implementation schedule for the park, the thought was originally to do all of the trail-building first and all additional tasks later. While this makes sense from a logistics point of view, having other tasks interspersed to balance the work provides more opportunity for youth development, and shows consideration for the crew’s feelings. In this year’s implementation schedule, the partners were successful in accommodating many agendas, and future designs should be sure to consider both as well.

Between the trail-building and the bench-building, CCM crews relied

heavily on the Parks Department staff’s use of heavy machinery and power tools. This is one way in which this project experience, as a design-build, differs from most other projects CCM participates in. It may be simply inevitable for a large scale construction project, but some crew leaders did express a desire for more independence from machinery if possible.

Result

The CCM crews made astounding progress on the work at Beaver Falls, completing far more than anyone expected. All of the trails on the plan, plus a couple extra, were trenched and graveled, all of the benches were built and installed, the council ring was created, and all of the plantings, plus some extra near the creek, were finished as well. In fact, the third and final crew “ran out of work to do” towards the end, although this could have been avoided with better communication within the Parks Department. There is, of course, still much left to be done at Beaver Falls: some of the trails need to be adjusted to the correct width, the prairie restoration needs to be installed, and the interpretive elements need to be designed and added. Work will continue next season.

The amount of work that was completed by each CCM crew was observed to correlate with the crew leaders’ leadership styles. Not surprisingly, the crew with the leaders that were most aggressive had the most aggressive approach and got the most done. The crew with the leaders who were softer and allowed longer and more frequent breaks got the least done. The crew leaders, in projects like this, need to be able to be the motivators that keep the crew going. That ability doesn’t come so much with age as it does with training and experience, so making sure that crew leaders receive adequate training in not only construction tools and techniques, but also in motivational tools and techniques, is extremely important for CCM to continue.

As a whole, working with the youth was a positive experience for Renville Parks. Though completing the work takes longer, and the youth have to be trained in how to work with new techniques and

materials, the educational and mentorship aspect of this project is worth the extra effort, and the work they do is of high enough quality to meet the park system's standards. Said Bob, laughing, *"I think [the CCM crew] probably works better than some of the people that work for us. There's people on there that I wouldn't mind keeping on!"*

Suggestions for Future Consideration

- At the project introduction for each CCM crew, take some time to explain the design they will be constructing: not just what is happening where, but why, and how those decisions were made. This can be an educational opportunity for the youth to learn more about the landscape design process.
- Revise the design drawings to reduce the use of arrows, labels, and numbers where possible. The bench drawings, in particular, should be significantly simplified.
- Continue to plan a variety of tasks for CCM crews to work on, especially for the end of a project, and make sure there are enough tasks that crews can do on their own, if necessary, and that don't rely on heavy machinery or power tools.
- CCL should continue taking responsibility for staking out projects before construction begins, and should develop a stake labeling method that includes distinction between elements.
- Provide the crew members with ear protection. CCM does an excellent job providing safety helmets and eye protection to all crews, but this project is unique in its high levels of exposure to noise from the skid-steer loader.
- Make sure crew leaders have adequate training in motivational techniques, as leadership style was found to correlate with the amount of work that was completed by each crew.
- Plan additional tasks in case of delivery delays, other schedule

changes, or the crews working faster than anticipated. Make sure these tasks are recorded or communicated effectively, especially towards the end of the project.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & IMPACT

The Minnesota River Valley Partners Project is different than most, if not all, others that CCM crews participate in around the state largely because of the community engagement aspect. With the opening ceremony and introduction to the project, the youth and crew leaders understand how their work is contributing to a larger vision: they are not simply digging trenches to build a trail, but more deeply, they are contributing to the creation of a park that is just one of many steps being taken to bring vitality to a region, from now into the future. The majority of youth and crew leaders said that knowing this was hugely motivating and helped them continue when the work got tough. One crew leader explained, *"[On other projects] we'll have to really help [the youth] understand why we're doing this work. That is a big part of our job as leaders when the project isn't very clear. Here, I feel like they understand a lot of that already. So it's different, and it's definitely a motivator. It's a lot easier to work when you know what you're working for... I'm just really excited, just excited."* The crews also enjoyed learning about the ecological, historical, and cultural context of their work site from the short presentations by Tatanka Bluffs members and CCL staff.

Although due to unfortunate circumstances, this season at Beaver Falls provided a unique chance to understand the value that community engagement and educational activities add for CCM youth. Activities were not planned in time for the first CCM crew, but they were for the second and third crews. The difference was noticeable. Without prompting or knowing that it should have been part of their experience, youth members and crew leaders from the first crew felt something was missing. They expressed a desire for more interaction with the community besides the opening and closing ceremonies, and they even proposed suggestions of ways to make that happen. One crew leader said, *"We could go out to summer programs and explain our project, or visit a 4H group and explain camping, leave no trace, etc. I think the youth on the crew might enjoy that too, and it would be something new for them. A lot of them don't see small towns like this. We're all from very different places, and I think we'd appreciate it more if we met more people."*

The second and third CCM crews in general thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to participate in activities that were planned for them. Among the favorite experiences were the waterpark, horseback

riding, and most of all, the history tour Renville County led by local historian and Mayor of Redwood Falls Gary Revier. The youth were definitely appreciative, but the crew leaders, who came to this project with experiences from other years and other spikes, were consistently blown away. One said, *"I feel like [the community aspect] is awesome. I've never felt so much support from the community on any project."* Another elaborated, *"I was amazed at how much we got to do. I've never actually been on a project where it this involved with the community. It's usually like you go to work, and afterwards you fend for yourselves, you don't really know what's going on. It was really nice to see the fact that the community wants us here... the community is impressive."*

Activities and involvement with community members help show the youth that they are appreciated and valued, as well as provide educational experiences outside of the work day. Because of this, and because youth mentorship and education is so important to all of the project partners and is, in some cases, required by grant contributors as well, planning these activities for the CCM crews needs to be a top priority for Tatanka Bluffs. This year, there wasn't a backup plan or enough communication to ensure that activities for the first crew were prepared in time. In future years, this will be considered unacceptable.

Julie Rath of Tatanka Bluffs acknowledges that there are difficulties in providing the activities that will occur even outside of extenuating circumstances. Each year is different, but the summer is generally a busy time for people in the region, with farm festivals and county fairs happening amidst their usual schedules. Entertaining three crews from CCM is a lot to ask of the same people during a busy time, so perhaps what is needed is a larger pool from which to pull. Making sure to plan the activities further in advance could also be helpful.

Shortly after work at Skalbakken was completed, Renville Parks arranged local media coverage in the Renville County Register and worked to promote the park themselves (Beaver Falls will also get media attention when completed, though it is a somewhat different situation because it is a longer-term project). It could be valuable to have more coverage throughout the season in the future, from even before the CCM crews arrive to after the final crew has left, acknowledging in

case of multi-year projects that the park is still a work in progress. In addition, a number of youth and leaders independently suggested holding an informative gathering in town, similar to the opening ceremony, but with more publicity and hopefully more residents attending. It would be an educational experience both for the youth, who would have the opportunity to give a presentation on what they are doing, and for residents of the region, who could learn more about the Minnesota River Valley Partners Project. This could be a way to get more residents informed and interested, and perhaps some new people would volunteer for community engagement activities through Tatanka Bluffs.

Ultimately, the Minnesota River Valley Partners Project exists because of and for the benefit of the communities in this region. Once CCL and CCM complete their work in the planning and implementation phases, it is the local partners – Tatanka Bluffs, Renville Parks, and the residents of the region – that are responsible for the project’s continued success. When people contribute to something, they begin to develop a sense of ownership and connection that increases their personal stake in it. The more contributors this project has, whether they do physical work onsite, provide resources or activities for the visiting CCM crews, help publicize the project, or come out to support the project during an event, the more likely it will be supported into its future.

Recommendations for Future Consideration

- Their commitment is strong and their passion is clear, but Tatanka Bluffs members are so ambitious that they may be spread a bit thin. More than one person should be responsible for planning the activities for the CCM crews, and there should be more communication between those people leading up to project implementation.
- Consider planning an informative event (or multiple events) for the public during the CCM crews’ stay in the area. This could be held at the Rotary Club on Monday nights, or at the public library in the evening. It would need to be advertised widely around the region

to ensure an audience. Events could also be planned on a peer-to-peer level, with summer youth programs or 4H groups in the area.

- Find ways to increase publicity both before and after project implementation. The more community members that are aware of this project, that participate in this project (whether onsite or offsite), and that visit the newly improved parks after the work is completed, the higher the stake the community has in its success.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Minnesota River Valley Partners Project is a long-term, visionary approach that is already having a strong positive impact after only its second year. With Tatanka Bluffs Corridor, Renville County Parks, the Center for Changing Landscapes, and Conservation Corps Minnesota, the right mix of organizations have come together to create real change in the region.

A formal survey hasn’t yet been attempted, but anecdotally, weekend day use at Skalbakken County Park has increased perhaps as much as 25% since last year’s work. People who have lived in the area all their lives say they’ve gone to the park and have been astonished at the changes. Bob Knutson of Renville County Parks tells about what he’s seen: *“Everything’s so much nicer - the campgrounds, the benches, people can actually utilize the shelter now. I think people from out of the area are coming. A lot of times there are people that come and camp, and then word of mouth goes [home with them] and they say, ‘Hey we camped at Skalbakken this weekend. It’s really nice.’ People have said to me down there, ‘Yeah, I’m telling my neighbor, he loves horseback riding.’ And we’ve even seen people in this park that don’t know there are more parks nearby, but then they start talking to each other about them.”* Andy Land of Renville County Parks added, *“People around here are happy, they’re excited to have kids out here working and doing neat things in a park that hasn’t been touched for years. These parks are so underutilized and so underdeveloped, it’s great to see them moving forward.”*

“The most important thing,” says Loran Kaardal, cofounder of Tatanka Bluffs, *“is that it’s just not about the individual parks. It’s about the bigger picture, the bigger landscape of the region. On both sides of the Minnesota River, we’re coming to the realization of how significant this project is. Not only recreationally, not only culturally, but from an economic development standpoint as well. With respect to the larger 30,000 acre landscape, I almost look at it as a bare canvas, where CCL needs to simply start painting and designing: linkages and connections, specific moments in the landscape. Having Renville Parks on board is so important, and CCM can also play a huge role in the implementation of the project as we continue to develop our partnership.”*

“There are unique linkages created through this partnership,” says Mary

Vogel, codirector of the Center for Changing Landscapes, *“and I also really like the idea that the community is such an active partner in this visionary project. I’m excited about the potential we have to bring design to more people across the state, and the opportunity to enhance a very successful youth development program [in CCM].”*

“The intentions with which the connections are drawn in this project are really key,” says Eric Antonson, CCM Program Director, *“and we’ve been able to take some of these elements – the environmental stewardship, the economic development potential, the community involvement – and really highlight them as part of the learning experience for the youth and the leaders on the crew. It is not something you get in every project... I think that we have a real strong interest in continuing to work on design-build projects like this one because all of the components we look for are there.”*

And CCM crew members did have an enriched experience. *“It was really, really good,”* says one crew leader. *“My expectations were really blown away. I knew coming into this project that it would be unique and really different from what we’ve done before... I’d been told how amazing it was because I saw the people from the first crew as they came back. But though my expectations were high, this project still blew them away completely. Thank you. It’s really been amazing for me and for the rest of the crew, a really rich experience. And it’s a lot easier to do the hard work with an entire community behind you and supporting you. That makes such a difference.”*

In the Minnesota River Valley, the partnership has already had positive impacts beyond the improvement of Skalbakken and Beaver Falls Parks. The grant-based partnership model has been an epiphany for the Redwood and Renville County boards and other non-profit recreational user groups, encouraging the energized collaboration of multiple stakeholder groups on additional infrastructure development projects that will accelerate the vision of a recreational economy becoming a reality.

The following collaborations are currently in progress:

PROJECT EVALUATION CONCLUDING REMARKS

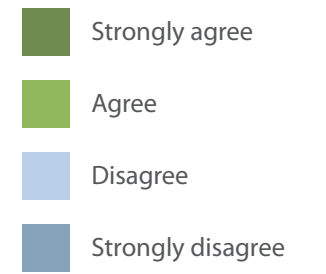
- Both Redwood and Renville County Boards are proactively protecting against the implementation of restrictive trail covenants on newly acquired public properties within the Minnesota River Valley.
- Both Redwood and Renville County are encouraging a legislative amendment that will allow for a shared recreational/agricultural landscape within the Minnesota River Valley. This proposed legislation is being supported by multiple stakeholder groups including chambers, wildlife groups and trail user groups, as well as individual business owners and citizens.
- The Renville County Board and the Minnesota Valley ATV Riders (MNVATVR) are proposing a new ATV Park that will be operated as a Renville County Park. Renville County has applied for a substantial Parks and Trails Legacy Grant for the acquisition and will be working with both the Center for Changing Landscapes (CCL) and the Conservation Corps of Minnesota (CCM) on the planning and development of this project.
- The MNVATVR club is also working with both county boards to open county roads for a GIA ATV trail that will connect both counties and the 26 communities to this trail grid.
- The Redwood County Board and the Green Corridor are proposing a new trail hub for the Whispering Ridge Corridor in the Minnesota River Valley. The county has applied for a Parks and Trails Legacy grant will utilize both CCL and CCM in the planning and development of the new trail hub.

boundaries of the redeveloped county parks to impact the entire region, becoming a catalyst that has illuminated the opportunity for new collaborative partnerships to further the Minnesota River Valley as a vibrant recreational destination with a bright future.

This evaluation has shown that there is great potential as this project and partnership continues into the future. Tatanka Bluffs Corridor, Renville County Parks, the Center for Changing Landscapes, and Conservation Corps Minnesota have come together from across the state of Minnesota to further the mission of each organization in a way that would not be possible without the collaboration of all, and this evaluation has shown that they are succeeding. The project has achieved its partners' primary goals, and has gone beyond its site

PROJECT EVALUATION SURVEY QUESTIONS & RESPONSES BY CCM YOUTH CREW MEMBERS

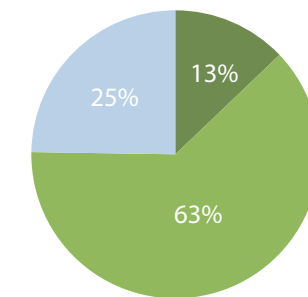
All Conservation Corps Minnesota youth crew members were asked to complete surveys as part of their participation in the Minnesota River Valley Partners project at Beaver Falls County Park. The youth crew members completed a short survey on their first day on-site to assess their initial understanding of design-build construction and drawings. They then completed a more extensive survey on their last full day on-site to provide feedback about their experience and information to measure the effectiveness of this project. What follows is a visual summary of the survey questions asked and the responses given by all youth crew members that worked at Beaver Falls County Park in the summer of 2012. Responses are color-coded according to the key at right.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

I understand...

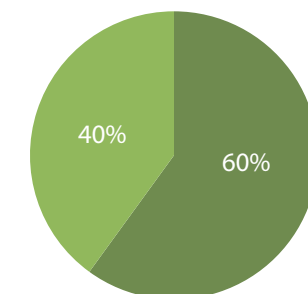
what landscape design is



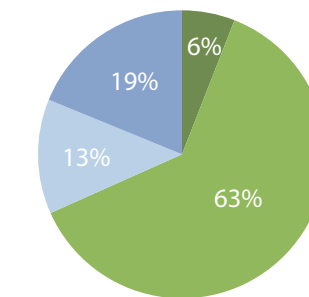
(first day)



(last day)



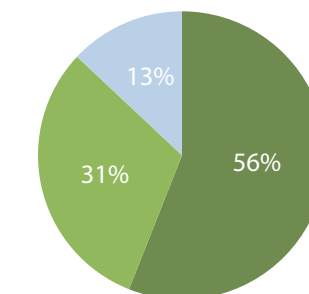
what design-build construction is



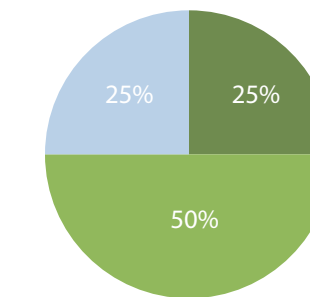
(first day)



(last day)



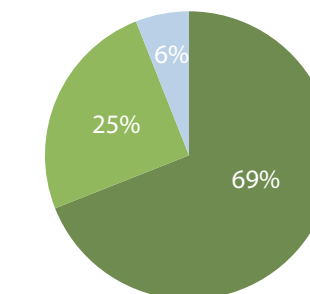
what design drawings are used for



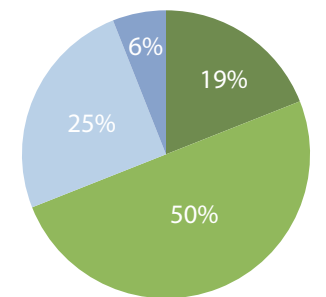
(first day)



(last day)



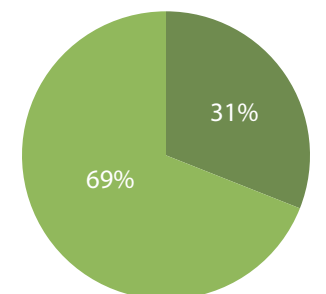
how to read and understand design drawings

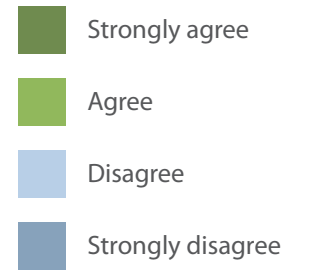
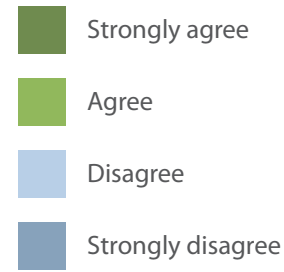


(first day)



(last day)

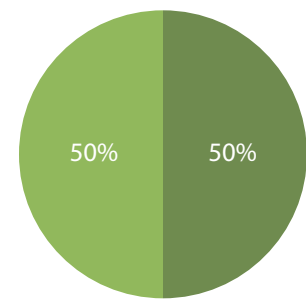




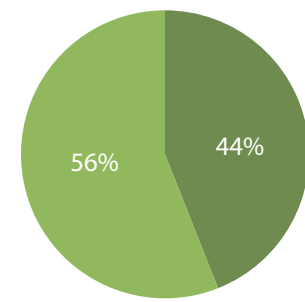
PROJECT LOGISTICS

The following were at the right level of challenge and complexity for me:

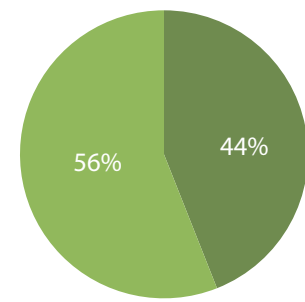
the physical labor required to complete the project



the physical labor required to complete the project

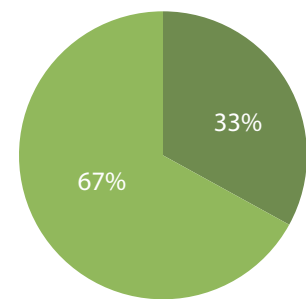


the knowledge required to understand the project

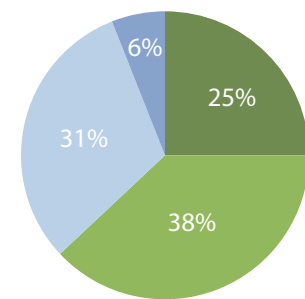


In my daily work...

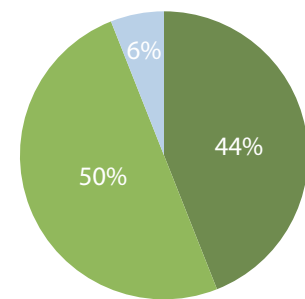
the schedule was paced appropriately



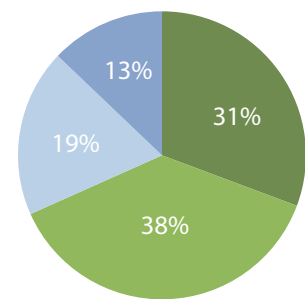
I used the printed schedule as a reference



the design drawings were easy to read, understand, and follow



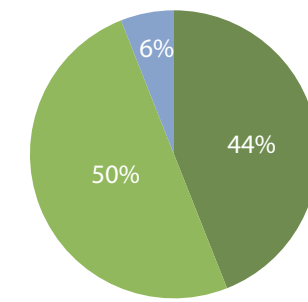
I used the printed design drawings as a reference



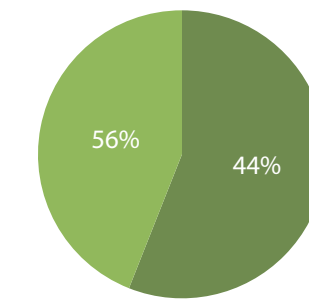
PROJECT EXPERIENCE

This project was positive and worthwhile:

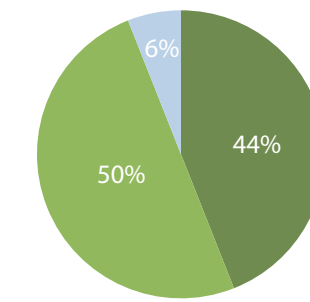
for my personal development



for the community

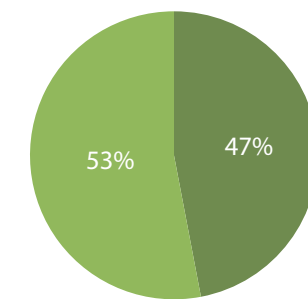


for the environment

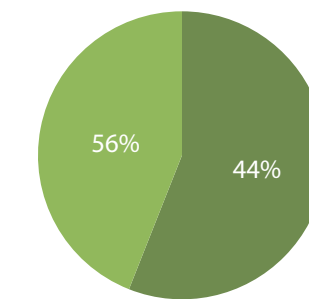


I...

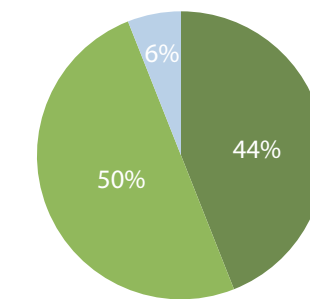
enjoyed participating in a design-build project



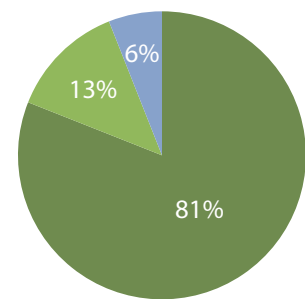
am interested in participating in a design-build project again in the future



would recommend a project like this to my friends



feel proud of the work I have accomplished



WRITTEN ANSWERS

How have you changed/developed by participating in the Beaver Falls Project? Please consider personal and technical skills gained, knowledge developed, opportunities explored, etc.

<i>"I have become close to a group of people while building a project that will benefit the community in the future. I learned how to pour concrete and how to set it up. I will never look at a sidewalk or a hiking trail the same way again."</i>	<i>"I gained skills for working better with tools, participating or helping crew members, and getting the job done."</i>	<i>"I developed an understanding of how to read a plan for a design-build project."</i>	<i>"I had to use skills that I haven't used in a considerable amount of time."</i>
<i>"I learned about the planning that goes into our projects."</i>	<i>"I have been made more aware of the southwestern region of Minnesota. And I believe I have improved upon my technical skills concerning digging."</i>	<i>"I've gained so much from building benches and digging out trenches and I loved it. At first it was hard but then it got easier."</i>	<i>"I learned more about 'leapfrogging' – a way to dig with a team. I also saw a live skink for the first time."</i>
<i>"My work ethic has gotten better, I enjoy working with a team more, and I have learned to appreciate the environment."</i>	<i>"I learned some trail-work skills and got the opportunity to dig and not get in trouble."</i>	<i>"I have become an expert at digging trenches and using a weed wrench."</i>	<i>"I have a stronger work ethic and ability to work with the weather (heat and sun)."</i>
	<i>"I got stronger."</i>	<i>"I have become physically stronger, mentally stronger, and appreciative."</i>	<i>"I've learned a lot about myself, and I now have a lot of options for my future."</i>

Do you think your experience on this project was different because this was a design-build project? If you have participated in other projects previously, how did this project compare?

<i>"Yes, this was much more organized and it was nice to know the tasks that we would be taking on."</i>	<i>"Yes, I had a clear idea of the outcome and the goals of this project. The design-build projects I have participated in before were disorganized and chaotic. The organization improved and quickened the process."</i>	<i>"I think my experience was much more planned out and organized than other groups. I've never participated in other projects, but I like the idea of a design-build project."</i>	<i>"This project was similar with other projects because the goal is already known. The only thing left was to begin the process."</i>
<i>"Yes, this project was a lot easier because everything was organized and we knew what we were working on."</i>	<i>"Not really. This one was a lot easier and I felt it was easier to see the impact we are making. I like it a lot."</i>	<i>"This is my first time in a design-build project, so I can't really compare. But I can say is that it was safe and fun :)"</i>	<i>"The trail building was like a mix of other CCM projects. I think the only non-comparable task was planting the bushes."</i>
<i>"Yes, this project was really different. Way better than my last project even though digging was tiring and hard."</i>		<i>"Yes, we could see a clear impact and improvement in the area. It was nice to make something instead of doing maintenance."</i>	<i>"I think we got to work much more closely with the project sponsors than on normal trail work."</i>
<i>"I haven't done anything like this before, so I'm not sure."</i>	<i>"Yes, I think it was different, but I'm not sure because I've never worked on a project before."</i>		

What part of this project did you most enjoy or learn the most from? Why?

<i>"I enjoyed working hard with the shovel, raking, wheelbarrowing, using the sledgehammer, and making the bench."</i>	<i>"Pouring the concrete is what I learned the most about. I have done similar woodworking projects in the past and I have used a shovel before, but concrete was something new to me."</i>	<i>"I really enjoyed getting closer with the people in my crew and completing the work with them. Having the opportunity to work in a small group keeps me more motivated that we as a whole can complete the project together."</i>	<i>"Building benches was the most enjoyable, since it helped me use skills that I hadn't used in a long time."</i>
<i>"I enjoyed tons of stuff like digging the trenches, learning how to use new tools, and how organized the design of the project was."</i>	<i>"I enjoyed the trail-building. Consistent pattern, easy to do when brain is tired. I learned from the cement mixing the most just because I've never actually set cement before."</i>	<i>"I liked building the benches."</i>	<i>"I enjoyed trenching! It's much more fun than working out at the YMCA and it's fun to see who can trench the best/fastest."</i>
<i>"I enjoyed building trails and learning from Andy & Bob."</i>	<i>"I enjoyed pouring concrete because it was a new experience for me."</i>	<i>"I enjoyed doing the bench because you can make it in the shade."</i>	<i>"I enjoyed trenching! It's much more fun than working out at the YMCA and it's fun to see who can trench the best/fastest."</i>
<i>"I enjoyed the concrete mixing. It was my first time and I got to make something with more permanent."</i>	<i>"The people I got to work with."</i>	<i>"I enjoyed laying the concrete and building the benches."</i>	<i>"I enjoyed raking the gravel to make it look nicer. I learned a lot from digging and it also helped me gain some muscles."</i>

Which activity (outside of work) did you most enjoy or learn the most from? Why?

<i>"I learned most from the tour of Redwood. It was fun (except for the fact that we hadn't eaten much), and I learned a lot about Dakota history."</i>	<i>"I enjoyed learning about the Dakota rebellion, specifically walking and seeing the locations of events."</i>	<i>Waterpark! It was fun and there were tons of cute boys."</i>	<i>"The water park because I love swimming!"</i>
<i>"I would say going on the history tour about Renville because it was interesting to learn so much about a place that's so small but has so much behind it."</i>	<i>"The historical tour by the mayor of Redwood Falls. We went to many historical sites that involved Native Americans. It was great to learn about the area around us."</i>	<i>"I liked the 'step-forward' activity. It was fun to learn things about other people."</i>	<i>"I liked learning about the design for this project, and all the mapping was awesome. Learning how to ride a horse was also fun."</i>
		<i>"I enjoyed horseback riding and the water park. And I learned a lot from Andy."</i>	<i>"I enjoyed the tour with the mayor and listening to Andy's stories."</i>

WRITTEN ANSWERS

What part of this project did you least enjoy or find to be the least beneficial? Why?

"Working on the same thing for long periods of time."

"None, it was all beneficial in some ways. It will help me in the future."

"I didn't like the fact that we had to do the same thing for a long time, so digging trenches for the trail was difficult for me."

"I didn't like building the benches. Our insurance liability does not cover power tools, which resulted in a lot of standing around for youth crew members."

"I got bored while friends chatted and hung out in the tent [this crew member is deaf]."

"Trenching, because it was really hot."

"None, it was all fun for me!!! :)"

"I am not opposed to any part of this project."

"When we ran out of things to do so we had to make stuff up."

"I really hated laying gravel in the sun. It was a lot of work and tedious."

"Digging trenches - it was hard at the beginning."

"I least enjoyed the trenches because of the hard soil, but I know they are very important."

"Everything has benefits somehow, but I didn't like cutting the branches off high trees because I'm short and cannot reach."

"I did not like the digging because the dirt was so compacted, until it rained and made digging far more enjoyable."

"I don't have anything I least enjoyed about this project."

"Nothing."

What challenges did you face during this project? How did you overcome these challenges?

"The shoveling was hard, but I just kept working."

"Crew members did not always see eye to eye, but compromising was a good method of problem solving. The project itself did not cause many issues."

"One challenge that I faced was not being very strong. I overcame it by working with other people when doing heavy things, like carrying dirt in the wheelbarrow."

"I found it difficult to be focused and motivated to come to work every day."

"There weren't any challenges in this project. It was well-prepared and people knew what to do."

"We faced lots of roots, hard soil, and rocks. We overcame these by asking each other for help."

"The heat was pretty bad, along with rocks and roots, but you just gotta muscle through."

"The heat, and trying to keep up with water."

"Getting along with my crew. We are all so different, and it was hard sometimes."

"We ran out of work, so then we did quality control."

"I faced a lot of challenges, like making the trail curve smoothly and hauling rocks up from the river. I overcame them by not giving up."

"My challenge was trying to work with others, but I overcame it by communicating with them better."

"Digging trenches was hard with the compacted soil, but luckily it rained and loosened it up."

"The heat, but I faced it by drinking water."

"Keeping my stuff dry inside the tent. So I moved it to the van."

What suggestions do you have to improve this type of project for future years?

"Have more variety - don't have us keep doing the same thing for so long."

"I really like the idea of this type of project, but if I could change one thing it would be to make sure to mix it up sometimes. It's hard to keep doing the same thing without changing it up."

"No suggestions."

"Bring tools for easy/ kind root removal."

"More people helping."

"Nothing much. But I guess we could have had a couple more people helping out."

"It would be nice if the sun wasn't so hot, but that really can't be helped. This project was much nicer and more organized than any of the other spikes."

"Get more shade!"

"Think bigger? I don't know, this project was pretty awesome."

"We need more supervision to look and tell us what to do. On the last day we didn't know what to do since everything seemed to be done."

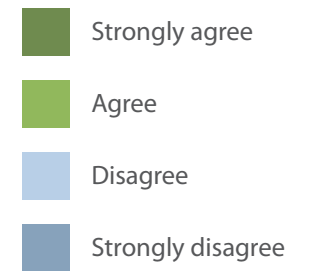
"Nothing."

"I think everything is great, so no changes would be nice."

"Have more extra tasks for when we finish early."

PROJECT EVALUATION SURVEY QUESTIONS & RESPONSES BY CCM CREW LEADERS

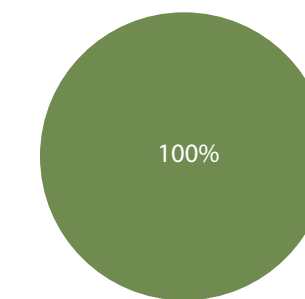
All Conservation Corps Minnesota crew leaders were asked to complete surveys as part of their participation in the Minnesota River Valley Partners project at Beaver Falls County Park. The crew leaders completed an extensive survey on their last full day on-site to provide feedback about their experience and information to measure the effectiveness of this project. What follows is a visual summary of the survey questions asked and the responses given by all crew leaders that worked at Beaver Falls County Park in the summer of 2012. Responses are color-coded according to the key at right.



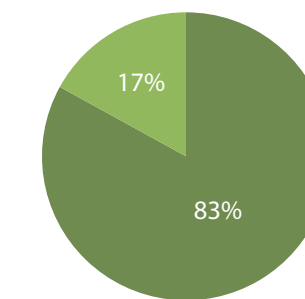
CREW MANAGEMENT

Leading and supervising:

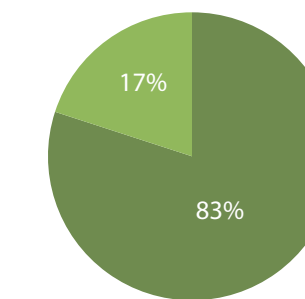
Project goals and expectations were clearly communicated to me



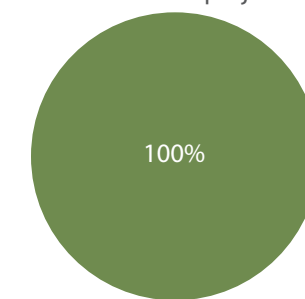
Project goals and expectations were realistic and achievable



I felt confident in my ability to lead this type of project

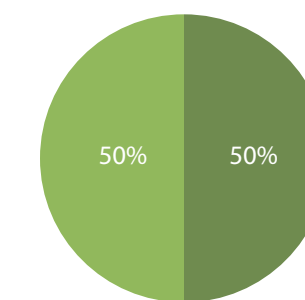


I felt confident in my ability to teach the skills and knowledge youth needed for this project

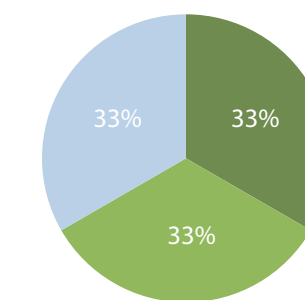


The following were at the right level of challenge and complexity for the youth:

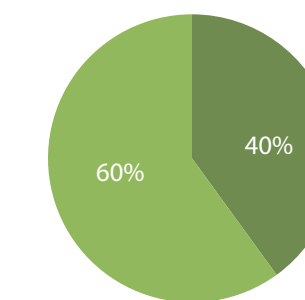
the physical labor required to complete the project

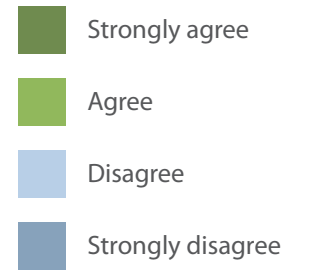
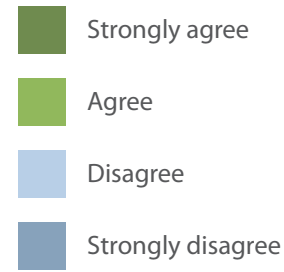


the technical skills required to construct the project



the knowledge required to understand the project

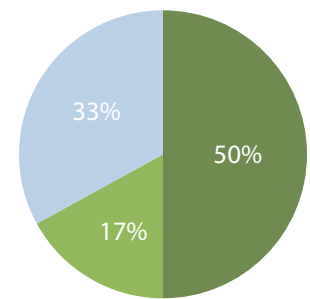




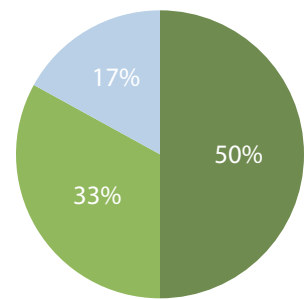
PROJECT LOGISTICS

Work schedule:

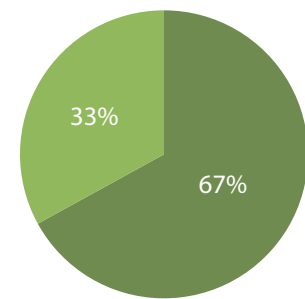
Work tasks were paced appropriately



The printed schedule was well-organized and made sense

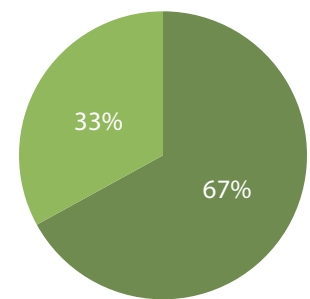


I was able to spend enough time directly supervising the youth

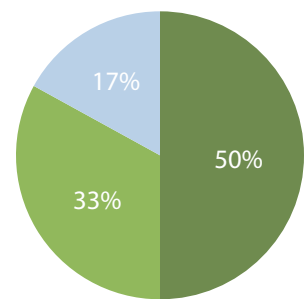


Work task support: It was necessary to have the Parks Department help with

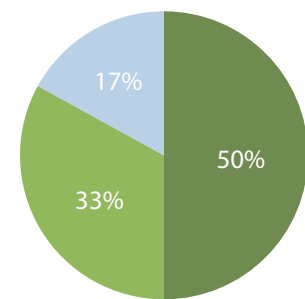
tasks that used power tools



moving heavy materials



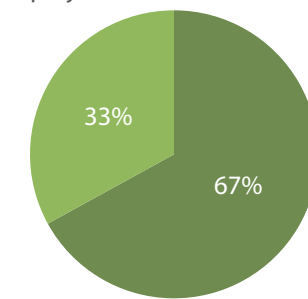
supervising technical tasks



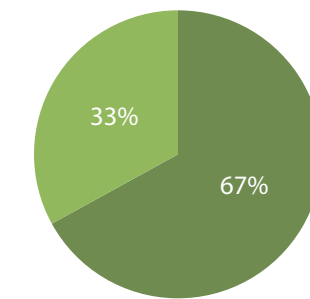
COMMUNICATION

With support staff:

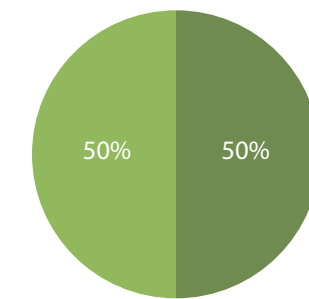
Having Parks Department staff on site was integral to the success of this project



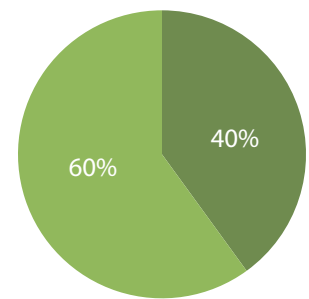
The Parks Department staff were easily accessible when I needed them



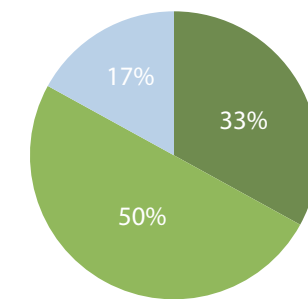
Having CCL staff on site was integral to the success of this project

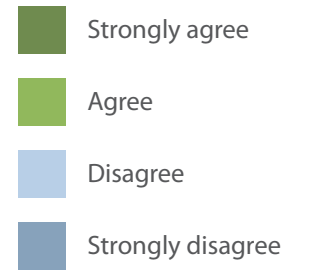
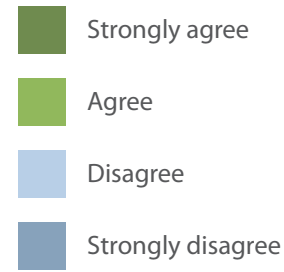


The CCL staff were easily accessible when I needed them



Communication delays did NOT get in the way of completing work efficiently

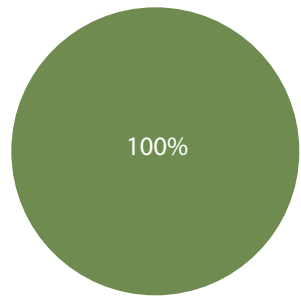




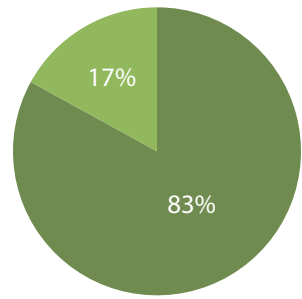
COMMUNICATION

Using the design drawings:

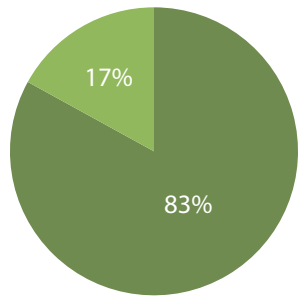
The drawings helped me understand the project better: in general



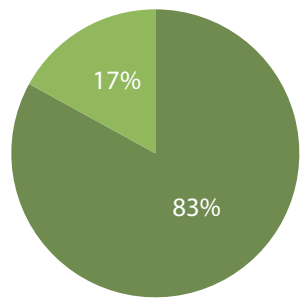
while leading work tasks



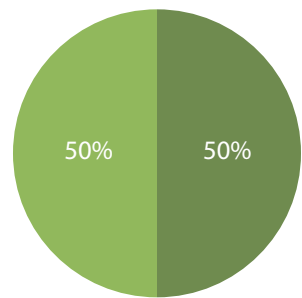
when questions arose



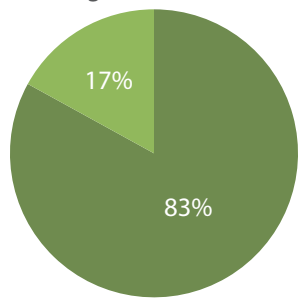
The drawings effectively communicated the designer's intent



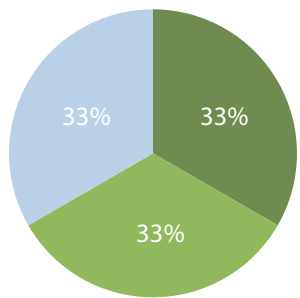
The drawings were easy to read, understand, and follow



I would have been able to lead tasks from start to finish using only the drawings



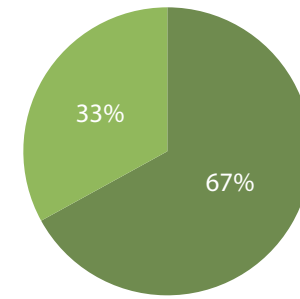
In the end, what we constructed matches the drawings



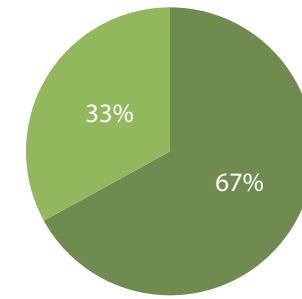
PROJECT EXPERIENCE

This project was positive and worthwhile:

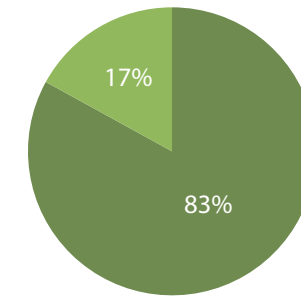
for my personal development



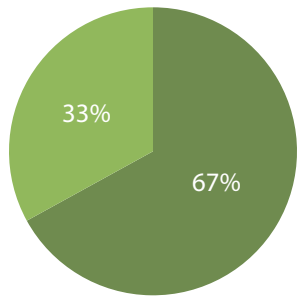
for the youth's personal development



for the community

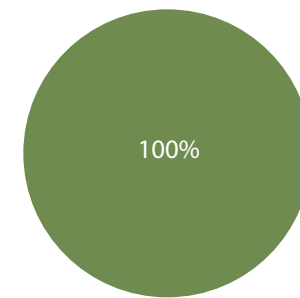


for the environment

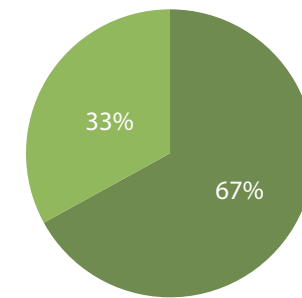


I...

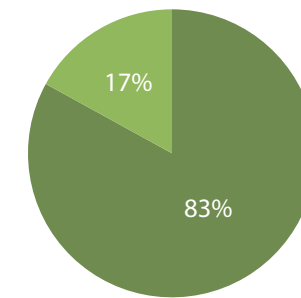
enjoyed participating in a design build project



am interested in participating in a design-build project again in the future



feel proud of the work we have accomplished



WRITTEN ANSWERS

Do you think your experience leading this project was different because this was a design-build project? If you have participated in other projects previously, how did this project compare?

“It was very different from other projects. I have never been involved with the start of a new park. It was an amazing experience.”

“I did not notice that much of a difference compared to other projects because there was almost always a Park Department staff saying what we would be doing that day.”

“I feel as though this project was a lot more clear on what they wanted from us than the other projects. And it was extremely cool to see the plans come to life.”

“This project was clearly stated, and you took the time to explain it so we would understand it, which made working towards the goals a lot easier.”

“It was completely different. I loved having the plans and seeing where everything needed to be done. It was a lot better organized and easier to find work that needed to be done.”

Who did you go to for help when you had questions about the design/location of elements? About materials/tools? Why?

“Andy was our go-to man. Very helpful, easy to work with, and great at working with youth.”

“We didn’t often have to ask for help, mostly just the plan for the day.”

“I went to Bob first, because he was with us all the time, and then Andy if he was around. Didn’t have to very often because everything was very clear.”

“We went to the Park Department staff for any questions, as they seemed to be the head of actual construction for the project. We probably asked at least one question every day.”

“We talked to Bob and Andy because they were the leaders on site. They worked with us every day and knew what was to be done, and they had the freedom to improvise if needed. We asked them questions daily.”

“I didn’t need to ask for much help, but if needed Bob was the guy we went to about the project.”

Do you think it would have been possible to complete this project without any support from the Parks Department? Without any support from the Center for Changing Landscapes? Without any support from either? Why or why not?

“No, it would have been a long, grueling process using only wheelbarrows. I’m very appreciative of their help and knowledge of the project.”

“I think it would have been possible with the plans, but it would have been extremely difficult and the end results would have been less impressive, especially without the Parks Department staff. It was integral to have them here every day and to be able to ask them questions.”

“No, not at all. I mean I guess we could have taken a stab at it but that’s really all we could have done. It was very noticeable that {CCL and Renville Parks} were on the same page and were really working well together towards similar goals.”

“No, because it would not have turned out so well. I guess it could have been completed but not with nearly as much work or the level of quality. We needed them for the bobcat and the cement.”

“It maybe would have been possible without support from the Parks Department. But definitely not probable (because of all the gravel hauling, rock moving, etc.). It would not have been possible without CCL as they designed the park and the direction/instructions/drawings to help us build a good-looking park.”

“No. We needed to have either one of both to accomplish such a project.”

What part of this project did you most enjoy or learn the most from? Why?

“Bob and Andy were both extremely knowledgeable and easy to work with. They connected with the youth and were willing to impart their wisdom. I enjoyed working with them and learned the most from them.”

“The beginning with the big presentation. Very exciting!”

“The area. I didn’t know about this area of Minnesota before, and what is trying to be done with the Minnesota River Valley.”

“I learned a lot about how to lay an accessible trail and how to line it out, and I really enjoyed watching the plans come to life.”

“Sometimes things don’t always go according to plan, and you must learn to accommodate the issues that may arise.”

“I enjoyed reading the blueprints!!”

What part of this project did you least enjoy or find to be the least beneficial? Why?

“There was not enough work for our crew to do. We found ourselves watching the Park Department staff work with the bobcat a lot because we relied on such machinery to do a lot of the work.”

“I liked the plans, but they did not have enough back up work for us when we finished. I think the integral part was having people working with us every day.”

“This question is not really applicable due to the fact that you can learn and benefit from every experience.”

“N/A. I really enjoyed it all, I mean other than the hot weather and some storms :)”

“Doing the bench while youth mostly did nothing. It was hard to supervise them while I was finishing the bench.”

“I personally enjoyed the bench building but it was difficult to find work that the youth to do.”

What challenges did you face during this project? How did you overcome these challenges?

“Wednesday’s 100° weather. We slowed our pace and took plenty of water breaks.”

“Not being able to personally use bigger equipment like the bobcat and saw because of the CCM and Park Department policies.”

“One challenge we had was digging the trench when it was so so hot outside. But we pushed through by hydrating and playing word games.”

“There weren’t really any, other than small miscommunication problems. Just kept on communicating.”

“Honestly, the biggest challenge for us was finding enough work for everyone. I don’t think that it was anticipated that we would finish as much as we did. We had to scramble for work at the end.”

“One challenge was finding enough work, and that was overcome partly by going over previously done work and doing quality control.”

What suggestions do you have to improve this type of project for future years?

“I feel as though this project is a super unique one and I don’t really see a way for improving it because it already surpasses expectations.”

“When it gets near the end of the project, having a larger backup plan in case all of the work is finished. A lot of the work still needing to be completely is largely bobcat work, so we are not needed. Anticipating the size of our group and how much work we are capable of completing would help prevent a lot of confusion and time that could have been better used elsewhere.”

“Having variety in work/jobs to do is good for the youth. Building benches was a good experience for me and the youth to learn, but unfortunately not everyone could be involved. I would suggest to also work on another task, and a few youth and the leaders could work on the benches at a time.”

“[Provide] two park staff to assist us so that we could finish even faster with more accuracy.”

“One suggestion is to create more work that doesn’t rely on heavy machinery as much. Our crew relied on the bobcat for graveling and for finishing other tasks, which took away from the man labor. Using heavy machinery isn’t bad since it gets the project done faster and efficiently, but it hurts on the CCM crew side as we do labor by hand and don’t use power tools often.”

[Left blank.]

Any additional comments you’d like to share?

“I’m so glad that I was able to be a part of building Beaver Falls Park, which is part of the bigger vision for the Minnesota River Valley. I’m super excited to come back in a couple years to see how the park looks once all finished with prairie restored. Plus, the area in which we worked holds so much interesting history that I don’t think many people realize, so it’s again exciting to be a part of this project that will attract people to such a place. Everyone we worked with was really awesome and so nice. Thank you so much for the opportunity to work with you!”

“I loved this project. Being able to see the project from our start to finish was incredible. The plans were helpful to see the vision they had, but having the people on site was even more beneficial. I can’t wait to come back in a couple of years and see how everything has changed. Also, the activities that were set up for us were extremely generous and we all enjoyed them immensely! THANK YOU!”

“This experience was like no other. The kids and myself learned so much and I just want to say thank you for making this a rich experience for the whole crew. Thank you!”

“Thank you to everyone. I feel as though this project is unique in that it treats the youth not just like kids here to do work. People showed a lot of respect.”

“In the end, I really enjoyed this project!”