



— State of —
North Dakota
Office of the Governor
Jack Dalrymple
Governor

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DALRYMPLE TO PROPOSE BOLD PLANS FOR STATE PARKS, CONSERVATION
Governor Proposes Expanding Opportunities for Outdoor Recreation, Statewide Conservation Enhancements, Major Improvements to State Parks throughout North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Jack Dalrymple today announced a bold plan for major improvements to North Dakota state parks and for statewide conservation enhancements. The governor’s plan calls for investing \$30.4 million in new funds to expand and improve state park amenities and increase public access to North Dakota’s great outdoors. Dalrymple also proposes increasing the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund to \$50 million, bringing the state’s total commitment to new conservation and outdoor recreation projects to \$80.4 million during the 2015-2017 biennium.

“Our state parks have become increasingly popular and they need more visitor capacity and improved amenities,” Dalrymple said. “These major investments in capital improvements will greatly increase the number of campsites, cabins and the overall capacity of our state park system.”

While working to develop the state’s current budget for conservation, Dalrymple proposed the creation of the Outdoor Heritage Fund at a level of \$30 million to support statewide conservation advancements.

“Now, thanks to the outstanding work of the fund’s advisory committee, I believe we should increase the funding to \$50 million for the upcoming biennium and adjust the formula to ensure it reaches its maximum funding level.”

Dalrymple said his proposal for conservation and outdoor recreation is fiscally sound and sustainable.

“This \$80.4 million funding package for park improvements and conservation throughout North Dakota is a self-contained package for capital improvements that will not add significantly to the state’s ongoing budget obligations,” Dalrymple said. “Because of the state’s strong financial position, we can make these significant investments and continue to meet ongoing commitments to high-quality education, low taxes, statewide infrastructure upgrades and the many other demands on our growing state.”

Dalrymple's proposal for park improvements includes constructing about 180 new campsites throughout the state's park system; building additional full-service cabins and basic camper cabins; and constructing a family retreat lodge at Lake Sakakawea State Park. The lodge will include a central meeting room and two-to-six adjoining bedrooms. To be operated by a private contractor, the facility will serve as a retreat for families and small groups. Other statewide park projects include enhancements to recreational trail systems, as well as upgrades to many other park amenities and roadways. The plan also includes a conditional proposal to transform about 200 acres of state-owned land along the Missouri River in south Bismarck into a day park featuring a water way and public access to the Missouri River. The property, part of the state correction's system, is located south of the Missouri River Correctional Center.

The governor's announcement today is the result of several years of work by the North Dakota Department of Parks and Recreation to develop master plans for system-wide park enhancements. The proposal for state parks also takes into account feedback from North Dakota residents who, during statewide 2020 & Beyond meetings, voiced support for more outdoor recreational opportunities.

More than one million people visited North Dakota's 13 state parks last year. North Dakota also has more than 200,000 acres of state wildlife management areas that are open to public hunting and other outdoor recreation. In addition, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department contracts with private landowners to make more than 700,000 acres available to public access for hunting, through the Private Land Open to Sportsmen program. The state also has more than 400 fishing waters – the most ever – for quality fishing opportunities. North Dakota is also home to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, four national grasslands and 63 national wildlife refuges, more than any other state.

Below is more information about North Dakota's celebrated parks and plans for system-wide improvements.

Lake Sakakawea State Park

Located on the south shore of Lake Sakakawea, the Lake Sakakawea State Park offers access to a wide range of recreational activities. The park has a full service marina, including convenience store, fishing guide services and boat and camper storage. Two large boat ramps provide access to some of the best fishing on the lake. The 1,300-acre park's amenities also include sleeping cabins, 197 campsites, boat refueling dock, shower facilities, an RV dump station, fish cleaning station, a swim beach and picnic shelters. About 115,000 people visited Lake Sakakawea State Park last year, with overnight stays increasing 26 percent in the last four years.

Proposed Park Improvements

The following improvement projects, estimated at \$8 million, are proposed for Lake Sakakawea State Park:

- Development of a family retreat lodge on the west bay
- Development of 80 modern campsites with water and electrical service
- Roadway improvements
- Upgrades to water and sewer systems

Fort Ransom State Park

About 80 miles southwest of Fargo, Fort Ransom State Park is also near the Sheyenne National Grasslands and two national wildlife refuges. The 950-acre park is managed as a natural and scenic area, and is located on North Dakota's officially designated Sheyenne River Valley National Scenic Byway. The park's offerings include 30 campsites, a visitor center, picnic shelters, an RV dump station, playground, canoe and kayak rentals and shower facilities. Corrals and trails are available to horseback riders. Canoeing is popular on the Sheyenne River during the summer. A segment of the North Country National Scenic Trail winds through the park. Snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are the major winter activities.

Proposed Park Improvements

A state investment of \$1.09 million is proposed for the following improvements at Fort Ransom State Park:

- Construction of a new visitor center
- Building renovation to provide year-round rental space
- Development of 15 modern RV campsites with water and electrical service
- Addition of 15 modern campsites with water and electrical service
- Upgrades to existing horse corrals
- Construction of two, full-service rental cabins
- Construction of four basic cabins
- Construction of a new shower facility
- Roadway improvements

Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park

Located seven miles south of Mandan, the 1,006-acre Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park is rich in both military and early Native American history. Fort Abraham Lincoln was once an important infantry and cavalry post. It was from this fort that Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and the Seventh Cavalry rode out on their ill-fated expedition against the Sioux at the Little Big Horn. Portions of the military post, including the Custer House, have been reconstructed. Earth lodges depict the lifestyle of the Mandan Indians, who occupied the site from about 1575 to 1781. A modern campground is adjacent to the Heart River with picnic sites and playground equipment. Other park amenities include campsites, horse corrals, shower facilities, cabins, a visitor center, an RV dump station, interpretive tours, picnic shelters and a playground.

Proposed Park Improvements

A state investment of nearly \$3.7 million is proposed for improvements at Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park including:

- Construction of an activity center
- Upgrades to park roadways and parking lots
- Campground expansion for 15 additional campsites with water and electrical service
- Relocation of existing RV dump station
- Construction of a four-stall shower facility
- Expanding electrical service to basic campsites
- Renovation of historic facilities at On-A-Slant Village

Cross Ranch Centennial State Park

Located along seven miles of the last free-flowing, undeveloped stretches of the Missouri River, North Dakota's Cross Ranch Centennial State Park is rich in both cultural and natural history. The park is located 12 miles southeast of Hensler via paved roads, or six miles by gravel. The park is purposely left primitive to preserve the land's natural beauty. An extensive trail system can be explored either on foot or on cross country skis during the winter months. During the summer, the trails allow access to a 5,000-acre nature preserve where mixed grass prairie, river bottom forests and woody draws can be seen. Other park amenities include a boat ramp, visitor center, campsites, log cabins, yurts, canoe and kayak rentals, cross country ski and snowshoe rentals, picnic shelters and playgrounds.

Proposed Park Improvements

A state investment of about \$970,000 is proposed for the following improvements at Cross Ranch Centennial State Park:

- Development of 18 modern campsites
- Construction of two full-service cabins
- Construction of a four-stall public shower facility
- Expanded electrical service for 45 campsites
- Construction of new bathroom facilities
- Ground and stage upgrades to festival area

Pembina Gorge State Recreation Area

The Pembina Gorge is a complex and diverse natural area spanning about 12,500 acres in northeast North Dakota featuring the longest unaltered stretch of river valley in the state. The glacial melt carved the Gorge out of soft marine shales, creating one of North Dakota's deepest and steepest river valleys. The Pembina Gorge is perhaps the most floristically diverse area in North Dakota with over 480 species of plants and more than 75 species of breeding birds. The Gorge's diverse wildlife includes elk, moose, black bear, mountain lion, lynx and bobcats.

The North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department has established the Pembina Gorge State Recreation Area to provide recreation opportunities in the Pembina Gorge through a system of trails, overlooks and access points. Recreational opportunities include hiking, biking and horse riding on the Gorge's extensive trail system, bird watching as well as canoeing and kayaking on the Pembina River.

Proposed Recreation Area Improvements

An investment of \$750,000 is planned to establish a state campground in the Pembina Gorge with the following amenities:

- Development of 20 basic campsites
- Construction of restroom and shower facilities

Lewis and Clark State Park

Situated on one of the upper bays of Lake Sakakawea, Lewis and Clark State Park offers excellent fishing and boating opportunities and a swimming beach with washed sand. The park's amenities include a campground with campsites, two sleeping cabins, a marina, public boat ramp, bathroom and shower facilities, picnic shelters, a playground, RV dump station and concession

store. The rugged buttes of the North Dakota Badlands display a towering backdrop to the park, which is named for the Corps of Discovery explorers, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. The expedition camped nearby on April 17, 1805, and an interpretive trail marker has been placed within the park to commemorate their historic journey through North Dakota.

Proposed Park Improvements

The state proposes investing \$1.06 million in the following Lewis and Clark State Park upgrades:

- Construction of 20 modern campsites (water and electric service) within the park's existing campground
- Construction of a four-stall shower addition to the park's existing facilities
- Construction of two additional cabins
- Construction of a 1.5-mile trail from the campground to the visitor service center
- Development of playground equipment
- Asphalt overlay on park roadways
- Electrical service to marina docks

Grahams Island State Park

The 1,122-acre Grahams Island State Park is located on the west shore of Devils Lake. The lake features some of the best fishing in North Dakota, both summer and winter. Amenities at Grahams Island State Park include a boat ramp, bait shop, modern and primitive camping facilities, a playground, picnic shelters, hiking trails, shower facilities, and RV dump station and camping cabins.

Proposed Park Improvements

A state investment of about \$2.2 million is proposed for the following improvements:

- Construction of a 2,400-square-foot visitor services center
- Expansion of the park's bait shop, concession sales and public restrooms
- Asphalt overlay and other roadway upgrades
- Construction of new sidewalks and parking lot

Fort Stevenson State Park

Located on the north shore of Lake Sakakawea, Ft. Stevenson State Park is a popular spot for sportsmen to experience great fishing. The park is home to the Governor's Cup Walleye Fishing Derby, as well as a variety of other fishing tournaments. The park includes a modern campground, sleeping cabins, picnic shelters, shower facilities, a visitor center, interpretive trails and two marinas complete with boat launching facilities and a boat refueling dock. Park visitors can rent boats and canoes, lease boat slips and rent meeting rooms.

Proposed Park Improvements

The following improvements, estimated to cost about \$800,000, are planned for Fort Stevenson State Park:

- Construction of rip rap along the north embankment of Garrison Bay Marina
- Replacement of the park's restroom and shower facilities

Icelandic State Park

On the north shore of Lake Renwick, Icelandic State Park offers visitors access to a wide array of recreational opportunities including, boating, swimming and fishing. Park amenities include picnic areas, full-service campsites, restroom and shower facilities, three sleeping cabins and an RV dump station. Within the 912-acre park are the Pioneer Heritage Center, restored historic buildings and a nature preserve. This early homestead preserves the state's pioneer spirit, while the 200-acre natural wooded area along the Tongue River is a sanctuary for plants, birds and wildlife.

Proposed Park Improvements

A state investment of \$850,000 is proposed for the following improvements:

- Replacement of the park's restroom and shower facilities
- Repair, overlay and chip seal of park roads

Lake Metigoshe State Park

Located in the scenic Turtle Mountains and on the shores of Lake Metigoshe, Lake Metigoshe State Park offers access to a variety of recreational opportunities including camping, hiking, fishing, cross-country skiing, ice fishing and snowmobiling. The 1,551-acre park's amenities include campsites, restroom and shower facilities, sleeping cabins, a boat ramp, RV dump station, playground and picnic shelters. Visitors can rent canoes, kayaks, skis and snowshoes.

Proposed Park Improvements

A state investment of \$1.48 million is proposed for the following improvements:

- Replacement of the park's restroom and shower facilities
- Renovations to the park's historic dining hall and other overnight facilities
- Water and electrical service improvements

Turtle River State Park

The Turtle River State Park is located in a beautiful wooded valley along the Turtle River, about 22 miles west of Grand Forks. The 784-acre park offers year-round recreational activities, including camping, picnicking, fishing and a trail system for hiking, mountain biking and cross country skiing. Other amenities include rustic cabins, bathroom and shower facilities, picnic shelters, a playground, kitchen and dining hall, campsites and an RV dump station.

Proposed Park Improvements

The following park improvements, with an estimated total cost of about \$1.05 million, will be proposed for Turtle River State Park:

- Replacement of the park's existing restroom and shower facilities
- Construction of a park maintenance building

Little Missouri State Park

Located 17 miles north of Killdeer, the Little Missouri State Park offers picturesque scenery of the Badlands. Most of this park is accessible only by foot or horseback. The park's popular activities include hiking and horseback riding on more than 47 miles of trails. The park's offerings include corrals, horse rentals, guide services, campsites, restroom and shower facilities and picnic shelters. The state will invest about \$100,000 to complete the following improvements:

- Upgrades to the park's public restroom and shower facilities
- Trail system upgrades

Sully Creek State Park

Located in the heart of the North Dakota badlands, Sully Creek is just minutes away from historic Medora and Theodore Roosevelt National Park. This seasonal park is open from April 1 to November 30. The park serves as a trail head for visitors accessing the 120-mile long Maah Daah Hey Trail. The park's amenities include horse corrals, bathroom and shower facilities and a campground. The state proposes to add electrical service to 30 campsites at an estimated cost of \$250,000.

Beaver Lake State Park

Beaver Lake State Park, located on the west shore of Beaver Lake about 17 miles southeast of Napoleon, include a swimming beach, boat ramp, campgrounds, three cabins, an RV dump station, restroom and shower facilities and picnic shelters. The state will refurbish the Old Rock Caretaker's Cabin at an estimated cost of \$60,000.