

Lake Vermilion Trail Steering Committee
Kick-off Meeting Notes
12/2/15 – US Forest Service LaCroix Ranger Station

Attendees

Carol Booth – *Wakemup Village Resident, Cook*
Joan Broten – *Office Manager, Minnesota DNR Parks & Trails, Tower City Council*
Eric Fallstrom – *Resident Engineer, St. Louis County Public Works*
Tiffany Fondie – *Lake Vermilion Resort Association*
Russell Habermann – *Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC)*
Eric Hanson – *Pehrson Lodge, Lake Vermilion Resort Association*
Tim Johnson – *State Farm Agent, Cook*
Holly Larson – *National Park Service*
Steven Lotz – *Vermilion Lake Township*
Theresa Martinson – *Administrator, City of Cook*
Lee Peterson – *Greenwood Township*
Wally Refsdal – *Owens Township Board*
Jay Schelde – *President, Lake Vermilion Resort Association*
Sue Wolfe – *Owens Township*
Shirley Woods – *Clerk, Owens Township*

1. Current Status of Trail Effort

- a. Carol Booth summarized the history of previous efforts to plan and implement the Lake Vermilion Trail, highlighting the development of the *Lake Vermilion Trail Plan*, produced by ARDC in 2011, and the *Lake Vermilion Trail Location Study*, produced by SRF in 2013. In 2015, Andy Hubley from ARDC met with individual townships and cities in the Lake Vermilion area to present the idea of forming a joint powers board for the trail.
- b. Background Documents can be accessed online.
 - i. Lake Vermilion Trail Implementation:
<http://www.arrowheadplanning.org/default.asp?PageID=963>
 - ii. *Lake Vermilion Trail Plan* (2011):
<http://www.arrowheadplanning.org/lakevermiliontrailimplementation/Lake%20Vermilion%20Trail%20Plan%202011.pdf>
 - iii. *Lake Vermilion Trail Location Study* (2013):
<http://www.arrowheadplanning.org/lakevermiliontrailimplementation/2013%20Lake%20Vermilion%20Trail%20Location%20Study.pdf>

2. Trail Development

- a. Project Scope: The committee discussed what part of the entire planned trail to focus on for the next year or so. Conclusions:
 - i. The most work has been done on the Cook end, the focus of the 2013 Location Study. Planning work should continue in this area.

- ii. Connecting Cook and the lake is a priority.
- iii. Building a first segment that is a memorable trail, such as the ridge between Vermilion Drive and Wakemup Campground should also be considered.
- iv. The Committee should look beyond the focus area of the 2013 Location Study, and start development at both ends of the planned trail.
- v. The Steering Committee should include the Tower end in the planning process.
- vi. The Steering Committee should look into the feasibility and funding of having a Location Study done for the Tower end, connecting to the new state park's trail system, Tower's existing trail, and the Bois Forte Trail.
- b. Research/Planning Work—Next Steps
 - i. Trail Ownership: Russell and Holly will obtain parcel maps, and talk to the County Engineer's office regarding ownership of road rights-of-way.
 - ii. Separation between vehicle lanes and trail: MnDOT recommends a minimum of 10 ft. between the road edge and the closest trail edge when the road is signed at 40 mph or less, and 20' desired. When the road is signed at 45 mph or more, 24' is the recommended minimum, and 35' is the desired separation distance. The Committee prefers to maximize the separation distance. The trail is envisioned outside of the powerlines, or possibly within the powerline easements.
 - iii. Wetlands: Russell and Holly will discuss trail design and permitting with the County Soil & Water Conservation District and other permitting agencies.
 - iv. Short Term On-Road Bicycle Improvements: Eric Fallstrom will check on the feasibility of adding "Share the Road" signs on Co. Roads 115 and 77, as well as the possibility of scheduling more frequent shoulder sweeping.

3. Building Public and Political Support

- a. Current Support for the Trail
 - i. Greenwood and Breitung Townships and the City of Tower have done community surveys, which show support for trails.
 - ii. Biking/walking trails exist in Tower (5-6 mile loop), Greenwood Township, and the Bois Forte Reservation.
 - iii. The *City of Tower Comprehensive Plan* supports the trail, and the City of Cook is updating its Comprehensive Plan now.
- b. People to Inform of Steering Committee Re-engagement & Progress
 - i. Tom Rukavina, County Commissioner—Theresa will contact.
 - ii. Tom Bakk—Carol and Theresa will contact later, once more progress has been made.
 - iii. Beatty Township Board—Shirley will contact Earl Grano.
- c. Ideas for Building Public Support
 - i. Prepare a fact sheet on the Trail.

- ii. Design a logo: hold a contest, and/or engage the Northwoods Friends of the Arts—Carol will contact the Northwoods Friends of the Arts
- iii. Promote the use of the Co. Rd. 115 shoulder for biking, after signs are installed.

4. Team and Partnership Building

- a. People/Organizations to Add to the Steering Committee
 - i. City of Tower Representatives – Carol will contact
 - ii. Beatty Township (Cathi Hiveley was invited to the 12/2/15 meeting)
 - iii. Additional County Staff (Andy Holak, Recreation Specialist, Land Department, and Mark Kailanen, Lands and Minerals, were on the past Steering Committee. Tyler Lampella, Planner, Land Use Department, has also been recommended.)
 - iv. Cook Lions Club—Carol will contact Jerry Storm.
 - v. Bois Forte (were invited to 12/2 meeting)
 - vi. Camp Vermilion (Joel Abenth and Julie Fogelberg were invited.)
 - vii. Tower Chamber of Commerce —Theresa will contact.
 - viii. Breitung Township
 - ix. Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)—A new SHIP coordinator is to be hired for St. Louis County soon. Russell will contact this person.
 - x. All townships in the trail corridor should have a representative on the Steering Committee.
 - xi. Lake Country Power – Carol will contact to see if they can have a representation on the Steering Committee.

5. Future Management Structure

- a. Options were presented on a handout (attached) and discussed by the committee. Comments/next steps:
 - i. Andy Hubley, ARDC, visited all of the township and city boards to ask about funding and a possible joint powers board. The response was lukewarm. The boards need more specific information to seriously consider the proposal.
 - ii. State Trail Designation—The State Legislature has been reluctant to designate new state trails in recent years due to the backlog of unfinished authorized trails. Holly (and Joan Broten) will inquire further about the feasibility of state designation.
 - iii. Management by Mesabi Trail's St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority?—Russell and Carol will contact Mesabi Trail staff.
 - iv. The Ashawa Ski Club is active in the area. Perhaps that existing group could assist with this project. Or, if they are a non-profit organization, they may consider expanding their mission to include the Lake Vermilion Trail. Carol will contact the club.
 - v. The county does not currently own or manage any trails like this.

6. Funding

- a. Potential government grant sources were presented in a handout (attached). These sources and potential sources for matching funding were discussed.

Comments/next steps:

- i. The ARDC still holds over \$5,000 from the Lake Vermilion Resort Association, which was left over from the Governor's Fishing Opener.
- ii. The committee could host a fundraiser.
- iii. The committee should consider raising private funds to match government sources.
- iv. In order to be eligible for the Parks and Trails Legacy Grants, the group would first have to submit an application for the trail to be designated as "regionally significant." The 2011 Trail Plan and the 2013 Location Study would need to be revised into a "Master Plan" in order to be eligible for the regional designation. Holly will find out the due date for the regional designation application. (Last year they were due June 30th.)
- v. The committee would like to be able to submit a grant application in 2016, if possible.

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6TH, 2016, 12:30 – 2:30 pm, at the Tower DNR Office

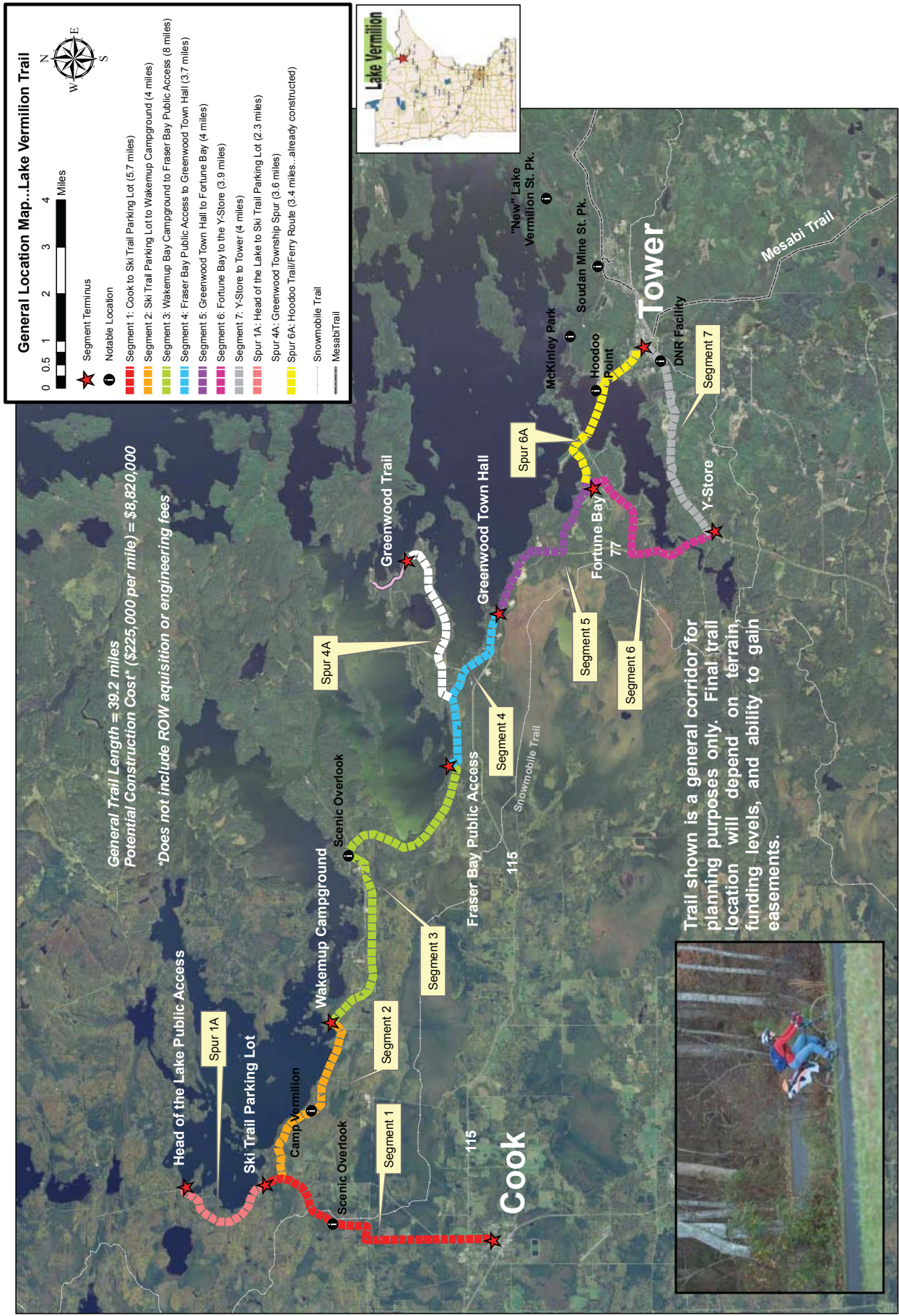


Figure 1: General Location Map

Corridor Segment Characteristics

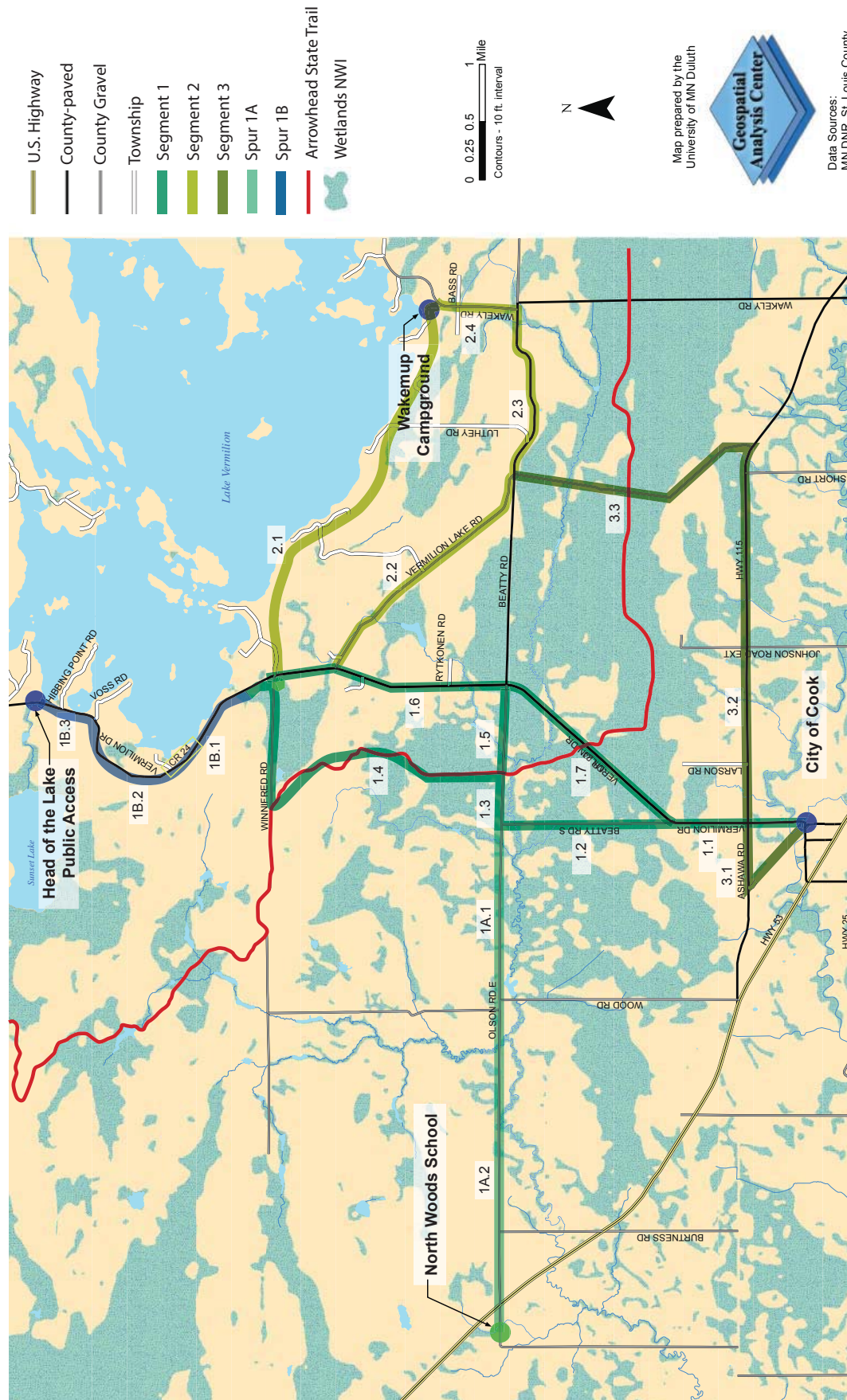


Figure 9: Corridor Segments Map

Lake Vermilion Trail : Feasibility Study Proposed Bike Route Alignment



Figure 10: Preferred Alignment Map

FUNDING

GOVERNMENT FUNDING SOURCES

There are three primary sources of government funding that are commonly used for trail development in Minnesota: state grants, federal grants, and state bonding. Depending on the program, these funding sources can pay for 50 - 100% of trail corridor acquisition, trail development and major rehabilitation costs. It is possible to match federal grants with state grants, but most grant programs want to see some local investment. Some grant programs require a “cash” match, but some allow “in kind” donations of labor and materials to make up all or part of the local match. Communities often commit staff time from Public Works, Parks or Highway Departments, use of construction equipment, and/or materials such as gravel to make up their in kind match. Some grants allow volunteer time to count as match.

PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES

To raise local funds, communities sometimes work with a private foundation or non profit organization to launch a capital campaign, during which they solicit donations from corporations, private foundations, businesses, philanthropic organizations, and individual donors. A list of potential non government funding sources is included in the Appendix.

Consider that in Minnesota in 2012, 72% of total charitable giving came from individuals, 10% came from private foundations, 13% from corporate foundations and giving programs, and 5% from community/public foundations. Given these statistics, it is wise to devise a fundraising campaign for your trail project that includes solicitations from individuals.

Common Government Funding Sources for Trail Acquisition & Development

DNR Administered Reimbursement Programs:

1. **Regional Trail Grants:** For greater MN only, must be of regional or statewide significance, \$5000-\$250,000 grant awards, 25% non state cash match, shares \$1.005 mil total w/Local Trail Connections program, lottery & Trust Fund \$, due the end of March
2. **Local Trail Connections:** For short trail links, \$5000-\$150,000 grant awards, 25% non state cash match, shares \$1.005 mil total w/Regional Trail Grant program, lottery & Trust Fund \$, due the end of March
3. **Parks & Trails Legacy Grants:** For greater MN only; regional or statewide significance reqd.; \$20K min, no max. grant award; no match required, but desired; \$7.5 mil total; sales tax \$, 1st step--regional significance application due June; if accepted, project applications expected to be due late Aug/Sept.
4. **Outdoor Recreation Grants:** For facilities in local parks, including internal park trails; \$35K - 65K average grant awards, 50% cash or in kind match; Fed. LAWCON & State \$, \$379K total, due the end of March
5. **OHV, Snowmobile & Cross Country Skiing Grant-In-Aid:** primarily for maintenance by clubs, but some trail development funded; small grants; gas tax & license fee \$, due the end of Nov.

MnDOT Administered Programs:

6. **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grants (formerly Recreational Trails, Transportation Enhancements & Safe Routes to School):** programs were combined; trail projects now compete with some types of road projects; Fed. Hwy. \$, For MnDOT District 8, 1st step--Letter of Intent due Oct; if invited, applications due Jan.
7. **Safe Routes to School:** New State-funded grant source, 2015-17: \$350K total available for Planning Assistance Grants, due Jan 2016; \$100K available for Mini Grants and Bicycle Fleets, due winter 2016; amount available for Infrastructure grants unknown. SRTS projects also eligible for TAP, above.

State Bonding:

8. **State Bonding:** For all types of capital improvement projects; has primarily funded State Trails, but also some regional & local trails; usually passed in even years; no match; \$18 mil for State Trails, \$4 mil for metro trails, and \$100K for Greater MN trails in 2014; need Senate & House Bill sponsors & widespread legislative support

Potential Management Structures for Trails

Management Type	Pros	Cons
Joint Powers Board Example: Cannon Valley Trail	Shared responsibilities Stable structure Committed funding	Extra layer of government Requires long term commitment Govts may be reluctant to join
Individual City/Township Ownership: each entity responsible for trail within their boundaries Example: ??	Simple structure Less complicated decision making hierarchy	Lack of city/township funds May get inconsistent maintenance & management Some duplication of functions & equipment
New Non Profit Example: Superior Hiking Trail	Separate from governments Focused on Trail	Need committed volunteers Most inconsistent funding Set up takes time and \$ Non profits not eligible for some govt. grants Long term existence not guaranteed
County Ownership: Example: Sunrise Prairie Trail	One existing government Existing maintenance staff	Adding to staff workload Adding to budget commitments
City/County Ownership: Tower & Cook own & manage portions within cities; County owns the rest Example: Blue Mound Trail	Commonly used structure Uses existing systems & staff	Lack of city funds & staff May get inconsistent maintenance & management Some duplication of functions & equipment
State Trail Designation: DNR takes over planning, construction & management Example: Gitchi Gami Trail	State responsible	Loss of local control Long backlog of unbuilt state trails—would likely take longer to get built Legislature may not approve any new state trails Local lobbying & land acquisition still needed
Public Entity and Non-profit Association: Government constructs & manages trail Non-profit assists with events, fundraising & maintenance Example: Mesabi Trail	Commonly used structure for parks and trails More long term stability with government commitment Non profits can raise funds, etc. with fewer restrictions	Memo of Agreement needed Two entities may not agree Two decision making hierarchies
Addition to Existing Mesabi Trail Structure	Railroad Authority & Non Profit experienced in trail management & construction Stable structure Well known organizations	Authority & Non Profit would need to change mission & legal documents Adding to workload & costs of existing staff & volunteers
Other?		

FINAL COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

The following tables contain the data compiled from the Greenwood Township 2015 Comprehensive Plan Community Survey. The survey contained 20 questions regarding planning and community issues identified by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee at open meetings in January, February, March and April of 2015. A blank copy of the survey is included in Appendix A of this report. The 20 questions contained 98 potential community issues and 217 possible responses to the questions.

A total of 1,948 survey forms were mailed to Greenwood property owners and residents on May 18th, 2015, using a master list of tax payers obtained from the St. Louis County Auditor. The list was edited to remove duplicates for property owners with multiple properties, public lands owned by federal, state and county governments. The U.S. Postal Service returned 26 survey forms as "undeliverable".

A total of 829 surveys were returned by the June 15, 2015 deadline and processed. Seventeen (17) surveys were rejected because they were substantially incomplete or unreadable. Some responders skipped part of a question and others only completed part of the survey form. This accounts for the variation in numbers for total responses to questions. The survey had a 43% response rate (1,905/814) from the community.

QUESTION 1. YOUR STATUS AS A RESIDENT (check all that apply)

YR RD	SEA	OWN BUS	OWN BUS & RES	OWN UNDEV LAND	OTHER DESCRIBE
470	487	12	15	84	5

QUESTION 2. IN WHAT AREA OF GREENWOOD DO YOU LIVE OR OWN PROPERTY? (SEE MAP IN APPENDIX A)

AREA A	AREA B	AREA C	AREA D
100	49	239	404

QUESTION 3. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU OR YOUR FAMILY LIVED OR OWNED PROPERTY IN GREENWOOD?

Greenwood has many families that have owned property on Lake Vermilion for 20, 30, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 and 100 years or more. The average length of property ownership by survey responders is 34.006 years.

QUESTION 4. HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD? HOW MANY UNDER 18? HOW MANY OVER 60?

The most prevalent household size in Greenwood is two persons both over 60. Next would be one person households also over 60 years of age.

TOTAL PEOPLE IN HOUSE HOLD	NUMBER UNDER 18	NUMBER OVER 60
1,975	219	960

QUESTION 5. DOES YOUR PROPERTY HAVE SHORELINE FRONTAGE ON LAKE VERMILION? IF "NO" DOES YOUR PROPERTY HAVE DEEDED ACCESS RIGHTS TO LAKE VERMILION?

YES HAVE LAKE ACCESS	N O	DEEDED ACCESS YES	DEEDED ACCESS NO
740	55	8	43

QUESTION 6. IS YOUR PROPERTY ON:

COUNTY ROAD	220
U.S. FOREST SERVICE ROAD	6
DNR ROAD	4
TOWNSHIP ROAD	77
PRIVATE ROAD	319
PROPERTY IS WATER ACCESS ISLAND	113
PROPERTY IS ON MAINLAND WATER ACCESS ONLY	54

QUESTION 7. WHAT ARE THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED BY GREENWOOD TOWNSHIP?

ISSUE	Strong Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strong disagree
Off Lake Housing for young families	27	86	281	203	170
Off Lake Housing for seniors	41	125	266	181	149
Off Lake Summer Recreation	55	174	227	169	127
Light Pollution/dark sky	185	189	147	120	110
Preserving and Protecting Lake Vermilion water quality	549	202	22	12	13
Preserving the visual character of Lake Vermilion	481	214	55	31	18
Public Sewer Systems for problem areas	183	229	203	97	68
New lakeshore development	110	181	196	182	111
Outdoor amplified music and announcements	127	155	156	176	157
Illegal boat motor exhaust systems	275 (471)	196	132	94 (165)	71

QUESTION #8. LAKE VERMILION IS SUBJECT TO NUTRIENT POLLUTION FROM NATURAL AND MANMADE SOURCES. WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD GREENWOOD TAKE TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY?

POSSIBLE ACTIONS	Strong Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strong Disagree
Require stormwater runoff control & treatment for new development	272	230	151	86	48
Encourage existing development to construct stormwater retention facilities	136	232	220	129	68
Encourage restoration of native shoreland vegetation on developed lots	189	265	128	125	92
Seek alternative wastewater collection and treatment systems for problem areas	176	333	167	49	52
Preserve publically owned undeveloped shoreland areas	336	275	104	42	37

QUESTION 9. SOME LAKE SHORE PROPERTIES HAVE POTENTIAL FOR REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THAT COULD INVOLVE MULTI-FAMILY OR HIGH DENSITY HOUSING. HOW SHOULD GREENWOOD REGULATE THESE TYPES OF PROPERTIES UNDER ITS ZONING CODE?

POSSIBLE REGULATION CRITERIA	YES	NO	Don't Know	Neutral
Allow redevelopment but maintain existing housing unit density	399	169	159	70
Prohibit variances from height and setback requirements without screening and stormwater runoff mitigation	422	165	133	65
Require restoration of native shoreland vegetation on developed Lots	431	191	88	79
Require new development to have stormwater retention & treatment for the entire property	396	167	165	60
Require redevelopment to maintain the character of existing adjacent developed single family properties	520	116	102	53

QUESTION 10. WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD GREENWOOD TAKE TO ENHANCE OFF LAKE AND WINTER RECREATION FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS?

POSSIBLE ACTIONS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Support Constructing a non-motorized paved trail for hiking and biking between Cook & Tower	191	(428) 237	109	159	(260) 101
Encourage on or off road hiking and biking paths	204	(507) 303	105	106	(181) 75
Expand recreational facilities at the Town Hall property	77	134	255	194	129
Expand winter recreation with fat tire and XC ski trails on and off lake, ice skating trails (on lake)	102	215	214	157	101

QUESTION 11. WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD GREENWOOD TAKE TO BETTER SERVE ITS AGING POPULATION?

POSSIBLE ACTIONS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Encourage construction of off lake assisted living facilities in Greenwood	80	224	214	185	106
Rely on in-home services	66	293	292	85	39
Promote alternative transportation options like van pool and dial a ride	72	343	206	111	55
Enhance emergency medical services provided by Greenwood Fire Department 1 st Responders	155	337	174	81	39

QUESTION 12 IS IT IMPORTANT THAT GREENWOOD HAVE A 24 HOUR HOSPITAL AND EMERGENCY SERVICES AVAILABLE?

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	NEUTRAL
324	317	26	127

QUESTION 13. SHOULD GREENWOOD JOIN THE COOK HOSPITAL TAX DISTRICT? (FOR EXAMPLE THE 2015 COOK HOSPITAL TAX FOR A GREENWOOD PROPERTY VALUED AT \$300,000 WOULD BE \$297.48 IF GREENWOOD WAS A MEMBER)

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	NEUTRAL
84	481	152	73

QUESTION 14. ARE YOU AWARE OF THE LAKE VERMILION PLAN PREPARED BY ST. LOUIS COUNTY (ADOPTED BY GREENWOOD TOWNSHIP) AND ITS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESERVING WATER QUALITY AND THE CHARACTER OF THE LAKE?

YES	NO	NOT SURE
279	381	121

QUESTION 15. THE LAKE VERMILION PLAN CONTAINS DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO PRESERVE WATER QUALITY, REGULATE NEW DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT OF SHORELAND PROPERTIES. SHOULD GREENWOOD IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES OF THE LAKE VERMILION PLAN REGARDING THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:

POSSIBLE ACTIONS	YES	NO	UNSURE
Standards for redevelopment of resorts and new Planned Unit developments	466	110	195
Requirements for Stormwater retention and treatment	360	171	239
Strict Adherence to wastewater treatment system requirements	462	118	195
Preservation and restoration of native shoreland vegetation	397	190	184
Vegetative screening and the use of colors and materials to preserve the character of the lake	355	200	213

QUESTION 16. SHOULD GREENWOOD TOWNSHIP ADVOCATE STRONGER ST. LOUIS COUNTY AND DNR EFFORTS TO:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Control the introduction of invasive species to Lake Vermilion	539	188	32	22	13
Enforce regulations for boat motor exhaust systems	360	(553)193	127	79	(121) 42
Tighten regulations on fishing tournaments	245	168	225	95	51

QUESTION 17. SHOULD GREENWOOD REQUIRE OUTSIDE "DARK SKY" LIGHTING FIXTURES? IF YOU ANSWERED "YES" SHOULD DARK SKY LIGHTING APPLY TO :

APPLY ONLY TO NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS; APPLY TO ALL PROPERTIES

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Should Greenwood require outside dark sky lighting fixtures	299	300	188
Should apply to only new construction and additions	88		

Should apply to all properties	209		
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QUESTION 18. SHOULD PLANNING IN GREENWOOD ADDRESS ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ISSUES?

	YES	NO	UNSURE	NO OPINION
Publication of a township newsletter	270	303	130	85
Allow conversion of single family homes and resorts to Multiple family housing	138	443	164	29
Allow property owners to rent out their lakeshore properties	448	181	119	35
Enforce ordinances regarding dilapidated buildings and Open outside storage of junk	571	116	90	25
Consider becoming a city	33	542	167	42
Acquire and set aside lands for road extensions and connections	141	359	236	43
Acquire land and develop a cemetery	48	505	132	85

QUESTION 19. WHAT TYPE OF INTERNET ACCESS DO YOU HAVE AT YOUR HOME/BUSINESS IN GREENWOOD?

NONE	299
DIAL UP	68
DSL	0
BROADBAND DSL	179
BROADBAND SATELITE	80
BROADBAND/CELL PROVIDER	150

QUESTION 19A. WHAT TYPE OF INTERNET ACCESS DO YOU WANT AT YOUR HOME/BUSINESS?

NONE	143
DIAL UP	20
BROADBAND DSL	188
BROADBAND/CABLE	106
BROADBAND SATELITE	81
BROADBAND/CELL PHONE PROVIDER	151

QUESTION 20. PLEASE PROVIDE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE HERE OR ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER. THANK YOU.

SURVEY FORMS WITH WRITTEN COMMENTS OR LETTERS ATTACHED	295
SURVEY FORMS WITHOUT WRITTEN COMMENTS OF LETTERS	490