

Existing Facilities

Numerous recreational opportunities, both passive and active, are available in the county for residents and visitors to enjoy. Municipal, county, state and federal governmental entities contribute to the current supply of park and recreation facilities shown on Map 6 in the pocket insert. In addition, the private sector operates commercial outdoor facilities that include several golf courses, gun (trap/skeet) clubs and rifle ranges, and an outdoor amusement park. The natural environment also offers recreational activities such as hiking, sightseeing, fishing, boating and canoeing.

Minnehaha County maintains two parks, McHardy and Wall Lake, under the direction of the County Park Board, an appointed citizen advisory group, and the County Commission. In both instances, the land for these facilities was given to the county for park purposes. On a historical basis, the county has not actively pursued the purchase of park and recreation land. Rather, its role as a recreation provider has evolved as a result of individuals who donated property for public use.

Both parks are centered around the natural environment. McHardy Park encompasses 38 acres along the shoreline of Split Rock Creek. A foot bridge spans the river, making more of the park accessible to visitors. The park is a regional attraction for families and large groups where picnicking is the main activity. Two picnic shelters, play equipment and a ball field are provided and the river is accessible for fishing. Sledding is a popular winter activity. The park has a central water supply system but lacks modern restroom facilities. A large part of the park is within the Split Rock Creek flood plain.

Wall Lake Park consists of 25 acres along the south shore of the 220 acre lake. The park also provides approximately 800 feet of beach. A picnic shelter and play equipment are available along with a modern bathroom. Although the county has owned the property since the late 1940's, park improvements did not begin until 1985. The Girl Scouts used the rear portion of the property exclusively since the 1950's and continue to occupy this area under an agreement with the county. The summer cabin constructed in 1933 by the Lyon family, donors of the property, still stands on the property. The stone structure was renovated in 1993 to preserve its historical character and functions as a shelter for group activities. A large part of the park is undeveloped.

Wall Lake beach is a popular attraction simply because it is the only facility of its kind in the county. General park improvements, most notably maintenance and upkeep of the grounds and increased law enforcement, have made the facility into a more inviting attraction. Restoration of the lake was completed in 1993, enhancing water quality through dredging and conservation practices implemented within the watershed and increasing the desirability of the beach for swimming. A sanitary district was also constructed to replace the residential septic systems around the lake. Due to the lack of water based recreation resources in the southeast region of the state, beach usage is extremely heavy and parking facilities are inadequate at times to accommodate the demand.

The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks maintains Palisade State Park along Split Rock Creek south of Garretson, the Big Sioux Recreation Area on the western edge of Brandon, and Beaver Creek Nature Center west of Valley Springs. The state also provides a boat ramp and parking area at Wall Lake. Both the state and city of Dell Rapids own property along the Dells of the Big Sioux south of Dell Rapids. Several acres of land located throughout the western part of the county have been acquired by the state for use as public hunting areas.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service owns several acres in western Minnehaha County for public hunting and fishing access.