

Written by  
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### **Park Board approves Phase III plan following public input**

It won't be long before visitors to Theodore Wirth Regional Park will be able to take a sunset stroll on a boardwalk along Wirth Lake, listen to an outdoor concert overlooking the lake and get a glimpse of urban wildlife. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners (MPRB) at its July 21 meeting approved the Wirth Beach Phase III site improvements. Approval follows recommendations from the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), and feedback from public hearings held on June 16 and on July 7.

The project, officially called Wirth Beach Phase 3, includes the area surrounding the lake and the picnic area south of Glenwood Ave. The approved plan includes a trail loop around the lake and family picnic areas with shelters for 250, 50 and 25 people. A promenade along the east side of the lake will feature a performance area, restrooms and concessions, art and play features and lake shore overlooks. Eco-friendly parking lots will accommodate visitors to the park. The western lakeshore focuses on supporting wildlife habitat and preserving natural areas.

Water quality will benefit from vegetative management and wetland restoration as well as a new storm pond. Invasive species removal and bank improvement along Bassett's Creek will also take place.

The CAC has been studying the proposal since March, working with MPRB staff and consultants to gauge park visitor goals and interest in the proposed designs. The plan approved was the CAC's recommendation.

"We appreciate all the hard work that has gone into this project and are excited to see the improvements completed in the next year," said Anita Tabb, MPRB District 4 Commissioner. The overall Wirth improvements began with Phase I in 2005 with the renovation of the beach house and utility work. Phase II began in 2009 and includes a new playground installed this summer, relocated volleyball courts, a half basketball court, trails, a concrete terrace overlooking the beach, and a 400-ft. floating boardwalk along the swimming area. Collaboration with existing activities including cross country skiing, mountain bike trail connections, and the JD Rivers' Children's Garden will continue in the design development phase.

Work to be completed this fall includes the Wirth Beach parking lot, the arc boardwalk, wetland and storm pond work and trail connections. The boardwalk along the north edge of the lake is expected to be constructed this winter.

The majority of the construction will be in the spring and summer of 2011, including the promenade, trail paving, parking and picnic shelter construction. Localized construction will be along the lakeshore from Washburn Ave. west along Glenwood and Theodore Wirth parkways. Closures and detours will be signed as needed.

Future amenities may include an interpretive display, a public art feature, fitness equipment on the trails and gateways.

The MPRB currently has committed \$4.69 million to the Phase II and III improvements. Funding

## Wirth Lake Area improvements focus on water quality, natural resources and picnic areas

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is through the Parks and Trails Fund of the Legacy Amendment and Metropolitan Council bonds.

An associated project will focus on the Wirth Picnic Pavilion. On July 21, the Board approved allocating \$500,000 to fund the exterior restoration and interior renovation of the pavilion. Last fall the Board also approved partnering with the Minneapolis Parks Foundation to fundraise for the project. The building improvements include the kitchen, bathrooms, and mechanical, and will provide ADA access inside as well as an improved accessible route to the building with a paved drive lane and accessible parking near the building.

### About the Park

The largest regional park in the Minneapolis Park System, **Wirth Park** is 759 acres, including 82 acres of water and 280 acres of golf courses. The park is located west of downtown Minneapolis in Golden Valley and Minneapolis.

Amenities in the Wirth Lake area include a supervised beach, volleyball courts, playground, picnic facilities, reservable indoor picnic pavilion, trails for walking, biking, off-road biking and skiing, and a fishing pier. A Swiss chalet-style clubhouse and 18-hole and Par 3 golf courses double as the site of the Wirth Winter Recreation Area featuring cross country skiing, snowboarding, sledding and tubing in the north half of the park. Natural resources are featured in the South Wirth area which includes the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary, the Quaking Bog, Birch Pond, soft numerous surface trails. The winding Wirth Parkway ties the three areas together.

The park is named after Theodore Wirth, the superintendent of Minneapolis parks from 1906-1935 who was a leading figure in shaping the parks system we all enjoy today.