

# North Arm Public Access redesign

## Project description and timeline

Hennepin County is redesigning the North Arm Public Access on Lake Minnetonka in Orono. This project will repair important infrastructure and improve access for all users. Final design and engagement activities will be completed in early 2025 and construction is expected to begin in fall 2025.

Planned improvements include:

- Infrastructure maintenance: repair structural deterioration at the access point and asphalt condition, maintenance for stormwater management.
- Safety and efficiency improvements, including:
  - Realigning the boat launch so that it doesn't require a backing turn.
  - Angling the parking stalls to improve navigation in the parking lot.
  - Adding a vertical access point to separate commercial use at launch.
- Increased accessibility: Adding lake access for users in human-powered crafts like canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards.
- Making improvements for shoreline anglers, including better accessibility, sightlines, and lighting and "pods" that extend out into the lake to improve the fishing experience.
- Incorporating climate and resiliency features, including redesigning the stormwater management system and adding solar.

## North Arm Public Access redesign concept plan



## Engagement activities

Hennepin County held an open house for the community on October 2, 2024, to share information about the project and gather feedback on the initial design concepts. Ten people attended, including residents who live near the access and representatives from the Lake Minnetonka Association, Lake Minnetonka Conservation District, Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Comments were also received via email from five additional individuals following the open house.

The county encouraged residents and partners to provide feedback via direct mail, message boards and outreach at the public access, emails to stakeholder contacts, and a news release shared through community newspapers.



Attendees shared feedback on topics including the access design, fishing, boating, parking, signage, and waste management.

## Feedback on initial design concepts

The following is a summary of feedback received during and after the open house, along with a summary of how the county will incorporate suggestions into the detailed design concept or future management of the public access. Engagement opportunities will be offered in early 2025 to gather feedback from the public on the detailed design concept.

### **Parking and traffic flow**

Attendees shared comments and concerns about the number and type of parking spaces available, what designated uses are needed for parking spaces, and how to ensure they are used for those specific purposes. Attendees asked the county to use arrows and signage to manage traffic flow but to also limit the number of signs to avoid clutter.

The county is:

- Maximizing the number of vehicle and trailer parking spaces available and ensuring those spaces can accommodate the current size of vehicles and trailers, which have both grown since this access was last designed.
- Differentiating the drive aisle and parking spaces with distinct materials – colored aggregate for the parking spaces and black asphalt for the drive aisle. Thermoplastic paint will be used on the asphalt to guide users, manage traffic flow, and further differentiate the parking space boundaries.
- Adding up to three designated "official use only" parking spaces near the site entrance for use by Hennepin County, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, City of Orono Police Department, or other public staff for official duties; as well as have a minimum of eight parking spaces designated for fishing use only.

- Communicating specific uses of parking spaces through signage. Enforcement of parking designation will remain at the discretion of the City of Orono Police Department.
- Limiting sign use when feasible. A freestanding sign board will relay important information.

### **Site access and use**

Attendees expressed both support and concern about the types of access allowed, specifically related to commercial use and rentals.

The county is:

- Facilitating all allowed uses at a public access point as defined by MN Statute 86A.05, including commercial and rental pontoon watercraft.
- Creating a vertical access point to allow current commercial users to more safely share the site with recreational users. The county does not anticipate the vertical access point will increase commercial use at this site.
- Installing signage to prohibit staging and any other site uses inconsistent with designated uses, such as allowing single vehicles to park in vehicle/trailer stalls.

### **Amenities**

Attendees suggested a small shelter be constructed for inspectors at the access. They also asked about the availability of restrooms.

The county is:

- Adding an 8'x8' permanent canopy shelter next to the lake access ramps, pending available project funds.
- Providing two ADA accessible portable toilets on the site.

### **Aquatic invasive species prevention**

Attendees suggested the county include a small cleaning station in addition to a more robust aquatic invasive species (AIS) decontamination system, Clean in, Clean out signage, and a porta-potty for AIS inspector use. Attendees also asked for space and infrastructure to capture and/or dry out sediment and invasive aquatic plants and seeds around access entry and exit points.

The county is:

- Providing a small cleaning station with AIS prevention tools installed near the permanent AIS decontamination station to provide an additional AIS removal option for users. The final location of the cleaning station will be determined once the site layout is finalized and the use patterns and traffic flow are identified.
- Installing Clean In, Clean Out signage and pavement graphics to inform and remind users of proper watercraft cleaning practices.
- Incorporating appropriate materials and infrastructure to provide space for AIS to be captured and/or to dry out.
- Installing a system and process for capturing plants and seeds, pending feasibility.

## **Floodplain impacts**

Attendees asked about moving the fishing piers and walkways back to reduce floodplain impacts.

The county is:

- Increasing accessibility for shoreline anglers by locating the fishing piers on the water's edge.
- Working with permitting authorities, including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, to gain approval for work within Hendrickson channel, and therefore within the floodplain.

## **Waste management**

Attendees expressed concerns about some users causing garbage cans to overflow and suggested implementing a pack in, pack out policy.

The county is:

- Implementing a pack in, pack out site policy. Signage will be installed to communicate this policy. No dumpsters will be provided on site. Containers for trash and recycling will be available in the fishing area only.

## **Project contacts**

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