

News Release

DNR completes strategic acquisition for Mill Towns State Trail in Rice County

July 21, 2016

The Department of Natural Resources has acquired nearly 6 miles of railroad property for the Mill Towns State Trail between Faribault and Dundas in Rice County.

“We haven’t had an opportunity like this – to acquire such a long segment of trail at one time from a single landowner - since we purchased 6.5 miles of railroad corridor for Brown’s Creek State Trail in 2012,” said Erika Rivers, director of Minnesota state parks and trails. “Once completed, the Mill Towns State Trail is going to be very popular because of its scenic beauty and its proximity to the Twin Cities.”

The DNR purchased the alignment from the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for \$810,000. With the new acquisition, the DNR now owns 9 of the 11 miles of trail right-of-way needed to connect Faribault and Dundas. The DNR is working with trail partners and landowners to secure the remaining 2 miles of right-of-way.

Funding for this project was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Additional funding came from bonding and the Parks and Trails Fund, created after voters approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment in November 2008. The Parks and Trails Fund receives 14.25 percent of the three-eighths percent sales tax revenue that may only be spent to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.

“We are very excited for the opportunity this provides to connect the communities of Northfield, Dundas and Faribault in Rice County,” said Peggy Prowe, a resident of Northfield and member of the Friends of the Mill Towns Trail. “It will be a wonderful place for walkers, bikers and other trail users, both local and statewide, to experience what this area and its communities have to offer.”

The Mill Towns State Trail was authorized by the Minnesota Legislature in 2000. When complete, the trail will follow the Cannon River Valley for 25 miles from Faribault to Cannon Falls, passing through Dundas, Northfield, Waterford and Randolph. The trail also will connect 41 miles of the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail with the 20-mile Cannon Valley Regional Trail.

Five miles of the trail have been paved so far. A 3-mile segment between Dundas and Northfield was constructed by the city of Northfield in the late 1990s. A 2-mile segment, under construction between Lake Byllesby Regional Park and Cannon Falls, will be completed this fall. In addition, 2 miles of trail in the city of Faribault have been constructed in anticipation of eventually extending the trail to Dundas.

For more information, visit the [DNR website](#) or contact the DNR Information Center at info.dnr@state.mn.us or 888-646-6367 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.