

### About the Committee

#### 2025 Members:

- Penny Macik - District 1
- Louise A. Kiecker - District 2
- Calvin R. Aarons - District 3
- Stephen Altmann - District 4
- Larry A. Eekhoff - District 5
- Brad Bastian - At-Large
- Dave Fischer - At-Large
- OPEN - Youth At-Large
- OPEN - Youth At- Large
- David Hamre - County Commissioner
- Greg Snow - County Commissioner
- Jesse Diehn - Parks Manager



The Parks and Trails Committee has nine members. Each member is appointed by the Renville County Board of Commissioners. One member comes from each of the five districts. Four members serve at-large, including two youth members. In 2025, the two youth positions were open.

Members serve three-year terms and can serve up to nine years in a row. Committee members are paid \$75 per meeting, plus mileage.

The committee meets four times a year. Its main job is to advise the County Board about parks and trails. This includes:

- Reviewing and recommending changes to park rules and plans
- Holding public hearings about park land and improvements
- Advising on park and trail planning, maintenance, and funding
- Recommending camping fees

# 2025 Committee Highlights

In 2025, the committee:

- Recommended updates to rules for the 2025 Parks Archery Hunt
- Recommended the 2026 Woodcutting Program
- Reviewed and suggested improvements for Skalbekken County Park
- Helped form a special committee to guide improvements at Skalbekken
- Recommended camping fee changes for Lake Allie County Park

## Parks Department Overview

The Renville County Parks Department takes care of seven county parks. These parks include:

- Over 1,300 acres of land
- 77 campsites
- More than 26 miles of trails

Staff also maintain several county properties, including the Government Services Center, Public Works buildings, the Fairgrounds, and Birch Coulee Battlefield.

### Staff

The department has:

- 1 full-time Parks Manager
- 2 full-time Park Maintenance Workers
- 2 seasonal workers (May–August 2025)

Highway Department staff also help when extra support is needed.

### Daily Work

Park staff focus on keeping parks clean, safe, and enjoyable. This includes:

- Mowing grass
- Cleaning shelters and restrooms
- Maintaining campsites and horse bunkers
- Keeping reservations current at campsites
- Routine repairs and upkeep



## 2025 Projects and Accomplishments

In addition to regular maintenance, staff completed many projects:

- Created a Joint Powers Agreement with the State to invest \$1.55 million into Skalbekken for horse-related improvements
  - Formed a special committee for Skalbekken upgrades
  - Oversaw restroom and camper cabin projects at Lake Allie
  - Finished interior work and built furniture for the Lake Allie camper cabin
  - Installed new shelter ceilings at Beaver Falls and Vicksburg
  - Repaired shelter roofs
  - Added new camping pads at Birch Coulee
  - Hosted the 4th Annual Outdoor Education Day at Birch Coulee
  - Improved fishing access and cleared overgrown areas
  - Repaired and stained picnic tables and benches
  - Provided firewood for campers
  - Attended the Renville County Fair
  - Represented Renville County in Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails
  - Drive snowplow routes for the Highway Department when needed
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## Upper MN Valley Trail Riders Association

Volunteers from five saddle clubs helped support local trails:

- Amigo Riders
- Granite Valley
- Hawk Creek
- Redwood Valley
- Triple T

In 2025, volunteers reported 63 hours of service.

### Donations

- Firewood donations totaled \$451



# 2025 Park Usage

The Parks Department tracks camping through permits.

In 2025:

- 788 total camping reservations
- 3,526 occupied campsite days
- 14 shelter reservations
- \$67,174 in total camping fees collected



## Camping Rates (2025)

- Rustic Camping (all parks): \$20 per night
- Water & Electric Sites (Birch Coulee and Lake Allie):
  - \$27 per night
  - \$150 per week
  - \$550 per month
  - \$1,630 seasonal (Lake Allie only)

## Park-by-Park Summary

<u>Park</u>	<u>Camping Fees</u>	<u>Occupied Days</u>	<u>Shelter Reservations</u>
Lake Allie	\$ 30,036	1,703	0
Beaver Falls	\$ 11,118	541	3
Birch Coulee	\$ 11,478	606	6
Vicksburg	\$ 7,354	345	4
Skalbekken	\$ 6368	289	1
Mack Lake	\$ 820	42	0
<b><u>Totals</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 67,174</u></b>	<b><u>3526</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>

## Groomed Winter Trails

Since 2021, the Parks Department and the EDA have worked together to groom winter trails at Beaver Falls and Skalbekken. Each Park has about 1.6 miles of groomed trail.

Due to low snowfall in winter 2025, trails were not groomed and usage was not tracked.

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## Marketing and Community Outreach

The Parks Department worked with the Renville County EDA to promote the parks.

### Marketing Efforts Included:

- Advertising in the Minnesota Trail Riders Association newsletter (5 issues, 1,000 subscribers)
  - Weekly Facebook posts (1,848 followers)
  - Promoting the Renville County tourism poster
  - Hosting a selfie station at the Renville County Fair
  - Collecting emails for future park promotions
  - Participating in Southern Minnesota Tourism Association meetings
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## Outdoor Education Day

The fourth annual Outdoor Education Day was held at Birch Coulee County Park. 160 students from GFW, BLH-S, and RCW attended.

Community partners included:

- EDA
- Sheriff's Office
- Environmental Services
- Emergency Management
- SWCD
- Hawk Creek
- Master Gardeners
- RRRSWA
- Public Health/SHIP
- Pheasants Forever
- Pact for Families Collaborative



Students learned about outdoor safety, conservation, and recreation.

## Looking Ahead

In 2025, Renville County Parks continued to grow and improve. Investments in park facilities, strong volunteer support, and community partnerships helped make the parks welcoming for everyone.

The Parks and Trails Committee and Parks Department look forward to continuing improvements in 2026 and beyond.

