

Spirit Mt Designation Application Contents

General Tab

This is where the application process starts and an application number assigned, and all other tabs in the designation application, master plan and funding application flow from this tab. All fields are required.

- Park or Trail Name: Spirit Mountain Recreation Area
- District - 1
- Location Description:
- Park or trail address 9500 Spirit Mountain Place, Duluth MN
- GPS coordinates of park or trail [Autofills based on the address of the facility]
- Map of Park or Trail [Upload File Button]
- Facility Website: <http://spiritmt.com/>
- Lead Applicant Organization City of Duluth
- Have you applied for regional designation for this park or trail before? NO
- Lead contact person: Jim Filby Williams
- Title: Director of Public Administration
- Mailing address (lead applicant)
- Phone: 218-730-5319
- Email: jfwilliams@DuluthMN.gov
- Joint Applicants [Up to 5, all must be a city or county in Greater Minnesota, with resolutions included]
- Other project supporters [Please list other project supporters such as advocacy or business groups, individuals, other units of government, etc.]

Description Tab

Regional Significance Statement [Provide a short "elevator speech" describing the regional significance of the park or trail. Focus on the core vision, essential qualities and primary public values the park or trail offers. **75 Words Max.**]

Spirit Mountain Recreation Area is a family friendly recreation area that provides the entire spectrum of four season adventure experiences from nature-based to built within the context of the compelling natural resources of the Lake Superior watershed. Winter activities: downhill and Nordic skiing, snow tubing, fat tire mountain biking, snowshoeing and snowmobiling. Summer activities: an adventure park (mountain coaster, zip line, mini-golf, jumping pillow) as well as camping, lift serve downhill mountain biking, cross country mountain biking, hiking, and disc golf.

Classification [One of five possible classes from Strategic Plan]

Special Recreational Feature - Regional Park

Overview/Description of Park or Trail (**500 word limit**) [Overview/description of park or trail should include:

Overview

Spirit Mountain overlooks majestic Lake Superior and the St. Louis River Estuary. Natural beauty abounds; an overlook provides views of Lake Superior, the St. Louis River, and the Aerial Lift Bridge. Visitors can take a round-trip scenic chairlift ride just for the fabulous views, or disembark at the mountain's base to enjoy lunch or dinner at the Grand Avenue Chalet.

Groups served

Spirit Mt. is family friendly, serving all ages including adventure park activities that are kid friendly. User groups that support and utilize Spirit Mountain include the Duluth Cross Country Ski Club (DXC), Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS (mountain biking)), and the Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA). The Duluth XC Ski Club (DXC) operates and staffs the Spirit Mountain Nordic Center, grooms the trails and coordinates its use with user groups.

Facilities

- Winter Recreation includes downhill skiing and snowboarding, snow tubing, Nordic (cross-country) skiing, fat tire biking, snowshoeing and snowmobiling. The Timber Twister aerial coaster operates in the winter unless it is extremely cold.

89 acres of skiable terrain has a capacity of 2,460 skiers; 26 marked trails have a total length of 6.1 miles. Four terrain parks and a half-pipe provide interest for the more advanced skiers and snowboarders.

- Summer Recreation includes tent and RV camping; an adventure park complete with an Alpine Coaster, Zip Line, Jumping Pillow; a 9-hole Mini Golf Course; a mountain bike park that includes multiple a downhill trails, pump tracks, skills park/jump lines, and an all-weather cross country course; hiking trails, cross-country mountain biking trails, and disc golf.

- Main Chalet on top and the Grand Avenue Chalet on the bottom are open year round. On-site accommodation is offered at the Mountain Villas. These provide fee-for-service amenities that supplement and sustain Spirit Mountain: weddings and banquets account for 11% of revenues.

Programs

Spirit Mountain lessons, programs, and camps for ages 3 and above provide skills and safety lessons for skiers and snowboarders of all ability levels to help visitors become more confident on the slopes. Freeski Camp teaches safety while introducing freeski/freestyle snowboarding skills.

COGGS sponsors programs to build biking skills and get families outdoors and moving. Many programs encourage underserved groups to participate. COGGS partners annually with Kraus Anderson to host the Duluth Bike Festival.

DXC sponsors programs to build Nordic ski (skate and traditional) skills with activities that build technique, stamina, and confidence in all ages. Events include everything from a 10km race for the competitive skiers, to lessons and free ski demos for beginners, and ski soccer and obstacle courses for kids. In summer, hill bounding, ski walking, and roller skiing helps with strength and cross country skiing coordination and technique. Please see Attachment X for programs and events.

Relationship to other parks and trails

Spirit Mountain is the place where multiple, multi-use trails come together. Spirit Mt. connects to the Duluth Traverse Trail, Superior Hiking Trail, Western Waterfront Trail, DWP multi-use trail and Willard Munger State Trail State Trail and will eventually connect to the Cross City Trail. These trails in turn connect to state, regional and city parks. A new road will link Grand Ave to the St. Louis River directly across from the lower entrance to Spirit mountain and link to the proposed paddle center access on the river. Snowmobile trails connect to 10 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in Duluth that connect to 20,000 miles of Minnesota trails and 25,000 Wisconsin trails.

Total Acreage or Mileage

Acres = 12701207 acres - 200 acres are built (trails, infrastructure, ski runs, parking, and chalets)

Acquisition and Development Status

XX% complete

Facility Listing Tab

Facility Listing

All Applicants are strongly encouraged to attach (tab 6) photos, graphics, or samples of existing or proposed facilities and features.

Clearly label all photos, including whether they exist or are proposed.

Facility Listing (Check all that apply):	<u>Existing Facilities</u>	<u>Proposed Facilities</u>
	X Camping-cross-section of camper types	X Camping-cross-section of camper types
	<input type="checkbox"/> Electric/water/sewer RV sites	<input type="checkbox"/> Electric/water/sewer RV sites
	X Electric/water campsites	X Electric/water campsites
	<input type="checkbox"/> Electric campsites	<input type="checkbox"/> Electric campsites
	X Non-electric campsites	X Non-electric campsites
	X Group campsites	X Group campsites
	X Tent only sites	<input type="checkbox"/> Tent only sites
	<input type="checkbox"/> Camper Cabins	<input type="checkbox"/> Camper Cabins
	Other (please describe):	Other (please describe):
	<input type="checkbox"/> Picnicking and picnic shelters	<input type="checkbox"/> Picnicking and picnic shelters
	<input type="checkbox"/> Walking Trails (paved)	<input type="checkbox"/> Walking Trails (paved)
	X Hiking Trails (natural)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking Trails (natural)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Biking Trails (paved)	<input type="checkbox"/> Biking trails (paved)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mountain Biking Trails (natural)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mountain Biking Trails (natural)
	X Cross-country Skiing Trails	X Cross-country Skiing Trails
	<input type="checkbox"/> Horseback Riding Trails (natural)	<input type="checkbox"/> Horseback Riding Trails (natural)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lake Access for power boats	<input type="checkbox"/> Lake Access for power boats
	<input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing Facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing Facilities
	<input type="checkbox"/> Fishing Piers	<input type="checkbox"/> Fishing Piers
	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitor Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitor Center
	<input type="checkbox"/> Nature Center/Interpretation Trails	<input type="checkbox"/> Nature Center/Interpretation Trails
	<input type="checkbox"/> Play areas, with an outdoor theme	X Play Areas, with an outdoor theme
	<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Amphitheater	<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Amphitheater
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dog Parks	<input type="checkbox"/> Dog Parks
	<input type="checkbox"/> Archery/Shooting ranges	<input type="checkbox"/> Archery/Shooting ranges
	<input type="checkbox"/> Climbing (natural/man-made)	X Climbing (natural/man-made)
	X Zip Lines	<input type="checkbox"/> Zip Lines
	X Restrooms/sanitation building	<input type="checkbox"/> Restrooms/sanitation building
	Roads and Parking Areas	<input type="checkbox"/> Roads and Parking Areas
	<input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt paved trail (10 feet or more)	<input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt paved trail (10 feet or more)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt paved trail (less than 10	<input type="checkbox"/> Aggregate surfaced trail (10 feet or more)
		<input type="checkbox"/> Aggregate surfaced trail

(Check all that apply)

General Site characteristics: describe key site characteristics, especially geologic, landform features that give the park its sense of place.

Spirit Mountain is distinct from the surrounding landscape and is visible from across the river on the Wisconsin side as a prominent and visible feature. The high quality hardwood forests are characterized by continuous, often dense, canopies of deciduous trees including sugar maple, basswood, paper birch, and northern red oak. The landscape is dissected by stream ravines that support aspens and birch mixed with white spruce, balsam fir, white cedar and white pine. Knowlton Creek is a designated trout stream and its dramatic valley flaunts bedrock, boulders, cobble and waterfalls. (knowlton creek photos)

The St. Louis River, the largest U.S. tributary to Lake Superior, becomes a 12,000-acre freshwater estuary as the river approaches Duluth and Superior. The upper section is characterized by wilderness-like areas, while the lower section is characterized by urban development and an industrial and international port. A freshwater estuary is ecologically unique. The current is slow and its wide expanse allows for small water and big water experiences as well as varied paddling experiences for all skill levels. Once on the estuary, just below Spirit Mountain, it's easy to forget that the river is in an urban environment. (River pics)

Within sight is Lake Superior when, combined with the estuary, provide an overwhelmingly sense of place. Volcanoes and glaciers created Lake Superior and the rugged mountain terrain of Spirit Mountain and the North Shore. Glacial Lake Duluth was five to six hundred feet above the present lake level. Duluth's Skyline Drive, with its wave-cut cliffs and terraces, remains one of the highest former shore lines of Glacial Lake Duluth and a popular scenic drive for residents and visitors alike. Erosion of the high bluffs and irregular shorelines composed of volcanic rock can expose veins of minerals in the cracks. Thomsonite crystals formed in these cracks along with other zeolites form agates that are enthusiastically hunted by visitors. Lake Superior waves can grow to large size especially in the late fall and early winter when the strongest winds blow out of the northeast. Waves can be 12 to 15 feet and were recently recorded at 28 feet. Wave watching and photography is a popular pastime and cold water surfing and diving are increasing in popularity. (Superior wave/surfing/rock pics_

Criteria #1 Provides a Special High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience

- Located in a highly scenic and/or natural setting

Spirit Mt. provides some of the best elevation, topography, and scenic views in the region and Minnesota. Scenic overlooks from the top of Spirit Mt. take in the City of Duluth, Lake Superior, the St. Louis River Estuary, the Duluth-Superior Harbor and Aerial Lift Bridge, and Wisconsin.

Spirit Mt is primarily forested: over 1,000 acres of old growth oak and maple forests provide stunning color displays in the fall and habitat for myriad species. Mammals found in the area are black bear, deer, porcupine, rabbits, skunks, raccoons, mice, bats, an occasional wolf, and transient mountain lions and moose. Reptiles and amphibians, such as the common garter snake and American toad, are found in the forest wetlands and streams. Duluth sits in a principal migratory flyway making Spirit Mountain a premiere bird watching venue, as dozens of bird species nest in the area and hundreds migrate through in spring and fall.

- Provides a very select and even unique set of recreational facilities/features well-suited to the site that will attract targeted user group(s) and population(s)

A premier four seasons outdoor adventure recreation center, Spirit Mountain is a multi-faceted facility that meshes mountain terrain, the Lake Superior experience, semi-wild river access, and a full spectrum of activities year round that utilizes and complements this unique combination of natural resources. Spirit Mountain provides the best alpine skiing within 60 miles, and has been a favorite destination for Nordic skiing as well as the home for area high school ski teams. Spirit Mountain tracks recreation trends and responds with activities that address those trends. Since 2008, Spirit Mountain added the alpine coaster, the zip lines, and snow tubing to take advantage of the mountain's rugged terrain. A jumping pillow, and mini and disc golf also expand offerings year round and appeal to a larger segment families and individuals. The mountain bike facilities (bike park, downhill trails and all weather trail) are unique to the Duluth area and draw mountain bike enthusiasts from throughout the region, and even world. The International Mountain Bike Association

designated the Duluth Traverse as a Gold Ride Center in part because of the high quality trails that Spirit Mountain offers.

- Well-designed facilities (relative to the most current design standards) that meet the contemporary needs of targeted user groups

Alpine skiing/snowboarding is the core winter activity at Spirit Mountain. A Regional ski facility is defined as an area with 500 to 2,000 feet vertical drop, ski trail area of up to 200 acres, and trails serviced by rope tows, handle lifts, T-bars and chairlifts. Spirit Mountain meets the regional classification because of the nearly 700 foot vertical drop. Spirit Mountain has the second largest vertical drop in the Local market; only the Lutsen Mountains Resort has a larger vertical drop. (See map of resort distribution in District 1) Of the three resorts that could be classified as Regional (Spirit Mountain, Lutsen, Giants Ridge), Spirit Mountain is located closest to the large population centers of Minneapolis/St. Paul and Duluth.

Spirit has a total lift capacity of 4,150 at one time. It has 5 chairlifts – 1 Detachable Quad, 1 Fixed Grip Quad, 2 Triples and 1 Double and 3 surface lifts - 1 Handle Tow, 1 Moving Carpet and 1 High Speed Rope Tow. There are 89 acres of trails over 26 marked trails with a total length of 6.1 miles. While the existing terrain is predominantly beginner and low intermediate; the four terrain parks and half-pipe provide interest for the more advanced skiers and snowboarders. Terrain parks include jumps and slides. A half-pipe is snow-covered sloping channel with a U-shaped cross section, used by skiers and snowboarders, to perform jumps and other maneuvers.

Nordic skiing. There are 13.7 miles of groomed cross-country trails at the top of Spirit Mountain in the wooded area surrounding the campground that connect to 8.7 miles of trails in Magney-Snively Natural Area. One of the campground buildings is used as a warming chalet and the campground and Chalet parking area provides parking. The planned Grand Avenue Nordic Center consists of 2.0 miles of new illuminated ski trails with snowmaking on the lower mountain near the Grand Avenue Chalet with a 1.4-mile connector to the trails on top. When complete, trails will form a 3.3 km (2.2 mi) stacked loop trail system to accommodate up to 3 competition lengths, 10.0 km (6.2 mi), 5.0 km (3.1 mi), and 3.3 km (2.2 mi). Trail width will be 29.5 feet on the uphill portions and 24 feet on the downhill portions of the stacked loop one-way trail, which will allow for two skate skiers to pass as well as provide room for a single classical track. The connector trail will be a two-way 24 feet wide route allowing for one uphill lane and one downhill lane.

Mountain/Fat bike: Mountain bike trails are built per International Mountain Bicycling Association sustainability specs and include beginner, intermediate, advanced and expert designs as well as trails that bridge the gap between levels. Spirit Mountain introduced lift service for winter fat tire mountain biking in the 2015/16 ski season and was the first ski area in North America to do so. The all-weather cross country mountain bike trail is hardened to prevent damage during spring or wet weather and is the only all-weather trail in the region.

Snow Tubing: A 5-lane tubing park at the top of the mountain has its own moving carpet lift and the Spirit Mountain Adventure Park support facility provides tickets and washroom facilities. Parking is provided at the Adventure Park parking area (P7). When weather conditions are favorable, the Alpine Coaster operates in conjunction with the tubing operation.

Spirit Mountain Campground is located in a wooded area and consists of 73 individual campsites equipped with fire pits, picnic tables and electricity, as well as an area for walk-in tent camping. Thirty-nine sites have water hook-ups. Campground guests can purchase discounted tickets to the activities at the Adventure Park and a walking trail links the two facilities.

The Adventure Park is supported by a structure that provides tickets, washrooms and a food concession that also supports the winter tubing operation. The Timber Twister alpine coaster descends on a 3,250-foot track that drops approximately 300 feet and then ascends back to the start. The Timber Flyer zip line drops 135 feet over a distance of approximately 700 feet. Riders can go solo or double on a bench seat complete with seatbelts. There is mini-golf and disc golf, and a jumping pillow, which is a 30 by 60-foot in ground airbag. Participation in the activities can be purchased individually or as part of a package. The Spirit Express II chairlift also operates to provide transport for summer sightseeing.

- Overall uniqueness is high, with new or innovative “special feature” outdoor recreational facilities of regional significance being the basis for the park.

Additionally to the mountain bike features unique to the Duluth area, coming soon is a new Nordic Center at the base of the mountain that will add lighted trails and snowmaking to the Nordic mix. The 2.0 mile trail will serve recreational cross country skiing and regional competitions. A 1.4 mile trail connection to the top of the mountain will connect these trails and the far west Duluth neighborhoods to Spirit Mountain Nordic Center. These investments will bring users from outside the region as studies show that ski teams are traveling as much as six hours to access snow covered trails for training and competition.

Criteria 2: Provides a Natural and Scenic Setting Offering a Compelling Sense of Place)

- Exhibits a regionally-important natural anchor feature that establishes the essential character of the site – i.e., interesting landforms, geology, water feature, etc.

Please see General Site Characteristics and Criteria 1 for descriptions of the regionally significant attributes of Spirit Mountain, the St. Louis River Estuary, and Lake Superior. Duluth provides some of the most concentrated scenery on the North Shore, lake view and waterfalls included. Knowlton Creek presents open gabbro ledges under a cool canopy of spruce, cedar, and Yellow Birch, followed by White Pines and a view of Clough Island and the estuary. Wild Leeks and Pennsylvania Sedge cover the ground under the hardwood forests. Ostrich and Lady Ferns, Forget-me-nots, nodding Trillium, Bouncing Bet, and patches of cedar, Mountain-maple are found throughout.

- Exhibits man-made features – i.e., restored quarry sites and naturally-shaped ponds – if unique and in-keeping with an outdoor recreation theme

Spirit Mountain the perfect combination of natural and built environment. The built ski and bike facilities, the adventure park, campground and chalets provide 200 acres of modern recreational activities to appeal to today's fast paced adventure seekers. These are surrounded by over 1,000 acres of stunning natural resources that enhance the experience. Skiers, bikers, and like can leave the built environment to hike or bike for miles in the wonder that is the Lake Superior watershed.

- Enough acres to accommodate desired recreational uses while preserving sense of place and protecting the natural features

Destination features, both on and off the mountain, are abundant winter and summer. 200 acres of built activities provide sufficient facilities to make the area attractive for regional and local visitors. Only 15% of Spirit Mountain is built, including the ski runs. Ski, bike, and hiking trails as well as the alpine slide and zip line wind through the dramatic natural resources that cover the other 85% of the mountain. This provides an opportunity to attract those who may not have familiarity with a wild environment to experience and learn to appreciate Minnesota's natural world.

Criteria #3: Well-located to Serve a Regional Need and/or Tourist Destinations

- Park is located right in a densely settled, rapidly growing, and/ or an established regional center or *well-established* tourist destination – with most residents in the area not having to travel very far (within 5 to 10 miles driving distance) to get there

Tourist destination: Duluth is the fourth largest City in Minnesota and serves the regional population of 279,601. Spirit Mt. is located within the city of Duluth, the regional hub for the North and South Shores of Lake Superior, Iron-Range, and “northwoods” of northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Duluth is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the state, attracting well over 3 million visitors throughout all 4-seasons. Visit Duluth photo collage

Regional appeal: Spirit Mountain is the place where an outdoor adventure “Newby” can come and try nearly every destination quality outdoor experience Duluth has to offer and it is affordable. If one is looking for exercise, adventure, or solitude, appropriate activities are available year round. Warm weather activities include hiking, biking, kayaking, stand up paddling, rowing, fishing, duck hunting, birding, swimming, camping, and picnicking. Winter activities include skiing, winter fat biking skijoring, snow shoeing, ice skating, ice fishing, ice kiting, dog sledding, and snowmobiling.

- Park is *readily* accessible by some combination of local, regional, or state trail from nearby neighborhoods and communities

Spirit Mt. is easily accessed via I35 from Duluth or communities to the south. Residents can access Spirit Mt via Grand Ave (Hwy 23) as well as public transportation: Duluth Transit Authority Route # 2 passes the Grand Ave Chalet.

Spirit Mt. is the primary hub for activities in Duluth. Superior Hiking Trail, Duluth Traverse Multiuse Trail, Munger State Trail, Gitchi-Gami State Trail, eventual access to the waterfront for kayaking, C.J. Ramstad/North Shore State Trail, Cross City Trail, and Lakewalk can all be accessed via Spirit Mt. This trail network connects visitors to:

- Special recreation facilities: Lake Superior Zoo, Piedmont Recreation Area, Quarry Park.
- City parks: Chambers Grove, Mission Creek, Fairmont, Keene Creek, Oneotta, Brewer, Bellevue, Lincoln, Enger, Central, Hilltop, Chester, Hartley, Downer, Amity, and Lester.
- Nature/ Environmental Learning Areas – Bagley, Hartley, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, F.R. Paine Forest Preserve, Magney-Snively Natural Area.

Criteria #4: Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region (limit to 300 words):

No regional or state-level parks offering regional-type recreational facilities exist near enough to the location or offer the type of facilities provided, and a clear gap in service exists

There are four ski/resorts in Minnesota within the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails District 1 including Spirit Mountain and two nearby in Wisconsin. Mont du Lac and Mount Ashwabay in WI are not considered regional resorts as their vertical drops are just 300 and 325 feet respectively. Only Spirit Mountain, Giant's Ridge, and Lutsen in Minnesota have the vertical drop needed to have a regional draw. Only Giant's Ridge has the breathe of activities that mirrors Spirit Mountain. Spirit Mountain is the closest resort to Mpls/St Paul and Duluth. Giant's Ridge is and 1hr/20 minutes from Duluth and 2hr/15 min from Mps/St. Paul. (reference map again)

Additional Supportive Information

Provide any pertinent information that will help the Commission in its evaluation of the regional significance of a park or trail. This is especially important when no master plan is available. Also provide any information related to previously completed cost estimates for acquisition, development, operations, maintenance, and programming. Also indicate if any development phasing has been considered.

Attachments Tab

Please upload any attachments that weren't uploaded elsewhere here. Attachments should be uploaded as PDF, JPG, PNG, TIFF, Microsoft Word, Excel or Powerpoint files.