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Crow Wing County is a major tourist and vacation destination, and a popular second-home community, because of its incredible landscape filled with clear lakes and towering pines. During the 2004 Comprehensive Plan process, however, public comments included many concerns about the declining amounts open land resulting in fewer recreation opportunities.

In response, CR Planning was hired by the Crow Wing County Parks Department and its Parks Advisory Committee to prepare a Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan that will maintain and enhance recreation opportunities while preserving the County's high quality natural areas.

The Plan addresses issues unique to a rural community that is transitioning quickly towards an urban/suburban community. CR Planning facilitated two public meetings on recreation and open space priorities to start the planning process. CR Planning then prioritized recreation use based on interest surveys and public meetings and facilitated discussion of the Park Advisory Committee. Using the latest GIS databases and other sources, CR Planning assembled background data and created maps to illustrate the distribution of recreation and natural resources. Park, trail, and open space needs were assessed using the following four criteria: Demand, geographic distribution and access, diversity of target activities, and carrying capacity (in a natural resource impact sense and capacity of the recreation resource). The resulting plan was adopted by the County Board in November of 2005.

CR Planning followed up the policy plan with an implementation plan. The implementation plan identified geographic priorities, an implementation timeline, and a decision tree matrix to help apply the goals and objectives described in the Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan.