

Aitkin County Board of Commissioners  
Request for County Board Action/Agenda Item Cover Sheet



To: Chairperson, Aitkin County Board of Commissioners Date: October 30, 2012

Via: Patrick Wussow, County Administrator

From: Patrick Wussow, County Administrator

Title of Item: Geocaching Challenge Report

Requested Meeting Date: 11/06/2012 Estimated Presentation Time: 15 minutes

Presenter: Rich Courtemanche - Asst. Land Commissioner

**Type of Action Requested** (check all that apply)

- For info only, no action requested  Approve under Consent Agenda
- For discussion only with possible future action  Adopt Ordinance Revision
- Let/Award Bid or Quote (attach copy of basic bid/quote specs or summary of complex specs, each bid/quote received & bid/quote comparison)
- Approve/adopt proposal by motion  Approve/adopt proposal by resolution (attach draft resolution)
- Authorize filling vacant staff position
- Request to schedule public hearing or sale  Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_
- Request by member of the public to be heard
- Item should be addressed in closed session under MN Statute \_\_\_\_\_

**Fiscal Impact** (check all that apply)

- Is this item in the current approved budget? Yes  No  (attach explanation)
- What type of expenditure is this?  Operating  Capital  Other (attach explanation) Tourism Grant
- Revenue line account # that funds this item is: \_\_\_\_\_
- Expenditure line account # for this item is: \_\_\_\_\_

**Staffing Impact** (Any yes answer requires a review by Human Resources Manager before going to the board)

- Duties of a department employee(s) may be materially affected.  Yes  No
- Applicable job description(s) may require revision.  Yes  No
- Item may impact a bargaining unit agreement or county work policy.  Yes  No
- Item may change the department's authorized staffing level.  Yes  No



**Supporting Attachment(s)**

- Memorandum Summary of Item
- Copy of applicable county policy and/or ordinance (excerpts acceptable)
- Copy of applicable state/federal statute/regulation (excerpts acceptable)
- Copy of applicable contract and/or agreement
- Original bid spec or quote request (excluding complex construction projects)
- Bids/quotes received (excluding complex construction projects, provide comparison worksheet)
- Bid/quote comparison worksheet
- Draft County Board resolution
- Plat approval check-list and supporting documents
- Copy of previous minutes related to this issue
- Other supporting document(s) (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

**Provide (1) copy of supporting documentation NO LATER THAN Wednesday at Noon to make the Board's agenda for the following Tuesday. (If your packet contains colored copies, please provide (4) paper copies of supporting documentation as we do not have a color printer or copier.) Items WILL NOT be placed on the Board agenda unless complete documentation is provided for the Board packets.**

## **MEMO - Aitkin County Land Department**

To: Aitkin County Board of Commissioners  
From: Rich Courtemanche  
CC:  
Date: 10/30/2012  
Re: Geocaching Challenge Report



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The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners awarded a tourism grant of \$608 to create a geocaching challenge tied to the grand opening of the new Northwoods ATV trail. This presentation is to summarize the benefits that grant has had for Aitkin County.

Attached is a brief synopsis and a synopsis of the comments received as of October 9, 2012.

The challenge continues through December 31, 2012.

Sincerely,

Rich Courtemanche  
Assistant Land Commissioner

Geocaching is the rapidly growing outdoor activity that combines the use of a GPS, the excitement of finding hidden treasure, and the enjoyment of exploring new places. The Aitkin County Land Department, Economic Development, and Trail Towns sought to use this family friendly activity to encourage people to explore Aitkin's trails, parks system, and communities by creating a countywide geocaching challenge. The Aitkin County Board of Commissioners agreed and awarded a tourism grant of \$608 to create a geocaching challenge tied to the grand opening of the new Northwoods ATV trail. On June 7, 2012, the challenge was published on the Aitkin County website [www.aitkin.co.mn.us](http://www.aitkin.co.mn.us) and on [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com).

A total of twenty treasure boxes (called caches) were placed throughout Aitkin with a unique trading card depicting historic places and activities in each cache. The response and reviews of the challenge have been great (an MS Excel table of some of the comments is attached) An award of either an Aitkin County Bird Guide or an Aitkin County Plat book is awarded to individuals who find at least 15 of the 20 geocaches.

Here are some of the highlights:

- As of October 3 there have been 433 separate caches found
- There have been 10 people to finish the challenge (5 Plat Books, 5 Bird Guides)
- There have been only positive comments in the logs entries (100%)
- We have received 17 "Favorites" designations by geocachers
- There have been many pictures posted and here are my 3 favorites. (Permission has been obtained from the parents to use these pictures)

The challenge continues through December 31, 2012.

## **Geocaching Challenge:**

As of September 26, 2012...

There have been 433 separate caches found

There have been 10 people to finish the challenge (5 Plat Books, 5 Bird Guides)

There have been only positive comments in the logs entries (100%)

We have received 17 "Favorites" designations by geocachers

There have been many pictures posted and here are my 3 favorites



Cache	Found	Favorites	Pics	Some of the comments
ACLD Turner Access	24	2	<a href="#">ACLD Turner Geo-kids.jpg</a> <a href="#">ACLD Turner Geo-water access.jpg</a>	<p>Nice little lake, may have to come back fishing. also spooked seven ducks at landing.</p> <p>We were taking a detour (or the long way home) and were surprised to see this one pop up. Nice hide in a great area. We really had to work hard to keep Tubbs out of the water (he loves to swim and fetch his bumper!). We took a card. SL TFTC!</p> <p>I started this series the other day and couldn't finish. I enjoyed this series so much I decided to finish it. The caches I found were great: good caches, in great locations, with excellent coords and hints. I had to muscle my way into the cache. Of course, I had to leave a pt here. That was a no brainer. TFTC</p> <p>Thanks to my pal geoilmay I discovered this series. I had the day off of work so I decided to make the road trip. I left home about 8 a.m. and returned at 11 p.m. I managed to find all 20; 12 FTF's and 8 STF's and a few misc caches thrown into the mix made for a great adventure. Thanks for the Fun!</p>
ACLD McGregor Town	37	0		<p>Found on our way camping. Tftc !</p> <p>Thanks much! These cards are great. S.</p> <p>Camping nearby for the weekend, picking up some caches in McGregor this awesome summer evening, start of a perfect weekend! TFTC</p> <p>FTF 06-08-12 15:25 Thanks to my pal geoilmay I discovered this series. I had the day off of work so I decided to make the road trip. I left home about 8 a.m. and returned at 11 p.m. I managed to find all 20; 12 FTF's and 8 STF's and a few misc caches thrown into the mix made for a great adventure. Thanks for the Fun!</p>
ACLD McGregor Soo	36	2		<p>Nice cache location near some history information about the town. Very good hide, we really liked the host.</p> <p>Never found one of those there before! Nice hide - again, I was tentative in checking things out, but yep, that was the place. Pretty chilly out this morning, but no rain - or snow - yet. I'll take cold over hot. TNLN. From what I've seen, this is a great series. Caches are well placed, in good containers and locations. Thanks for the hide.</p> <p>The Fairer Half took Tubbs down the trail in search of agates and let me find one. I really enjoyed the hide here (like the earlier one), but there was a big nasty spider inside. Got another card! SL, TFTC!</p> <p>Nice family friendly cache!</p> <p>First day ever geocaching and we're hooked!! So much fun!</p>
ACLD Jacobson	27	1		<p>Sweet hide! Dead day on the ball field, no stealth needed today</p> <p>Quick find on our geo trek. Caching with part of the Goldsgoonies Awesome container! SL TFTC!</p> <p>It was like ordering at a drive thru window: seriously a neat cache. Took card #154 and look forward to trying to collect more when i am in the area. TFTC</p> <p>Lots of stuff to see here in the suburbs of Jacobson! Great cache thanks!</p>
ACLD Palisade	22	0		<p>Nice easy find. Kid friendly.</p> <p>Nice to return to Palisade now and then. I found the cache then drove around town to see the sights again. I took nothina. left nothina. and sianed the loa. Thanks again for this cache.</p> <p>Yup I agree it's there, very well hidden.</p> <p>Out caching with tworiverseagle for the weekend. 9 out of 20 for the ACLD caches. Tricky hide, made sure we placed the cache back exactly how we found it. TFTC.</p> <p>Found 6-24 after having a great lunch at the nearby cafe :)</p>

Cache	Found	Favorites	Pics	Some of the comments
ACLD Solana ATV Loop	15	1		<p>Fish2007 and I were caching in the Solana State Forest today. It really felt like a fall day today and some of trees were in full color. It's a great time of the year to be here. Thanks for placing this cache. I took a card and signed the log</p> <p>Drove up to Solana SF today to check out this section of the State Forest I haven't visited before and pick up a 'few' caches while I was at it. tftc</p> <p>We set our sights for Solana State Forest today and the weather report looked much more promising than the last time we were here. We started our day with a 2 mile hike for a couple of caches just to get warmed up from the cool morning air and that was all it took. Some of the finds came easier than others, but then there were few that required extensive searching before the cache was found. There was a couple that we never did find. We met the caching teams of Two of Hearts riding with Butcher and Swimmer a couple times on the trail...it is always good to see fellow cachers/friends playing the game. Some of the minimum maintenance roads were challenging to navigate, especially when meeting ATV's head on with hardly any room to pass. On one of those roads I managed to run the vehicle up on a log which brought us to a sudden halt. I think it took close to an hour to get back on the trail again. Another road we actually dragged a tree top off of the road so we could drive passed! We would like to thank the CO's for all of the hard work in getting these hidden and maintaining them for the likes of us. We had a great time and I think Tubbs will sleep in tomorrow! It was a nice walk to this cache and did not encounter an</p> <p>Driving home from a day of State Forest fun, so we had to stop. TFTC</p> <p>Found lots of agates on the trek to this one too!!</p> <p>I started this series the other day and couldn't finish. I enjoyed this series so much I decided to finish it. The caches I found were great: good caches, in great locations, with excellent coords and hints. I parked in the wrong place. I thought I had to bushwhack about 500 ft. I went through a wetland and looked rather bedraggled and sloshed around in wet shoes the rest of the day. If this looks too hard look again for a better plan of attack. TFTC</p>
ACLD Jacobson Campground	20	4	ACLD Jacobson SLAG.jpg	<p>This was not on my agenda, but I was so close...what better time? Glad I made that choice. I would never have seen this campground otherwise. Are those camper cabins? I will have to check that out - this could be a good home base for future caching trips. First ammo can of the day. I bet I don't find many of those where I am headed</p> <p>Very pretty spot along the river - thanks for the cache and for bringing me out here.</p> <p>Thanks for the cache. Now that's what I call service, providing a drinking fountain nearby. SL</p> <p>A gorgeous stop along the Great River road. We're imagining a canoe trip here. Tftc!</p> <p>What a great little place! Might have to come back here to camp! TFTC!</p> <p>A nice little campground, I don't think I have ever been back here before. Love the natural wells, but have no empty containers to fill. I TNLN and SL. Thank you for this cache.</p>
ACLD Hill City	34	0	ACLD Hill City Geo-Kids.jpg	<p>Camping at Quadna with Minnesotaman6 and decided to find a few caches in the area. Seems like the container was missing - iust a zip lock bag with TB inside.</p> <p>The last cache for the night. My chauffeur and I are on our way home, but couldn't pass up a couple ACLD caches- we will return later this summer for the rest.</p> <p>Great place to take a break from the weekend traffic. TNLNSL TFTC</p>

Cache	Found	Favorites Pics	Some of the comments
ACLD Willow River Bridge	22	4 ACLD Willow River Geo-baby.jpg	<p>There was a pretty good size group of 4 wheelers stopped close to the bridge, and we just busted right through them This is a really nice trail, I was almost wishing it was longer just to enjoy the walk, but was really glad it was not longer as it started raining after we found the cache Really nice walk to this one. May go again just for the walk.</p> <p>We had our granddaughter for a couple of days and thought we would take her out for a walk. We gave her a gps (she has no clue how or what it does, but it was so cute). We found the cache and she had to help us. It was so precious, I will post a picture! Met up with a group on 4-wheelers, enjoying the trail. Beautiful spot for everyone to enjoy. So glad it dried out! TFTC</p> <p>I'm glad I didn't come looking for this one with all the water! All dry back here today! Good thing the container has a hold down device for all that water! Seen some big paw prints under the bridge. I'm amazed at how often I see the bridges from Alex all over the country! TFTC!</p> <p>Much better conditions today! I was able to access area with ease, make the find, sign in, and trade nothing. The skeeter bugs weren't even bad today, but I came prepared for them. Have pictures which I may post when I get home Thanks for this hide neat area!</p> <p>Great spot bring a lunch! SLTk a card and LN T4t\$</p> <p>What a great place this is. Even my son hopped out of the vehicle to check it out. Thank you very much for placing a cache here so we could appreciate some of the work done by the ATV enthusiasts.</p>
ACLD Swatara Soo Trail	23	1 ACLS Swatara Buildings.jpg	<p>Wow, I would have never known about this town if not for geocaching. Thanks! I wish we would have toured it a little more to see what other old buildings were around, but the two by the trail were cool.</p> <p>Pretty easy find - really like the county ones</p> <p>nice trail for walking as well. We kept on going to the Swatara cache. It was a nice crisp day...TF</p> <p>Was hoping to have lunch at the nearby cafe, but was closed d/t flooding :( oh well :) fun anyways! TFTC</p> <p>Out on a ATV rider for The Rapids Riders! Fd and sl and left a TB t4t\$</p>
ACLD Lone Lake Beach	19	0	<p>Nice hide, nice area. Thanks!!</p> <p>We pretended to walk him in the woods and that we were just passing thru (we laughed) because we were just passing thru and we were able to be very sneaky. Nice spot, we did not know about this beach. TFTC</p> <p>Great beach. TFTC.</p> <p>After a few hours of playing on the lake, my brother drove his boat over to this beach and we relaxed for awhile. I noticed there was a cache here so we decided to check it out even though we weren't prepared for the ravenous mosquitoes</p>

Cache	Found	Favorites	Pics	Some of the comments
ACLD Long Lake CC	17	1		<p>seen eight turkeys and three deer and lots of acorns to walk on.</p> <p>It's been 34 years since I've been to the Long Lake Conservation Camp. Memories are vague, but some are still solidly there. Neat to come back and reminisce. Grabbed the TB but otherwise just signed in and replaced as found. Thank you for bringing me back here.</p> <p>Found 6-23. Our first geocache ever! And we're hooked!!</p> <p>My GPSr finally settled in where it should have been. L:pt My Dad taught an occasional class here back in the 1960's and 1970's so it holds special memories for me. I was too young to be in the classes but would hear about them. TFTC</p> <p>Out caching with tworiverseagle for the weekend. 8 out of 20 for the ACLD caches. Thought this area was very pretty. <del>we can't wait to come back and spend some time here.</del> TFTC</p>
ACLD Vispo	13	1		<p>A fun multi cache: a "Duh" moment as I could not figure out the new coords when they were hidden in plain sight. SL. traded TB for Geo coin. tftc</p> <p>TFTC!!! Thanks ACLD for all these caches. You guys rock. Keep up the good work!!!!</p> <p>This was the best ACLD series cache I've found! Thanks for placing one out here!</p> <p>This was a fun one! Road tripping to see my brother and decided to pick this one to do on the way. Had fun hunting as we got caught up in the sticks and hubby took a spill. We laughed as this is normal for us while geocaching but, it is usually me who takes the tumble though. Anyway, this was a beautiful view and our count is now 17 out of 20. Only 3 to go! TFTC!</p> <p>It is a good thing I found this cache after stopping by the office for my prize. I was distracted as soon as I pulled up to the parking area. After looking things over a bit I went back to the task at hand. After finding the final I turned around to leave looked ahead and that was it. I went to get my camera and did much more investigating. I give tours of pioneer Finnish farmsteads. I left with a few answers and many questions. I probably spent as much time here as will be the sum total time of all other cachers that come here. It is a good thing there is only one cache left in the challenge to get.</p>
ACLD Campground	20	0		<p>We came here after the nearby Breakfast Buddies Event to check out the campground. I got a call from a fellow cacher just as we pulled up, so the Fairer Half jumped out of the car and headed toward gz without a gps. When I finally got close she was already checking out the contents of this fun cache. This is our first in the series! TNLNSL, TFTC!</p> <p>Wonderful spot. TFTC</p> <p>What a great day to be outdoors! Thought I'd take a chance at grabbing a FTF up here and am I glad I did! Ate <del>my lunch by the river and enjoyed the birds!</del> Thanks for another exciting cache!</p>
ACLD McGrath Town	23	0		<p>Stopped here on my way to Solana SF this morning. Early enough that I didn't have to contend with any ATV's on the trail. This is the first of the 'official' Aitkin County caches for me. tftc</p> <p>Another great hide this morning outdoors! TFTC!</p> <p>tftc..we are really enjoying this series..sl</p> <p>Taking the long way back to the freeway. Thanks for the cache and the puzzle piece.</p>
ACLD RedTop	17	0		<p>Out for a day of 4-wheeling - cache #2 TFTC -</p> <p>Started my day on this trail! Also hiked up a bit further for two new FTF's! Took my card and signed the log! TPTH!</p> <p>Saw a huge 8/8+ pt buck on the way to this!</p>



Cache	Found	Favorites	Pics	Some of the comments
ACLD Rabey Trail	26	0		<p>The Brides 65th birthday today, so I said we could do whatever she wanted and she said caching. So we're trucking around picking up odds and ends today. TFTC!!</p> <p>beautiful evening for a nice little walk down the trail, signed the log book and grabbed the coin, thank you!</p> <p>Great cache in the woods! Swapped TBs.</p> <p>Out on a. ATV ride great trail! Tnks 4 \$ sl tn left a few smiling Skeeters!!</p> <p>I hope to get the rest very soon. I hadn't been this way in Hill City before. Exchanged pathtags TFTC</p>
ACLD Blind Lake ATV	11	0		TFTC
ACLD Snake River Campground	16	0		<p>Caching in the State Forest with Minnesotaman6 while at the cabin this week. sl tftc.</p> <p>Wow. This looks like a great campground. I wonder if it's quiet on the weekends? SL. Thanks for the cache.</p> <p>Very cool campground. Thinking I may have to add this one to the list of places I would like to set up a tent and spend the weekend. Was pretty quite in here today, like we were the only people in the campground. On the hunt for caches and rolling through this neat place with King Boreas today. TNLNSL</p> <p>I never knew this campground was here so close to many caches. TFTC</p> <p>Went for it anyway as this was the last in the challenge for us. Felt so good to come out with number 20! TFTC and Thanks for the Series! We had a blast!</p>
ACLD Lawler Trail Town	11	0		<p>TFTC! Kids enjoyed the little playground nearby. Actually the adults did too! :)</p> <p>This was an easy find, and one of the best caches we have found so far! TFTC - this was spot one in the ACLD challenge. We will have to find the rest now!</p>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>17</b>		

Aitkin County Land Department  
Geocaching Challenge – 2012



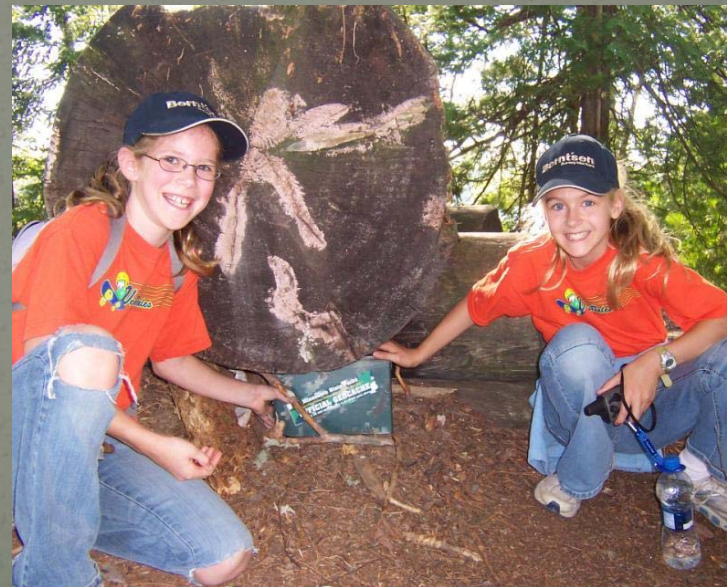
# What is Geocaching?

- Outdoor activity
- A treasure hunt using a GPS or GPS enabled phone
- Using coordinates found
  - On the web, typically [Geocaching.com](http://Geocaching.com) –FREE
- Waterproof container
  - Log book to record visitors
  - Larger caches have trinkets to trade
- All ages participate

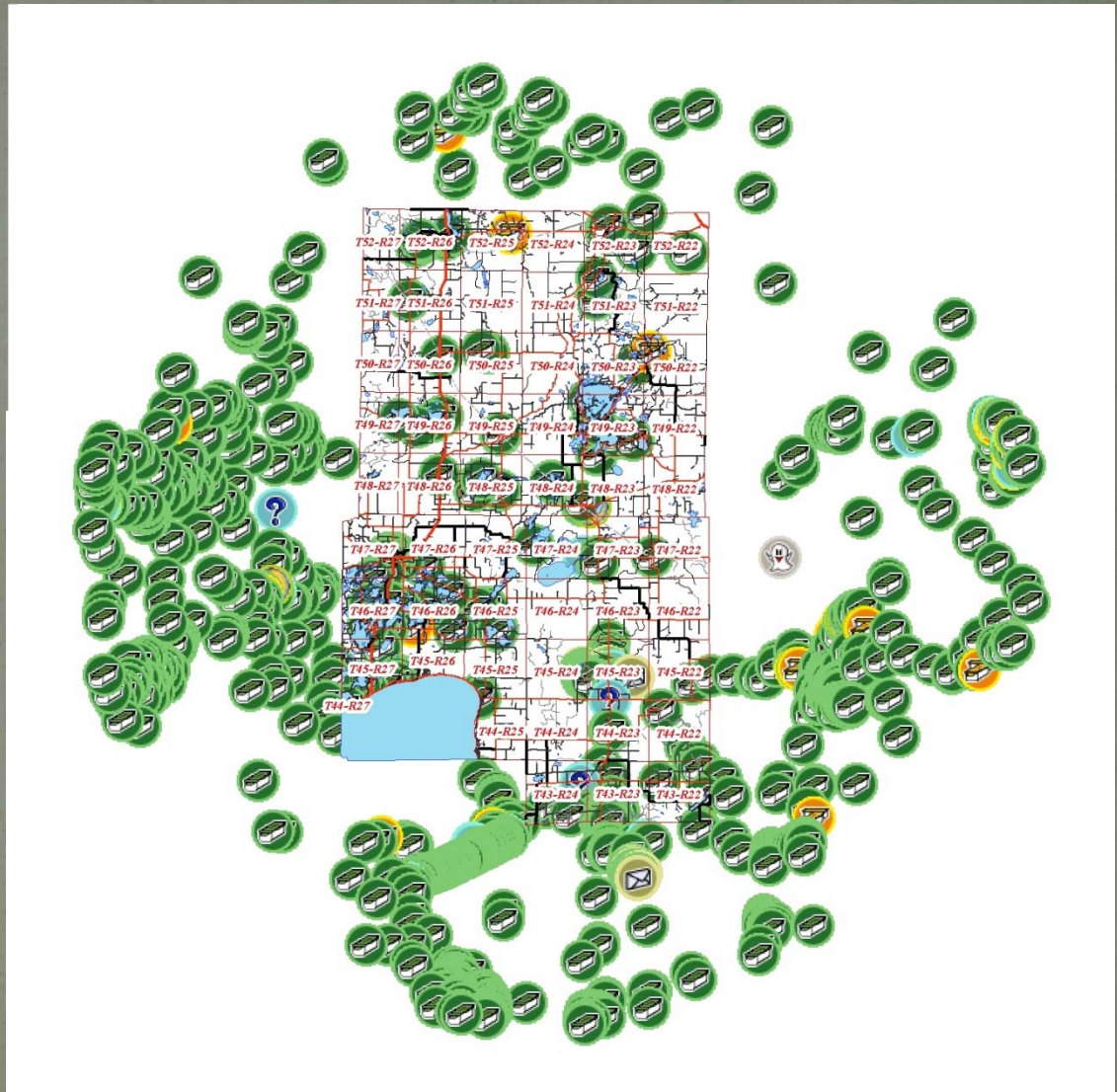


# Geocaching Today

- 100 countries
- All 7 continents
- 1,639,000 active caches worldwide
- 5+ million registered geocachers



# Existing Geocaches Near Aitkin



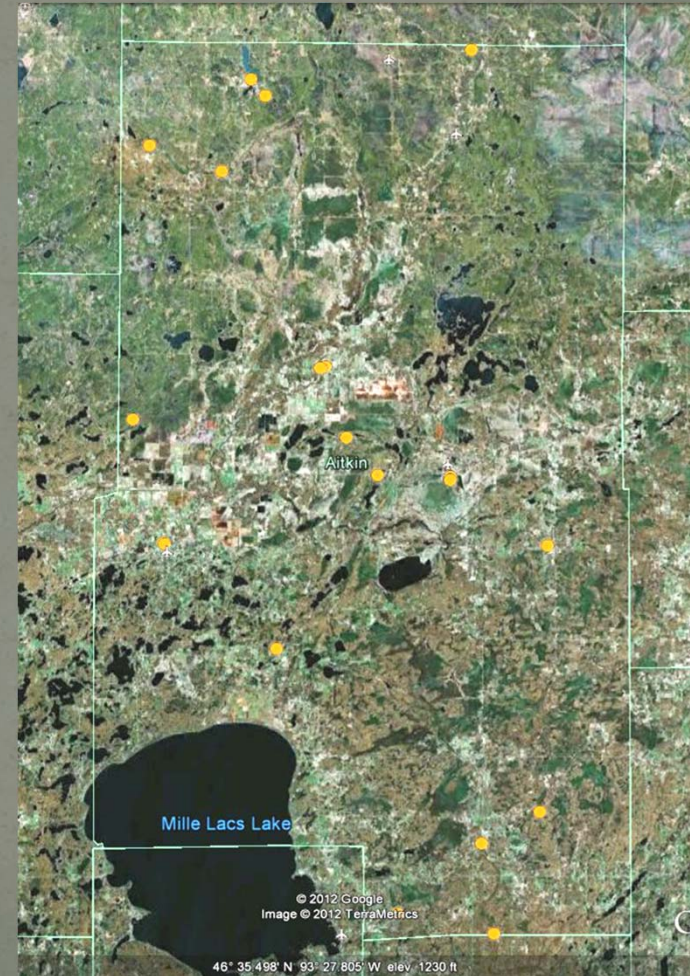
# ACLD Geocaching

- Compatible with desired uses of public property
- Referenced in the recreation plan
- Celebrating the ATV trail system
- Promote trail towns along ATV trail
- Promote ACLD parks system
  - LLCC
  - Campgrounds
  - Trails
  - Water Accesses



# ACLD Online Account

- Geocaching.com
  - “AitkinCountyLand”
  - Member no. 5459376



# Tourism Grant

- \$ 608 Grant from Board of Commissioners
- Allows countywide placement
- Reasonable startup for the county
- Promote trail towns along ATV trail
- Include a Geocaching “Challenge”





# 2012 Geocaching Challenge

- Different collector card in each cache
- Collect enough cards get a prize
  - Plat Book - Thank you 4H
  - or Bird watching,
  - ~~Collector Token~~
- Promote trail towns along ATV trail



# Trail Towns

- Caches getting people off the trail and into towns
- Encourage longer stays to visit new places
- Educate visitors of the history and uniqueness of Aitkin



# Challenge to Date (09/26/2012 )

- 433 separate log in entries for caches found
- 10 people have finished the challenge
- 100% positive comments (excluding the mosquito comments)
- 17 Favorites designations



# ACLD would like to thank:

- Aitkin County Board
- Northwoods ATV Trail
- Aitkin Historical Society
- Aitkin Trail Towns
  - Hill City, Jacobson, Lawler, McGregor, McGrath, Palisade
- Aitkin County Economic Development
- Volunteers/Supporters
  - Leon Hixon (Tidepuddle)
  - Courtemanche Family (Team Cootie)
    - Gina, Elise, Nicole, Annie, Colin
  - King Boreas
  - MN Fruitcake

