



Summer 2015

Volume 3 #2

Bluff & Valley



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Manager Speak

By Park Manager: Rick Samples

Summer's here and the parks are busy with activity. Campers, hikers, bird watchers, geo-cachers, picnickers, fishermen, and nature photographers are just some of the people that use Great River Bluffs and Beaver Creek Valley State Parks.

There is a lot that goes into having clean, safe facilities. Routine duties of staff include mowing, trimming, cleaning, trash/recycling pickup, collecting fees, painting, road grading, and making various repairs. Also, behind the scenes are budget management, attendance reports, revenue management, scheduling, security/enforcement, natural resource work, and planning.

This year, in addition to the day to day work, both parks have seen or will be seeing improvements and changes. Some minor and others more noticeable.

At Beaver Creek Valley,

one problem that has existed since the park was established is the threat of flash floods during heavy rain events. There are four "fords" that dissect the campground. The watershed that feeds Beaver Creek Valley is relatively small, but given enough rain the creek can come out of its banks quickly. It does not last too long, usually receding back to normal in just a few hours, but park users, particularly campers, often see the rising waters and want to leave. This is dangerous as the waters can be too deep to cross until things settle down. Park staff do a good job of communicating with the public when there is the possibility of a rain event and what to do if it happens (which is stay in place). However, staff is not always there.

So, this summer, the park is working with MN DNR's water division to study stream flow and set guidelines of measurement as to when it is safe to cross moving water in the park. Once the study is complete, water level markers will be in-

stalled that park visitors can reference when deciding when it is safe to cross.



2013 flood damage at Beaver Creek Valley State Park

Another project, along that same line, will be the replacement of the first "ford" into the campground with an above water structure. This will eliminate the need to drive through the water any time and will make it safer when there is a flood event in the park. This project will be completed by a contractor after Labor Day weekend. This work will make it safer and easier for motorcycles, large RV's, and pulled trail-

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Great River Bluffs State Park

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Phone: (507) 643-6849
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grriverbluffs@state.mn.us

Reservation Line
(866) 857-2757

Great River Bluffs State Park is a natural resources park that provides its patrons with 7 miles of hiking trails, 31 campsites, and numerous overlooks over the beautiful Mississippi River.

In the winter, the park provides snowshoe and cross country ski opportunities. In addition to the numerous recreational activities available, the park is home to many rare prairie plants, as well as the timber rattlesnake, a state threatened species.

King and Queens Bluffs, two of Minnesota's Scientific and Natural Areas, are also included within the boundaries of Great River Bluffs State Park.

Volunteer Campground Hosts Provide Valuable Service in Parks

Campground Hosts increase the quality of service and experience by park users in Minnesota State Parks. Beaver Creek Valley and Great River Bluffs are thrilled to have hosts in both of our parks this summer! Dave & Nancy Lexvold joins Great River Bluffs as hosts this July. Dave is a retired VoTech teacher from Pine Island, MN north of Rochester. Jack and Mary Westcott are retirees that came all the



Dave & Nancy Lexvold at Great River Bluffs State Park

way from Texas to be hosts at Beaver Creek Valley this summer, but are originally from Minnesota. We would like to thank our four hosts for their volunteerism and contributions in making our parks the best they can be!

Hosts camp at a park for at least a four week stint and make themselves available to answer visitors' questions and share information on the parks recreational opportunities, rules and facilities as well as local resources. They may assist with keeping facilities cleaned and stocked, or performing light maintenance duties when park staff is not available or at odd times. They also assist with special park projects or naturalist programs. In exchange for their volunteer service, they are provided a free

electric campsite during their hosting period.

If you are interested in learning more about the campground host program [visit this web site](#) or contact the program coordinator at (651) 259-5607 or email campground.host@state.mn.us.



Jack and Mary Westcott at Beaver Creek Valley State Park

Greenview Staff Essential to Forest Recreation Area Campground Management

In addition to Beaver Creek Valley and Great River Bluffs State Parks, our work unit is also responsible for taking care of three state Forest Recreation Areas (FRAs) campgrounds in the [Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest](#) at: Reno, Wet Bark, and Vinegar Ridge located in Houston and Winona counties.

These satellite campgrounds do not have the more advanced amenities that the

parks provide but do provide nice campsites with a picnic table and fire ring as well vault toilets, but at a lower fee rate and are open year round for camping. The FRA campgrounds and sites need to be maintained weekly with mowing, cleaning bathrooms, picking up litter, trimming brush, clearing/planting trees, taking care of fire pits, maintaining fences, collecting fees, and monitoring for compliance with camping rules.

Our year round and seasonal DNR park staff stay very busy maintaining the primary park units so much of the weekly activities at the FRAs is well taken care of by Greenview staff member Leo Simon from the Caledonia area. Leo is a retired teacher and wrestling coach and has been in his Greenview position for the past six years. He does a fantastic job of keeping the FRA campgrounds looking good

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Beaver Creek Valley State Park

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Caledonia, MN 55921
Phone: (507) 724-2107
Fax: (507) 724-2107
beavercreek.statepark@state.mn.us

Reservation Line
(866) 857-2757

Beaver Creek Valley State Park is a natural resources park with a high level of biodiversity among its plant and animal communities.

The park contains 8 miles of hiking trails, 42 drive-in campsites, 6 walk-in sites plus a camper cabin. Trails lead to scenic bluff views as well as to cold-water springs.

Native brook trout and brown trout are in abundance in the creek which winds its way through the park. Check the fishing regulations for seasons and rules.

Birders also find the park a migratory species paradise with rare species such as the Louisiana Waterthrush and Cerulean Warbler passing through.

Interns in High Gear at the Parks

Beaver Creek Valley State Park and Great River Bluffs State Park are pleased to announce the addition of 2 interns working at the parks for the summer season. The Minnesota DNR internship program provides students with the opportunity to gain practical work experience in a realistic work environment and expose them to state government employment while receiving academic credit. Internships are based on learning objectives agreed upon by the DNR intern's hiring supervisor, the intern's faculty advisor, and the intern. The interns at Beaver Creek Valley and Great River Bluffs have a variety of duties at the parks including but not limited to public contact with park visitors, trail and facility maintenance, public outreach, public education, and park security.

Elissa Knutson is the Park Operations Intern stationed at Beaver Creek Valley State Park for the summer season. Elissa is a senior student attending Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is majoring in Environmental Science and minoring in Resource Management. Elissa grew up in the Caledonia area and would visit the park as a child with her family. "I have so many fond memories of Beaver Park from when I was growing up, and it is such an awesome oppor-



Beaver Creek Valley intern: Elissa Knutson

tunity to get to work here and help other visitors enjoy it the same way that I did" says Elissa. After graduation, Elissa is planning on getting a job in the conservation field where she can help educate people and preserve the natural world for the enjoyment of future generations.



Great River Bluffs intern: Danielle Schleich

The intern at Great River Bluffs State Park this summer is Danielle Schleich. Danielle is a senior from St. Mary's University in Winona, MN majoring in Law Enforcement and minoring in Biology. Danielle is originally from Winona and would like to work in the forensic science field once graduated. Danielle's favorite part of her job is getting to work outside in nature and the variety of things that she gets to do. Each day is always different and exciting.

The parks' Manager, Rick Samples, is a huge advocate of the internship program stating that "the intern program is a win-win situation. It gives the park a good quality seasonal employee while the student gets a good feel for what working as a park professional would be like."

For more information on MN DNR internships and how to apply, visit the [MNDNR employment website](https://www.mndnr.gov/employment).

How to Become and Expert Angler- Summer Season Trout Fishing Tactics

Trout fishing is a very popular activity at Beaver Creek Valley State Park. The Beaver Creek is a cold water spring fed stream that winds through the park. It is home to an abundance of naturally reproducing native brook trout and brown trout.

In order to become an expert angler it is important to know a bit about the fish. Brook trout, thrive in smaller streams, occupying shallow pools. They are very aggressive and relatively easy to catch. They normally are smaller than browns and rainbows, and a 14 inch brook trout is considered a trophy. In large and medium sized streams you will find them near the headwaters and in major springs. Brown trout are the most plentiful and most sought after trout in southeast Minnesota streams. They are cautious and must be pursued

with patience. Even your shadow on the water will scare them away for an hour or two. They require overhanging cover like undercut banks or fallen trees. They will be found in the deepest pools, moving into the shallows (riffles) to feed in early morning and late afternoon. Brown trout commonly are 14 to 18 inches long.

The first step to a successful fishing trip is to get a map of the area you are going to fish and make sure that you are actually fishing in trout water. Maps can be found online on the [MN DNR web-site](#). It may also be helpful to check [local fishing reports](#) to get more specific information. Use monofilament line no heavier than 6 pounds to test in cloudy or muddy water and no heavier than 4 pounds to test in clear water. Fill your reel spool with

backing (heavy line) and put about 30 yards of lighter line at the end. Use hooks in the #10 to #14 size range and do not use long shank sunfish hooks. You want your hook to be as

inconspicuous as possible. Make sure you clean your reel before you go so your line flows smoothly off the spool. You can use a variety of bait or artificial flies; however night crawlers are hard to beat for bait fishing trout. Hellgrammites and water worms (insect larva) are also good. Spinners, jigs and other minnow imitators also work well for trout.

Approach the pool quietly from downstream keeping well hidden from the fish. Cast upstream over the pool, allowing your crawler to drift naturally back towards you. Your line will float so watch it, and you can tell when you have a bite. Be patient and fish carefully. Learn to cast with accuracy. If you have disturbed the pool, move on to another. Also, if you want to release a fish that is deeply hooked



Father and sons showing off their catches after a successful day of trout fishing in Beaver Creek.

you should just cut your line.

To be successful at trout fishing remember these important tips: fish natural (natural drift, no bobber, no sinker, light line), keep hidden, don't walk in the water, make accurate casts, and fish in the early morning hours in summer. For more information on trout fishing visit the [National Trout Center website](#).

Good fishing!



Brown trout

Check us out on Facebook!



- Located under **Great River Bluffs State Park & Beaver Creek Valley State Park** or at <https://www.facebook.com/GreatRiverBluffs>
- Get information about upcoming events, park alerts, and interesting updates on happenings at the parks.

Help us get to 500 Likes by liking our page!

The Conservation Corp of Minnesota- Staying Busy with Summer Projects



The CCM crew showing off their pile of picked garlic mustard plants at Beaver Creek Valley State Park..

Conservation Corp Minnesota (CCM) crews have had a very busy and productive summer so far. CCM crews provide natural resource management and habitat restoration for the parks. This summer, the main focus has been invasive species control and prescribed fires.

Prescribed burning is a common resource management tool used to reduce brush density on bluff prairies and in oak woodlands and has taken place at both Great River Bluffs and Beaver Creek Valley at the beginning of the summer season.

Garlic mustard is an invasive plant that has been a large battle for Beaver Creek Valley State Park. Seeds are spread very easily, especially in flood waters. This plant quickly crowds out native plants and takes over the landscape. The CCM crew spent approximately four days picking the garlic mustard plants out of the park. Thanks to all of their hard work and dedication, the invasive plant has been controlled inside of the park boundaries for the time being.

For more information on the Conservation Corp of Minnesota [visit their website.](#)

Answer the *Call of the Wildflowers!*



Explore Minnesota state parks and trails on this geocaching adventure and learn about Minnesota wildflowers and pollinators along the way! You'll use a GPS unit to pursue hidden caches in 74 state parks and seven state trails. Each state park or trail cache contains a collectible wildflower card, with a

beautiful photo on the front and fun wildflower facts on the back. A different bloom is featured at each location – see if you can collect all 81!

More information is available at the [MNDNR geocaching website.](#)

Greenview Staff Essential to Forest Recreation Area Campground Management-Continued from Page 2

and providing a quality campsite and experience for users.

The Greenview program is a senior community service employment program, which focuses on people age 55 and older. The program is ideal for retirees who wish to return to work part time and older adults who are unemployed and wish to learn new skills. Dave Blees, Greenview Regional Field Supervisor, shared that “Greenview jobs are

available throughout the State of Minnesota. State Park positions are available seasonally and year round positions are available at Dept. of Transportation facilities and range from 16 hours to 27 hours per week.”

More information on the [Greenview program can be found online](#) or contact program manager Taryn Galehdari at (651) 259-7540 or email Taryn.Galehdari@state.mn.us.



Leo Simon mowing in the park.

Gifts Help Improve State Parks for Visitors

Beaver Creek Valley State Park is pleased to acknowledge two recent gifts to the park. Alice & Jeff Dillon of Milaca, MN donated a very nice GPS unit to add to our small cache of GPS units available for check out to park users, mostly used for the Geocache program at the park. With the bluffs in the park, cell phone reception is not available, so portable GPS units are necessary to geocache here.

The Rice family recently donated \$500, given in memory of their

mother Helen M. Rice, who was a local Caledonia area resident. Her family says "Over the years Helen enjoyed picnicking with family, hiking along the creek, and seeing the



change of seasons...and always enjoyed the sights and sounds of nature in the park." Park Management is considering potential projects to fund with the donation, some project ideas are: bench at the top of Plateau Rock trail, educational kiosks, pollinator garden, purchasing a good set of binoculars, or educational signage. We want to sincerely thank both of these families for their valuable contributions to Beaver Creek Valley State Park which will be appreciated by park users now and into the future!

Manager Speak- Continued from Page 1

ers to enter the campground. It will also lead to better stream flow and water quality in Beaver Creek. While this work is being done, the campground will have to be closed, maybe for as long as four weeks, depending on weather. When completed though, this improvement will be a noticeable change that has been needed for a long while.

Although Emerald Ash Borer has not officially been found yet at BCV, it is certainly just a matter of time. In a preemptive strike, the BCV crew has been working on cutting down ash

trees and replacing them with a variety of other hardwoods in the day use area.

At Great River Bluffs, the former group camp area has been re-classified as a cart-in camp area with good results. Previously, there were four camp sites for groups, up to 20 people. There were several deficiencies in the group camp including not enough parking and no showers/flush toilets. Also, large groups were causing resource degradation. To remedy these concerns and make the group camp more amenable to group camper needs would have been expensive. At the same time, GRB had a de-

mand for dispersed camping from people wanting a little more space than the traditional campground provided. So, the group camp is now a cart-in camp with four sites that each holds up to six people. This more remote experience has been popular with every weekend booked full since the change was implemented in April.

Because of this, for now, there is no longer group camping at GRB. It is hoped that funding can be designated to build suitable group camp facilities in the future. So, there is much going on. Come out and take a look.

Special Deer Hunt in Beaver Creek Valley Likely this Fall

A special deer hunt will most likely be held again this fall at Beaver Creek Valley State Park. The park is located within an intensive harvest permit area of the state, which translates into too many deer for the area, which can result in resource degradation. The tentative dates are Saturday and Sunday November 7 & 8, with a harvest limit likely of two deer per licensed hunter. The park will be closed to the general public during the special hunt.

Details are still being worked out, but lottery permit applications and hunt details should be available in the near future for **2015 Special Firearm Deer hunts** on the [MND-NR's Hunting License website](#). In the fall of 2014, 20 lottery based permits were issued in the park, with a two deer bag limit, and a restriction of four points to one side. The harvest total was 16 animals.



Whitetail deer in the Park