

The Storm

On the evening of July 1, 2011 a severe storm ripped through St. Croix State Park and surrounding areas.

Along with a deluge of rain, winds in excess of 60 miles per hour struck the park. Pockets of wind estimated between 80 and 100 miles per hour uprooted and snapped trees across the park.

Approximately 11,000 acres had at least 50% damage to the trees (shown in blue on map), and 9,600 of those acres lost 75-100% of the trees. Previous windstorms shrink in comparison to this event. See map to the right for more detail.

The Damage

Park roads, trails and facilities were blocked and damaged extensively by this storm. St. Croix State Park was closed to the public for two months to prevent endangering any park visitors.

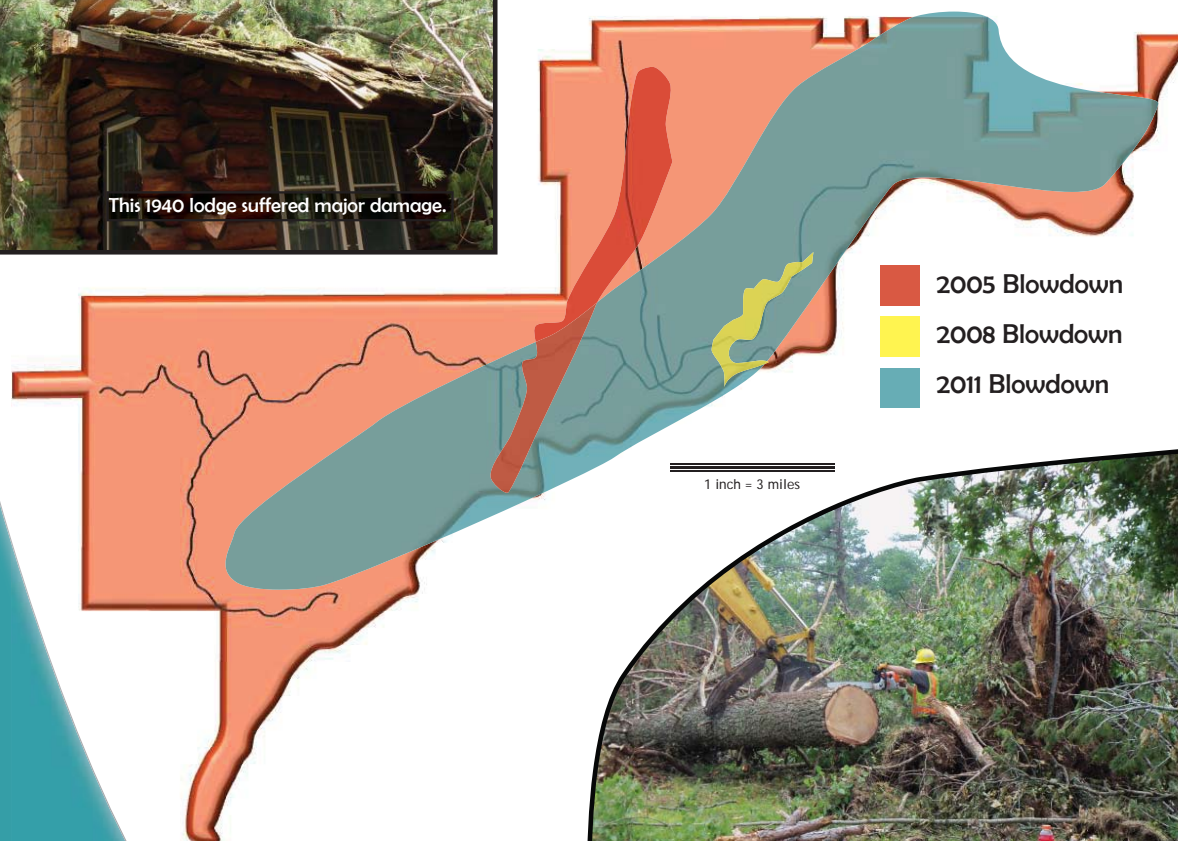
Facilities

Unlike the blowdown of 2008, this storm struck heavy blows to park facilities. Of 197 park buildings, 74 experienced tree damage. St. John's Landing Group Center was most heavily impacted with trees damaging or destroying many historic buildings. These buildings will be restored to their original state to meet the standards of a National Historic Landmark.

The campgrounds, group camp and horse camp were mangled with toppled trees. These areas will look much more open in the years to come.



7/1/11 Blowdown Area In St. Croix State Park



Roads and Trails

The roads and trails in the park were blocked in many locations by walls of fallen trees. The initial clearing of roadways leading to facilities took crews two weeks to accomplish. Clearing of trails lasted through August, with extensive work by chainsaw crews and backhoes.





A maze of trees blocks park facilities.

The Recovery

The volume of timber down is enormous. If left to dry, the trees would become a very serious wildfire hazard and a breeding ground for forest pests and diseases. Contracted logging through strictly regulated timber sales is the most efficient method to handle this type of event in a state park.



Prairie flowers flourish in 2008 barrens restoration.

The Process

The removal of damaged trees will open the canopy and allow native grasses to flourish. The area will have to be carefully managed to ensure continuing quality and biodiversity of the Pine Barrens and Oak Savanna. This process will take many years of diligent care to be fully accomplished.

Continuing management techniques will include:

- invasive species control
- prescribed burning to control brush and minimize wildfire hazard
- fostering naturally recurring plants like pine and oak trees, prairie grasses and wildflowers.



Logging after 2008 windstorm restored Pine Barrens.

Restoring Rare Habitats

After logging, the blowdown will be managed to restore Pine Barrens and Oak Savanna. These habitats are globally imperiled. Worldwide, this type of ecosystem has nearly disappeared. Pine Barrens and Oak Savanna are defined by sparse trees with an understory of prairie grasses, wildflowers and scattered shrubs. St. Croix State Park once contained thousands of acres of Pine Barrens and Oak Savanna in addition to the big pine forests for which Pine County is named. Restoring these habitats will encourage greater plant and animal biodiversity and restore the historic landscape to this National Historic Landmark. In areas where the damage is most severe, the landscape will more closely resemble a prairie habitat.



Prescribed burning controls understory vegetation.



For more information:
St. Croix State Park (320) 384-6591

Windstorm Recovery at St. Croix State Park



After a severe storm on July 1, 2011, St. Croix State Park answers the questions:

- What was the extent of the damage?
- How will the blowdown be managed?
- What is the ecological impact of this event?

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