

BOWSTRING, BATTLEGROUND AND WELSH LAKE STATE FORESTS

BOWSTRING STATE FOREST
526,285 ACRES

BATTLEGROUND STATE FOREST
17,969 ACRES

WELSH LAKE STATE FOREST
19,798 ACRES

ESTABLISHED 1963

FOREST LANDSCAPES: Bisected by the Mississippi River and dotted with innumerable small lakes, as well as the large Leech and Winnibigoshish lakes, this area is home to spectacular forests of towering trees, abundant game, and seasonal berries. These forests are located between Bemidji and Grand Rapids and popular for cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, boating, and birdwatching.

A WORKING FOREST: From year to year, you may see changes in these forests. The DNR manages the trees, water, and wildlife in state forests to keep them healthy and meet recreational, environmental, and economic goals. Trees are harvested to make a variety of products, such as lumber and building materials, pulp for making paper, pallets, fencing, and telephone poles. Through careful planning, harvesting, and planting, land managers work to improve wildlife habitat. The DNR manages state forests for everyone, while preventing wildfires and ensuring forests continue to keep air and water clean.

HISTORY: The two large lakes in the area—Leech and Winnibigoshish—were formed around 10,000 years ago by huge blocks of ice left behind by receding glaciers. Abundant wild rice grows in the area's many lakes and rivers. Evidence of human life—hunting, fishing, settling, and harvesting wild rice—date back at least 1,000 years. In the 1600s, the Dakota had communities on Leech Lake. Beginning in the middle 1700s, the Mississippi and Pillager bands of Ojibwe arrived, along with French fur traders who set up Northwest Company trading posts in the area. Treaties in 1847, 1855, and 1864 later ceded Indian lands to the new state of Minnesota and established the boundaries of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Indian Reservation. The Battle of Sugar Point was fought in 1898 between the 3rd U.S. Infantry and members of the Pillager Band of Chippewa (Ojibwe). Between 1880 and 1920 timber barons claimed the land and removed millions of board feet of pine. In the 1940s the Civilian Conservation Corps planted millions of trees and improved opportunities for recreation and sustainable future harvests. Also, dams constructed in the early 1900s greatly increased the area of Cass Lake and Lake Winnibigoshish.

TREES: Aspen, maple, ash, oak, and balsam fir cover much of the forest. White, red, and jack pine grow on sandier soils. Other conifers include spruce, cedar, and tamarack.

WILDLIFE: Game species include white-tailed deer, black bear, ruffed grouse, woodcock, and furbearers. Other species include gray wolf, bobcat, beaver, fisher, pine marten, trumpeter swan, mink, muskrat, otter, snowshoe hare, eagle, and wood frog. More than 200 species of birds have been found in the area.

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