



GRAND PORTAGE STATE FOREST  
100,174 ACRES  
ESTABLISHED 1943

**FOREST LANDSCAPE:** This remote forest bordered by the BWCAW and Grand Portage Reservation includes several hills, cliffs, and rock outcrops that provide some of the roughest and most scenic terrain in Minnesota. Elevation varies from 602 feet above sea level at the shore of Lake Superior to about 2,200 feet on the highest hills. Large areas of land have little or no vehicle access.

**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 utility 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 bedrock exposed along Lake Superior's North Shore has a geologic history that goes back some 1.1 billion years. During the dramatic volcanic activity of that time, molten lava poured through great fissures that developed in the Earth's crust. As these flows accumulated, the land along the rift zone sank to form a great basin, into which huge volumes of sediment were deposited after volcanic activity ended. A long period of erosion followed. The local Sawtooth Mountains of the Grand Marais area are the remnants of these great, tilted lava flows. Much more recently, glaciers took their toll on the area as massive ice sheets gouged out the Lake Superior basin, mainly from the post-volcanic sediments, and scoured the bedrock surface.

Several scenic rivers and streams form whitewater rapids and waterfalls on their way to Lake Superior. Wildflowers begin to show in early spring with marsh marigold, wood anemone, and violet. In summer, look for the rose, thimbleberry, moccasin flower, coral root, bluebead lily, wild sarsaparilla, and fireweed. Asters and goldenrod add to the fiery colors of autumn.

Anishinaabe people used the area for hundreds of years for hunting and sugarbush. Later, French Voyageurs transported animal skins by canoeing through the area's interconnected lakes and rivers to trading posts at Grand Marais. Git-che-O-ni-ga-ming and "Grand Portage" are Ojibwe and French words for "a great carrying place."

Loggers arrived next. In the early 1900s, the Pigeon River Company loggers removed millions of board feet of pine, cedar, black spruce, and white spruce. Much of the wood was rafted on Lake Superior and towed to Wisconsin paper mills. The steel pins and rings that anchored the log booms can still be seen protruding from the rocky shoreline of the lake. Observant visitors might find remnants of abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps camps in the area.

In 1910, a major fire burned much of the southeast corner of the forest. In 1936, another fire burned 10,000 acres in the central part of the forest. Some timber was salvaged from these fires. Charred stumps and logs can still be found.

**TREES:** Aspen, paper birch, and sugar maple, are widespread. White spruce, white pine, white cedar are also common with red and jack pine found on sandier soils and rock outcrops. Peat bogs and swamps feature black spruce, white cedar, black ash, and an occasional tamarack stand.

**WILDLIFE:** Wildlife includes moose, loon, white-tailed deer, black bear, Canada lynx, spruce and ruffed grouse, woodcock, waterfowl, gray wolf, bobcat, beaver, fisher, pine marten, snowshoe hare, otter, mink, muskrat, trumpeter swan, and eagle. Birds associated with the boreal forest include boreal chickadees, olive-sided flycatchers, gray jays, Canada warblers, boreal owls, great gray owls, common nighthawks, and various raptors during early fall migration along the North Shore.

**PUT THIS MAP ON YOUR DEVICE**  
Download this map to your mobile phone or tablet to track your current location. Visit [mndnr.gov/geopdf](https://mndnr.gov/geopdf) for more information.

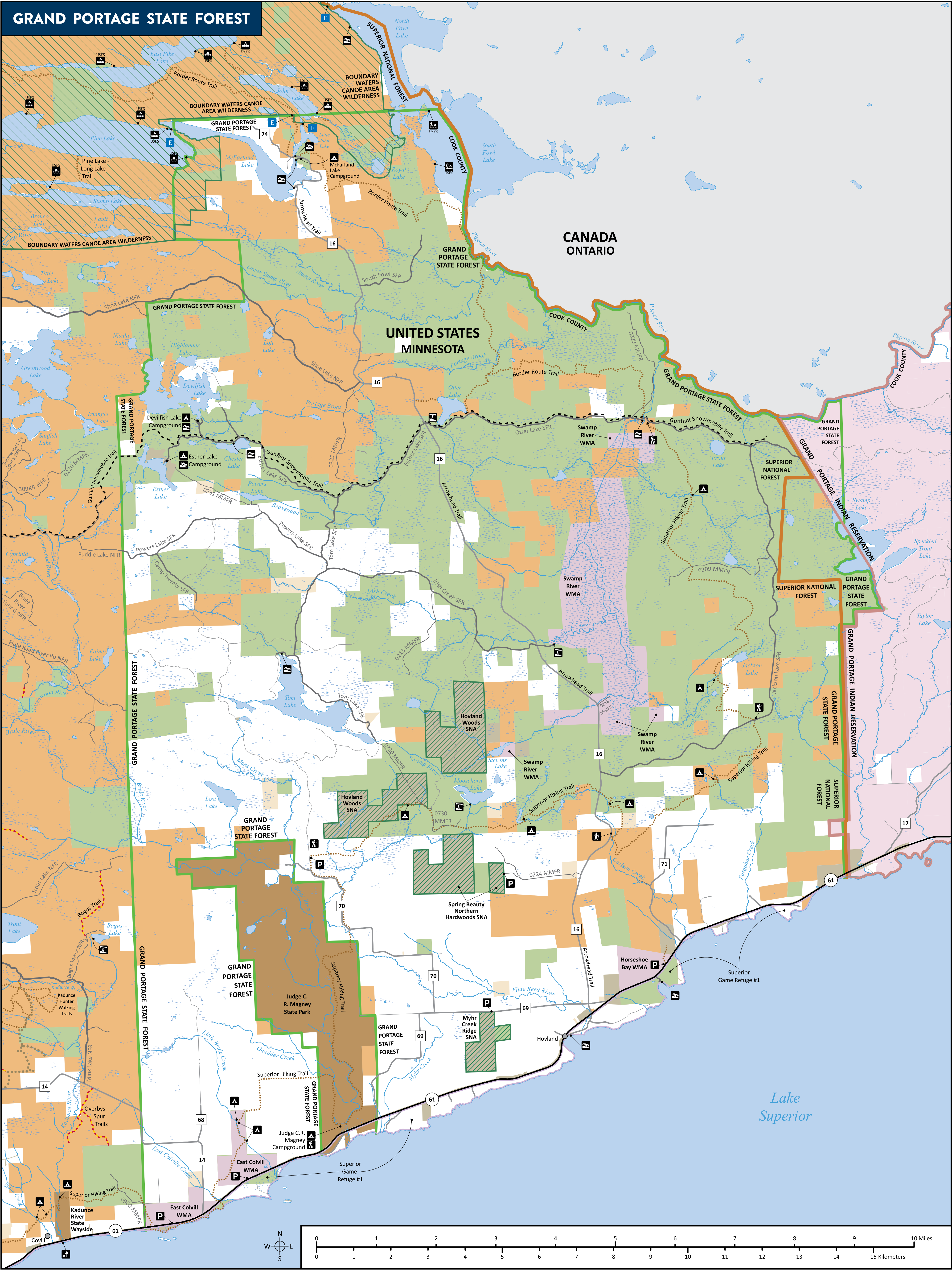
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Roads and Trails	Places	Ownership and Management
State Highway	Populated Place	Wildlife Refuge
County Road	Public Facilities	Scientific and Natural Area
State Forest Road	Carry-In Access	Boundary Waters Canoe Area and Wilderness
Minimum Maintenance State Forest Road	Trailer Access	Wildlife Management Area (WMA)
U.S. Forest Service Road (Passenger Vehicles)	Watercraft Campsite	Statutory Boundary of State Forest
U.S. Forest Service Road (High Clearance Vehicles)	Watercraft and Hike-In Campsite	DNR Forestry Land (State Land)
Other Road	Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) Entry Point	State Park or State Wayside Land
	Hunter Walking Trail or Hiking Trail	Other State Land
	Dogsled Trail	County Land
	Off-Highway Motorcycle & Class 1 & 2 ATV Trail	Federal Land
	Snowmobile Trail	Superior National Forest Boundary
		Grand Portage Indian Reservation Boundary
		Tribal Land
		Private Land

For more information on snowmobile trails, visit: [mndnr.gov/snowmobiling](https://mndnr.gov/snowmobiling)

Land ownership can change. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of all map features. Check before you visit.

SFR = State Forest Road  
MMFR = Minimum Maintenance (State) Forest Road  
NFR = National Forest Road  
USFS = United States Forest Service

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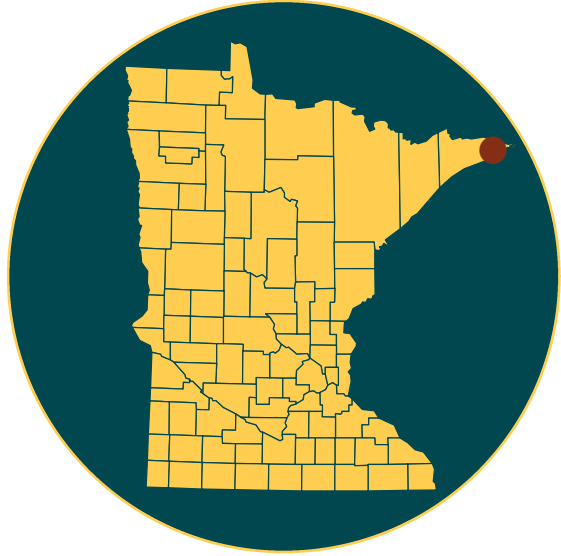
GENERAL STATE FOREST RULES

- Whether you are camping, hunting, riding, geocaching, skiing, fishing, snowmobiling, or gathering berries, take care to leave the forest in good condition.
- Forest lands are open at all times unless otherwise posted closed.
  - On state forest land, summer camping is limited to 14 days, and winter camping is limited to 21 days between the second Sunday in September and the first Saturday in May. For rules about camping on federal land within the Superior National Forest and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), visit [recreation.gov](#)
  - Pack out what you pack in. Remove all personal property. Do not burn litter or garbage and pack it out of campgrounds and campsites.
  - Don't leave equipment unattended for more than 24 hours.
  - Building any permanent structures, including deer stands, is prohibited.
  - Use firewood purchased from vendors who harvested firewood in the same county as the state forest or harvested in Minnesota and certified by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture or USDA. Bring your receipt. You may also collect dead fuelwood on site. Kiln-dried, unstained, unpainted dimensional lumber free from metal or other foreign objects is also permitted. It is illegal to bring in any other firewood. These rules are to prevent accidentally introducing harmful pests such as emerald ash borer. [mndnr.gov/firewood](#)
  - Fireworks are prohibited on all state, county, and federal lands.
  - Keep campfires no larger than 3 feet wide and 3 feet high. Attend the fire at all times. Completely extinguish fires before leaving the area. It should be cold to the touch.
  - Bury human waste (if toilets are not available) and animal parts such as fish guts at least 150 feet from a water body and away from areas where it could cause a nuisance or hazard to public health.
  - Collecting berries, mushrooms, boughs, or dead fuelwood for personal use does not require a permit. However, collecting large amounts firewood, boughs, birch bark, and craft wood may require a permit. Get permits from your local DNR forestry office. [mndnr.gov/areas/forestry](#)
  - Wild rice, Minnesota's state grain, may be harvested when ripe unless posted otherwise. Collecting wild rice requires special harvesting equipment and a license. [mndnr.gov/regulations/wildrice](#)
  - This is a partial list of rules. For more information, visit the website listed below.

[mndnr.gov/forestrules](#)



GRAND PORTAGE  
STATE  
FOREST



CAMPING

**DEVILFISH LAKE CAMPGROUND**  
This campground has five campsites, vault toilet, lake access, walleye fishing, and a dock. No trash removal. No reservations. No fee.

**ESTHER LAKE CAMPGROUND**  
With three campsites on Esther Lake, this primitive camping area offers swimming, water access, boat ramp, dock, stream trout fishing, and hiking trails. No trash removal. No reservations. No fee.

**MC FARLAND CAMPGROUND**  
Located on the edge of the BWCAW and Border Route Hiking Trail, this small campground has five campsites, one vault toilet, a dock, and a lake access. No trash removal. No reservations. No fee.

**DISPERSED CAMPING**  
Dispersed camping with no amenities or fees is allowed in state forests at least one mile outside of a designated campground. Summer camping on state forest land is limited to 14 days. Winter camping is limited to 21 days between the second Sunday in September and the first Saturday in May. No fee.

Camping along the Lake Superior shore is prohibited.

BOATING

Several boat accesses are located in the area, including launch sites on Lake Superior; McFarland, Devilfish, Esther, and Tom lakes; and on the north end of the Swamp River Reservoir. Carry-in accesses are on Little John, South Fowl, Chester, Olga, Otter, Stevens, Unnamed (west of Tom), Margaret, and Loft lakes, and where Irish Creek and Swamp River flow into the Swamp River Reservoir.

Register your watercraft at [mndnr.gov/licenses/watercraft](#)

SPECIAL BWCAW RULES

Whether camping, canoeing, kayaking, skiing, hiking, hunting, or trapping, all visitors to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness must have a visitor permit. No motorboats or wheeled recreational equipment are allowed in the BWCAW. <https://go.usa.gov/xnu9r>

TRAILS

Hiking is allowed on state forest trails and roads. Off-trail hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing are allowed in winter.

Bikes and wheeled recreational equipment are not allowed in the BWCAW. Where trails enter the BWCAW, visitors need a permit. <https://go.usa.gov/xnu9r>

SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL

This nationally acclaimed trail stretches more than 260 miles between the city of Duluth and the Pigeon River Falls in Minnesota's far northeastern corner. Day hikers often walk sections of trails to experience stunning views of Lake Superior, including the highest point on the whole trail. Thru-hikers may use designated campsites along the way. No reservations. No fees. [superiorhiking.org](#)

**LAKE SUPERIOR WATER TRAIL**  
Stretching between the St. Louis River in the west to the Pigeon River in the east, this dramatic water trail follows the north shore of Lake Superior. Experienced sea kayakers can view miles of rocky shoreline, boreal forest, sea caves, and sandy beaches. Lake Superior can be treacherous. Canoes not recommended. [mndnr.gov/watertrails/lswt](#)

**SNOWMOBILE TRAILS**  
Snowmobile trails (state and grant-in-aid) are open and groomed between December 1 and April 1, depending on snow conditions. Use caution at all times. Logging operations can sometimes share the trails. Trails are marked with orange signs.

- Visit [mndnr.gov/snowmobiling/interactive\\_map](#) for maps.
- Snowmobiles must be registered. [mndnr.gov/regulations/snowmobile](#)
- Snowmobiles are not allowed in the BWCAW.

**OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE TRAIL CLASSIFICATION: MANAGED**  
All trails on state-managed lands are classified regarding motor vehicles. The Grand Portage State Forest is classified as "managed," which means that motor vehicles and off-road vehicles (OHVs) and off-highway motorcycles (OHMs) may operate on roads, routes and designated trails unless they are posted as closed. Driving off roads or trails is prohibited. [mndnr.gov/regulations/ohv](#)

Wildlife Management Areas are closed to OHVs.

**HOVLAND WOODS TRAIL – COOK COUNTY ATV CLUB**  
Ride on the Boyd, Tom Lake, and Irish Creek roads for a remote trail through the Hovland Woods Scientific and Natural Area. This trail crosses the Swamp River and provides access to Stevens, Moose Horn, and Tom lakes. Shoe Lake Road connects to the Old Greenwood ATV Trail. The terrain along the trail changes from beautiful hardwood forests to pine to granite rock outcrops with scenic vistas of big bog areas.



HUNTING AND TRAPPING

State forests provide opportunities for hunting and trapping. In the appropriate season, licensed hunters can hunt for big and small game.

[mndnr.gov/hunting](#)

**FIREARMS AND BOWS**  
Firearms must be unloaded and cased and bows must be cased while in or within 200 feet of any recreation area (campground, day-use area, parking area, boat launch, etc.).

- Cutting shooting lanes is not allowed.
- Building permanent structures, including deer stands, is prohibited.
- For regulations about hunting, trapping, firearms, bows, limits, seasons, and deer stands on state-managed land, visit [mndnr.gov/regulations/hunting](#)

WILDLIFE

**MANAGEMENT AREAS**  
State Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are managed to perpetuate and establish quality wildlife habitat to produce a variety of species, particularly harvestable species, emphasizing wildlife that lives in wetlands and young forests. They are also managed to provide opportunities for public hunting, trapping, and watching wildlife.

**WMA HIGHLIGHT: SWAMP RIVER WMA**  
At 2,602 acres, this WMA is primarily lowland habitat that is primarily managed for waterfowl, moose, and wetland wildlife. It is best accessed by water.

WMA maps: [mndnr.gov/maps/compass](#)  
WMA information: [mndnr.gov/wmas](#)

**GAME REFUGES**  
The Superior State Game Refuge encompasses the area between Highway 61, the Lake Superior shoreline, the Lake County line, and the Grand Portage Reservation boundary. No one may take a wild animal, except fish, within a state game refuge. No firearms allowed, unless unloaded and cased. This game refuge includes private land. Avoid trespassing.

**AQUATIC MANAGEMENT AREAS**  
Aquatic Management Areas (AMAs) provide angler access, areas for education and outreach, and protect critical shoreland habitat. The Swamp River AMA lies along the Swamp River between the Swamp River Reservoir and Stevens Lake. The AMA is managed to promote high water quality and protect wetland habitats in and along the river.

FISHING

Anglers may find northern pike, walleye, and smallmouth bass in the larger area lakes. In addition, trout of various species are regularly stocked in several smaller lakes: Unnamed, Olga, Chester, Esther, Loft, and Margaret lakes. Irish Creek and Portage Brook are among the area's better brook trout streams, while the Brule and the Flute Reed rivers provide excellent spring fishing for steelhead.

Anglers must have the proper license and abide by the rules outlined in the current Minnesota Fishing Regulations. [mndnr.gov/regulations/fishing](#)

**Important:** Avoid spreading invasive organisms, such as zebra mussel larvae or spiny waterfleas, by not transporting lake or river water, including in bait buckets. Pack out unused bait and live worms or dispose in trash containers where they can't reach water or soil.

SCIENTIFIC AND NATURAL AREAS

Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) protect natural features of exceptional scientific or educational value including native plant communities, rare species, and significant geological features. Visitors may enjoy the undisturbed natural quality of these sites. This SNA has no trails, restrooms, or drinking water. SNAs do not allow camping, vehicles, or collecting plants and animals. SNAs do allow birding and wildlife watching, hiking, photography, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing.

**SNA HIGHLIGHT: HOVLAND WOODS SNA**  
Aspen-birch forest blankets roughly half of the SNA's 1,280 acres. Priority features for conservation here are sugar maple forest, upland white cedar forest (many old-growth), white cedar swamp, and lowland white cedar forest. These hardwood forests are able to persist near Lake Superior's north shore in part because of the lake-moderated climate with cooler summers, milder winters, and higher humidity. This contrasts with the more conifer-dominated Boundary Waters, just ten miles to the north. Notably, in 1936, a fire burned 10,000 acres in the area.

This large SNA is unusual because it is accessible via many trails. The Superior Hiking Trail runs through parts of the west unit. The Boyd Road, Stevens Lake Spur, and Tom Lake Road are open to bicycles, snowmobiles, and ATVs. Hunting and dogs (under control) are also allowed. [mndnr.gov/snas](#)

NEARBY RECREATION

**JUDGE C.R. MAGNEY STATE PARK**  
Come for the quiet solitude and scenic waterfalls. The most popular hike leads from the trailhead upstream along the Brule River to the famous Devil's Kettle waterfall, where the river splits around a mass of volcanic rock. Half of the river plunges 50 feet into a pool, while the rest pours into a huge pothole. Anglers can catch brook and rainbow trout in the Brule River or its tributary, Gauthier Creek. The park offers camping, picnicking, and hiking. State Park vehicle permits are required.

**GRAND PORTAGE HIKING TRAIL-GRAND PORTAGE NATIONAL MONUMENT**  
Traverse this nine-mile trail that follows a historic Ojibwe and Voyageur route through the woods between the village of Grand Portage and the Pigeon River.

**GRAND PORTAGE STATE PARK/REST STOP**  
Experience a unique sense of place through a partnership between the State of Minnesota and the Anishinaabe people of Grand Portage. Hike six miles of trails to view two waterfalls and ridgetop overlooks of Lake Superior and the Pigeon River valley. Pigeon River forms the northern boundary of the park and divides the U.S. from Canada. The main attraction is High Falls, Minnesota's tallest waterfall, with a drop of 120 feet. No camping.

**BORDER ROUTE HIKING TRAIL-BORDER ROUTE TRAIL ASSOCIATION**  
This long and winding trail starts at the north end of the Swamp River reservoir and wends its way toward McFarland Lake and far beyond along the Minnesota-Ontario border. [borderoutetrail.org](#)



MAP AND GUIDE

GRAND PORTAGE  
STATE FOREST MAP



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
[info.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:info.dnr@state.mn.us)  
651-296-6157 | 888-646-6367  
TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf)  
651-296-5484 | 800-657-3929

**DNR TIP LINE (Turn in Poachers)**  
800-652-9093

**EMERGENCY SERVICE - DIAL 911**

**COOK COUNTY SHERIFF**  
218-387-3030

**NEAREST HOSPITAL SERVICES**  
**Cook County North Shore Hospital**  
218-387-3040

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