



HILL RIVER AND WAUKENABO  
STATE FORESTS

HILL RIVER ESTABLISHED  
1963, 2000, 2001  
124, 207 ACRES

WAUKENABO ESTABLISHED 2000  
15,689 ACRES

**FOREST LANDSCAPE:** The Hill River and Waukenabo state forests are located on gently rolling hills in north-central Minnesota. With an array of public trails and expansive habitat for white-tailed deer and other wildlife, these forests are popular destinations for hunting, fishing, off-highway vehicle riding, and boating.

**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:** Rolling hills, especially in the western and northern portions, are the result of past glacial activity. The Hill and Willow rivers flow through the forest before emptying in to the Mississippi River. Reflecting the language of the people have lived in the area for hundreds of years, “Waukenabo” is the Ojibwe word for a broth made of moss or milt when faced with starvation. During the late 1800s, millions of board feet of virgin red and white pine were cut from the highlands in the northwest parts of the forest. The logs were rafted down the Hill, Willow, and Mississippi rivers to sawmills in Brainerd. In the 1920s, a network of ditches was constructed in an attempt to drain the marshes for cultivation, but much of the land proved unsuitable for agriculture, leading to many abandoned farms in the 1930s. Many of the roads providing access today were constructed on these ditch banks.

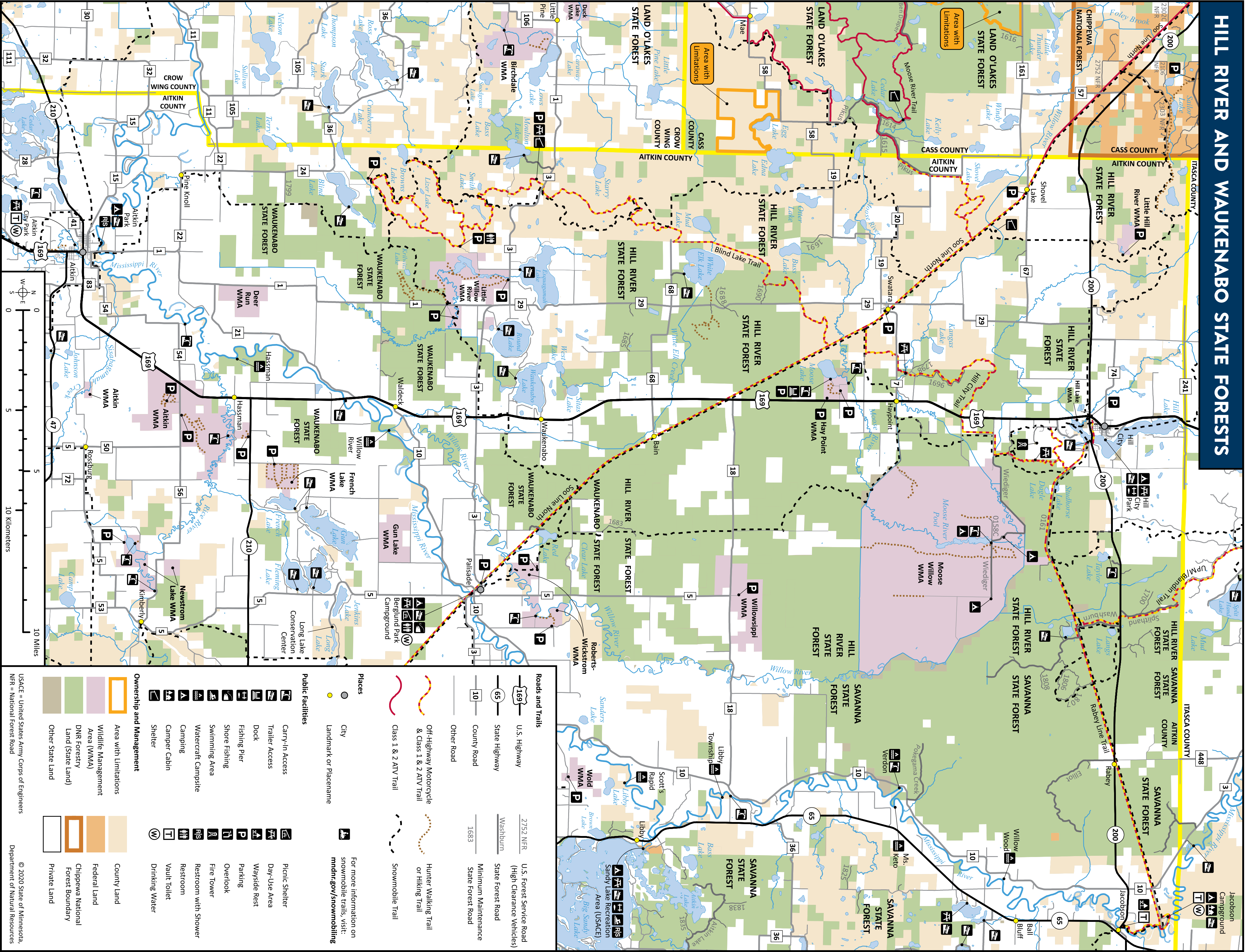
**TREES:** Northern hardwood stands comprised of maple, oak, ash, elm, and basswood, along with aspen and paper birch, grow on higher land. The lowlands support black spruce, tamarack, and white cedar.

**WILDLIFE:** Wildlife includes white-tailed deer, black bear, ruffed grouse, wild turkey, woodcock, waterfowl, gray wolf, bobcat, beaver, fisher, snowshoe hare, otter, mink, muskrat, trumpeter swan, and eagle.

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Download this map on your mobile phone or tablet to track your current location. Visit [mndnr.gov/geopdf](https://mndnr.gov/geopdf) for more information.

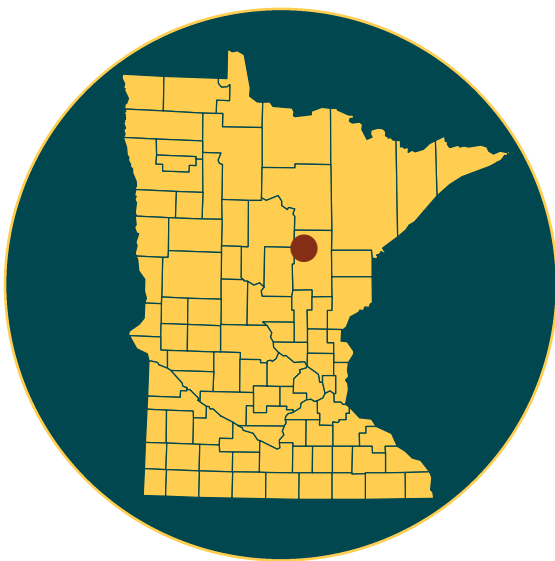
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HILL RIVER AND WAUKENABO STATE FORESTS



# HILL RIVER AND WAUKENABO STATE FORESTS



## CAMPING AND DAY-USE AREAS

Please practice the “Leave No Trace” camping ethic.

**MOOSE WILLOW WMA CAMPSITES**  
There are three designated campsites in the Moose Willow Wildlife Management Area (WMA). No reservations or fees required. First-come, first-served.

**AITKIN CAMPGROUND – AITKIN COUNTY**  
Located on the banks of the Mississippi River, this campground has nine campsites, with access to flush toilets, showers, drinking water, and picnic grounds. Reservations required. Fees charged. [co.aitkin.mn.us/departments/Land/recreation/AitkinCamp.html](https://co.aitkin.mn.us/departments/Land/recreation/AitkinCamp.html)

**JACOBSON CAMPGROUND – AITKIN COUNTY**  
Located one mile north of the city of Jacobson, this park offers 13 campsites, two camper cabins, ATV and snowmobile access to trails, a boat launch on the Mississippi River, toilets, and drinking water. Reservations and fees required. [co.aitkin.mn.us/departments/Land/recreation/Jacobson.html](https://co.aitkin.mn.us/departments/Land/recreation/Jacobson.html)

**BERGLUND PARK CAMPGROUND – AITKIN COUNTY**  
Located in the town of Palisade, this campground has nine campsites with electric hookups, flush toilets, showers, water, picnic shelter with fireplace, boat access to the Mississippi River, a handicap-accessible fishing pier, and access to the Soo Line ATV/Snowmobile Trail. [co.aitkin.mn.us/departments/Land/recreation/BerglundCamp.html](https://co.aitkin.mn.us/departments/Land/recreation/BerglundCamp.html)

**WATER CAMPSITES**  
Scattered campsites along the Mississippi River State Water Trail in the Waukenabo State Forest are accessible only from the water. Most campsites have a picnic table, fire ring, and vault toilet. No reservations or fees required. First-come, first-served.

**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.



SCAN TO  
DOWNLOAD MAP

## BOATING

The Mississippi River in this area is an easy 12-mile paddle with launching access at Berglund County Park and off Highway 169. Several boat accesses are located on area lakes and on the Mississippi River. Register your watercraft at [mndnr.gov/licenses/watercraft](https://mndnr.gov/licenses/watercraft)

## TRAILS

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

**CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS**  
Several miles of groomed cross-country ski trails include those at Long Lake Conservation Center, No Achen (in the city of Aitkin), Savanna State Park, and the Remote Lakes Solitude Area. Great Minnesot Ski Pass may be required.

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER STATE WATER TRAIL**  
A small portion of the Mississippi River State Water Trail flows through the southern part of the Waukenabo State Forest. The river in this area is generally an easy paddle through hardwood forests and few rapids. Good water quality supports walleye, northern, muskie, bass, and panfish. Detailed map: [mndnr.gov/watertrails/mississippiriver](https://mndnr.gov/watertrails/mississippiriver)

**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](https://mndnr.gov/snowmobiling/interactive_map) for maps.

• Snowmobiles must be registered. [mndnr.gov/regulations/snowmobile](https://mndnr.gov/regulations/snowmobile)

**OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE CLASSIFICATION: LIMITED**  
All trails on state-managed lands are classified regarding motor vehicles. These forests are classified as “limited,” allowing off-highway vehicle (OHVs), all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and off-highway motorcycles (OHMs) on signed and mapped routes open for that type of OHV use. Off-road traffic is prohibited, except when needed to retrieve big game when hunting and trapping during the proper season and with the proper license. [mndnr.gov/regulations/ohv](https://mndnr.gov/regulations/ohv)

• Unless posted closed, local forest roads are open to ATVs, OHVs, and OHMs.

• OHV trails are open as weather conditions allow. [mndnr.gov/ohn/closures.html](https://mndnr.gov/ohn/closures.html)

- ATVs, off-road vehicles (ORVs), and OHMs must be registered. [mndnr.gov/licenses/ohv](https://mndnr.gov/licenses/ohv)
- Wildlife Management Areas are closed to OHVs.

**Soo Line North Trail**  
This popular trail is open to snowmobiling in the winter and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-highway vehicles (OHVs), and off-highway motorcycles (OHMs) during the warmer months. Only ATVs are allowed north of the trail’s intersection with the Moose Lake Trail Connection in the northwest part of the Hill River State Forest. The trail is relatively flat and level. The Soo Line North Trail runs through Aitkin County, connects Cass and Carlton counties, and ends where it connects with the Soo Line Trail to the south near the city of Moose Lake.

[mndnr.gov/maps/ohv/sooline\\_north.pdf](https://mndnr.gov/maps/ohv/sooline_north.pdf)

**Axtell Technical Riding Area**  
The area offers technical trails across a variety of natural and placed features. Ride the “whoops,” circle the “bowl,” climb the hills or take the “crawls” to build riding skills. [mndnr.gov/ohv/trail\\_detail.html?id=94](https://mndnr.gov/ohv/trail_detail.html?id=94)

**Rabey Line**  
The 19-mile Rabey Line winds through the Hill River and Savanna state forests and connects the communities of Jacobson and Hill City. The Rabey Line runs over a 1900s railroad grade once used to move timber from Hill City to the landing at Jacobson. Today, the Rabey line is a multi-use trail running through a combination of high ground, swamp, and bog land with beautiful woods along the Mississippi River. Open to Class 1 and 2 ATVs and OHMs.

**UPM Blandin Trail – Itasca County**  
Located off the Rabey Line, the 21-mile UPM Blandin Trail travels through a wooded landscape of upland spruce and northern hardwood, with several small stream crossings. A short spur trail leads to an overlook and picnic area. Open to Class 2 ATVs and OHMs.

## 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](https://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 on any state land.
- 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](https://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: MOOSE-WILLOW WMA**  
This large WMA has expansive marsh, tamarack and low grassy areas. Pockets of cedar, and islands of aspen and northern hardwood are scattered throughout the unit. There are two wetland impoundments with excellent stands of wild rice (harvesting not allowed). Upland timber is managed for white-tailed deer, bear, and ruffed grouse. Look for trumpeter swans, moose, wolves, ring-necked ducks, black terns, great gray owls and common yellowthroats. Trumpeter swans have nested on the impoundments.

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

## AQUATIC MANAGEMENT AREAS

Aquatic Management Areas (AMAs) provide angler access, protect critical shoreland habitat and areas for education and outreach. The Hill Lake AMA on the east side of the lake offers opportunities for shore fishing and is a general use AMA and so is also open to hunting and trapping, bird watching, and hiking. Additionally, there are fishing easements available for use on Morrison Brook, just west of Hill City, which is a designated trout stream with opportunities for fishing Brook Trout.

## FISHING

Anglers may find largemouth bass, and smallmouth bass, northern pike, walleye, panfish, trout, and catfish. Some lakes may have special provisions or restrictions on fishing in state and national forests. You must have the proper license and abide by the same rules and seasons as anywhere else in Minnesota.

Avoid spreading invasive organisms such as zebra mussels or spiny waterfleas by not transporting vegetation, 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.

Visit [mndnr.gov/fishing](https://mndnr.gov/fishing) for up-to-date regulations.

## NEARBY RECREATION

**SAVANNA PORTAGE STATE PARK**  
Located a short distance east of Waukenabo State Forest, this beautiful state park contains five lakes and the East and West Savanna rivers.

- Camping available in the Savana Portage Campground on Lake Shumway, camper cabins, and guesthouse. No dispersed camping.
- Hikers can explore the Savanna Portage Trail, a historic trail traveled by fur traders, Dakota and Ojibwe people, and explorers.
- Swimming is available at Loon Lake.
- Bicyclists can use 12 miles of unpaved, groomed trails.
- Off-highway vehicles are not permitted.

**LAWLER LOOPS TRAILS IN THE SAVANNA STATE FOREST**  
A scenic detour off the popular Soo Line North Trail, the Lawler Loops system showcases iconic northern Minnesota landscape. The trail has three loops, passing north and south of the Soo Line. Stretches of

## GENERAL STATE FOREST RULES

Whether you are camping, hunting, riding, geocaching, skiing, or gathering berries, take care to leave the forest in good condition.

- Forest lands are open at all times unless otherwise posted closed.
- 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.
- Pack out what you pack in. Remove all personal property. Do not burn litter or garbage.
- 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](https://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, or dead fuelwood for personal use does not require a permit. However, collecting large amounts of these items to take home for personal use or sale does require a permit. Get permits from your local DNR forestry office. [mndnr.gov/areas/forestry](https://mndnr.gov/areas/forestry)
- Wild rice, Minnesota’s state grain, may be harvested when ripe unless posted otherwise. Collecting wild rice requires a license. [mndnr.gov/regulations/wildrice](https://mndnr.gov/regulations/wildrice)
- This is a partial list of rules. For more information, visit the website listed below.

## mndnr.gov/forestrules

boardwalk cross over the wetland areas and picnic stops with grills are available. Open to Class 2 ATVs and OHMs. [mndnr.gov/ohv](https://mndnr.gov/ohv)

**RICE LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE – U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
Established in 1935 to preserve valuable habitat for waterfowl, this extensive refuge area contains mixed forest, peat bogs, and lakes. Woodland people have built burial mounds in the area and harvested wild rice from this 3,600-acre Rice Lake for thousands of years. Today, visitors can enjoy trails, parking, picnic areas, and restrooms. Fishing and hunting permitted, no overnight camping allowed.

The American Bird Conservatory designated this refuge as a Globally Important Bird Area. In mid-October, viewers can watch thousands of ducks, geese and swans on Rice Lake from the elevated observation platform along the Wildlife Drive. Fall duck populations are greatly tied to the wild rice produced on Rice Lake and average peak numbers are 200,000 individuals. [fws.gov/refuge/Rice\\_Lake/about.html](https://fws.gov/refuge/Rice_Lake/about.html)

**BIG SANDY LAKE RECREATION AREA – U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**  
Located at the outlet of Big Sandy Lake, this recreation area offers camping, fishing, boating, interpretive education, playground, and swimming beach. Reservations and fees required. [recreation.gov](https://recreation.gov)

Trespassing is a misdemeanor. If convicted, you could lose your license to hunt. All conservation and peace officers enforce trespass laws.

**STAY ON TRAILS**  
Whether you’re riding or walking, tread lightly on the land. Be courteous to others, respect private property, and obey the law.

**LEAVE TROUBLE BEHIND**  
Help prevent the spread of invasive plants and animals.

- Clean your gear before entering and leaving the recreation site.
- Remove mud, seeds, and plants from clothes, pets, boots, gear, vehicles, and watercraft.
- Stay on designated trails.
- [PlayCleanGo.org](https://www.CleanGo.org)



MAP AND GUIDE

HILL RIVER  
AND WAUKENABO  
STATE FORESTS MAP  
DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES

**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**

**AITKIN COUNTY SHERIFF**  
218-927-7435

**NEAREST HOSPITAL SERVICES**  
Grand Itasca Medical Center, Grand Rapids  
218-326-3401

Riverwood Healthcare, Aitkin  
(218) 927-2121

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