



KOOCHICHING AND SMOKEY BEAR STATE FORESTS

KOOCHICHING STATE FOREST
567,985 ACRES
ESTABLISHED 1943

SMOKEY BEAR STATE FOREST
12,276 ACRES
ESTABLISHED 1963

FOREST LANDSCAPES: Located in Koochiching County, the Smokey Bear and Koochiching state forests consist of pine, spruce, fir, aspen, and birch, underlain by a profusion of flowers, blueberries, high- and low-bush cranberries, black cherries, and plums. The landscape is mostly flat, containing several peatlands, and drained by several streams and the Little Fork and Big Fork rivers.

A WORKING FOREST: From year to year, you may see changes in this forest. 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 to use, while preventing wildfires and ensuring forests continue to keep air and water clean.

HISTORY: Over 10,000 years ago, the gigantic Glacial Lake Agassiz inundated much of this area. As the shallow lake slowly drained to the northwest, receding waters deposited clayey to loamy soils, along with peat deposits up to 12 feet deep. Today, vast bogs surround "islands" and ridges of black spruce, cedar, tamarack, and pine growing on relatively higher land.

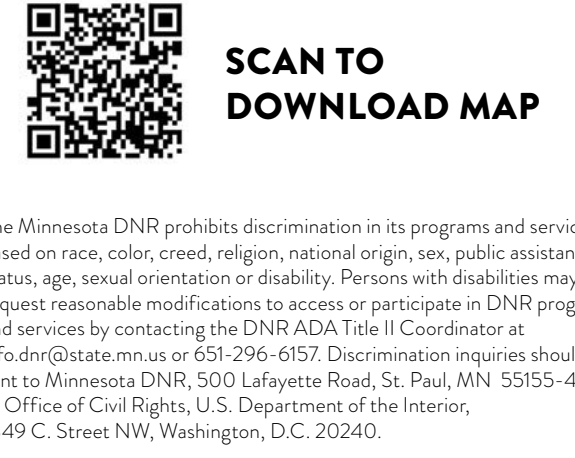
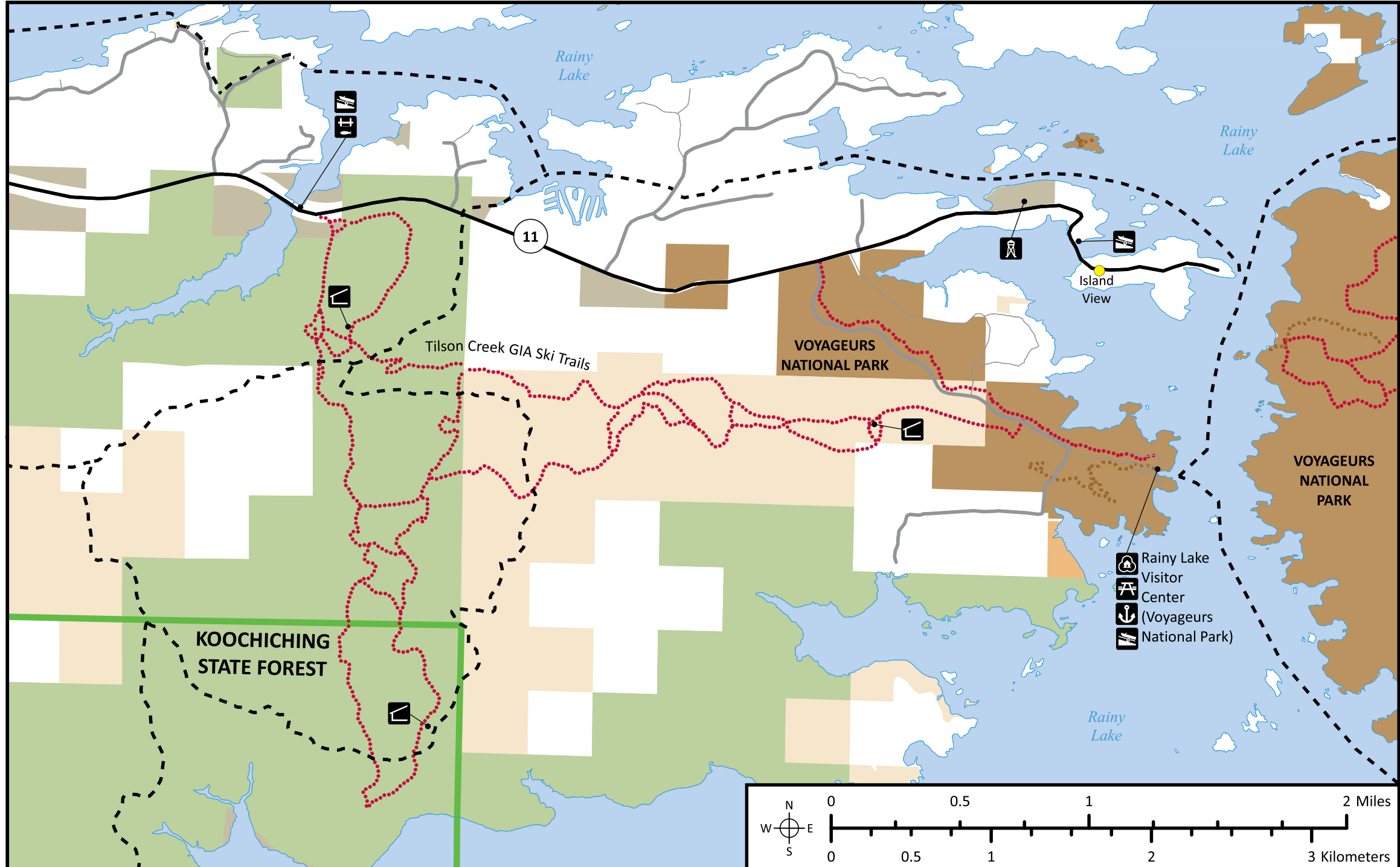
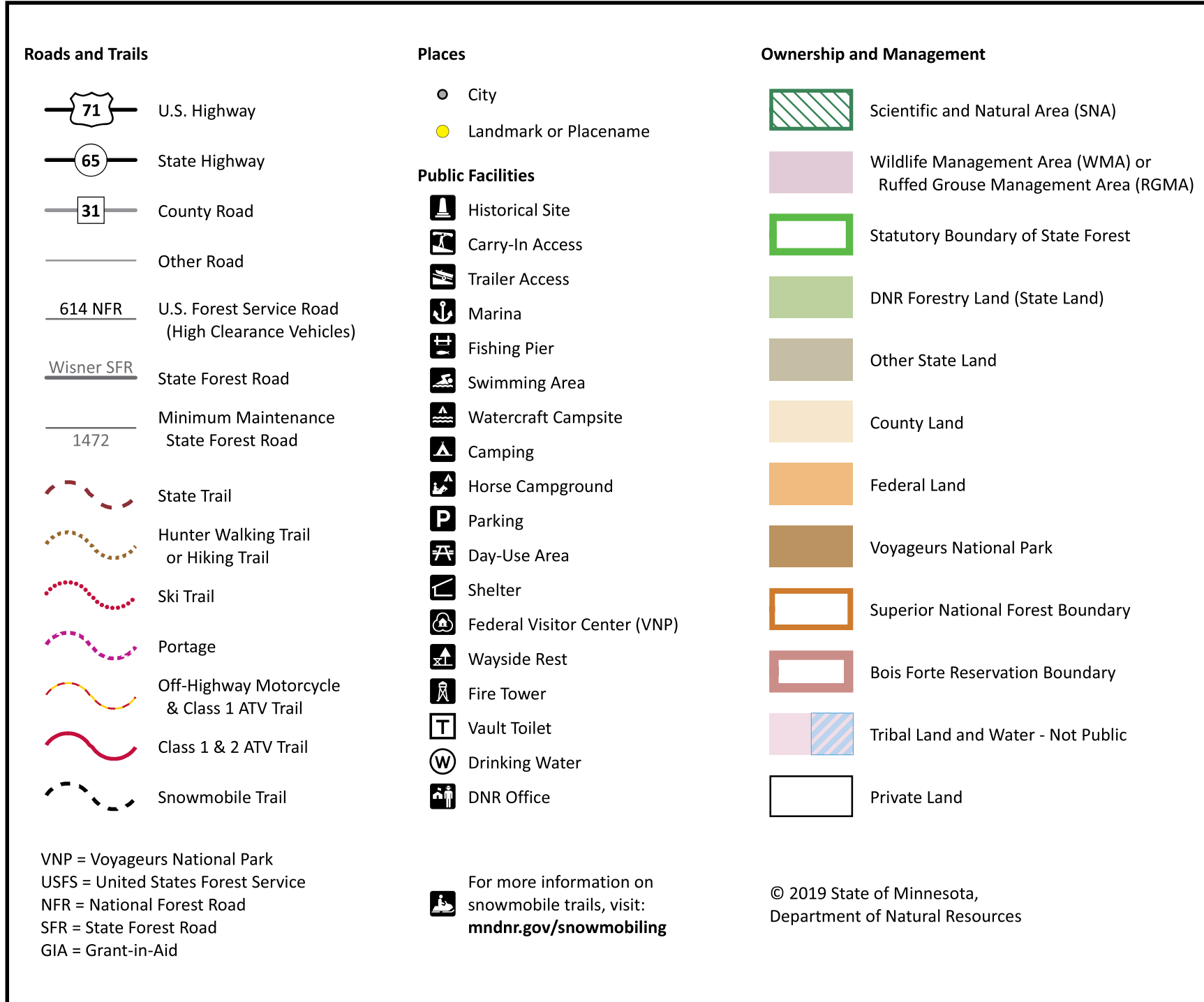
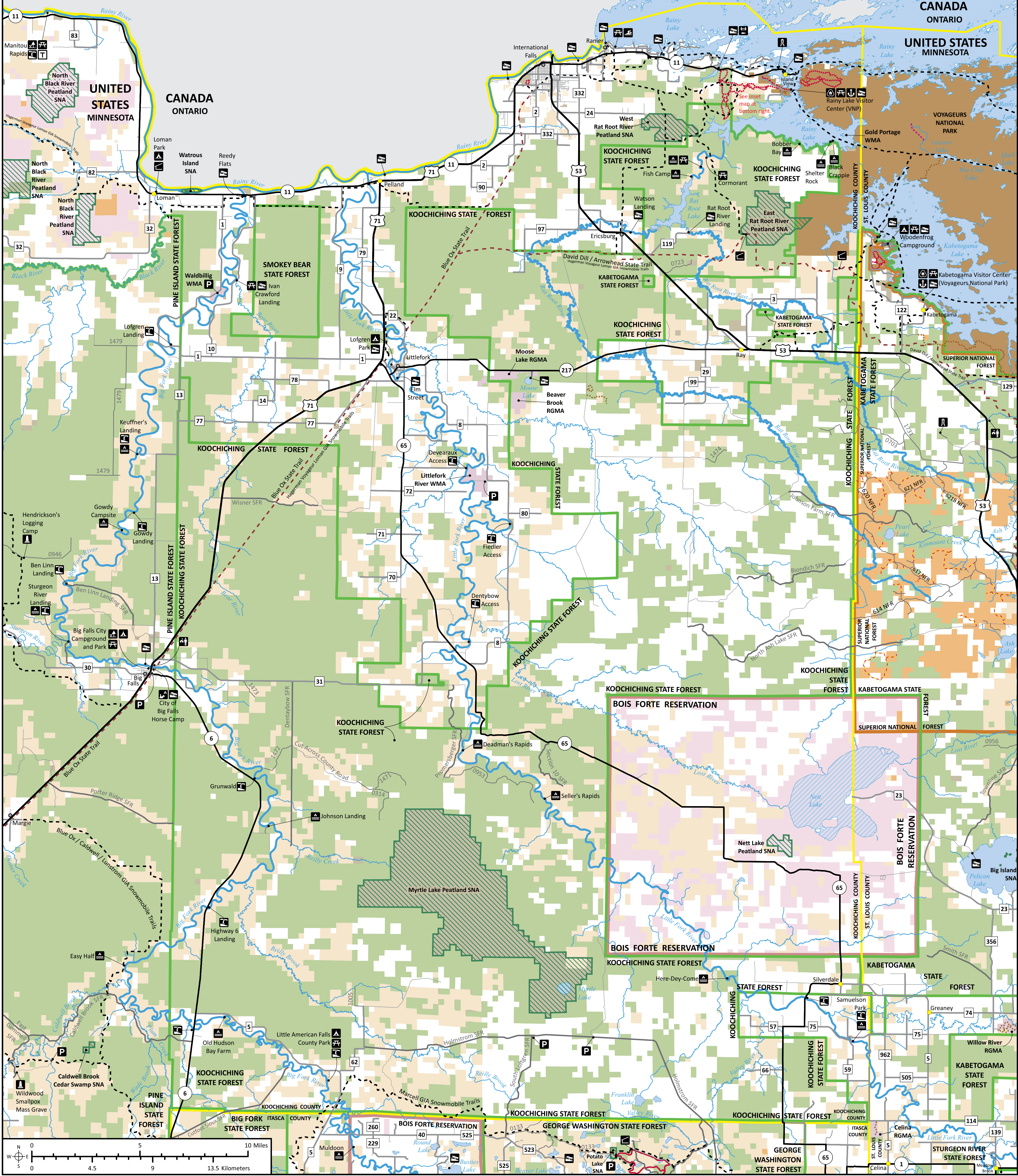
A succession of Woodland Indians occupied the region for at least 2,500 years, including the Laurel group who created the burial and effigy mounds at Grand Mounds area near the Smokey Bear State Forest. Early people hunted woodland caribou, elk, moose, and deer. The Dakota inhabited the area until the Ojibwe arrived. Today, most of the state's largest sources of wild rice, Bois Forte, or "strong wood," was the French name given to the Indians living in the densest forests. Logging between the late 1880s and early 1900s profoundly transformed the area, as millions of board feet of pine logs were floated downstream (north) along the Little Fork and Big Fork rivers to lumber mills in Ontario. Today's forests represent later growth.

TREES: Look for stands of white pine, red pine, and white spruce. In boggy areas, black spruce, fir, cedar, and tamarack are common. Aspen, birch, and jack pine grow in other upland sites. Oak and maple are also present.

WILDLIFE: These forests are home to timber wolves, bobcats, beaver, otter, bald eagle, osprey. Big game include black bear, moose, and white-tailed deer. Ruffed grouse, trumpeter swans, and many species of ducks are common.

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Download this map to your mobile phone or tablet to track your current location. Visit mndnr.gov/geopdf for more information.

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GENERAL STATE FOREST RULES

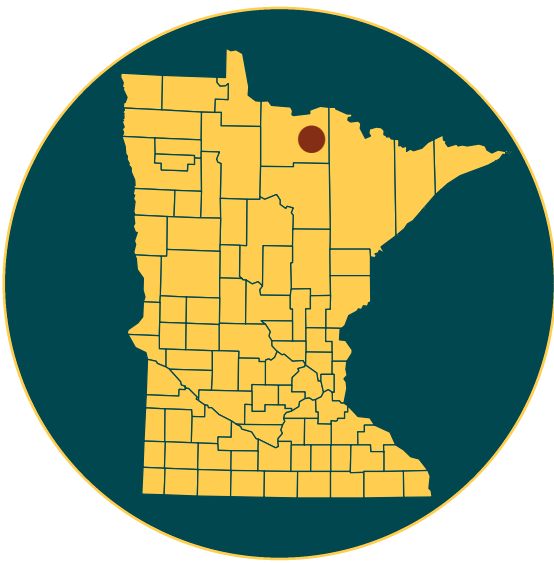
Whether you are camping, hunting, riding, geocaching, skiing, or gathering berries, take care to leave the forest in good condition.

- Forest lands are open at all times unless otherwise posted.
- Dispersed camping is allowed on state forest land at least 1 mile outside of campground areas for no fee.
- On state forest and county 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.
- 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
- Fireworks are prohibited on all state 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. Ashes 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 while in the forest is OK. However, collecting large amounts of these items to take home for personal use or sale requires 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 a license. mndnr.gov/regulations/wildrice
- Within the Bois Forte Reservation, only tribal members may collect wild rice.
- Unless posted closed, hiking, horseback riding, and off-road biking are allowed on all trails except groomed ski trails.
- This is a partial list of rules. For more information, visit the website listed below.

mndnr.gov/state_forests/rules.html



KOOCHICHING AND SMOKEY BEAR STATE FORESTS



CAMPING

Dispersed camping with no amenities is allowed on state forest land, without fee. Camping is limited to 21 days between the second Sunday in September and the first Saturday in May. 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.

Please practice the "Leave No Trace" camping ethic.

WOODENFROG

STATE FOREST CAMPGROUND

Located on the west shore of Kabetogama Lake, this campground has more than 60 drive-in, non-electrical campsites, including two handicapped-accessible sites. Most campsites can accommodate an RV. All sites have a picnic table and fire ring. Toilets and drinking water are on site. Other features include a dock and popular sandy swimming beach.

CANOE-IN CAMPSITES

Several campsites along the Big Fork and Little Fork rivers have a picnic table, fire ring, and wilderness toilet. No drinking water. No fee. First-come, first-serve.

mndnr.gov/watertrails/littleforkriver

COUNTY CAMPSITES

AND DAY-USE AREAS

Koochiching County operates several scattered campsites, most with water access. There is a day-use site on the Rat Root River. All campsites are first-come, first-served. No fees. co.koochiching.mn.us/261/Parks-Recreation

BIG FALLS CAMPGROUND – CITY OF BIG FALLS

Campsites along the Big Falls of the Big Fork River are available May through October. Campsites have access to modern restroom and showers, boat and canoe access, swimming, and shore fishing. Fee charged.

BIG FALLS HORSE CAMPGROUND – CITY OF BIG FALLS

Located at the base of Big Falls on the east side of Highway 71 north, six campsites offer tether lines, picnic tables, fire pits, electric and water hookups, and access to showers. Riders can easily access 30 miles of marked, multi-use trails. Fee charged.

VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK – NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This park offers boating, swimming, fishing, camping, and miles of hiking trails. Nearly half (40 percent) of the park is water. The main body of the park is accessible only by boat in the summer, or by snowmobile, ski or snowshoe in the winter. Popular guided boat tours are available on Rainy Lake. The Rainy Lake Visitor Center also serves as a popular trailhead for the Koochiching County cross-country ski trails. There are no fees to enter this park. Fees charged for camping, overnight boat trips, and tour boats.

nps.gov/voya

BOATING

Rivers are popular canoe and kayak routes. Motorboats are allowed on the Little Fork River. Water levels vary greatly throughout the year, and beaver dams and rapids can make boating difficult.

Register your canoe, kayak, or motorboat at mndnr.gov/licenses/watercraft

PUBLIC WATER ACCESSES

Boaters may use several public water accesses. Some are carry-in and others have ramps.

BIG FORK RIVER STATE WATER TRAIL

This low-lying river flows north to the Rainy River. Pastoral in places and wild in others, the river offers excellent fishing for walleye, northern pike, and muskie. Two spectacular waterfalls must be portaged: Little American Falls and Big Falls. mndnr.gov/watertrails/bigforkriver

LITTLE FORK RIVER

STATE WATER TRAIL

Flowing north to the Rainy River along the U.S.-Canada border, this river winds northwest through and near the Koochiching State Forest. Rapids are separated by long stretches of quiet water. Most portages are short, but sometimes brushy. Contains Class 1 and 2 rapids, and one Class 6 rapids at Hannie Falls. mndnr.gov/watertrails/littleforkriver

BOIS FORTE RESERVATION

No motorized boats allowed in lakes, inlets, or streams. Nett Lake is open only to tribal members.

TRAILS

All trails and roads are open to hiking and mountain biking, unless posted closed. Off-trail hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are also allowed.

TILSON CREEK HIKING AND SKI TRAILS – POLAR POLERS SKI CLUB

Located just west of Voyageurs National Park, this 16-kilometer trail crosses open and forested bogs and passes through stands of aspen, spruce, balsam fir, and eastern white cedar, including a half-mile bogwalk. The trail follows along a rock ridge with several overlooks of Rainy Lake. The trailhead is at the Rainy Lake Visitor Center in Voyageurs National Park.

Great Minnesota Ski Pass required on all ski trails. mndnr.gov/licenses/skipass

SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

Snowmobile trails (state trails and grant-in-aid) are open and groomed between December 1 and April 1 depending on snow conditions. Use caution at all times as logging operations often share the trails. Trails are marked with orange directional signs.

- Snowmobiles must be registered mndnr.gov/regulations/snowmobile
- Detailed trail maps are on mndnr.gov/state_trails/list.html

DAVID DILL/ARROWHEAD

STATE TRAIL

This 135-mile snowmobile trail extends from its intersection with the Taconite State Trail near Tower to three miles south of International Falls. Approximately 69 miles of trail are suitable for horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking. There may be wet areas. Contact the DNR to check local conditions.

HAGERMAN-VOYAGEUR-LOMAN

SNOWMOBILE TRAIL

This snowmobile extends across the northern part of the Koochiching and Smokey Bear State Forest.

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE TRAIL

CLASSIFICATION: MANAGED

All trails on state-managed lands are classified regarding motor vehicles. Both the Koochiching and Smokey Bear state forests allow highway-licensed vehicles on all roads unless posted closed, and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-highway vehicles (OHVs), and off-highway motorcycles (OHMs) on all roads, routes, and designated trails. No motorized use is allowed off roads and trails.

- Unless posted closed, local forest roads are open to ATVs, OHVs, and OHMs.
- OHV trail seasons vary and roads may close temporarily. mndnr.gov/regulations/dnr
- ATV trails are open as the spring and fall weather conditions allow. mndnr.gov/ohv/closures.html

BLUE OX/CALDWELL STATE TRAIL

The 74-mile Blue Ox/Caldwell State Trail is open to ATVs and snowmobiles. It follows an abandoned railroad grade, providing an easy and relatively straight ride through stretches of black spruce, swamps, and upland aspen stands. Parking and trail access in Big Falls, Northome, and International Falls. Trail pass required.

HUNTING AND TRAPPING

Both the Koochiching and Smokey Bear state forests provide habitat for hunting and trapping. In the appropriate season, licensed hunters can hunt for white-tailed deer, grouse, and other game.

mndnr.gov/hunting

FIREARMS AND BOWS

Firearms and bows must be unloaded and cased while in or within 200 feet of a state recreation area (campground, day-use area, parking area, boat launch, etc.) or 450 feet of a national forest recreation area. Exception: During seasons open for hunting, a person may carry an unloaded, uncased firearm or strung bow from a forest recreation area to hunt outside of the area.

- 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
- For regulations about shooting on federally managed land, visit fs.fed.us/visit/know-before-you-go/shooting

WMA HIGHLIGHT:

LITTLE FORK RIVER WMA

At 640 acres, this WMA is 60 percent brush/grasslands and 40 percent hardwood forest. Deer, bear, forest upland birds, and sharptail grouse live here.

WMA HIGHLIGHT:

WALBILLIG WMA

This 190-acre WMA adjoins the Big Fork River. Most of the hardwoods are young with older conifers nearby. Access is good from the county road. Look for deer, bear, small game and forest upland birds.

FISHING

Anglers may find muskie, walleye, northern pike, muskellunge, smallmouth bass. There are no special provisions or restrictions on fishing in state 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 mussel larvae or spiny waterfleas by not transporting lake or river water, including in bait buckets. Pack out and dispose unused bait and live worms in trash containers where they can't reach water or soil.

- Visit mndnr.gov/fishing for up-to-date regulations.
- Visit mndnr.gov/lakefind for current information on specific lakes.

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, however, most SNAs have 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:

MYRTLE LAKE PEATLAND

This relatively undisturbed 22,950-acre peatland provides rich scientific research value. Aerial images convey striking landscape patterns that escaped ditching: massive raised bogs with spruce, a large water track, ribbed fens with ridges and pools oriented at right angles to water movement, and circular and teardrop-shaped forested "islands." In the 11,700 years since Glacial Lake Agassiz departed its lakebed, more than 12 vertical feet of peat has slowly accumulated. Myrtle Lake, rather than filling in over time, still shines. Rare plant species include the ram's head orchid, white adder's mouth, coastal sedge, twig rush, and English sundew. This SNA is also a National Natural Landmark.

SNA HIGHLIGHT: CALDWELL

BROOK CEDAR SWAMP

The swampy nature of this 80-acre SNA in nearby Pine Island State Forest has protected some of Minnesota's oldest white cedar trees, including a 550-year-old specimen on Seagull Lake. Among the hummocks and pools, orchids, blue-bead lilies and starflowers bloom, and northern parula warblers sing and collect grandfather's beard lichen for their nests.

SNA HIGHLIGHT: EAST AND

WEST RAT ROOT RIVER

PEATLAND

This SNA is divided into two peatlands east and west of the Rat Root River (the "rat" refers to muskrat) that together encompass 4,300 acres. High quality peatlands are expressed in extensive areas of black spruce bog, black spruce-leatherleaf bog, and leather-leaf bog. Smaller fens are found near the water tracks. Native plants include the carnivorous pitcher plant, round-leaved sundew, and stemless lady's slipper orchid. Most of Minnesota's peatland butterflies live here: Dorcas copper; bog copper; jutta arctic; and arctic, bog, freija, and Frigga fritillaries. Both SNAs contribute to water quality in the region as a whole, especially benefiting the natural walleye spawning areas in the Rat Root River.

HISTORY

A succession of Woodland Culture Indians occupied the region during the 2,500 years before modern time. One of the most notable groups, the Laurel, built Grand Mound, a burial hill 40 feet high and more than 100 feet across at the base. Located near the mouth of the Big Fork River, Grand Mound's village site was a spring gathering place for the harvest of spawning fish and a spiritual center for indigenous peoples. Today, this mound is accessible only to descendants of the people whose ancestors are buried there. The Laurel people gave way to the Blackduck, who may have been the direct predecessors of the Dakota. The Dakota inhabited the region until the Ojibwe laid claim to what would become northern Minnesota.

Magnificent stands of white and red pine in the southern part of this area were logged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The last major log drive in 1937 was down the Nett Lake and Little Fork rivers to the Rainy River to lumber mills in Ontario.



KOOCHICHING AND SMOKEY BEAR STATE FORESTS MAP
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
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

KOOCHICHING COUNTY SHERIFF
218-283-4416

NEAREST HOSPITAL SERVICES
Bigfork Valley Hospital
258 Pine Tree Dr.
Bigfork, MN 56628
218-743-3177

Rainy Lake Medical Center
1400 US Hwy 71
International Falls, MN 56649
218-283-4481

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FORESTRY
500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155
888-646-6367
mndnr.gov



RESPECT THE LAND

Whether you're riding or walking, tread lightly on the land. Be courteous to others, respect private property, and obey the law.

AREAS WITH LIMITATIONS

Lands within tribal boundaries and SNAs are designated to protect unique natural resources and provide other non-motorized recreation opportunities. Motorized vehicles may not operate off designated trails within "Areas With Limitations" for any reason, including retrieving big game.

KNOW COUNTY LAND USES AND REGULATIONS

Koochiching and Smokey Bear state forests consist of a patchwork of state-managed land within areas of county-managed and private land. Rules may change as you cross boundaries. More resources for the Koochiching County-managed lands are on www.co.koochiching.mn.us/261/Parks-Recreation

RESPECT PRIVATE PROPERTY

Many state forests contain private land within their boundaries, so know where you are. Watch for posted "No Trespassing" and "No Hunting" signs and stay off private property.

You must have permission before entering private land, even to cross it to access public land.

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