

Pillsbury State Forest

A guide to recreational opportunities in Minnesota state forests



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Photos provided by DNR

About the Forest

Size: 25,612 acres

Year Created: 1900 (Minnesota's first state forest)

Forest Landscape: A rolling to hilly topography that is a result of past glacial activity. Numerous small ponds and lakes occupy depressions in the glacial moraine.

Management Activities: Timber harvesting, reforestation, wildlife habitat improvement, and recreational development occur in the forest. Deer-browse protection is also being done to help young white pine, a favorite "food" of the whitetail, become established. The DNR protects the forest and surrounding areas from wildfires.

History: Millions of board feet of virgin pine were cut from the area in the late 1800s to make way for farmland. Much of the land was found unsuitable for agriculture, however, and many of the farms were eventually abandoned.

Minnesota's first forest reserve was established in 1900 when 1,000 acres of cutover pine lands in Cass County, donated to the state by Governor John S. Pillsbury, became the Pillsbury State Forest. Over the years, the Minnesota Legislature enlarged the original forest reserve to its present size. The DNR manages all of the publicly owned land within the state forest boundary, with the rest belonging to industry and private individuals.

Highlights: Minnesota's first forest tree nursery was developed in the state forest in 1903. Some of the descendants of that long-gone enterprise can still be seen along County Highway 15. In 1911 the region's first fire lookout tower was erected in the forest. Built of wood, it was later abandoned when steel towers were constructed elsewhere in the region.

Look for ...

Predominant Tree

Species: Northern hardwood stands of sugar maple, red oak, green and black ash, quaking and bigtooth aspen, and paper birch are common.

Smaller acreages are covered by

red, white, and jack pine; balsam fir; white spruce; and tamarack. The forest contains 43 acres of red pine and 37 acres of oak that are designated old growth and protected from harvesting and other management activities.

red oak

Wildlife: White-tailed deer are abundant in the forest and the oak trees with their crops of acorns are attractive to black bears, gray squirrels, and ruffed grouse. The water created by lakes and small ponds draw in waterfowl such as mallards. Wood ducks can also be seen, not only attracted by the water, but by the acorns and cavity-nesting trees the oaks and other northern hardwoods provide. Blue heron rookeries (breeding areas) have been spotted too.

wood duck

The furbearing beaver is prevalent in the forest, having plenty of trees like the aspen to create lodges and dams in available streams and ponds. A "species of special concern," the red-shouldered hawk, is a feature in the forest and bald eagles and osprey can be seen throughout the area. A flock of wild turkeys that probably migrated from Camp Ripley near Little Falls is now established in the forest. Gray wolves have also been spotted traveling through the area.

gray wolves



Recreation: Recreational facilities in the forest include the Rock Lake Campground and Day-Use Area, Walter E. Stark Horse Assembly Area, and Shafer Lake, Green Bass Lake, and Beauty Lake day-use areas.

The Rock Lake Campground contains 44 campsites, four of which are handicapped accessible. There is also a walk-in campsite. The Rock Lake Day-Use Area is adjacent to the campground and provides a picnic ground, swimming beach, and water-access site.

The Walter E. Stark Horse Assembly Area (along the Pillsbury Forest Road) provides horse camping and horse-trailer parking. Shafer Lake Day-Use Area has room for horse-trailer parking and picket lines for horses. Green Bass Lake and Beauty Lake are canoe access sites.



The forest is "closed" to off-highway vehicles (see OHV information in far right column.) However, vehicles licensed for highway use may use forest roads that are not posted or gated closed and snowmobiles may operate on designated trails.

The Pillsbury trail system includes 27 miles of trails. Visitors can hike, bike, and horseback ride in the summer and snowmobile in the winter. Trails are marked and groomed for snowmobiling and connect several points of interest within the forest.

Hunting, fishing, and trapping, in accordance with state regulations, are allowed on all public land within the state forest. Beauty Lake Forest Road and Pillsbury Forest Road are open year-round to facilitate access to forest areas. Designated vehicle-parking areas can be found along these roads to provide for safe parking.

blue heron

What Is a Tree?

A tree is a woody plant that can grow to be 15 feet or higher and usually has a single stem and a crown (branched-out area) at the top.

Reading the Rings

A tree's trunk is like a highway. It transports water and nutrients from the soil to the leaves. It transports food in the form of sugars from the leaves to the rest of the tree.

The trunk is made up of five layers:

1. Inner wood: dead xylem; stores food and supports the tree.
2. Xylem: tubelike cells that move water and nutrients from the roots to the rest of the tree.
3. Cambium: layer that produces phloem and xylem.
4. Phloem: tubelike cells that move sugar (called sap) from leaves to the rest of the tree.
5. Outer bark: dead phloem; protects the rest of the tree.

Keep Trees a Healthy Part of Your World!

Plant trees. Make sure they are right for the site.

Help keep trees healthy. For example: Water trees during dry periods; avoid wounding bark with lawn mowers and weed whips; stake small-diameter, newly planted trees to give them added support; mulch trees to help retain moisture in the soil.

Celebrate Arbor Day and Arbor Month. In Minnesota, Arbor Day is the last Friday in April and May is Arbor Month.

Join or establish a local tree committee or board.

Go to www.MNtrees.org, Minnesota's one-stop Web site for information on trees, tree care, and tree-related organizations.

The Value of Trees

Trees help humans and other living things in many ways. Among them, they:

- Remove carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) and other pollutants from the air.
- Produce oxygen.
- Provide food and shelter for wildlife.
- Provide wood products.
- Add beauty to the landscape.
- Provide a pleasant environment for recreation.
- Help reduce residential energy consumption by shading homes in summer and sheltering them from wind in winter.

Help protect streams and lakes by reducing runoff.

Reduce noise pollution by absorbing sound.

Increase property values.

Research has shown that trees can provide up to \$7 in benefits each year for every \$1 invested in caring for them. Benefits include increased property values, pollution control, and energy savings.

Two Kinds of Trees

Minnesota is home to 52 native tree species and they can be divided into two main types: deciduous and coniferous.

Deciduous trees drop their leaves each autumn. Deciduous trees are sometimes called angiosperms, broadleaf trees, or hardwoods. Oaks, maples, and elms are deciduous trees.

Coniferous trees are trees that produce seeds without fruits or nuts. Most coniferous trees bear seeds in cones, have needles instead of broad leaves, and keep their needles in winter. Coniferous trees are also called gymnosperms, evergreens, or softwoods. Spruces, firs, and pines are coniferous trees.

To learn more about Minnesota's native trees, check out the following:

- "Trees of Minnesota." Minnesota's Bookstore, order number 9-1, phone: 800-657-3757, www.minnesotasbookstore.com
- "Minnesota Trees." Minnesota Extension Service, order number BU-00486-GO, phone: 800-876-8636, www.extension.umn.edu
- "Nature Snapshots: Trees & Shrubs." www.dnr.state.mn.us/trees_shrubs/index.html

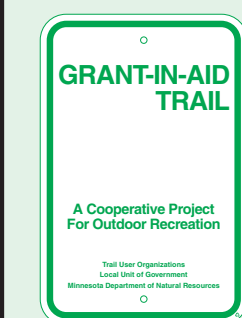
Snowmobile Laws

Alcohol, nighttime driving, and high speeds are the main causes of snowmobile fatalities. Conservation officers remind snowmobilers:



- Operating a snowmobile while intoxicated is unlawful.
- 50 miles per hour is the maximum legal speed for snowmobiling on frozen public waters and DNR-controlled lands (conditions permitting, when no other restrictions apply).

For complete legal information see "Minnesota Snowmobile Safety Laws, Rules, and Regulations," available from DNR Information Center and DNR Licensing Bureau.



The Grant-In-Aid Trail System

Through efforts of snowmobile club volunteers across the state, Minnesotans enjoy more than 20,000 miles of groomed snowmobile trails. The maintenance of 90 percent of these trails is the responsibility of local snowmobile clubs and Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association (MnUSA).

Stay on the trails with the help of orange reassuring blazers, which are posted along the route.



Minnesota Snowmobile Trails



Locations of Minnesota's snowmobile trails have been mapped for NW, NE, SW, and SE Minnesota and copies are available from DNR Information Center and other locations. The same information is available on the DNR Web site, www.dnr.state.mn.us.

Hunting



Hunting in state forests is allowed during the appropriate season and with the correct license. State forests do contain private holdings within their boundaries, many of which are signed "no hunting." Hunting on private land within a state forest is subject to state trespass laws.

Firearms, deer stands:

Firearms must be unloaded and cased and bows must be unstrung and cased while in or within 200 feet of a forest recreation area (campground, day-use area, etc.). The only exception is during an open hunting season when a person may carry an uncased and unloaded firearm or strung bow to hunt outside of the recreation area.

Temporary and portable deer stands are allowed in state forests.

For more information on hunting and trapping, go to:

www.dnr.state.mn.us/hunting

Fishing, Trapping



There are no special provisions or restrictions on fishing or trapping within state forests. Participants in these activities must have the proper license and abide by the same rules and seasons as anywhere else in the state.

For more information on fishing, go to:

www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing

OHV Use on State Forest Lands

State forest lands are classified by the commissioner for purposes of motor vehicle use.

The DNR is conducting a review of state forests that currently permit off-highway vehicle use. Following the review, these forests may be reclassified as either "managed," "limited," or "closed" to OHV use.

For up-to-date information, check www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/ohv/designation/index.html

PILLSBURY STATE FOREST IS CLASSIFIED AS CLOSED

Motor vehicles and snowmobiles are not allowed except:

- Vehicles licensed for highway use may use forest roads that are not posted or gated closed.

- Vehicles may operate on frozen public waters where it is not otherwise prohibited.

- Snowmobiles may operate on designated trails.

Forest is Closed for Off-Highway Vehicle Use

SMOKEY SAYS~

Be Safe With Campfires!

- Let your fire burn out completely to ashes or very small coals.
- Drench the fire with water, stir the ashes and coals, and wet again.
- Make sure any food, plastics, or foil is packed out as garbage.
- When your fire is extinguished completely, it should be cold to the touch.

Blue Sky Illustration & Design