



STURGEON RIVER STATE FOREST  
170,587 ACRES • ESTABLISHED 1963

**FOREST LANDSCAPE:** The Sturgeon River State Forest consists of rolling hills and vast stands of aspen and red pine in its southern reaches and black spruce bogs in the north. Several small streams and the Sturgeon River drain the area.

**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:** The hilly topography and sandy ridges were shaped during the retreat of the last continental glacier around 12,000 years ago. Glacial debris formed the steep-sided sandy ridges. Pothole lakes were created when large remnant chunks of ice melted in place. Archaeologists have found human artifacts in the area dating back up to 10,000 years ago. In 1999, archeologists working near McCarthy Beach State Park found small copper awls and a well-crafted stone spear point made of Jasper Taconite reworked into a drill. During Woodland times, 2,000 to 5,000 years ago, people made their camps along the shores of Sturgeon Lake and other larger lakes in the area.

Before European settlers arrived, giant red and white pines stretched as far as the eye could see. These pines attracted loggers looking to provide timber for booming sawmills in Hibbing and Minneapolis. The Swan River Logging Company built a railroad to the Sturgeon Lake area in 1895. In the 1930s nearby Civilian Conservation Corps workers from camps near Luna Lake, Sturgeon River, and Side Lake, planted trees and created recreation trails.

The Minnesota Legislature established this state forest in 1963.

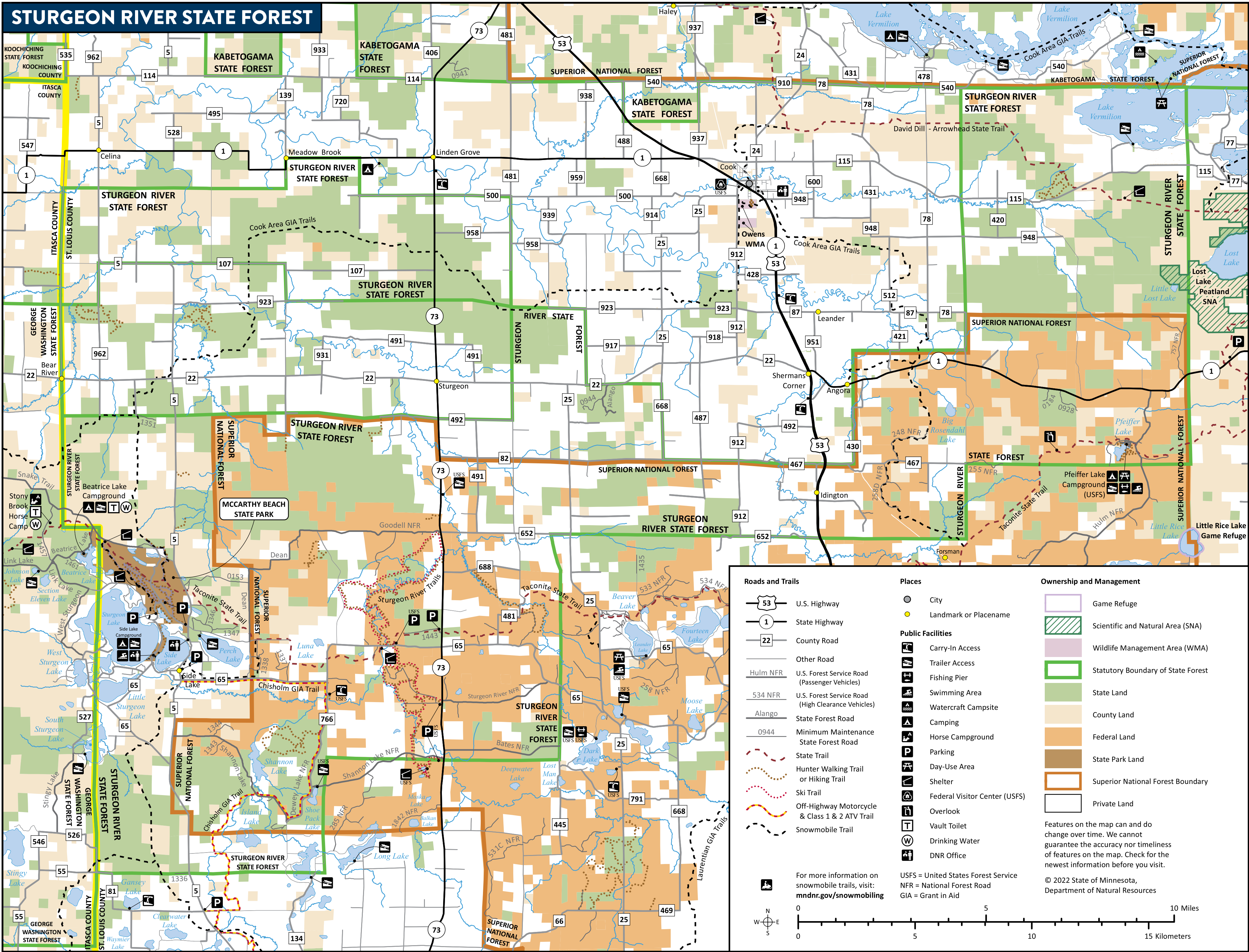
**TREES:** Uplands support stands of red, white, and jack pine; white spruce, balsam fir, aspen and paper birch. The lowlands and boggy area contain black spruce, tamarack, and northern white cedar.

**WILDLIFE:** Weasels, red squirrel, deer mouse, skunk, porcupine, timber wolf, white-tailed deer, black bear and moose are but a few of the mammals seen in the forest. Bird watchers may find yellow warblers, Canada jays, bald eagles, and loons.

**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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### 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 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. Camping in the Superior National Forest is limited to 14 days.
  - 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 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](https://mndnr.gov/areas/forestry)
  - 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/forestrules](https://mndnr.gov/forestrules)

# STURGEON RIVER STATE FOREST

### 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.

#### MCCARTHY BEACH STATE PARK

This developed state park offers more than 80 drive-in campsites, 21 electric sites, three walk-in sites, and one group campsite. Each campsite has a picnic table, fire ring and access to seasonal showers, and a dump station. Reservations recommended and fees collected. The natural sand beach is rated one of the best beaches in North America and features a large picnic shelter. [mndnr.gov/state\\_parks/rules.html](https://mndnr.gov/state_parks/rules.html)

### BOATING

Canoe, kayak, or motorboat on lakes or on the Sturgeon River. Water levels on rivers vary greatly throughout the year, and beaver dams and rapids can make boating difficult. Use one of the many public boat and canoe accesses in the area.

Register your canoe, kayak, or motorboat at [mndnr.gov/licenses/watercraft](https://mndnr.gov/licenses/watercraft)

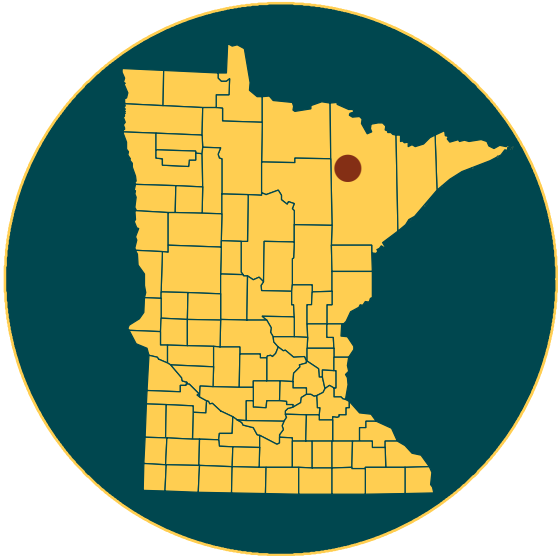


### TRAILS

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

#### MCCARTHY BEACH STATE PARK SKI TRAILS

Five miles of ski trails through birch and pine forest and rolling hills. Great Minnesota Ski Pass required on all ski trails within the park. [mndnr.gov/licenses/skipass](https://mndnr.gov/licenses/skipass)



### TACONITE STATE TRAIL

The Taconite State Trail winds through forests of aspen and pine and past many isolated lakes and streams. Terrain is rolling and tree covered as it extends through public lands, including McCarthy Beach. Visitors may hike, ski, snowshoe, and snowmobile. All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are allowed between Highways 73 and 53. [mndnr.gov/state\\_trails/taconite](https://mndnr.gov/state_trails/taconite)

#### BIG ASPEN TRAILS – U.S. FOREST SERVICE

This 21-mile trail has many loops and scenic vistas. It is a multi-use trail, allowing mountain bikes, class 1 and 2 ATVs (May 1 – Nov. 31), and horses. No off-highway motorcycles or off-road vehicles allowed. Open to skiing in the winter.

#### STURGEON RIVER TRAIL – U.S. FOREST SERVICE

This 22-mile hiking and cross-country skiing trail offers opportunities for camping and river fishing. The trail winds along high ridges of the Sturgeon River, through mature pine forests, and grassy openings. Most of the trail follows gently rolling terrain. A loop around Jean and Louise lakes is steeper. Jean Lake features an Adirondack-type shelter for campers. A part of trail (in the southern section) is closed indefinitely. Check the U.S. Forest Service website for information. No Great Minnesota Ski Pass required. <https://go.usa.gov/x6Ssa>

#### SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

Several miles of 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 because logging operations often share the trails. Trails are marked with orange directional signs.

- Snowmobiles must be registered [mndnr.gov/regulations/snowmobile](https://mndnr.gov/regulations/snowmobile)
- Detailed trail maps are on [mndnr.gov/state\\_trails/list.html](https://mndnr.gov/state_trails/list.html)

#### DAVID DILL/ARROWHEAD STATE TRAIL

This 135-mile trail extends from the intersection with the Taconite State Trail 10 miles west of Tower to 10 miles south of International Falls. The natural surface trail is used primarily for snowmobiling. Sections of the trail may be impassible during warm months when the ground is not frozen. Approximately 69 miles are suitable for summer horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking, although there may be wet areas. [mndnr.gov/state\\_trails/arrowhead](https://mndnr.gov/state_trails/arrowhead)



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### OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE TRAIL CLASSIFICATION: LIMITED

All trails on state-managed lands are classified regarding motor vehicles. The Sturgeon River State Forest allows highway-licensed vehicles on all roads and routes unless posted closed. Off-highway vehicles (OHVs) such as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and off-highway motorcycles (OHMs) are allowed on roads, routes, and designated trails. No motorized use is allowed off roads and trails.

EXCEPTION: Parts of the forest east of McCarthy Beach State Park are closed to all OHVs.

- OHV trail seasons vary, and roads may close temporarily. [mndnr.gov/regulations/ohv](https://mndnr.gov/regulations/ohv)
- ATV trails are open as the spring and fall weather conditions allow. [mndnr.gov/ohv/closures.html](https://mndnr.gov/ohv/closures.html)

### SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST ROADS AND TRAILS

- Detailed U.S. Forest Service maps showing allowed uses in Superior National Forest roads and trails are available on <https://go.usa.gov/xmu3p>
- ATVs and OHVs are not allowed for cross-country travel, including retrieving game or accessing tree stands.

### HUNTING AND TRAPPING

Sturgeon River State Forest provides habitat for hunting and trapping. In the appropriate season, licensed hunters can hunt for white-tailed deer, grouse, and other game. [mndnr.gov/hunting](https://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.



### AREAS WITH LIMITATIONS

These areas 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.

### 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.

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](https://mndnr.gov/regulations/hunting)
- For regulations about shooting on federally managed land, visit [fs.fed.us/visit/known-before-you-go/shooting](https://fs.fed.us/visit/known-before-you-go/shooting)

### RUFFED GROUSE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Ruffed Grouse Management Areas (RGMAs) are a great destination for hunters looking to experience grouse and woodcock hunting. RGMAs are managed to promote suitable habitat conditions for these species.

#### RGMA HIGHLIGHT:

##### SHANNON RIVER RGMA

This RGMA is approximately 1,000 acres and contains 5.5 miles of hunter-walking trails. Park at trailhead on County Road 766.

### FISHING

Anglers can catch panfish, walleye, bass, and northern pike. There are some trout fishing opportunities in the Dark River and Pickerel Lake in McCarthy Beach State Park.

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](https://mndnr.gov/fishing) for up-to-date regulations.
- Visit [mndnr.gov/lakefind](https://mndnr.gov/lakefind) for current information on specific lakes.

### KNOW FEDERAL LAND USES AND REGULATIONS

These state forests encompass a patchwork of state- and county-managed land within areas of federally managed and private land. Rules may change as you cross boundaries.

For information about hunting, off-highway vehicle use, snowmobiling, camping, and other recreation, visit [www.fs.usda.gov/superior](https://www.fs.usda.gov/superior)

More resources for the Superior National Forest are at the U.S. Forest Service Office, Laurentian Ranger District, 318 Forestry Road, Aurora, MN 55705.

### 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.

### 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.playcleango.org)



## STURGEON RIVER 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**  
**ITASCA COUNTY SHERIFF**  
218-326-3477  
**ST. LOUIS COUNTY SHERIFF**  
218-726-2340

**NEAREST HOSPITAL SERVICES**  
**Fairview Range Medical Center, Hibbing**  
218-262-4881  
**Cook Hospital, Cook**  
218-666-5945  
**Essentia Health Hospital, Virginia**  
218-741-3340

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