

# SAKATAH LAKE STATE PARK

## FACILITIES AND FEATURES

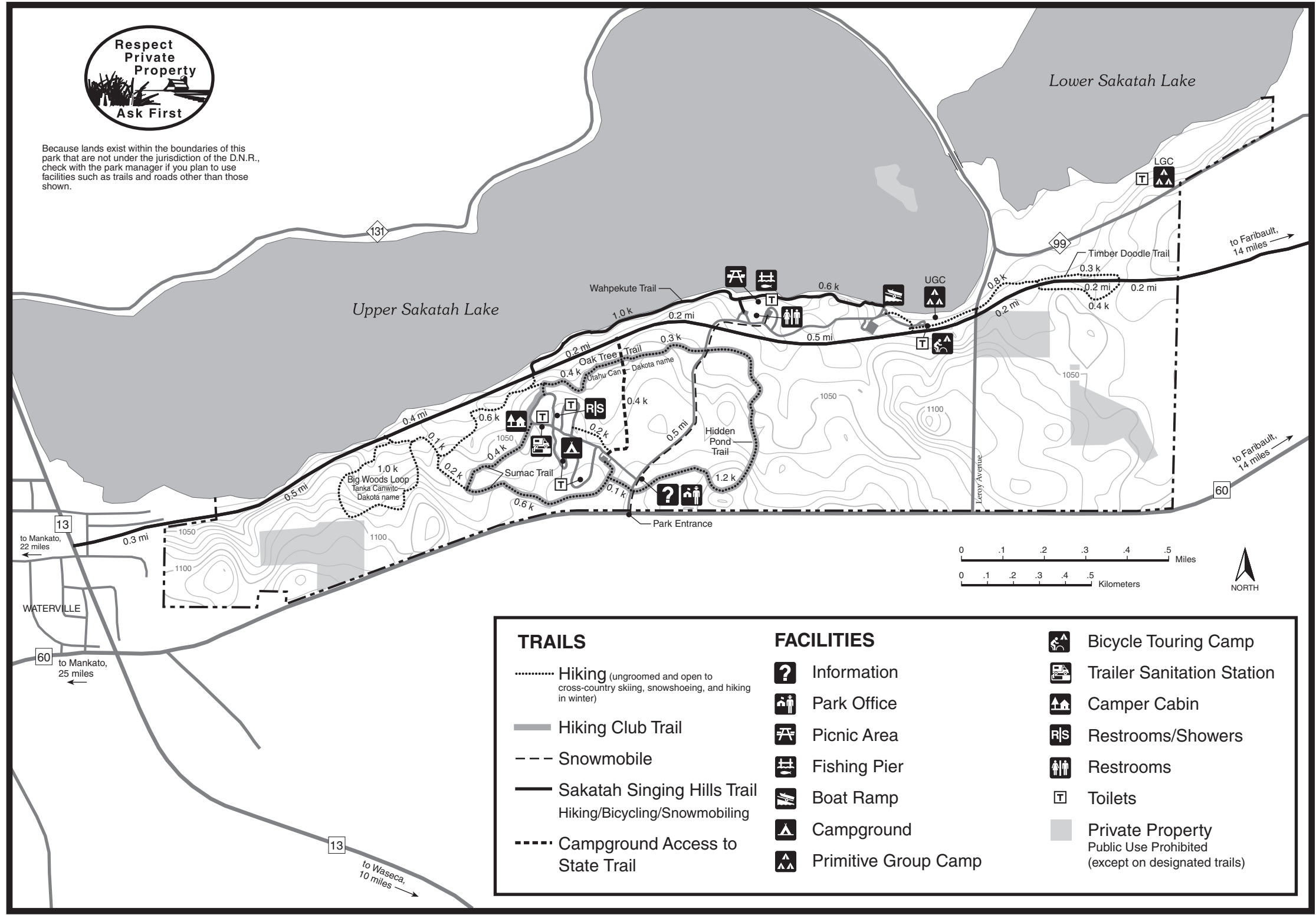
- 62 semi-modern campsites
- Showers (seasonal)
- Trailer sanitation station (seasonal)
- Boat ramp
- Picnic grounds
- Access to 39 miles of hiking, biking and snowmobiling trails
- 14 electrical sites
- Bicycle touring camp
- Primitive group camps
- Camper Cabin

## VISITOR FAVORITES

- Shaded campsites
- Fishing and boating on Sakatah Lake
- Hiking/biking/snowmobiling the State Trail
- Picnicking at the lake
- Canoeing
- Horseshoes



Because lands exist within the boundaries of this park that are not under the jurisdiction of the D.N.R., check with the park manager if you plan to use facilities such as trails and roads other than those shown.





# SAKATAH LAKE STATE PARK

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Sakatah Lake State Park  
50499 Sakatah Lake State Park Road  
Waterville, MN 56096  
(507) 362-4438

Department of Natural Resources  
Information Center  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

**(651) 296-6157 (Metro Area)**  
1-888-646-6367 (MN Toll Free)

[mndnr.gov/stateparks](http://mndnr.gov/stateparks)

**SAKATAH LAKE STATE PARK** is located on the border of LeSueur and Rice Counties, 14 miles west of Faribault. The park entrance is off of Minnesota Highway 60, one mile east of Waterville. Highway map index: J-9.

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION:** The park was established in 1963 by an act of the Minnesota Legislature, with a statutory boundary of 842 acres. The parklands include 3.5 miles of shoreline along Sakatah Lake. The rolling topography of the park features rich,

mixed hardwood forest. The Cannon River area formed the boundary between the “Big Woods” of the Minnesota and Mississippi River Valleys, and the southern oak barrens south of the park. Sakatah Lake, a natural widening of the Cannon River, provides visitors with opportunities for many forms of outdoor recreation and nature study.

Running through the park is the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail, a 39-mile, multiple-use state trail which has been developed on an abandoned railroad grade. The trail provides a paved surface for bicyclists, hikers, skiers and snowmobilers. The park serves as a convenient base camp for those wishing to travel the state trail.

**WILDLIFE:** The combination of open fields, upland forests, wetlands, open water and forest edge provides excellent habitat for many of southern Minnesota’s wildlife species. Deer, muskrat, raccoon, mink, rabbit, and red fox are animals commonly seen in the park. Many bird varieties including song birds, woodpeckers, hawks and owls can also be seen.

**FLORA:** When the last glaciers retreated from this area over 10,000 years ago, it is theorized that the forests which developed in Minnesota and Wisconsin consisted largely of oak and other hardwoods. During the years that passed, small climate changes saw occasional invasions of prairie into the park area. With the moister climate of recent times, the deciduous forest you see today has reestablished itself in areas invaded by the prairie. Remnants of the invading prairie are still visible in the park.

The first written notes of the area were done in the mid to late 1800’s by the original surveyors of Minnesota. They describe the area as low, rolling, land with second-rate timber and prairie land with bur oak, basswood, aspen, butternut, elm, ash and ironwood.

Today you can see examples of the large bur and white oak that have covered this area since glacial times. These, along with the elm, walnut and other hardwood trees, greet the modern visitor just as they did the settlers more than a century ago.

**TOPOGRAPHY/GEOLOGY:** The land forms of Sakatah Lake State Park were formed as a result of glacial activity some 14,000 years ago. The park sits on an altamont moraine that was formed during the last glacial period. A moraine is a large mound of rock and mineral debris deposited at the end of a glacier, where the ice melted as fast as it advanced. In many areas of the park you will see examples of the

moraine deposits. In some places these deposits are up to 400 feet deep. Along the Cannon River Valley, glacial ice blocks left by receding glaciers formed depressions which filled with water creating lakes such as Sakatah.

**HISTORY:** During early historic times, members of the Dakota Nation, Wahpekute (Wapacoote) band, inhabited the area that today is the park. These people lived by hunting, gathering and trapping. They named the place Sakatah, which translates to “Singing Hills”, hence the name for the state trail.

The Cannon and other area rivers served as an important Indian water route between south-central Minnesota and Wisconsin. The “Big Woods” made land travel difficult and a water route allowed larger loads. Numerous trading posts and Indian villages existed along the route. Several burial mounds were discovered in the late 1800’s and can still be seen in the park. A village site is believed to have existed in the area of the point separating Upper Sakatah and Lower Sakatah lakes.

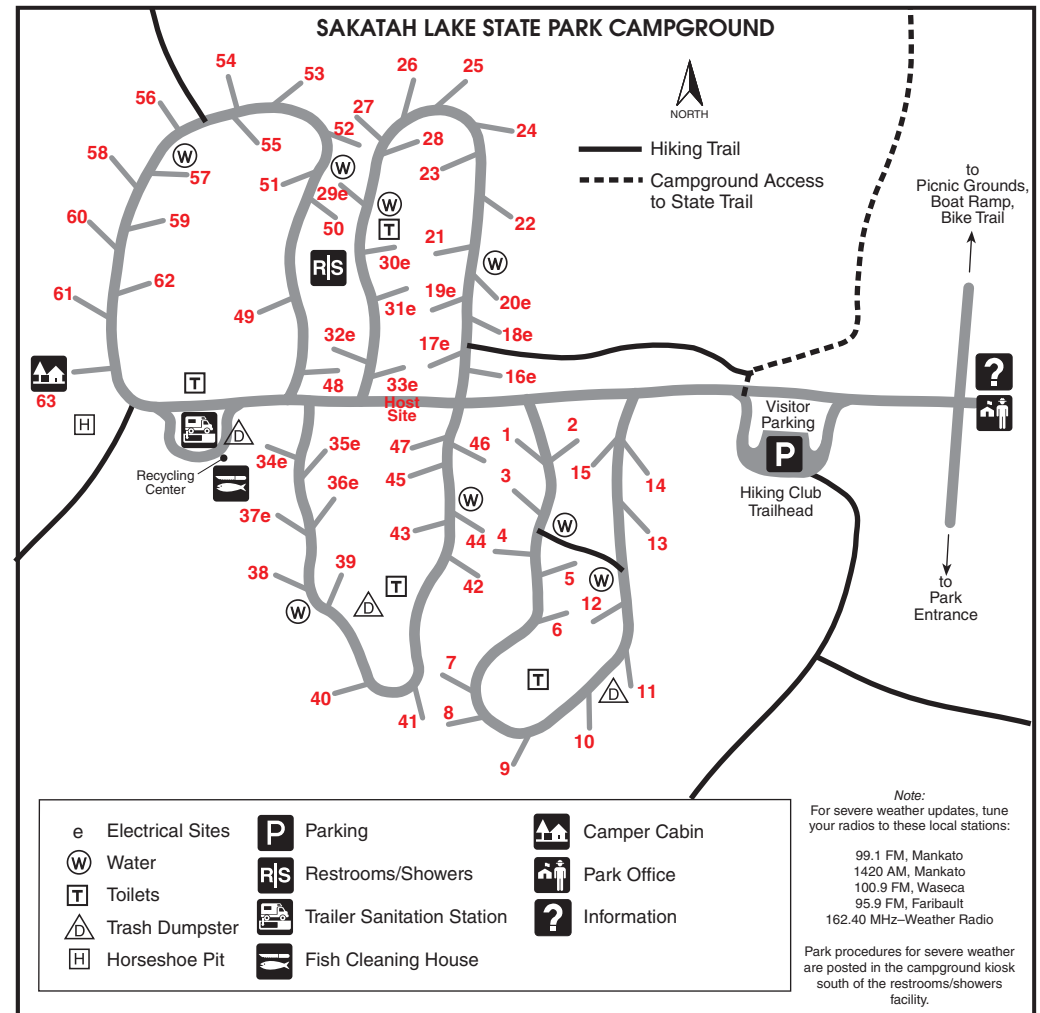
In 1826 the trader Alexander Faribault established a trading post on the northeast shore of Cannon Lake, near present day Faribault. This is thought to be the first permanent white settlement in the area. He eventually established at least five other trading posts at various points along the Cannon River. One of these is likely to have been in the park, along Sakatah Lake.

The railroad played an important role in opening up the country to settlement. Although the route was surveyed in the late 1870’s, none of the actual work was done until the spring of 1882. The railroad was completed from Faribault to Waterville that same year by the Cannon Valley Company, and four years later the tracks reached Mankato. Electric passenger trains and steam freight trains both used the Mankato to Faribault segment, stopping at various points including Waterville and Elysian.

The Chicago and Northwestern Railroad abandoned the line in the early 1970’s because of competition with other forms of transportation. The state purchased the right-of-way, and established the state trail that you see running through the park today.

## SO EVERYONE CAN ENJOY THE PARK...

- The park belongs to all Minnesotans. Please treat it with respect and help us to protect it by following the rules.
- The park is open year-round. On a daily basis, the park gate is closed from 10 P.M. to 8 A.M.



- the following morning except to registered campers.
- Camp only in designated locations.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- The use of firearms, explosives, air guns, slingshots, traps, seines, nets, bows and arrows, and all other weapons is prohibited in state parks.
- Pets must be restrained on a leash no longer than six feet. Pets are not allowed in park buildings. Pet waste must be disposed of properly.
- Park in designated areas only.
- Motor bikes and other licensed vehicles are allowed only on park roads, not on trails.
- Enjoy park wildlife and plants but please respect them. Do not pick or dig up plants, disturb or feed animals, or scavenge dead wood.

- Build fires only in designated locations—fire rings or fireplaces. Wood is available for purchase from park staff. Portable stoves or grills are permitted.
- Daily or annual permits are required for all vehicles entering a state park. They may be purchased at the park headquarters or the Information Center in St. Paul (see “FOR MORE INFORMATION” to left).

*This information is available in alternative format upon request.*

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