



Interpretive Services

Buffalo River State Park

Kathy Beaulieu, Regional Naturalist

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Minnesota State Parks and Trails Statewide Plan for Interpretive Services

2018 - 2025

Interpretive Services Section

- Our vision is to **forge emotional and intellectual connections** to Minnesota's natural, cultural and recreational heritage by provoking curiosity, encouraging discovery, and inspiring stewardship across generations.

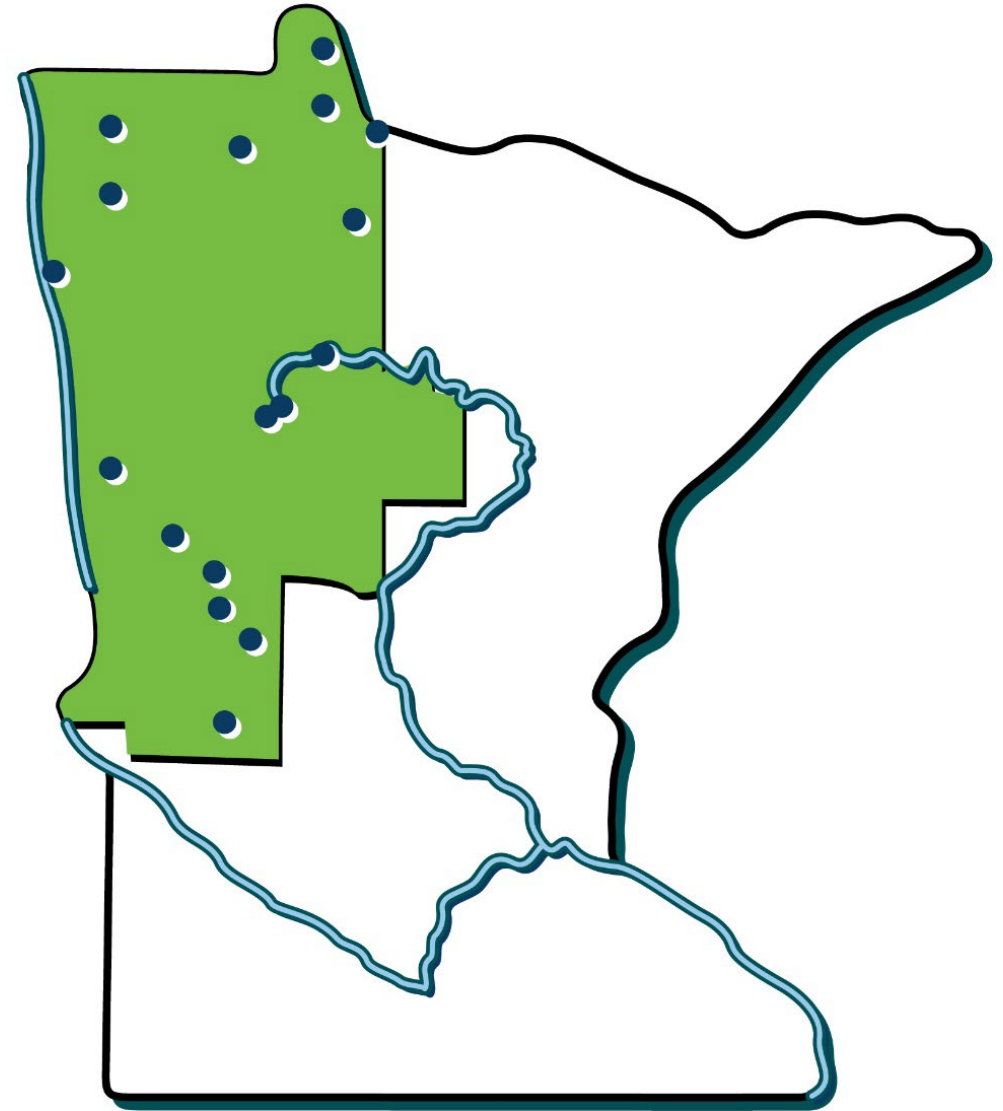
Make Connections!

Some goals

- Provide inclusive interpretive experiences for diverse audiences.
- Achieve well-attended staff-led and self-guided interpretive experiences.
- Focus on specific park and trail resources and identified interpretive themes.
- Invest in staff by providing professional development opportunities.

NW Region

- **12 State Parks**
 - **Buffalo River, Glacial Lakes, Glendalough, Hayes Lake, Itasca, Franz Jevne, Lake Bemidji, Lake Bronson, Lake Carlos, Maplewood, Old Mill, Zippel Bay**
- **4 State Recreation Areas**
 - **Big Bog, Garden Island, La Salle Lake, Red River**
- **50% offer in-person programming**



Year-round Naturalists

- Ben Eckhoff, Lake Carlos/ Glacial Lakes
- Christa Drake, Lake Bemidji/ Big Bog
- Dora O'Brien, Maplewood/ Glendalough
- Connie Cox, Itasca/ La Salle Lake
- Sandra Lichter, Itasca/ La Salle Lake



Seasonal Naturalists

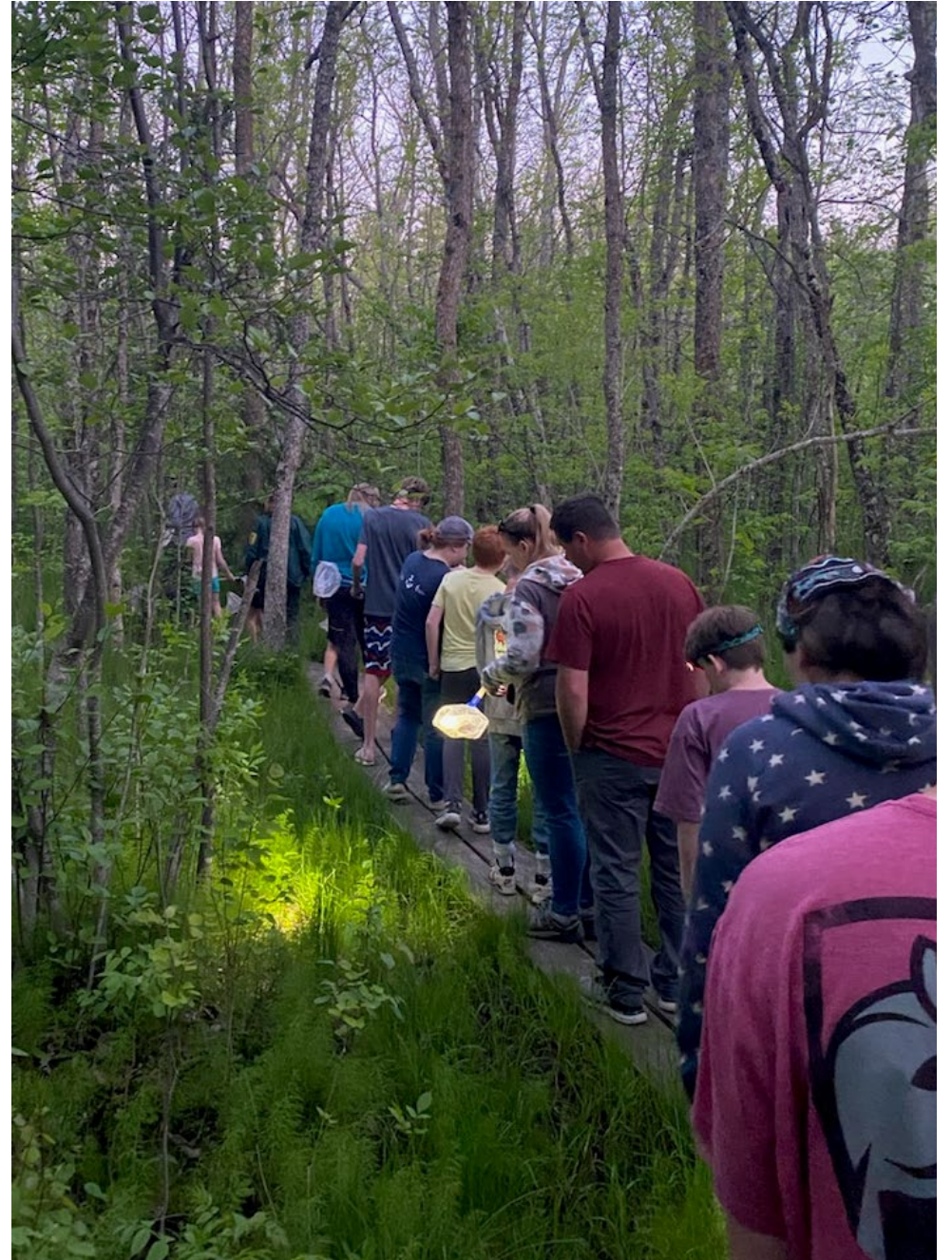
- Augusta Grumdahl, Buffalo River
- Anna Fairbanks, Itasca



Personal Interpretation

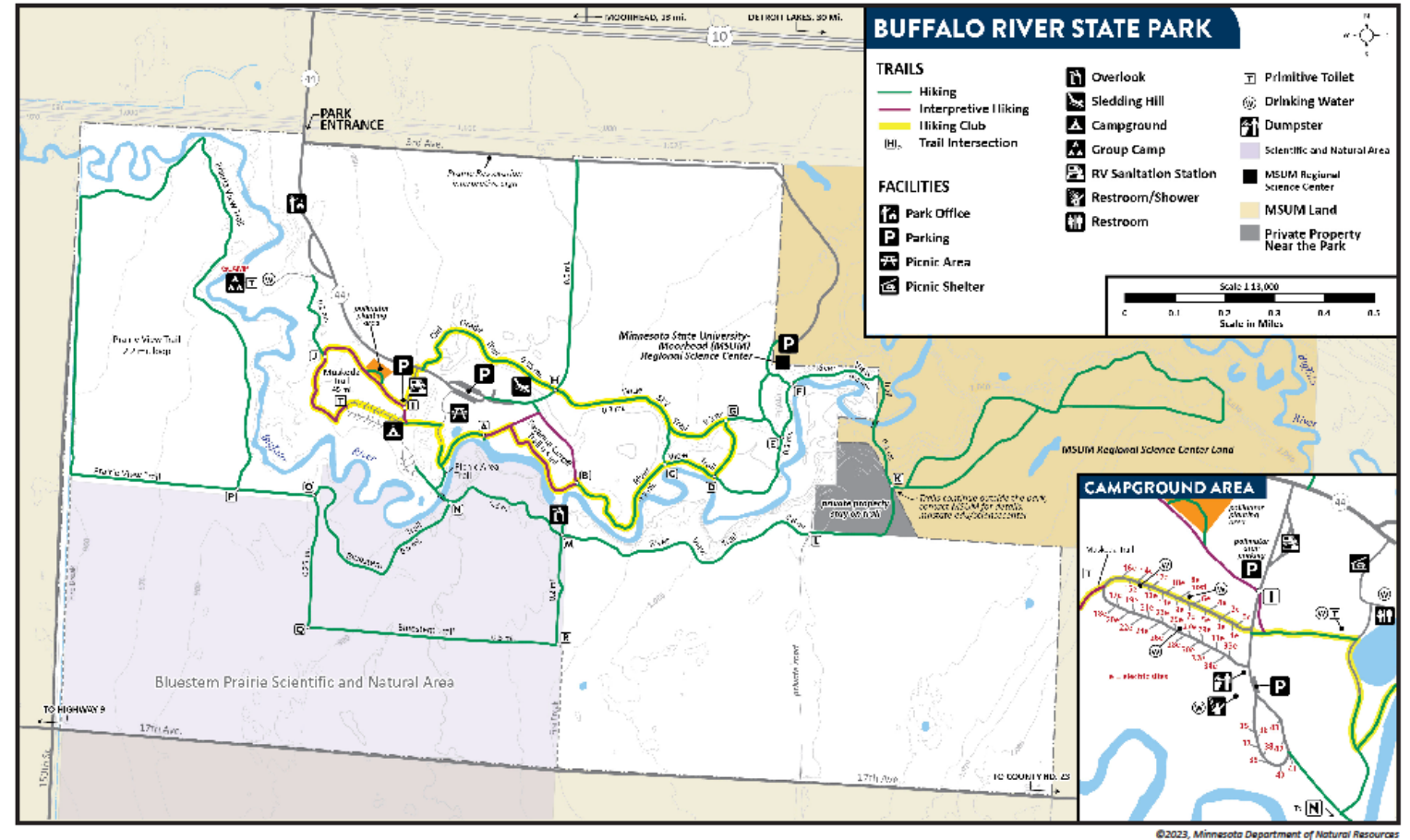
Partnerships

- Prior to 2012-
Regional Science Center
- Starting in 2012-
Scientific and Natural Areas



Regional Naturalist- Projects

- Hiring
- Training
- Coaching
- Work planning
- Program direction
- Interpretive planning
- Theme development
- Manage contracts
- Lead exhibit projects
- Information and wayfinding





Nonpersonal Interpretation

- Visitor center exhibits
- Wayside exhibits
- Interpretive trails
- Video/Audio
- Digital media/Apps

- Accessibility features important

Exhibit Review

Damaged – Exhibits don't last forever!



Exhibit Review

Harmful

“Our pioneer forefathers learned this art from the American Indians.”



A Tree of Color and Taste

The sugar maple ranks high as a timber tree. Its wood is heavy, hard, and very close grained. This tree is responsible for the autumn colors of scarlet, orange, and yellow, as the green chlorophyll breaks down with the changing season.

Warm, thawing days of March and April stimulate the flow of sweet sap from the roots to the buds. Approximately 40 gallons of sap must be collected and “boiled down” to produce just one gallon of maple syrup. Our pioneer forefathers learned this art from the American Indians.

Sugar Maple



Award-winning Interpretation



Interpretive Planning

A photograph of a prairie landscape. In the foreground, several tall, thin stems of yellow wildflowers with dark brown centers are visible. The background shows a rocky, reddish-brown hillside under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Theme

Development 1/2

- This prairie complex is one of the largest and highest quality northern tallgrass prairies in the United States.
- People work together (behind the scenes) to restore and maintain this high-quality prairie complex.
- The tallgrass prairie is home to a diversity of plants and animals.



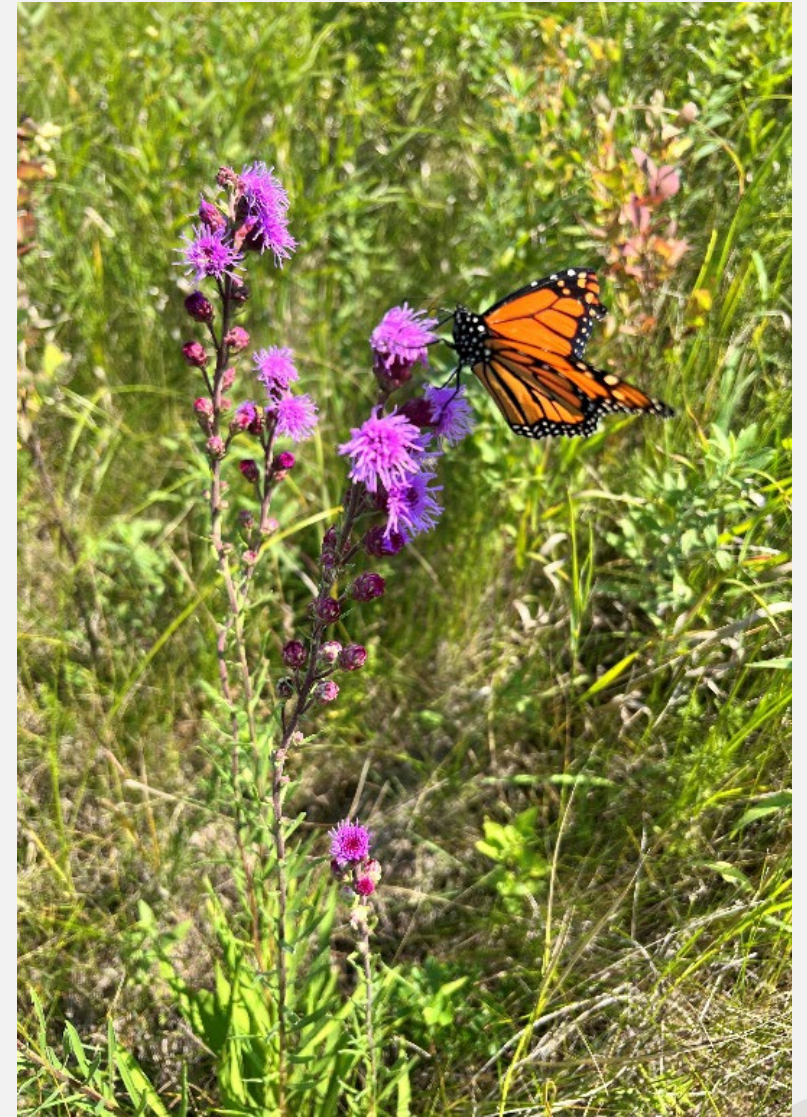
Theme

Development 2/2

- The rich lakebed of Glacial Lake Agassiz formed the tallgrass prairie.
- The natural resources of the area attracted people to the prairie and river for thousands of years.
- The Buffalo River is a break in the prairie. Prairie species, forest species, river species, and people use the river corridor.

Questions?

- How can we draw larger and more consistent audiences?
 - 2024: 47 programs, average attendance of 16 per program
- What ideas do you have for reaching out to new audiences and diverse communities?
- How can we work together better?





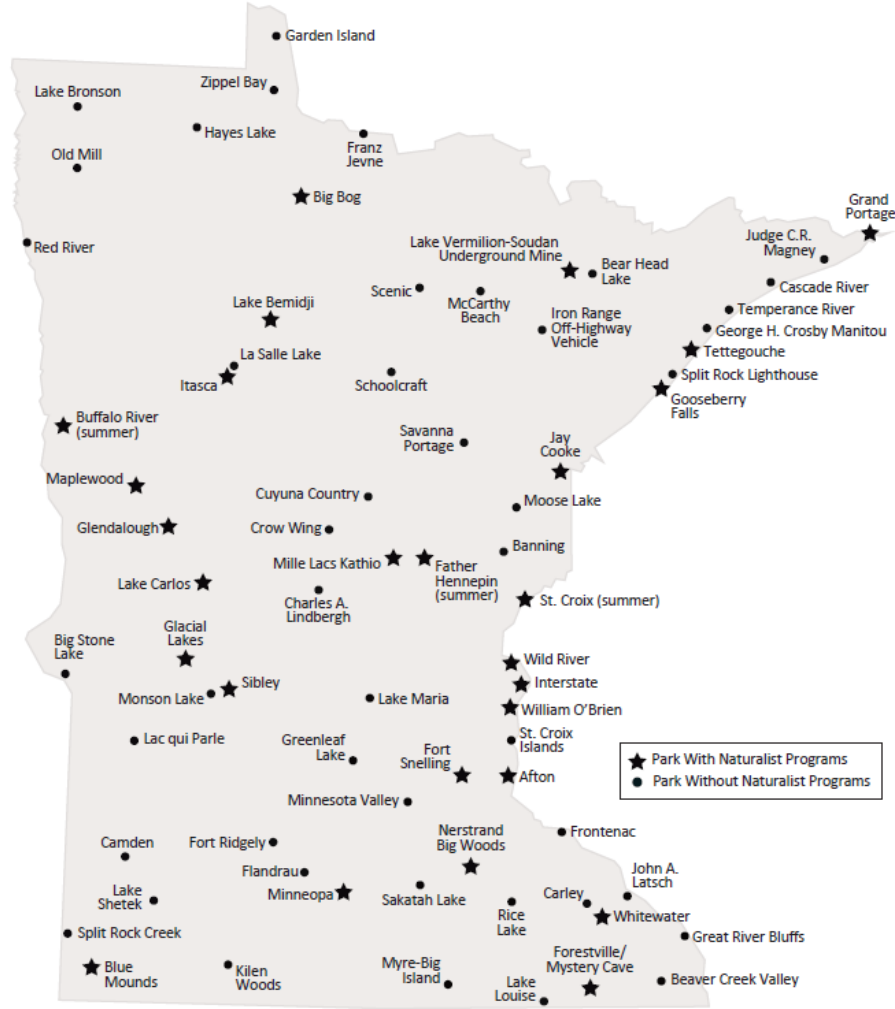
Parks and Trails Division Vision

- Our vision is to create unforgettable park, trail, and water recreation experiences that inspire people to **pass along the love for the outdoors to current and future generations.**

Spread the Joy!



State Park Naturalist Locations



Parks and Trails

- 64 state parks
- 9 state recreation areas

A large group of approximately 40 people, mostly wearing outdoor gear like hats, jackets, and sunglasses, are posing for a group photo in a grassy field under a cloudy sky. The image has a warm, orange-toned overlay.

Naturalist Staff

- Interpretive Supervisor-1
- Exhibit Specialist-1
- Outdoor Skills staff-3
- Regional Naturalists-4
- Year-round Naturalists-22
- Seasonal naturalists-5
- Mine and Cave Supervisors-3 and guides
- Summer interns-25

Program participation per year





Interpretive Programs at Buffalo River State Park
Augusta Grumdahl-Interpretive Naturalist
May 7, 2025

Naturalist Position

- Funded by the Environmental Natural Resource Trust Fund (ENRT)
- Ecological and Water Resources Division, Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) Programs
- Parks and Trails Division, Buffalo River State Park



Park Programs

- Campfire programs
- Nature Carts
- Art in the Park/Art on the Prairie
- Guided hikes
 - Requested programs
- Special Events
 - Trivia Night



Prairie Preschool

- Started 2012
- Geared toward 0-4 years
- Local parents and children
- Promotes early connection to prairie



Self Guided Activities

- Free Check-outs
 - Kids Discovery Kits
 - Birding Kits
 - Fishing poles
- Junior Ranger Books



Scientific and Natural Areas

- Bluestem Prairie and surrounding SNAs
- Citizen Science
 - Bioblitz
 - Bumblebee Survey
- Stewardship
 - Seed collection
 - Invasive species removal
 - Trash cleanup



Regional Science Center

- Science Saturdays
 - Hands-on activities
 - Guest speakers
 - Advertise upcoming programs and events





THANK YOU!