



BIG FORK STATE FOREST

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74,817 ACRES • ESTABLISHED 1963

FOREST LANDSCAPE: Located between Scenic State Park and Northome, Big Fork State Forests feature boreal forests of pine, spruce, and aspen. Many lakes and streams dot the landscape, including picturesque rapids along the Big Fork River.

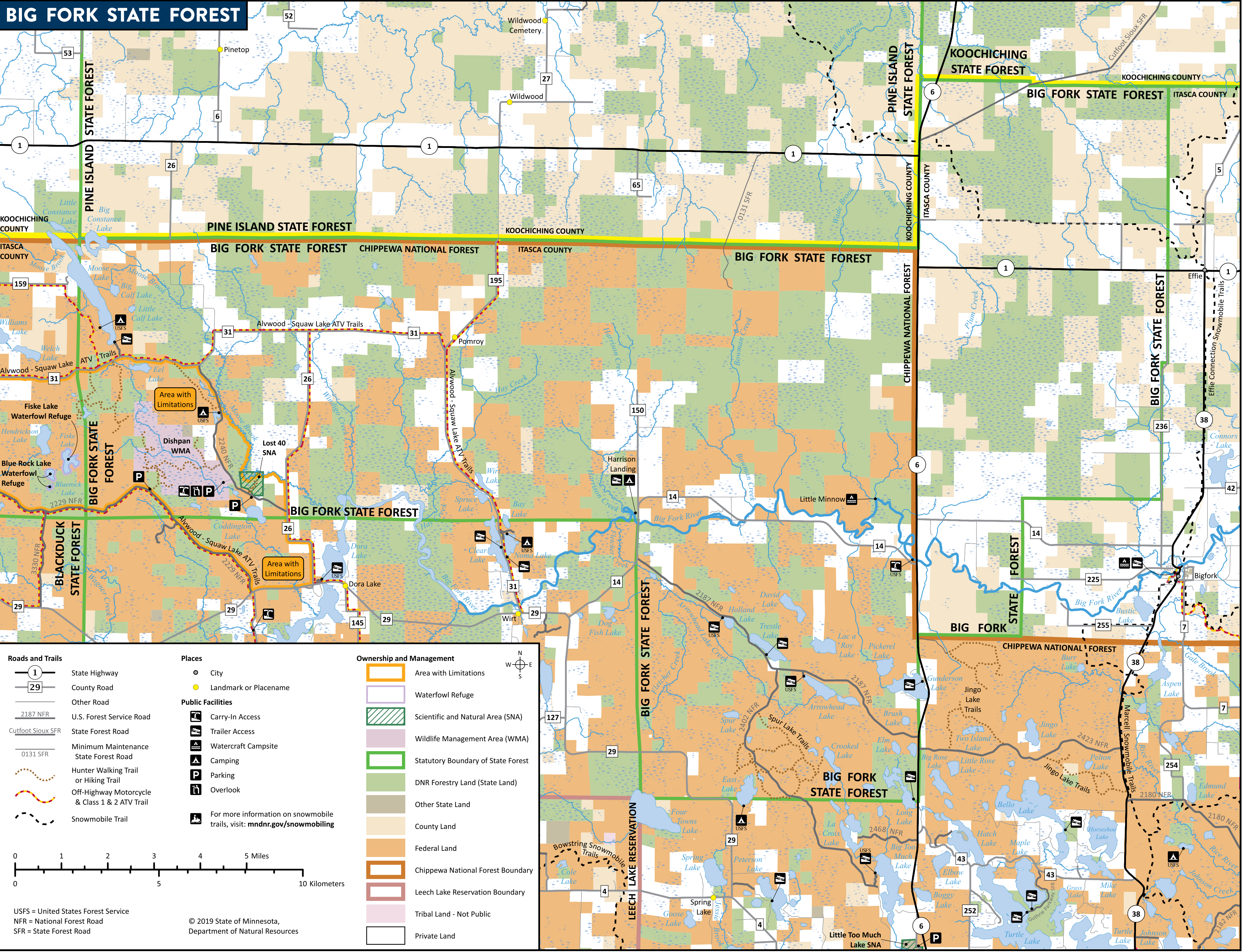
A WORKING FOREST: From year to year, you may see changes in this forest. The DNR manages the trees, water, and wildlife in state forests to keep them healthy and meet recreational, environmental, and economic goals. Trees are harvested to make a variety of products, such as lumber and building materials, pulp for making paper, pallets, fencing, and telephone 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: After the last ice age, glacial Lake Agassiz inundated the area that is today's Big Fork State Forest. As the shallow lake slowly drained to the northwest, receding waters deposited clayey to loamy soils. Today, the landscape is mostly flat to slightly rolling. The southern part of the forest, east of Wirt, is hillier, with more lakes.

A succession of Woodland Indians occupied the region for at least 2,500 years. The Dakota (or Sioux) inhabited the area until the Ojibwe (Chippewa) arrived. In the late 1800s, a group of Chippewa/Bois Forte lived along the Big Fork River in bark wigwams. 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 Big Fork 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: 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.



Roads and Trails	Places	Ownership and Management
State Highway	City	Area with Limitations
County Road	Landmark or Placename	Waterfowl Refuge
Other Road	Public Facilities	Scientific and Natural Area (SNA)
U.S. Forest Service Road	Carry-In Access	Wildlife Management Area (WMA)
State Forest Road	Trailer Access	Statutory Boundary of State Forest
Minimum Maintenance State Forest Road	Watercraft Campsite	DNR Forestry Land (State Land)
Cutfoot Sioux SFR	Camping	Other State Land
0131 SFR	Parking	County Land
Hunter Walking Trail or Hiking Trail	Overlook	Federal Land
Off-Highway Motorcycle & Class 1 & 2 ATV Trail	Snowmobile Trail	Chippewa National Forest Boundary
Snowmobile Trail		Leech Lake Reservation Boundary
		Tribal Land - Not Public
		Private Land

USFS = United States Forest Service
NFR = National Forest Road
SFR = State Forest Road

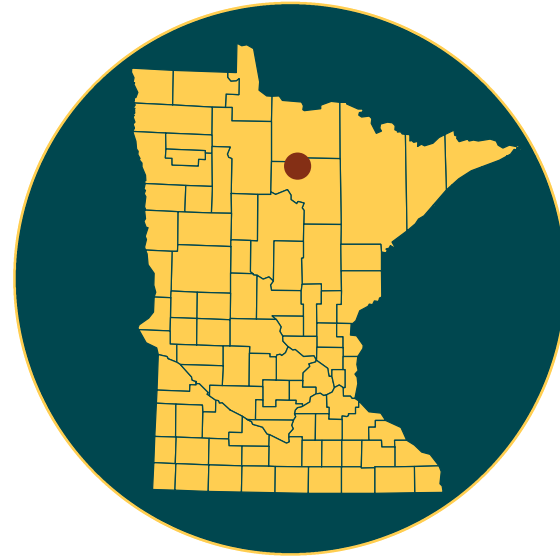
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BIG FORK STATE FOREST



CAMPING

Dispersed camping with no amenities is allowed on state forest land, without fee. Follow general state forest rules.

Two boat-in campsites along the Big Fork River, Harrison Landing and Little Minnow, have a fire ring, toilet, and picnic table.

Please practice the “Leave No Trace” camping ethic.

SCENIC STATE PARK

Just east of the forest, Scenic State Park offers several camping opportunities, including sites with electric hook-ups, group sites, cabin, and canoe campsites. mndnr.gov/state_parks

NOMA LAKE CAMPGROUND – U.S. FOREST SERVICE

This campground has 14 sites surrounded by a beautiful stand of paper birch and white pine. Noma Lake offers good fishing for bass, northern pike, and panfish. A county boat ramp is located at the south end of the lake. Fishing platforms and picnic area are available. No reservations needed. Fee charged. www.fs.usda.gov/chippewa

BACKCOUNTRY CAMPSITES – U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Some campsites are accessible by foot or canoe only. Camping on National Forest Service Lands is limited to 14 days in one location. For more information about camping on land managed by the U.S. Forest Service, visit www.fs.usda.gov/chippewa

BOATING

Canoe or kayak on many of the area’s lakes and rivers. Public water access points are on Moose, Dora, Clear, Noma, Holland, Trestle, Gunderson, Arrowhead, Long, Peterson, Big Too Much, Turtle, and Bello lakes.

BIG FORK RIVER STATE WATER TRAIL

Canoe, kayak, or motorboat on the Big Fork River. Water levels vary greatly throughout the year, and beaver dams and rapids can make boating difficult. There are public access points near Noma Lake, at Harrison Landing, on Highway 6, and in the town of Bigfork. Overnight trail users can use one of several watercraft-accessible campsites. mndnr.gov/watertrails/bigforkriver

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



SCAN TO DOWNLOAD MAP

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.

LOST FORTY HIKING TRAIL – U.S. FOREST SERVICE

This one-mile, self-guided trail winds through 144 acres of towering, old-growth red and white pines untouched by loggers. The trailhead is off the parking lot on Lost 40 Road.

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

SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

The Caldwell/Blue Ox and West Bowstring trails run just outside the forest. 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.

The Marcell Snowmobile Trail passes the southeast corner of the Big Fork State Forest and runs north to Effie, east to Scenic State Park, or south to Grand Rapids.

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

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OHV) TRAIL CLASSIFICATION: MANAGED

All trails on state-managed lands are classified regarding motor vehicles. The Big Fork State Forest allows highway-licensed vehicles on all roads unless posted closed, and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-road vehicles (ORVs), 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

ALVWOOD-SQUAW LAKE ATV TRAIL

This trail system is 159 miles sharing road shoulders and rights-of-way. Off-highway motorcycles allowed. Detailed map: http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/ohv/blue_ox.pdf

B&B CONNECTION ATV TRAIL

Running just outside of the southeast corner of the Big Fork State Forest, this popular trail connect 33 remote miles between the towns of Bigfork and Balsam. http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/ohv/bigfork_balsam.pdf

CHIPPEWA NATIONAL FOREST ROADS AND TRAILS

- Detailed U.S. Forest Service maps showing allowed uses on Chippewa 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

Big Fork State Forest 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

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.

KNOW FEDERAL LAND USES AND REGULATIONS

Big Fork State Forest is a patchwork of state-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/chippewa

Chippewa National Forest 1235 Division St. Deer River, MN 56636 218-835-4291

WMA HIGHLIGHT: DISHPAN WMA

The 1,555-acre Dishpan WMA has 6.5 miles of hunter walking trails with opportunities for trapping and harvesting wild rice. It is adjacent to the Lost Forest Scientific and Natural Area and the “Lost Forty” stand of old-growth pines.

FISHING

Anglers may find sturgeon, muskie, walleye, small mouth bass, and northern pike. 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.

NEARBY RECREATION

LOST FORTY SCIENTIFIC AND NATURAL AREA

The Lost Forty SNA owes its old-growth pine forest to a surveying error that occurred during the Public Lands Survey in 1882. As the story goes, loggers missed the pines because surveyors mistakenly mapped the area as Coddington Lake. The main feature of this SNA is nearly 32 acres of old-growth white pine-red pine forest estimated to be between 230 and 240 years old. An interpretive trail runs through the site, which is also an “Audubon Important Bird Area” and “Watchable Wildlife Viewing Area.” To prevent the spread of invasive species, please clean shoes and gear before entering.

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.

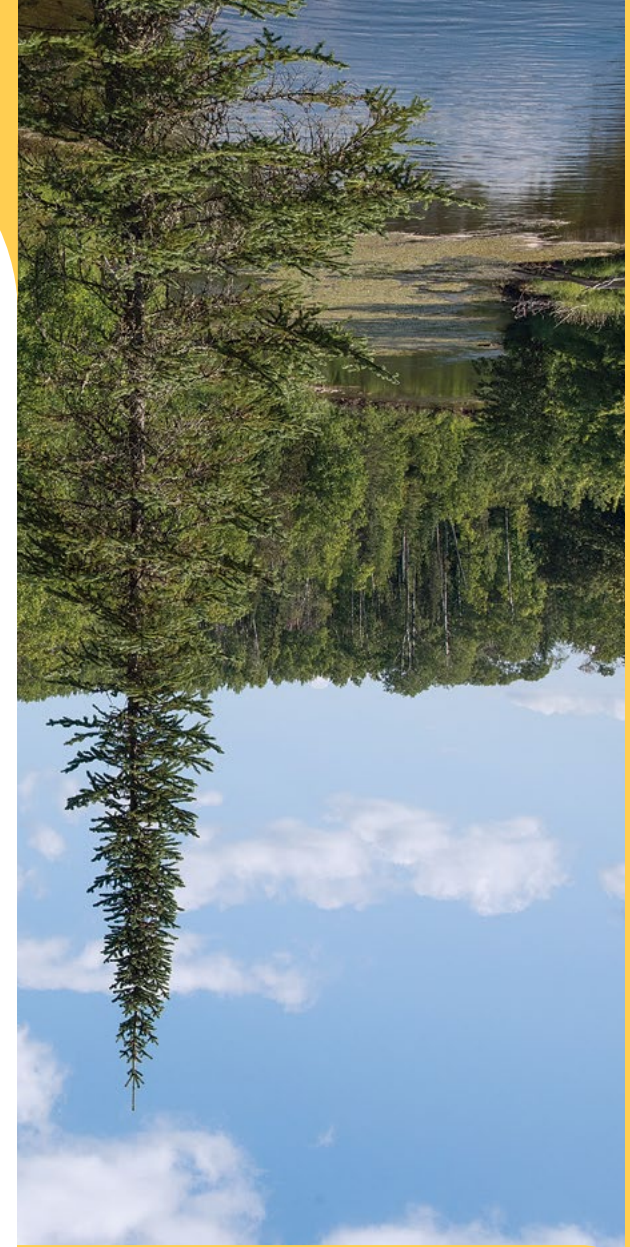
RESPECT THE LAND

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



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

ITASCA COUNTY SHERIFF
218-326-3477

NEAREST HOSPITAL SERVICES

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

Grand Itasca Hospital
1601 Golf Course Rd.
Grand Rapids, MN 5564
218-326-3402

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