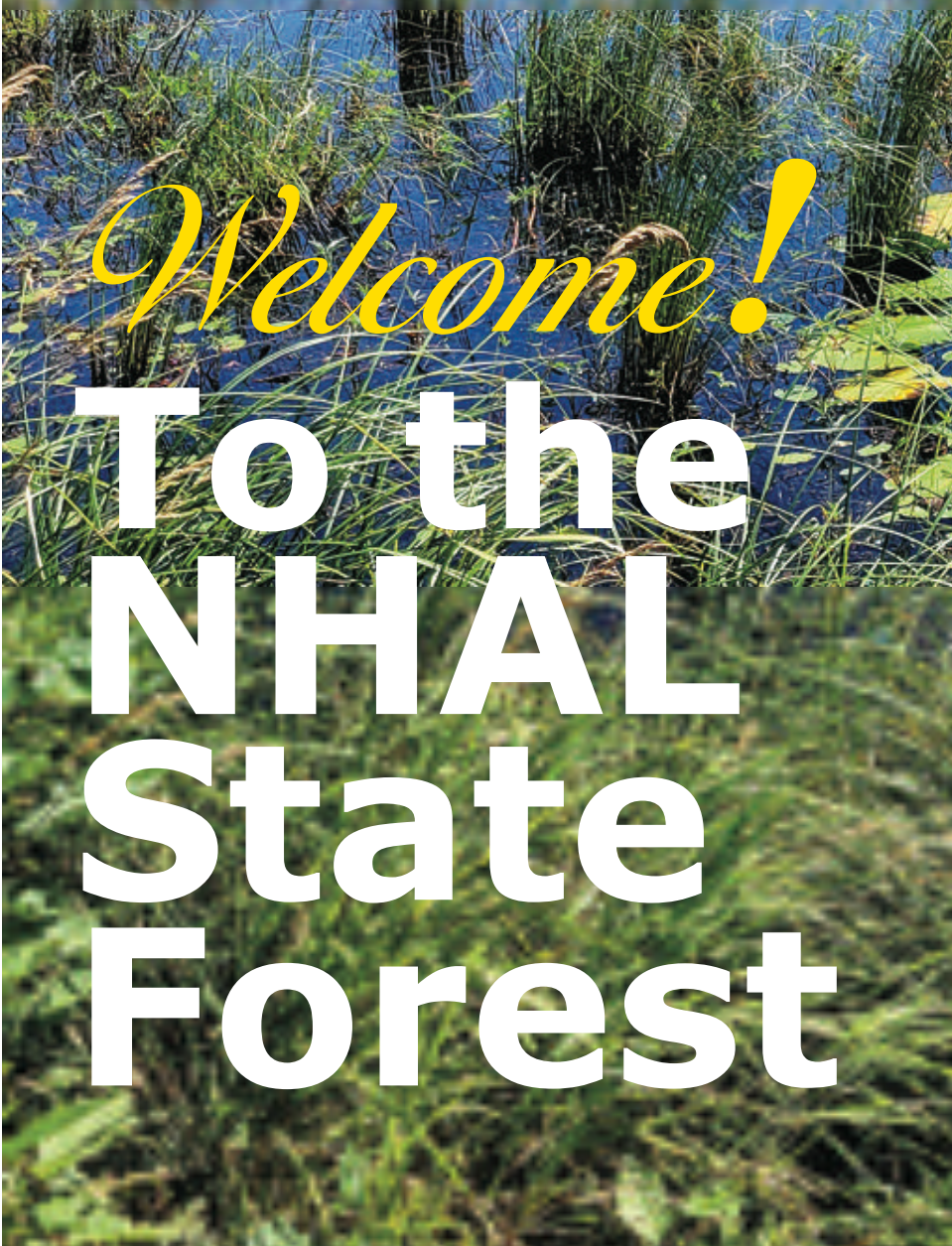


2025

Visitor's Guide



Welcome!

To the NHAL State Forest

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF FORESTRY INNOVATION, CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

BY BETH FEIND & NHAL SF PROPERTY MANAGER
ADAM WALLACE NHAL ASST. PROPERTY MANAGER

This year, it is our pleasure to feature the Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest's 100-year anniversary (1925-2025)! We are very excited to celebrate this centennial milestone with you and have created many ways for you to share in the celebration.

Our webpage: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/StateForests/nhal/centennial>, has been updated and contains many fun and creative activities for individuals, families or groups to join in the centennial celebration. There are a "Top 100 things to do by Season," a bingo card game with prizes (while they last), and a chance for the birder in you to find

See **Welcome...** page 3

Recreation program update



By **Joe Fieweger**
NHAL RECREATION
SUPERINTENDENT

Thank you for visiting the NHAL in 2025 during our centennial year. In the pages of this Visitor Guide you will find a wealth of information about the state forest and the natural environment – written by staff here on the forest, other local DNR staff, and some of our local partners. A lot of time and effort goes into the content of this Visitor Guide, so I hope you enjoy it!

Visitation to the NHAL continues to be very high. Our campground usage in 2024 was down 1.9% from our record high camping year in 2023, but still third highest in available records back to the year 2001. Other recreation on the forest – use of boat landings, trails, beaches, picnic areas, etc is not easily counted, but continues to be very busy as well.

With so many visitors to the forest, it takes a lot of work to keep everything in good condition and provide the best possible experience that we can. I am proud of our hardworking staff and volunteers who help to make your visit enjoyable. We love to see lots of people enjoying the forest – ultimately that's why we do what we do. If you are interested in joining our team reach out to me or any of our staff for more information. We hire many seasonal limited term employees (LTEs) every year and that hiring process typically starts in January. We also have volunteer opportunities available, particularly as volunteer campground hosts in some of our campgrounds. Maybe one of our positions is a perfect fit for you or someone you know!

In the rest of this article, I would like to provide an update on some of the more significant things happening in the "recreation world" on the NHAL.

One constant in life is change – and there is always change occurring here on the NHAL. This year we have some notable changes in rules and policies for the state park system. NR45, which is the Wisconsin Administrative Code that

regulates conduct on and use of DNR properties, was updated in summer 2024 and you can read more about some of those changes elsewhere in this Visitor Guide. Included in the NR45 updates were some changes to pet rules and stemming from that leashed pets will now be allowed on all NHAL trails except the Tom Roberts Trail near the Crystal Lake Nature Center. Pets had been prohibited on Fallison, North Trout, the yellow loop of Raven, and Star Trails. That prohibition ends as soon as signage is updated in 2025, however it is important to remember that pets must be leashed at all times on designated trails, in campgrounds, and in other use areas. Unleashed pets on trails and in campgrounds are one of our biggest sources of complaints and issues.

Other changes being implemented in 2025 affect our vehicle admission passes. We have transitioned this year to a 12 month vehicle admission pass (valid for 12 months from purchase rather than expiring December 31 each year) and we are transitioning away from self-registration for vehicle admission and trail passes. Some of our self-registration stations have already been removed and those that remain will be removed before the 2026 season. Vehicle admission and trail passes are available online as well as at our office locations, so we encourage you to plan ahead for your vehicle admission and trail pass purchases (especially if cell service concerns may prevent you from making an online purchase upon your arrival).

2024 saw the completion of a few



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOGRAPHS



large projects on the forest. Two boat landing renovation projects were completed in tandem in late summer. Boat landings at Tomahawk Lake (adjacent to Indian Mounds Campground) and the north end of Big Arbor Vitae Lake received new concrete ramps and new docks along with other minor improvements in the ramp areas.

An ATV/UTV route project that has been in the works for several years was finally completed in fall of 2024. We call this route the "Woodruff North/South Route". The southern portion of that route, which begins at the railroad grade along Highway 47 in the Town of Woodruff and goes north on the east side of Clear Lake to Bass Lake Road, creates a connection between the Highway 47 railroad grade and Highway J and first opened to ATV/UTV traffic in October 2022. The development of the final northern segment of the route is now complete and the entire route will be open in 2025, continuing north from Highway J all the way to Ross Lake Road in the Town of Arbor Vitae.

A smaller ATV/UTV trail project was completed and opened in 2024 near the intersection of Highway 51 and Highway M in the Town of Arbor Vitae. For this segment, the Lakeland ATV Club funded minor improvements to a snowmobile trail in the area that is now open to



ATV/UTV use. This was an important safety improvement to get ATV/UTV traffic off the road at the intersection of Highways 51 and M.

2024 also saw some bike trail projects completed on the NHAL. One of those was extension of our "Clear Lake" bike trail toward Lake Tomahawk. The paved trail that ended at Tomahawk Road along Highway 47 has been extended to just prior to Gritzmachen Road. At that point bicyclists hop back onto the railroad grade and can ride into Lake Tomahawk. The new section of trail is gravel for now with hopes to have it paved at some point in the future.

Continuing with bike trail progress on the NHAL, our partner the Town of Boulder Junction completed their extension of the paved bike trail along Highway H. The paved bike trail along Highway H

See **Update...** page 4

Emergency and State Forest contact information

Emergency: 911

Emergency Telephones: Emergency telephones are located outside the entrance doors at the Clear Lake and Crystal Lake Visitor Stations (yellow phones).

Hospital: Howard Young Medical Center, 240 Maple St., Woodruff WI 54568, 715-356-8000, Marshfield Medical Center, 9576 Highway 70, Minocqua, WI 54548, 715-359-1710

Urgent Care: Marshfield Clinic and Urgent Care, 9576 Highway 70, Minocqua WI 54548

General DNR Information:
1-888-WDNRINFO
(1-888-936-7463), 7 days/week,
7 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Non-Emergency Law Enforcement
– 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367 call or text to report suspected recreational, fish and game, and environmental violations, available 24 hours a day, 7 days / week)

State Forest Visitor Stations:
Clear Lake Visitor Station
715-356-3668
8282 Woodruff Road,
Woodruff WI 54568

Crystal Lake Visitor Station
715-542-3923
3237 Crystal Lake Rd,
Boulder Junction WI 54512

DNR Offices

DNR Service Center
8770 Co Rd. J.
Woodruff WI 54568
Phone: 715-356-5211
Office Hours: Monday – Friday
8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
General Customer Service
number: 1-888-936-7463

State Forest Personnel:

Joe Fieweger
Recreation Superintendent
joseph.fieweger@wisconsin.gov
715-385-3355 ext. 119

Nikki Kloes
Deputy Recreation Superintendent
nicole.kloes@wisconsin.gov
715-385-3355 ext. 113

Beth Feind
Property Manager
beth.feind@wisconsin.gov
715-892-0095

Tom Shockley
Forestry Team Leader
tom.shockley@wisconsin.gov
715-356-5211 ext. 259

Chris Bartelt
Woodruff Area Conservation
Warden Supervisor
christopher.bartelt@wisconsin.gov
715-892-0695



2025 NHAL State Forest Visitor's Guide

published by

THE LAKELAND
TIMES

PO Box 790, 510 Chippewa Street
MINOCQUA, WI 54548

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and

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RIVER NEWS

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715-365-6397

www.RiverNewsOnline.com

Welcome

From page 1

"100 Birds for 100 years!" There are also links to more history, videos and many photos.

Did you know the NHAL provided the 2024-25 Governor's Executive Residence Holiday Tree? Check out the photos and video on our webpage.

We also invite you to our public celebration event on June 7, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at our Crystal Lake Campground, beach area and Nature Center. Additional details for the event will be available on our website. We hope you can make it!

Celebrating the NHAL's centennial is an important milestone in its rich history. The state forest was established in 1925 and currently spans 236,000 acres and is the Wisconsin's largest state-owned property.

Initially set up to protect the headwaters of the Wisconsin, Manitowish and Flambeau Rivers, the forest is now a hub for outdoor recreation, including hiking, camping, fishing, hunting and both nonmotorized and motorized activities. Drawing

over three million visitors annually, it is a vital resource for both recreation and sustainable forestry.

The roots of NHAL's conservation efforts trace back to 1904, when Wisconsin appointed its first state forester, Edward Merriam Griffith. Trained by German forester Dr. Carl A. Schenck, Griffith pioneered sustainable forestry practices in Wisconsin, including selective logging, reforestation, and forest thinning. His work led to the creation of Wisconsin's first state forest reserve, which eventually became the NHAL.

In 1911, Wisconsin established its first state tree nursery at Trout Lake, helping to restore the forest after early logging and devastating fires. To help with reforestation and conservation efforts, the first forest rangers were hired. The forest rangers' role in fire detection, reforestation and land surveying was crucial in these early years. The NHAL's long-term impact on sustainable forestry continues today through carefully managed ecosystems and wildlife conservation efforts.

Today, the NHAL State Forest plays a significant role in the local economy, particularly in the surrounding communities of Oneida, Vilas and Iron counties. The forest's recreational opportunities attract thousands of people annually, while forest management helps contribute to the multi-billion-dollar forest products economy in our state. Wildlife and fisheries management ensures that species like white-tail deer, grouse and abundant fish populations thrive in diverse habitats.

This type of management also allows for robust hunting and fishing opportunities. All of these attributes have contributed to the long success of the forest.

The NHAL remains a model of sustainable forest management, certified for meeting strict ecological, economic and social standards. Governed by a master plan, the forest balances conservation, recreation, and local economic needs, ensuring its continued legacy for future generations.

As the NHAL celebrates its centennial, it stands as a testament to the foresight of early conservationists and the enduring value of Wisconsin's natural heritage. From its rich history rooted in forestry innovation and management to its vital role in conservation and community enrichment, the state forest continues to inspire and welcome visitors.

Whether exploring its winding trails, paddling across its pristine lakes, or simply marveling at its timeless beauty, you are invited to help honor a century of forest stewardship and learn more about how this living legacy will continue to be a vital part of Wisconsin's Northwoods for generations to come.

If you have any questions about the NHAL State Forest or would like to chat with us please reach out anytime to property managers Beth Feind at 715-892-0095 or Adam Wallace at 715-892-0143.

Beth Feind is the NHAL SF Property Manager & Adam Wallace is NHAL Assistant Property Manager.



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2025 campground operating dates

Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest

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<p>April 1st through December 1*</p> <p>*Snow conditions permitting (no plowing in any of these campgrounds)</p> <p>Firefly Indian Mounds Carrol Razorback West Star North Trout Big Lake</p>	<p>April 30 through Columbus Day (Oct. 13)</p> <p>Starrett Upper Gresham Buffalo</p>	<p>Thursday before Memorial Day (May 22) through Labor Day (Sept. 1)</p> <p>South Trout Cunard Plum</p>	<p>Thursday before Memorial Day (May 22) through Columbus Day (Oct. 13)</p> <p>Sandy Beach East Star</p>
<p>All campsites are reservable during all operating dates. To make a reservation, call 1-888-947-2757 or visit wisconsin.goingtocamp.com</p>			

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Rules for generator use in NHAL Campgrounds

Generator use is not allowed for any reason at Cunard Lake and Starrett Lake Campgrounds. These campgrounds are designated as "quiet zones" for campers who are looking for a place to camp where they won't hear generators (radios, musical instruments and other noise producing devices are also prohibited in these two campgrounds).

In all other NHAL campgrounds:

- Generators can be used between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- Campers must be present on the campsite while generators are in use.
- If generators are excessively noisy, permission to operate can be

revoked.

- Be aware of where the sound and exhaust from your generator are directed and be considerate of neighboring campers.

Occasionally, visitors have a medical need to operate a generator outside of the normal generator hours. Please contact one of our visitor stations for information about special permits for such instances.

Be aware that running a generator outside of normal generator hours can be extremely disruptive for other campers, so please consider options for running medical devices on battery power.

Update

From page 2

now extends from Highway K to North Creek Road. North Creek Road can be used to create a nice biking loop back to the paved trail along Highway M. There continues to be a lot of interest in expanding the paved bike trail system on the state forest and surrounding areas so stay tuned for other new segments in coming years.

Another Town of

Boulder Junction project on the NHAL which became an instant hit in the winter of 2024/2025 was creation of "The Glide", a 0.8 mile ice skating trail. This is located at Boulder Junction Winter Park, on state forest land just outside of downtown Boulder Junction. The Town of Boulder Junction manages this park through a land use agreement with DNR.

There are many other exciting projects on the horizon for the state forest. I look forward to sharing more details of those

as they become known.

In closing, I again want to thank you for visiting the state forest and helping us celebrate our centennial with your presence. This forest is a very special place. The concentration of lakes in this area makes it unique in the world and the surroundings forests and all the recreation amenities combine to draw many visitors and those lucky enough to call this area home. I hope you enjoy your visit and come back frequently.

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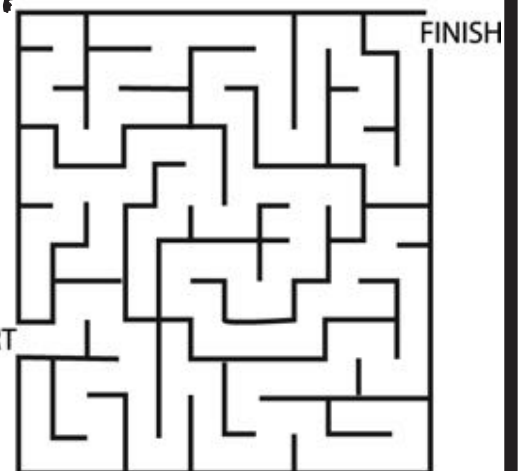
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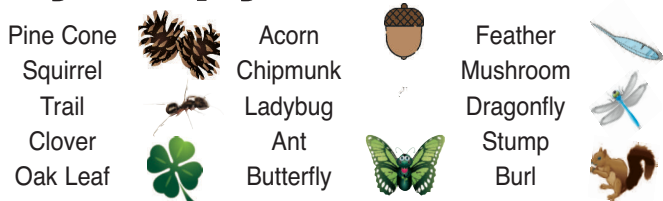
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Word Search

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- ButterBurger
- Cheese
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- Custard
- Chocolate
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- Strawberry
- Salad
- Chicken
- Fries
- OnionRings
- Soup
- Pickles
- Malt
- Shake
- Sundaes





MANAGEMENT

Forest Management 2025



The Northern Highland – American Legion (NHAL) State Forest has a long and storied history in Wisconsin. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the state forest's establishment, offering an opportunity to reflect on a century of significant forest management and conservation efforts.

Forestry as a profession was born here in 1904 with the establishment of the first Forestry Headquarters at Trout Lake and the state's first tree nursery. Today there is an active sustainable forestry program in place on the NHAL where we focus our management on meeting the economic, ecological, and social needs of current

users while protecting the forest's ability to fulfill this role for future generations.

It's difficult to imagine, but just over 100 years ago nearly all the trees in northern Wisconsin, including most of the trees in this state forest, were cut down to help build our nation. Many of the red and white pine trees were sawn into lumber to build homes and businesses in Chicago and other cities on the east coast. Timber harvesting for lumber production peaked in 1910 and began a steady decline due to the exhaustion of the resource.

Throughout the 20th century, trees were planted, remaining stands of pines and hemlocks were protected, and the forest was allowed to recover. During this time, with the advantage of hindsight and lessons learned, the concept of sustainable forestry was born. In the last 100 years, the occupation of 'forestry' evolved into its current form as a professional vocation.

Today the foresters on the NHAL state forest use art, science, history, and new technology to protect and sustainably manage these forests for our use and enjoyment today and for future generations.

The forestry program on the NHAL state forest not only produces wood fiber for Wisconsin's paper and lumber industry but also helps support over 60,000 jobs throughout our state.

Wisconsin is the number one paper producing state in the U.S. and many of the trees grown right here on the state forest help keep that industry alive. In all, there are over 1,200 companies in the state that rely on wood products to produce lumber, paper, furniture, and many other items.

The skilled team of foresters establish approximately 3,500 acres of timber sales every year on the NHAL state forest.

Many forest visitors inquire about why we manage the NHAL state forest in areas that are visible to the public. Wisconsin State Statute Chapter 28 defines Wisconsin's public forests and guides all management on the NHAL state forest. This statute, along with the property master plan, serve as cornerstones for our forest management program and all the activities that occur here.

In short, unless state law or the master plan prohibits timber harvesting in an area, the forest will be managed. The forestry team are cognizant of the social impacts that may occur from managing the forest and they work closely with the NHAL Recreation staff when timber harvests occur in campgrounds or along one of the trail systems. The foresters often incorporate special considerations into the set-up and design of timber sales in highly visible locations.

Many of the most popular locations on the NHAL state forest owe at least some of their beauty to the sustainable forest management that is practiced by the forestry team. Hiking areas like the trails at Madeline, Fallison, McNaughton, and Raven have all undergone extensive timber harvest in recent years. The forests in an around the campgrounds at Crystal, Musky, Firefly, Big Lake, North Trout, and Clear Lakes have also been managed over the past 20 years.

The foresters have carefully removed many of the suppressed, deformed, and diseased trees to provide more growing space for the healthy, dominant trees. Not only do these areas look more beautiful because of forest management, they are safer, healthier, and contribute to a very important portion of Wisconsin's economy.

The forestry team relies on information known as forest reconnaissance (recon) to determine when and where

trees are ready for harvest. Another practice known as silviculture is used to manage the individual tree species to either maximize growth or to encourage regeneration in the form of new seedlings and saplings. The foresters design timber sales to promote natural regeneration and today less than 5% of the acres harvested every year require replanting

with nursery trees.

The foresters also take great care to protect water quality on our lakes and rivers by following best management practices and by using buffers in riparian areas. In many cases, management is not readily visible from the water.

Foresters consider many ecological aspects and attributes of the forests and trees when practicing silviculture. For example, some of our tree species such as birch, balsam fir, jack pine, and aspen rely on full sunlight to regenerate. This means that when these tree species are old enough to harvest, most of the trees in the area are cut all at once. This type of practice is essential for these species to fully regenerate.

The foresters on the NHAL state forest utilize several different tactics to minimize the aesthetic impact of this type of harvest including leaving unharvested buffer zones along roads and trails, leaving islands of trees to diversify the age class and to break up the visual impact of the harvest, and by not cutting scattered white pines, red pines, and spruces in the harvest area.

The trees that regenerate after these harvests create a young forest that provides food and habitat for some of the most popular game animals like deer, grouse, and turkeys and many non-game species like herptiles and songbirds. Young forests also create age and structural diversity that help our resource remain resilient and healthy.

Not all areas of the NHAL state forest are subject to active forest management. There are many locations embedded in the forest that are passively managed, where human intervention is kept to a bare minimum. These areas, known as state natural areas (SNAs), are left to the whims of Mother Nature to determine their fate. In rare cases salvage harvests may occur if a significant number of trees are blown down in a tornado or wind storm.

To see examples of some of the most profound SNAs on the NHAL state forest, use the search tool on dnr.wi.gov to look for Lake Laura Hardwoods, Van Vliet Hemlocks, and Frog Lake and Pines. These are all prime examples of areas that are evolving on their own without human-influenced forest management.

Compare and contrast these areas with other locations where foresters have been actively managing the trees. What do you notice as the key differences?

The NHAL state forest is unique for many reasons, including the large, sustainably managed forest that surrounds our lakes, trails, and campgrounds. The NHAL forestry team is comprised of some of the most highly skilled professionals in their field. Not only do they consider the economic value of the forest, they also care deeply for the ecological and social values that are so important to the well-being of our environment, our community, and our visitors.

Tom Shockley is the NHAL Forestry Team Leader.



By Tom Shockley
NHAL FORESTRY TEAM LEADER

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Management

DNR Conservation Wardens and Community Service Officers are Here to Serve You



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Conservation Wardens and Community Service Officers (CSOs) welcome you to the Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest (NHAL).

Whether you are here for just a day or an entire week, you will likely encounter DNR wardens and CSOs. Our duty is to protect Wisconsin's natural resources and the people who enjoy them.

I'm Lieutenant Chris Bartelt, the warden supervisor for the DNR's Woodruff Warden Team. My team uses the nearby community of Woodruff as its home base and serves the larger territory that includes the NHAL.

We are happy you are here and want you to enjoy your time in this remarkable forest. Here's a look at who we are, what we do to serve you and how you can help protect our resources while you're here.

WHO ARE THE DNR WARDENS AND CSOs?

There are eight full-time conservation wardens – including myself – on the Woodruff Team serving Oneida and Vilas counties. We will also have one or two CSOs on hand at the NHAL for the 2025 season.

Wardens seek to protect hundreds of thousands of acres of land and

wildlife. We monitor more than 1,000 lakes in this region to ensure they remain clean and safe for future generations. We patrol hundreds of miles of local ATV, biking, hiking and snowmobile trails to ensure everyone's safety. And, importantly for you, we are the primary law enforcement presence on state-owned lands such as the NHAL.



Lt. Chris Bartelt
WARDEN SUPERVISOR, DNR'S
WOODRUFF WARDEN TEAM

Our CSOs fill a similar role, providing a presence and a resource for all of our Forest visitors. 2022 was the inaugural year for the DNR's CSO program and we're excited to keep it rolling for 2025. While not credentialed like our wardens, CSOs will still be out and about in our campgrounds and other use areas, able to educate visitors on the rules mentioned below, provide some enforcement, and answer questions.

Our CSOs also find themselves out on our lakes and in the woods, providing an extra set of hands as our wardens and CSOs work jointly to protect our natural resources.

Starting in 2018, the DNR Conservation Warden Service became the primary law enforcement in Wisconsin's state parks and forests. Before this change, law enforcement on state properties was handled by credentialed DNR park rangers. Today, DNR rangers remain a vital part of the state park and forest system, as-

sisting with enforcement, maintenance and visitor service duties. However, the rangers no longer serve in credentialed law enforcement roles.

Our DNR conservation wardens, and CSOs, are incredibly passionate about the outdoors. While hunting and fishing enforcement may come to mind when you hear the word warden, our work goes well beyond that.

DNR conservation wardens work with nearly anything that impacts our amazing natural resources. This includes air pollution, solid waste disposal, fish stocking, wildland fire, taxidermists, recreational vehicles, timber theft, commercial fishing, septic hauling and disposal and more.

You can also help protect Wisconsin's resources by keeping the following in mind.

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR AT THE CAMPGROUNDS

Staying in a campground for a weekend (or a couple of weeks if you're lucky) is like becoming a part of a new community – new neighbors, new friends, and sometimes new issues.

As with any community, a little understanding and cooperation between neighbors goes a long way. NR 45, the administrative code that regulates conduct and use of state properties, saw an update last year.

Here are a few of the common issues DNR wardens respond to along with some of the updates.

- **Noise** – This is the top complaint. NR 45 states that "no person may make a noise at a level above that of a quiet conversation in camping areas and overnight moorings be-

See **Bartelt**. . . page 7

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Note: Direct access to/from the Campground is now available to approved ATV & UTV trails. Additional on-site parking for large haulers/trailers is also available.

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Bartelt

From page 6

tween the hours of 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. (new for 2025). Though remember that our campgrounds and day use areas are all public spaces and that “violent, abusive, indecent, profane, boisterous, unreasonably loud or otherwise disorderly conduct” remains illegal no matter the hour.

• **Pets And Leashes** – Pets are part of our families, but they also have the potential to impact other forest visitors negatively. NR 45 states that when in a designated use area (e.g., campground, day use area or trail) pets must be on a physical (new for 2025) leash no greater than 8 feet in length. Also, at no time may a pet interfere with another’s enjoyment of the property. Pets are not allowed on any designated beach or where otherwise posted.

• **Camping And Timing** – All NHAL campers must be registered (i.e., have a reservation) before setting up camp unless at a first-come, first-serve water-access only site. All camping permits expire at 1 p.m. (new for 2025) on the last day of the permit and all camping equipment must be removed by that time to make room for the next set of campers. Camping is only allowed on designated sites. Only registered campers are allowed in the state campground after 11 p.m.

• **Vehicle Admission Stickers** – Admission stickers are required when a motor vehicle is operated within a designated public use fee area. The sticker must be fully attached to the windshield by its own adhesive – simply laying the sticker on the dash does not meet the legal requirement.

• **Firewood Rules** – Firewood that originates more than 10 miles from your campground on the NHAL is prohibited – this is to protect the state forest from infesting pests or diseases. To remedy this, consider purchasing certified firewood that has been heat-treated to kill the organisms mentioned above or by obtaining firewood from nearby.

• **Speed Limits Are For Safety** – There are many children, pets, bicycles and others recreating across the NHAL, so always be aware and observant while driving. Follow applicable speed limits, one-way road and stop signs and all other traffic laws.

• **Fires** – Fires are allowed in designated fire rings and cannot be left unattended. If leaving, fully extinguish the fire first. Never burn garbage as not only is it illegal, but it produces harmful pollutants.

• **Fireworks** – It is illegal to possess or discharge fireworks in the state forest. As a general guideline, anything that makes noise, throws sparks or lifts off the ground cannot be used in the state forest.

• **Boats** – No person may operate a boat within a water area marked by buoys or other approved regulatory devices at a swimming beach. Further, boat mooring is only permitted in areas designated on campground maps for that purpose and by campers with waterfront campsites who are allowed to moor boats at their campsites.

• **Beaches** – Items may not be left out at the picnic areas or beaches over night. This includes canopies and other temporary structures which need to be brought back to your campsite each night.

For the full set of rules, read Wisconsin Chapter NR 45, Use of Department Properties, at https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/nr/001/45/10.

Again, welcome to the NHAL. We hope you have a safe and enjoyable experience in the area – there is no better playground than the forests and lakes at your feet right now. The DNR thanks you for remembering the importance of community during your time here, even if you’re searching for solitude in Wisconsin’s great outdoors. Thanks for doing your part to protect our state’s resources.

CONTACT A DNR WARDEN OR CSO

On any given day or night, our wardens and CSOs might be in a campground, on an area lake, patrolling a local ATV trail or following up on many other environmental issues, so we need your help to respond to the above issues and any other issues that may arise.

Report violations directly to DNR staff or via our Violation Hotline by calling or texting 1-800-847-9367. Using the 24/7 hotline, callers can confidently report suspected wildlife, recreational and environmental violations. You do not have to leave your name when reporting a violation, but it is often useful for warden follow-up. If provided, any identifying information is protected under Wisconsin State Statute 23.38.

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MANAGEMENT

Black Bear Biology and Management



Last spring an NHAL Visitor reached out to me and asked if they should avoid biking on the state forest because of the potential danger of a black bear encounter. I realized that this is a fairly common question I receive. It is true that we have a healthy and abundant bear population on the state forest, however there is no reason to avoid normal recreational activities because of the chance of coming across a bear. It never hurts to be bear aware and to do things more mindfully to avoid negatively impacting bear and all other species of wildlife, but normal activities can be safely done in bear country. If you would encounter a black bear in the wild take comfort in knowing the bear is likely more afraid of you than you are of it. Tips for if a bear does approach too closely or acts threatening in nature: stay calm and don't run, wave your arms and make noise to scare it away, if needed back away slowly and allow the



Alaina Roth-
WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST
VILAS COUNTY,
NHAL WILDLIFE LIAISON

bear ample room to escape. There are an estimated 23,000 black bears in Wisconsin today and about 5,500 in bear management zone B which covers most of the state forest. Even with all these bears, negative close encounters in the wild are quite rare. The most common negative encounters include property damage like raiding garbage cans and bird feeders, toppling grills and agricultural damage. It is very uncommon for an outdoor recreationalist to enter a dangerous situation with a black bear while out in the woods. So now that we know we can safely share the land with bears, let's talk about what makes them so unique! Black bears are one of the most charismatic creatures we have in the forest and are an emblem of the Northwoods of Wisconsin. Black bears are one of the smartest wildlife species in the state. They have long lifespans and a capacity to learn and remember things that

is truly outstanding. Bears can remember important food source areas and continue to check them annually to see if the food supply is present. They are omnivores meaning they can eat a variety of animal and plant matter, but the large majority of their diet is composed of plant material. They are important seed dispersers because they can eat hundreds of seeds and travel miles before defecating, effectively planting new fruiting plants as they go! They also aid in nutrient cycling by breaking down dead logs searching for bugs and grubs to feast on and can break down organic material by scavenging on dead animal carcasses. One of the most amazing traits about black bears is their ability to enter a state of torpor, a form of hibernation, to survive our harsh winters. They can spend up to 6 months a year in a slowed metabolic state to reserve their resources. Their heart rate drops from 40-50 beats per minute in the summer to just 8-20 beats per minute during hibernation. They typically don't eat, drink, defecate



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOGRAPH

or urinate during this time period. This ability may even have medical and scientific implications, as researchers try to understand how bears can cycle their nutrients, metabolize their urine and avoid muscle loss while in this extended sleep state. This information could one day prove useful to people suffering from comas, it could also inform how to keep astronauts healthy and fit in space!

In Wisconsin, our main tool for

See Roth. . . page 9

Boulder Junction

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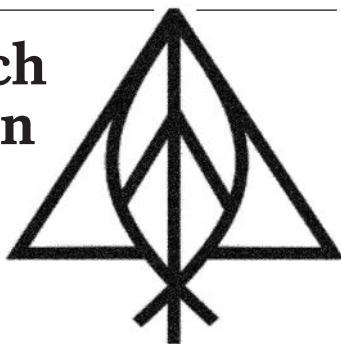
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Roth

From page 8

managing the black bear population at a healthy and sustainable level is through hunting. The information provided from hunters who have harvested a bear (the age, sex and location of harvest), gives us biologists invaluable information that helps us have a healthy population of bear. Hunting also allows us to address nuisance and agricultural damage problems bears can cause. Bear hunting is one of the few types of hunting in Wisconsin that has increased in popularity in recent years, and because of this interest, it takes many years to draw a bear hunting permit in northern parts of the state. The funds the Wisconsin DNR receives from bear hunting permit applications and hunting licenses supports and funds black bear research and habitat management.

Black bears are hunted not only for the trophy of their hide, but the meat is absolutely delicious and other byproducts like the bear's fat can be rendered and used to make baked goods, soaps, candles, and even treat guns and boots. This is undoubtedly one of my favorite creatures we have on the state forest, and I personally feel completely in awe of them whenever I see one in the wild.

New Rangers

Hi, my name is Dan Nelson and I started working as a park Ranger with the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest in November of 2024. Prior to being a Ranger, I was a customer service representative with the DNR for 5 years. Some of my responsibilities included selling park stickers and trail passes, hunting and fishing licenses, registering vehicles, issuing permits and answering general DNR questions. This position gave me a solid knowledge base for my current position. I grew up and spent most of my life in the Northwoods of Wisconsin, where I've enjoyed being outside and taking full advantage of all the great natural resources it has to offer. I'm grateful and truly excited to be a part of the NHAL and look forward to seeing all your smiling faces around our property.



Nelson

Hi, my name is Zach Mayer, and I started as a Park Ranger at NHAL-SF this past November. Growing up in a military family, I have lived in several different states but have called Wisconsin home since graduating from George Mason University in 2017. During my first few months here, I have mainly been focused on learning the vast property and working on equipment maintenance in preparation for our busy summer season. I have very much enjoyed my short time here, and I plan on continuing to learn and grow in my new position. I especially look forward to the dynamic nature of the job and how each season of the year will bring new job duties and challenges. I love to hunt and fish in my free time and plan to take advantage of the many recreational opportunities that the Northwoods has to offer. If you see me around the property, feel free to stop and say hi. I would be happy to meet you and answer any questions you may have. I hope everyone has a great year and can get outside and enjoy the NHAL State Forest!



Mayer

Boulder Junction



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JUST IMAGINE

Greg G. Sass, Ph.D.

FISHERIES RESEARCH TEAM LEADER, OFFICE OF APPLIED SCIENCE,
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Stephanie L. Shaw, Ph.D.

NORTHERN LAKES FISHERIES RESEARCH SCIENTIST, OFFICE OF APPLIED
SCIENCE, WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Just imagine... About 125 years ago, what is currently Wisconsin's Northern Highland American Legion State Forest (NHAL) would have been a barren landscape dotted by stumps of logged old growth pine forest embedded within one the most lake-rich regions in the world.

Following connections by railroads to areas of southern Wisconsin and Chicago, farmers were encouraged to settle the former north-temperate forest to prospect the feasibility of agriculture in the region. The possibility of profitable agriculture was quickly abandoned due to the glacial soil, the climate, and short growing season. So, now what?

Just imagine... In 1925, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources had the foresight to set aside the origins of what is now over 236,000 acres of Iron, Oneida and Vilas counties to protect the headwaters of the Flambeau and Manitowish rivers.

2025 marks the 100th anniversary of the NHAL. A state forest that is now lush with managed forest, popular state forest campgrounds and seemingly boundless public hunting opportunities for black bear, ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer and wild turkey.

A state forest with world-renowned hiking, cross country ski and snowshoe trails. A state forest that accommodates hundreds of miles of paved bicycle, mountain bike, UTV and snowmobile trails, all while protecting the beauty of this

second growth plus north-temperate forest.

And, did I mention the lakes?

The NHAL is also home to over 900 natural lakes that provide silent sport opportunities like canoeing and kayaking, along with world-renowned opportunities to fish. Today, the NHAL welcomes over three million visitors each year to enjoy its beauty and engage in the aforementioned recreational opportunities available.

Now, let's focus on the NHAL and its lakes and fisheries.

Just imagine... Around the time of the end of World War II in the mid-1940s, the NHAL and its small cities and villages were transforming into a tourist destination for recreational anglers and outdoors people from the south, while also preserving the natural beauty of the forest and lakes.

As an avid angler and fisheries scientist, I think about this time period quite a bit. If I were a child (or adult for that matter... my excitement to fish and understand fish is insatiable), I cannot imagine the excitement I would have had if I lived in Madison, Milwaukee or Chicago and had the opportunity to fish hundreds of pristine lakes that just had to be brimming with abundant and large bass, muskellunge and walleye.

For me, this would be the type of excitement resulting in several nights of restless to no sleep prior to the trip, and in the rare moment of exhaustion and sleep, dreams of large fish jumping in the boat, shore lunches and trophy fish mounts to commemorate the trip afterward.

Were these fishing dreams reality 25 years post-establishment of the NHAL? Although fish catch rates were likely very high for these early, rugged anglers (think very primitive roads and boat launches, small wooden boats with oars, and fishing gear and technology no where near as advanced as today), my expert opinion and research of the early documentation of these fisheries would suggest that dreams of lakes brimming with large, trophy sportfish were likely not reality for these pioneering anglers.

Although Ojibwe Native Americans had colonized the region hundreds of years prior to the establishment of the NHAL and fished the lakes for subsistence, this level of exploitation on the fisheries was very low. Therefore, adventurous an-

glers visiting state forest lakes in the mid-1900s would have almost certainly encountered high abundances of fish within the lakes.

Therein lied the problem with the availability of large or trophy-sized fish. Although some large and trophy-sized fish were likely available within a given lake, most fish populations and species were likely near their carrying capacities (i.e., highly abundant) within the lakes, which would have influenced fish growth rates.

I would surmise that early anglers venturing to the region caught plenty of fish, but the majority of their catch was likely on the small-side. This is due to the concept of density dependence. Because lakes only have a finite amount of energy to support fish and these were relatively untapped fisheries in the mid-1900s, fish abundance was likely high and individual fish growth rates slow.

This density dependence (an inverse correlation between population abundance and fish growth) means that highly abundant fish populations often suffer from slow growth rates because the amount of food per individual must be spread more thinly across more fish mouths.

The inverse occurs when fish abundance is reduced; fish growth rates improve because there is more available food per individual fish in the population. The disconnect between low fish population size structure and pristine, unfished lakes was likely one of several reasons for the establishment of the Northern Highland Fishery Research Area (NHFRA) within the NHAL near Boulder Junction.

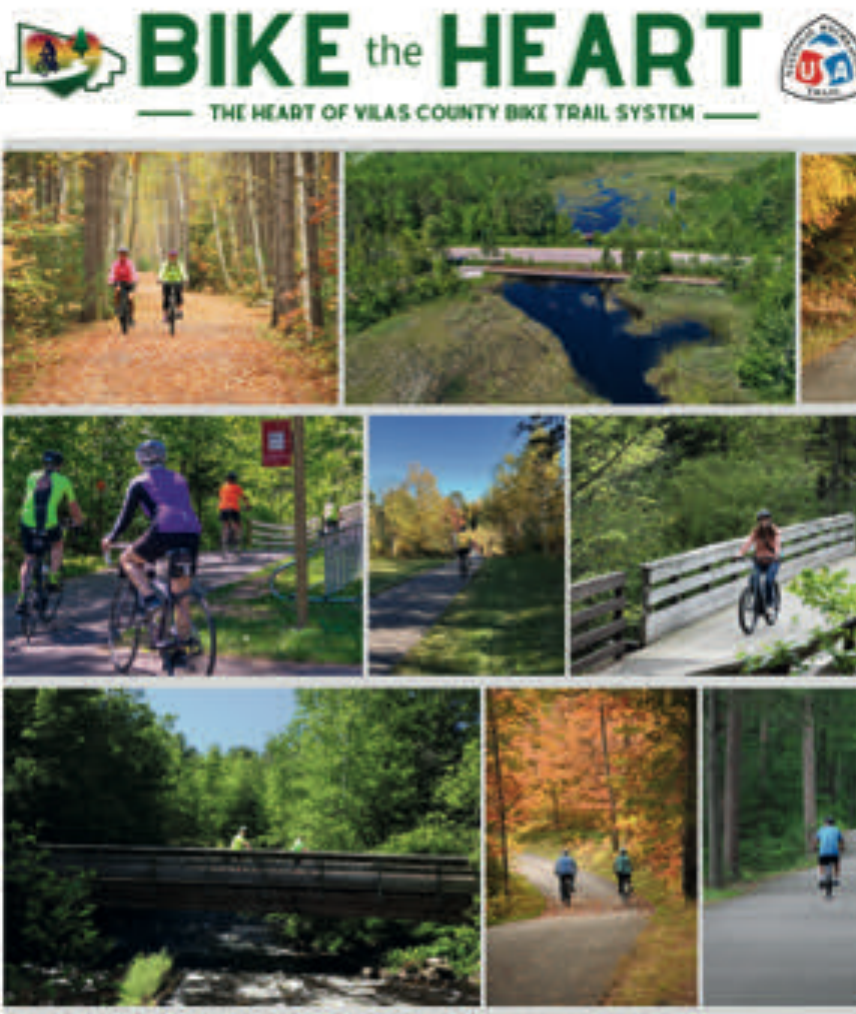
Just imagine... About 20 years after the establishment of the NHAL, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (along with input from Aldo Leopold) had the foresight to set aside five state forest lakes for experimental fisheries research purposes. No more imagining in this case, as the NHFRA was established at the boat launch of Escanaba Lake nearly 80 years ago in June, 1946.

The NHFRA includes five lakes: Escanaba Lake, Mystery Lake, Nebish Lake, Palette Lake and Spruce Lake.

The five lakes were purposely chosen to represent the diversity of fisheries and lakes in north-


See *Imagine* . . . page 11

Boulder Junction



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Imagine

From page 10

ern Wisconsin. For example, drainage and seepage lakes, stained and clear lakes, kettle and bog lakes, and fisheries with a range of cold, cool, and warmwater species such as cisco, largemouth bass, muskellunge, northern pike, smallmouth bass, walleye, and yellow perch.

When established (and to this day), there are no fishing regulations (no closed seasons, no bag limits, no length limits) on NHFRA lakes unless specified for research purposes.

Initial research on the NHFRA lakes encouraged unlimited harvest to better understand the growth responses of previously unharvested fish populations (see density dependence above) and to better under-

stand how much harvest fish populations could withstand and remain self-sustaining. To achieve these goals, any angler wishing to fish NHFRA lakes is required to stop at the Escanaba Lake Research Station prior to their fishing trip to fill out a free fishing permit and then is required to check back out at the research station at the conclusion of their fishing trip. At check-out, anglers are asked several quick questions about their fishing trip (e.g., how long did they fish, what were they fishing for, how many fish were caught and released). Likewise, any harvested fish are measured for length and weight, an aging structure is collected, and the sex of the harvested fish is determined.

Since 1946, over one quarter of a million anglers expending over a million hours of effort have fished the NHFRA lakes, with over 200,000 yel-

low perch and nearly 150,000 walleye being harvested. Just imagine the size of this dataset to better understand and manage Wisconsin's amazing fisheries!

Given the nearly 80-year history of the NHFRA, I could go on and on about all the important fisheries research that has been conducted on these lakes.

To briefly summarize, the NHFRA has been used to better understand angler behaviors over time (e.g., harvest- vs. catch-and-release orientation), experimental fish stockings, experimental regulations and associated fish responses before implementing the regulation statewide, whole-lake experiments, and numerous other research projects on various aspects of Wisconsin's fisheries.

Better yet, I encourage anglers and non-anglers alike to visit the Escanaba Lake Research Station to cel-

brate the 100th anniversary of the NHAL to get a first-hand history lesson about the area and our fisheries research program by our courteous and informative staff.

For anglers, please bring your fishing gear and fish the NHFRA lakes to personally contribute to the nearly 80-year legacy of fisheries research that has been conducted on these lakes! Without our anglers, this rich fisheries dataset and its importance to Wisconsin's fisheries would not be possible.

After all, the mission of the NHFRA is to "Improve Fishing through Scientific Research!"

Greg G. Sass, Ph.D. is the Fisheries Research Team Leader at the DNR Office of Applied Science.

Stephanie L. Shaw, Ph.D., is a Northern Lakes Fisheries Research Scientist at the DNR Office of Applied Science.



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Coming in 2026 – Campground Season Changes

Beginning in 2026, the camping season (campground opening and closing dates) will be changing for many NHAL campgrounds. All campgrounds will remain open for the entire peak summer camping season of Memorial Day to Labor Day, but spring opening and fall closing dates for many campgrounds will be changing. The spring and fall seasons tend to be very slow in many of our campgrounds. Concentrating use

into fewer campgrounds during those times of the year will create efficiencies for staff and save money allowing us to continue to provide the best camping experiences that we can.

The new camping seasons keep available camping opportunities spread geographically across the NHAL for most of the year so even if your favorite campground is not available during a certain time in spring or fall there should be a

different campground available relatively nearby. Decisions on changes also considered campground use data from recent years to determine which campgrounds should have longer seasons than others. See the accompanying chart for the new seasons for 2026.

Campground	2026 Season
Clear Lake	Open All Year (3 campsites plowed)
Crystal Lake	April 1-December 1 (no plowing)
Big Lake	April 30-November 1
Musky Lake Group	April 30-November 1
North Trout Lake	April 30-November 1
Reservable Boat-in Sites	April 30-November 1
West Star Lake	April 30-November 1
Buffalo Lake	April 30-Columbus Day
Firefly Lake	April 30-Columbus Day
Indian Mounds	April 30-Columbus Day
Starrett Lake	April 30-Columbus Day
Jag Lake Group	Thursday before Memorial Day-October 1
Musky Lake	Thursday before Memorial Day-October 1
Razorback Lake	Thursday before Memorial Day-October 1
Upper Gresham Lake	Thursday before Memorial Day-October 1
Carrol Lake	Thursday before Memorial Day-Labor Day
Cunard Lake	Thursday before Memorial Day-Labor Day
East Star Lake	Thursday before Memorial Day-Labor Day
Plum Lake	Thursday before Memorial Day-Labor Day
Sandy Beach Lake	Thursday before Memorial Day-Labor Day
South Trout Lake	Thursday before Memorial Day-Labor Day

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Weather Warnings? What to do

The National Weather Service plays a key role in protecting American lives and properties from severe weather. They announce dangerous weather by issuing "watches" if conditions offer potential for severe weather. "Warnings" are issued if there is a likelihood of severe weather or if it is directly reported.

Weather forecasting has evolved to become very accurate and warnings should be taken seriously.

One easy way to receive weather announcements is from a weather radio, available at a low cost from many stores. Battery operated, they will work just fine in our campgrounds and remote campsites.

Our visitor stations, as well as our campground attendants and campground hosts all have weather radios.

The SAME codes for our counties are Vilas 055125, Oneida 055085, and Iron 055051.

Local radio stations will broadcast warnings, and these may be able to better pinpoint a storm's location and direction of travel for you. That being the case, it is helpful for you to be aware of where you are geographically.

The most local radio stations for the NHAL area are FM 91.7 WXPB (Rhineland), 100.1 WRHN (Rhineland), 92.5 WJJQ (Tomahawk), 94.5 WRJO (Eagle River), 95.9 WMQA (Minocqua), 98.3 WCQM (Park Falls) and 99.7 WIMI (Ironwood / Hurley).

There are several apps for smartphones that can provide weather alerts and high-resolution radar.

Do not depend on law enforcement or other staff to provide warnings to you. To the degree that we are able we will do so, but our staff is spread too thin and may not be positioned to be effective, nor do we staff 24 hours a day. Your safety is ultimately in your own hands.

If severe weather threatens, begin to form a plan of what you would do if a warning were announced. You might consider:

- Roll up your awning.
- Pick up camp chairs and other loose items around your site.
- Consider where you would seek shelter and how you would get there.
- Make plans with your family to establish a meeting place if you get separated.

When you receive a warning, seek shelter. As safe as your vehicle may seem, many people have been injured or killed within them during violent weather. Seek shelter in low lying areas or within sturdy buildings like our shower buildings or concrete toilet buildings. Our newer solid concrete toilet buildings are built to sustain very high winds.

Campers in remote locations have improvised and sought shelter in a low, flat location or at the shoreline.

Severe weather can lead to tragedy. Modern forecasting and planning on your part can help to keep you safe. Please take a few minutes to plan how you would respond to a severe weather warning.



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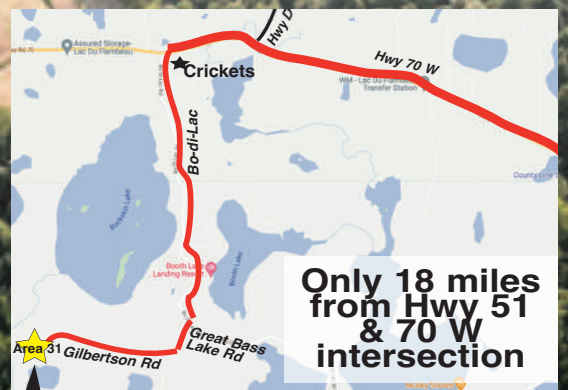
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Camping guide



CAMPGROUNDS

A Variety of Camping Experiences

Camping is a versatile activity, and the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest (NHAL) provides a variety of camping experiences where almost any camper can find their favorite site. The NHAL has over 900 total campsites which provides many opportunities to camp at different campgrounds and campsites. We encourage you to try as many of them as you can, because they all offer a different and unique way to experience the NHAL State Forest.

Modern standard campgrounds

NHAL has four modern standard campgrounds: Crystal Lake, Musky Lake, Firefly Lake and Clear Lake. These campgrounds have flush toilet and shower facilities along with hand-pumps for water and vault toilets throughout the campgrounds. Clear Lake and Crystal Lake have

dump stations. These sites may be occupied up to 14 nights per visit.

Rustic standard campgrounds

Many people have come to associate traditional, rustic-style campgrounds with the NHAL. The facilities are minimal and include hand-pumps for water and vault toilets. NHAL has 14 rustic campgrounds: Big Lake, Buffalo Lake, Carrol Lake, Cunard Lake, Indian Mounds, Plum Lake, Razorback Lake, Sandy Beach Lake, East Star Lake, West Star Lake, Starrett Lake, North Trout Lake, South Trout Lake, and Upper Gresham Lake. North Trout Lake has a dump station. These sites may be occupied for up to 14 nights per visit.

Group campgrounds

There are two group campgrounds on the NHAL, and there is space for

up to 80 campers at each location. These campgrounds, located at Jag Lake and North Muskellunge Lake, are equipped with vault toilets and hand-pumps for water. Jag Lake is a tent only group camp. These sites may be occupied for up to seven nights per visit.

Primitive camping

Non-reservable boat-in campsites: There are currently 88 primitive non-reservable boat-in campsites located on more than 20 waterbodies across the NHAL's lake and rivers. These sites are accessible only by water, limited to a one-night stay, and are non-reservable. Site amenities include a fire ring, picnic table and box latrine.

Reservable boat-in campsites: The NHAL has 17 reservable boat-in campsites. They are located on Allequash Lake, Day Lake, Nebish Lake, Clear Lake, and at the Bittersweet Wild Lakes Area. They are accessible only by water. Site amenities include a fire ring, picnic table, and box latrine. These sites may be occupied for up to 14 nights per visit.

Backcountry camping is allowed

on the NHAL State Forest. A free permit must be obtained prior to setting up camp and permits can be obtained at Crystal Lake Visitor Station and Clear Lake Visitor Station. Camping is limited to 14 nights and no more than six individuals or one family. You must move your camp at least 100 yards every night. You must provide your planned camping location for each night shown on a map with your permit application. Camping is not allowed within sight of any trail or body of water. Campsites must be at least one-half mile from your vehicle and from any designated campground. Practice leave no trace – minimal impact camping.

Accessible Camping

Firefly and Crystal each have one accessible site with electricity for campers with disabilities. Clear, Crystal, Musky and Firefly have accessible sites and shower facilities.

Registration

All campsites in our modern and rustic standard campgrounds and

See Guide . . . page 16

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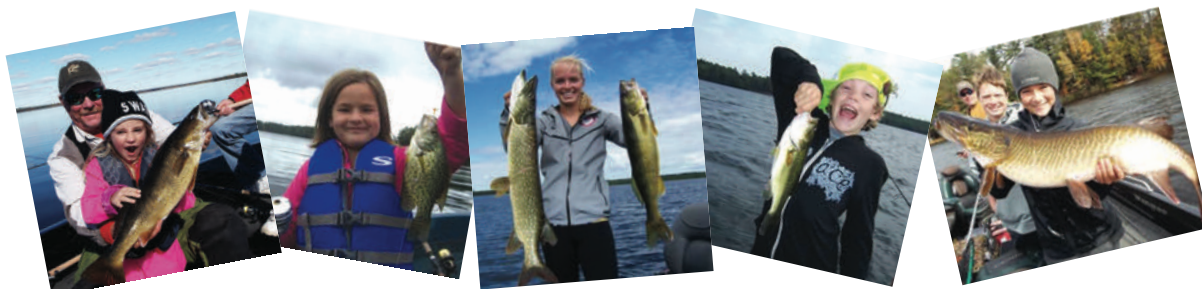
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Guide

From page 15

reservable boat-in campsites are reservable for the entire duration of the camping season. Before setting up on a campsite you must make a reservation. Camping reservations are automatically checked in at 3 p.m. on the day of arrival. Once you arrive at your campground you may go directly to your campsite and set up starting at 3 p.m. New for 2025 campsite checkout is 1 p.m.

You must have a vehicle admission sticker on each vehicle in the campground

which can be obtained at Crystal Lake Visitor Station, Clear Lake Visitor Station, or at self-registration stations at some campgrounds.

Campsite reservations

Campsite reservations can be made for same day camping and may be made up to 11 months in advance. A reservation is required before you can set up on your campsite. All campgrounds, group campgrounds, and reservable boat-in campsites in the NHAL require reservations. Reservations are made by calling Camis at 888-947-2757 or visiting the

website at wisconsin.going-tocamp.com. If you are needing to make a change during your stay you may talk with staff at one of our visitor stations.

Campsite Occupancy

Campsites within the NHAL have a maximum number of consecutive nights campers can stay. For modern and rustic standard campgrounds and reservable boat-in campsites, the maximum stay is 14 nights. For group campsites (Jag Lake and Muskellunge Group Camp) the maximum stay is 7 nights. After your

maximum stay has been reached, you will have to leave the NHAL State Forest campgrounds for 7 days before you may return to camping.

Firewood

Firewood is sold at the following campgrounds: Crystal, Clear, Buffalo, North Trout, Sandy Beach, Big Lake, Upper Gresham, Starrett, Razorback and West Star. Firewood is also available from private vendors in the area. Firewood can be brought to the campgrounds if the wood is from within 10 miles.

Trailer dump station

Trailer dump stations are located at Clear Lake, Crystal Lake, and North Trout Lake campgrounds. The dump stations are for draining holding tanks and filling tanks at the freshwater fill-up tower. Non-campers will be charged a fee, in addition to having a valid WI state park vehicle admission pass, to use the dump stations. Campers may not drain dish wastewater or sewage onto the ground.

Lost and found

A lost and found service is

See **Guide**. . . page 17

Minocqua

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Help Wanted

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to work in Wisconsin's largest state forest?

Each year the NHAL State Forest hires approximately 25-35 LTEs (limited term employees) for a variety of seasonal jobs to help do everything it takes to make the forest a great place to visit. Without our LTE staff, it would be impossible for the forest to provide all the recreational opportunities that we have.

Many of these positions last from mid-April to mid-October, while others are for a shorter period, from Memorial Day to Labor Day. We have a range of positions from maintenance based to customer service based, and even a combination of both. We are always seeking candidates at all skill levels for our positions.

Recruiting for the season typically be-

gins in January/February of the year. Visit the DNR's website, dnr.wi.gov and enter "employment" into the search window.

Here is a brief description of the positions we offer:

Visitor Services Associate: Work in our Clear Lake or Crystal Lake Visitor Station greeting visitors, registering campers, selling admission stickers, and answering questions about the forest and general area.

Campground Attendant: Live and work in one of our outlying campgrounds, clean and maintain the campground, provide customer service, explain campground rules, and sell admission stickers.

Park Technician - Maintenance: We have a variety of maintenance positions that includes work in our campgrounds, trails, and boat landings.

• **Campground Crew:** maintain our largest and busiest campgrounds, cleaning shower buildings, vault toilet buildings, mowing, trimming, and performing a variety of other light maintenance duties.

• **Trails Crew:** work on the forest's vast trail system by keeping the trails mowed, cleared of downed trees and brush, and maintained.

• **Boat Landing Crew:** work to maintain the 100+ boat landings, seasonal dock installation/removal, general maintenance throughout the season, and maintenance of our boat-in campsites.

Dormitory style housing may be available for our seasonal staff. The housing is located within close proximity to the work locations of the positions.

If any of these positions interest you or if you would like more information about the positions please stop by or contact either Crystal Lake Visitor Station at 715-542-3923 or Clear Lake Visitor Station at 715-356-3668.

Guide

From page 16

maintained at the Crystal Lake and Clear Lake Visitor Stations. Found items may be turned in and lost items reported at the visitor stations. Please help us return items to their rightful owners.

Garbage pickup and recycling

Trash and recycling receptacles are located at each campground. Please cooperate by taking garbage and recycling to the dumpsters. Please leave your campsite cleaner than it was before you arrived. Trash should always be taken to the proper receptacles and should never be burned in your campfire ring.

Generator Use

Generators are allowed in the modern and rustic campground sites as long as the following rules are adhered to:

• Campers may operate their generators between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. and only when they are present on the site.

• Permission to operate may be revoked if generator is excessively noisy.

Generators are not allowed at Cunard Lake and Starrett Lake Campgrounds.

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Do you need a vehicle admission pass?

A vehicle admission pass is required on all motor vehicles parking (whether camping or just visiting) anywhere within the state forest campgrounds, in any beach area parking spot located within a state forest campground, or at the Crystal Lake beach and picnic area, shelter building or nature center.

Buy your pass when you get to the forest or in advance.

Passes can be purchased in multiple ways on the forest. Visitor services associates at the Clear Lake or Crystal Lake visitor station will be happy to sell you your admission pass.

Self-registration stations are available at the entrances to the Big Lake, East Star Lake, Buffalo Lake, West Star Lake, Cunard Lake, Starrett Lake, North Trout Lake, Upper Gresham Lake, Razorback Lake and Sandy Beach Lake campgrounds (note that self-registrations stations will be removed prior to the 2026 camping season, so plan accordingly beginning in 2026).

There is also an E-Kiosk located at Firefly Lake

campground near the entrance where you can purchase your passes. Online pass sales are available at <https://yourpassnow.com/ParkPass/wi>.

You can buy a 12-month pass for admission to all state parks and forests valid for 12 months from purchase, or a daily pass which is valid for the date of issue. Any camper using a state forest dump station must have a daily or annual vehicle admission pass (non-state forest campers must also pay an additional fee to use the dump station).

Beginning in 2025, 12-month passes are valid for 12 months from purchase.

If you have a motorcycle

The vehicle admission pass rule applies to motorcycles as well. If your motorcycle does not have an adequate windshield or the pass may damage the windshield, fasten the pass in one of these places:

- on the front fork;
- behind the license plate; or
- under the seat.

Replacement Passes

If you have a valid, current pass and you are trading in your car or replacing a windshield with a vehicle admission pass on it, you can get a replacement pass for your new windshield at no charge by following the steps below.

- Note the serial number of your existing pass.
- Scrape the old pass off your windshield (it will come off in pieces) to prove you have it. Make sure that the punched month can be identified when the pass is scraped off.*
- Bring the old pass with you to a state park system property office or;
- mail the old pass to Attn: Sticker Replacement; Devil's Lake State Park; S5975 Park Road; Baraboo, WI 53913.

* Please note: If the punched month is not clear, bring a valid proof of purchase (online or kiosk receipt) of the original pass with you to the property office, or include the proof of purchase when you mail in your old pass.

For more information on vehicle admission passes visit <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/parks/admission>.

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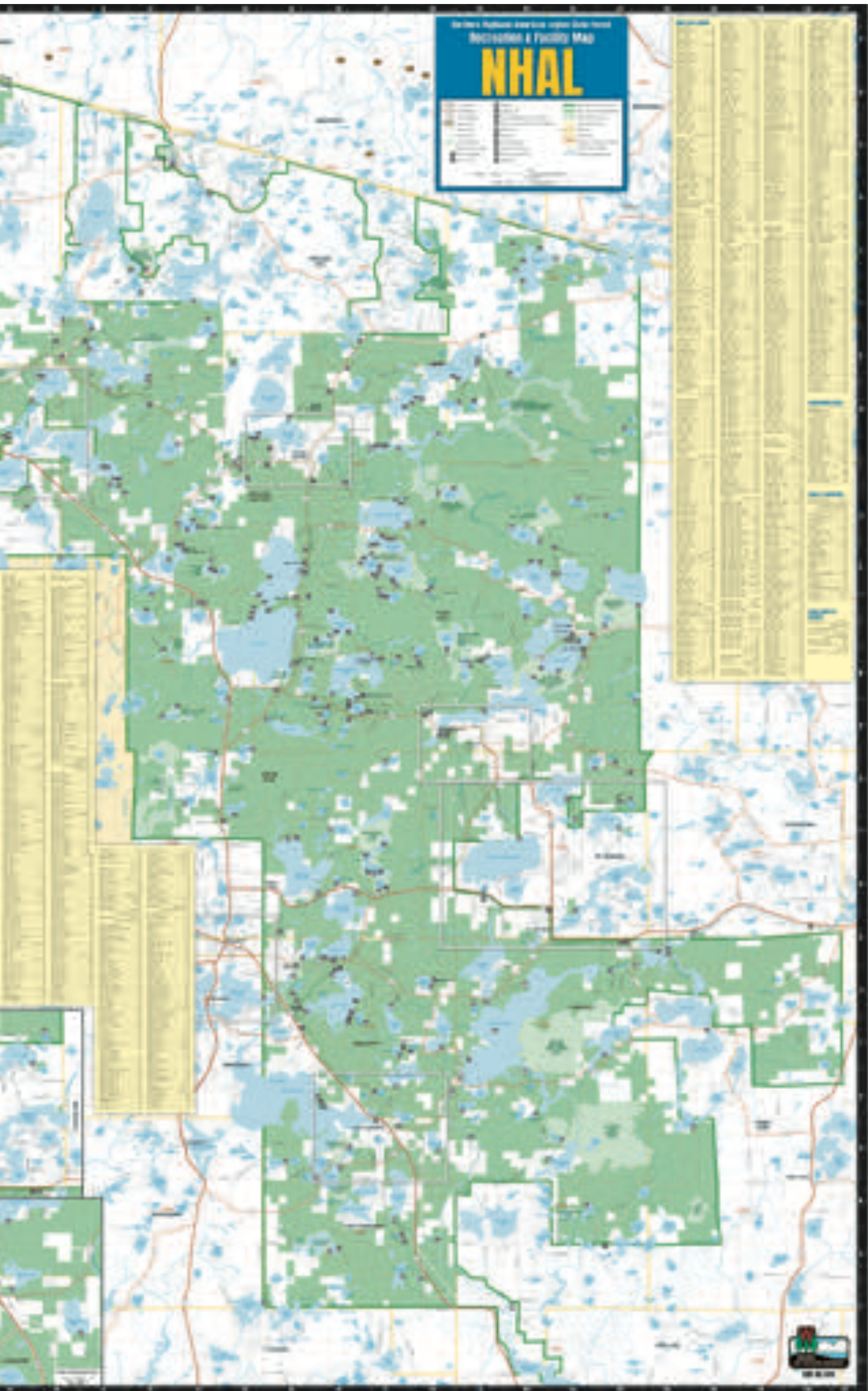
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Volunteers wanted



Nature Center

Seeking friendly, helpful volunteers to staff the Crystal Lake Nature Center.

Duties: Greet visitors and answer questions during open hours at the nature center. Natural resources background, knowledge of the local area, and/or interest in conducting drop-in programs for children all helpful, but not required.

Location: Nature Center at the Crystal Lake Day Use Area.

Commitment: The nature center is open from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend. Specific time commitment is flexible – stop by or call the Crystal Lake Visitor Station, 715-542-3923, for more information.

Campground Hosts

Calling for hospitable, energetic, knowledgeable campers to serve as volunteer campground hosts for the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest.

Duties: Provide visitor services by answering questions and giving out information, assist with firewood sales, and light maintenance

in campgrounds – some positions require staffing Crystal Lake Nature Center, some positions require daily cleaning of toilet buildings.

Location: Nine of the forest's campgrounds, ranging from the modern campgrounds where hosts have electric hook ups, to the some of the rustic campgrounds where there is no electricity in the campground (but generator use is allowed 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily or a solar unit is available).

Commitment: Approximately 5 weeks, 20-30 hours of work per week (a free campsite is provided).

For more information on volunteer opportunities stop by or call either Crystal Lake, 715-542-3923, or Clear Lake, 715-356-3668, Visitor Stations.

You can also find more information about volunteer opportunities at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/parks/volunteer>. Click the Volunteer Impact System link to find a list of opportunities for our property and statewide.

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Our concern — your safety

The safety of forest visitors is always a priority so please be careful and please impress safety precautions on your children. The following are some precautions to keep in mind.

Swimming — Swim safely. Swim at a designated beach where available; swimming at a boat landing is not recommended due to conflicts with boat traffic. None of the state forest beaches have lifeguards. Don't swim alone, at night, or in unfamiliar places. Use caution when wading in unknown waters, as water depth may change abruptly. Watch small chil-

dren closely near the water.

Boating/Canoeing — Every watercraft must carry a Coast Guard approved lifesaving device for each person aboard, and passengers should always wear lifejackets. This includes paddleboards! Don't overload your craft. When boating, be aware of your wake and stay well away from swimmers. Please do not power load boats, this will help keep the lake bottom in place and preserve our boat landings.

Hiking — Hike safely. Be aware that trails vary in difficulty. Not all trails are surfaced. There may

be steep climbs or descents or stairways. Watch small children closely. Trail surfaces can become slippery when wet, covered by leaves or pine needles, or where there is loose gravel.

Biking — For your protection, wear shoes, pant-leg clips and helmet when bicycling. Wear reflective clothing for bicycling at night. Always keep your bike under full control. Pull off the road or trail to view wildlife, flowers or scenic views. Be cautious in areas with loose gravel or sand, wet leaves, or other loose material. Always be alert to traffic. Park and forest roads follow the terrain and often have steep grades, sharp corners and intersections. Burrowing animals and tree roots may leave bumps and holes in the trail.

Skiing — Be aware that groomed trails cannot be groomed daily. The quality of groomed trails can vary depending on heavy use, weather and terrain. Skiers should not ski beyond their abilities or allow speed to build up beyond the skier's ability to control.

Insect Hazards — The state forest can be prone to high populations of mosquitos, ticks, biting flies, yellow jackets and other nuisance insects. To protect yourself, use insect repellent, wear long-sleeved shirts and pants, treat clothing and gear, and avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter. Be sure to check your clothing and yourself after being outdoors, and don't forget about your pet!

Plants — Never eat berries or plant parts unless you are certain of their identity.

Severe weather — The time to prepare for severe weather is before the storm hits. Please develop a plan with your family on what you will do if threatening weather approaches.

Questions to consider:

- What county and city are you visiting?
- Where will you go if threatening weather is approaching?
- How will you find out if a storm is moving toward your area?
- How will you receive warnings and forecasts before the storm strikes?

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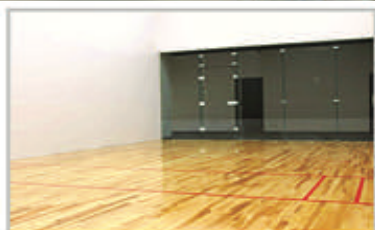
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North Lakeland Discovery Center

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In the heart of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, on the former site of the Statehouse Lake Youth Conservation Corps Camp lives a hands-on experiential learning center dedicated to enriching lives and inspiring an ethic of care for Wisconsin's Northwoods through the facilitation of connections among people, nature, and community: the North Lakeland Discovery Center.

In the fall of 1995, a small three-inch classified ad in the Lakeland Times caught the eye of several members of the local community, as well as staff at the North Lakeland Elementary School: For rent, former Youth Conservation Corps Camp at Statehouse Lake in Manitowish Waters. Contact WI-DNR. The school would use the site for its renown outdoor education program; local leaders envisioned a community-based nature center for both kids

and adults, which they promised the school would be self-supporting. The school put in a lease proposal which was accepted.

By 1998, the North Lakeland Discovery Center had 501©(3) non-profit status, its first executive director, a solid community membership base, and a variety of outdoor learning programs including Discovery Day, attended by hundreds.

Through the years, the staff, membership, volunteer base, and budget grew. The Discovery Center pioneered truly innovative programs like the Intercultural Leadership Initiative, Digital Time Traveler, a Woods and Waters pine marten research program for area kids, and the adult evening series Nibbles 'N Knowledge. Traveling Naturalist took the Discovery Center's show on the road and continues to do so today.

As aquatic and terrestrial invasive

See NLDC. . . page 25



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOGRAPH

North Lakeland Discovery Hall.

Woodruff

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NLDC

From page 24

species began to appear in area forests and lakes, the Discovery Center lent its expertise to local towns and lakes associations to educate citizens and secure grants to protect our woods and waters. Citizen science projects including bat monitoring and long-term lake level monitoring expanded with the help of a huge cadre of volunteers.

Summer interns have been critical in expanding the Dis-

covery Center's ability to manage its growing audience, and it has become known as one of the absolute best places in Wisconsin for a young person to gain hands-on experience with caring and professional mentors. This echoing of the YCC's life-changing effect on so many of its young campers is one of the Discovery Center's proudest achievements.

By 2015, the Wi-DNR granted the Discovery Center a permanent easement for its 63-acres within the

See **NLDC**. . . page 26



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOGRAPH

Woodruff

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NLDC

From page 25

NHAL, as long as the Discovery Center continues to provide low-cost nature-based outdoor education programs for the benefit of the public. This easement paved the way for the Discovery Center to achieve its long-time dream of becoming a truly year-round facility.

None of the original YCC buildings had been winterized. The Discovery Center undertook a \$4.5 million capital campaign to renovate and winterize the historic YCC Lodge,

insulate and install bathrooms in the residential cabins, and build a new addition with state-of-the-art interactive Nature Center and classrooms: Discovery Hall. The Lodge, addition, and landscape feature many sustainability components, including geothermal heating and cooling, rain gardens, and the Lodge's cork floor.

Locals and visitors alike have flocked to the new Nature Center, with its animal ambassadors, human-scale eagle's nest, crawl-through beaver lodge, and much more. In 2025, the Discovery Center is thriving, with a permanent staff of eleven plus seasonal staff offering

year-round programs for adults and kids, residential groups, and the public at large, as well as maintaining twelve miles of snowshoe, ski, hike, and bike trails through diverse natural habitats.

Never an organization to rest on its laurels, the Discovery Center has formed a strategic partnership with the Manitowish Waters Historical Society to renovate and transform a historic Civilian Conservation Corps barracks on its premises into the Northwoods Forest History Experience: More than a Museum. Six exhibits will showcase the stories,

See **NLDC**. . . page 27



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOGRAPH

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NLDC

From page 26

images, and artifacts of Northwoods forests: Indigenous Nations, Logging Era and Early Management, CCC, YCC, Forest Management Today, and a rotating exhibit beginning with Art of the NHAL. An outdoor activity area will allow visitors to use period-specific tools like crosscut saws and fire suppression equipment. Equally important will be to encourage visitors to Get Out and Explore the plethora of local historical sites, using Clio, a geo-based application that will provide both directions and an abundance of information.

By preserving both the building and the stories of historical uses of the forests, by informing the public of how forestry practices have sculpted and continue to shape this precious resource, and by integrating the museum experience with both on-site activities and real-world historical sites, the NFHE will create better informed stewards for future generations. The NFHE plans to open its doors in 2026.

In all its efforts, the Discovery Center seeks to be a strong community voice for preserving and celebrating the extraordinary natural world of the Northwoods and connecting people of all ages to nature with hands-on experiences, leading ultimately to greater health in both our environment and populace.

For more information or to become a Discovery Center member, please see <https://discoverycenter.net/>.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOGRAPH

Kids working with the NLDC Naturalist.

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Swimmer's itch

Swimmer's itch, also called cercarial dermatitis, is caused by an allergic reaction to the larvae of certain flatworms that infect some birds and mammals.

Before infecting birds and animals, the hatched parasites must live within a snail. Infected snails release these parasites into the waters of our lakes. The microscopic parasites preferred hosts are specific birds or mammals, most notably waterfowl in our forest lakes.

The larva is always looking for new hosts to penetrate, which is where humans come into play. Humans are not suitable hosts

for the parasite, so they die shortly after burrowing into the skin, but the burrowing in the skin is where the issues can start.

Swimmer's itch appears as a rash, but other symptoms include tingling, fever or itching of the skin. While swimmer's itch is neither dangerous nor contagious, it can be very uncomfortable depending on a person's sensitivity. Most symptoms will be gone within a week, but redness may last longer.

Most cases of swimmer's itch do not require medical attention and many people use items such as a corticosteroid cream, cool compress,

or Epsom salt bath to try and provide some relief from a rash.

Although we don't typically hear of many cases, swimmer's itch could potentially be obtained from swimming in any lake on the forest. There doesn't seem to be any special characteristics of lakes where swimmer's itch is present, as it all kind of depends on the waterfowl and snails in the area.

If swimmer's itch is present at a lake one weekend that doesn't necessarily mean it will be present the next time you are there. It is common for lakes to have occasional breakouts depending on environmental factors, and we can see minor to severe breakouts at varying times and varying lakes.

Swimmer's itch is ever changing from year to year and lake to lake and sometimes may be hard to get an understanding. Since swimmer's itch is hard to predict, it is best to make yourself aware of steps you can take to prevent swimmer's itch.

It is best to avoid swimming in weedy areas and avoid sitting or standing still in shallow water. If you are in deeper water and keep moving in the water, you will be less likely to encounter larvae.

Waterproof sunscreens are a good option to help prevent the larva from burrowing in the skin as the sunscreen will create a barrier.

Once you are done swimming or even if you just

leave the water for a little while it is very important to towel off briskly to crush the larva. Additionally, it is a good idea to shower shortly after leaving the water.

While we would consider the larva that cause swimmer's itch to be pests, they are a sign of a healthy and diverse environment. We should think about swimmer's itch in the same regard as ticks, mosquitoes and deer flies in that there is nothing we can do to eliminate them, but we can take steps to reduce our exposure to them.

As you are visiting different forest lakes, you should be aware of swimmer's itch and if you take preventative steps it should not discourage you from enjoying a fun outdoor activity.

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2024 NHAL camping by the numbers

2024 facts and figures

The following are some interesting statistics about camping on the NHAL in 2024.

Total number of campsite nights on the forest for 2024 was 60,227 (one campsite night = one campsite occupied for one night). That was down 1.9% from 2023, and the third highest annual total in our records that go back to 2001 – 2021 and 2023 were higher. This continues to far surpass our pre-COVID camping totals of approximately 45,000-50,000 campsite nights per year.

The busiest month was July with 18,412 campsite nights. The least busy month was January with 11 campsite nights. The busiest night of the year on the forest was Friday, July 5 with 828 campsites booked. The average length of camping stay on the forest for the year was 3.68 nights.

In 2024 campers came to NHAL from 43 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and four other countries. The U.S. states not represented were Arkansas, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island and Vermont. The top states NHAL campers were from and percentage of all NHAL campers they represent were: Wisconsin (89.1%), Illinois (4.8%) and Minnesota (2.2%). Other countries represented were Canada, Germany, Ireland and Netherlands.

Although wheeled camping units are very popular, NHAL still sees a lot of tent campers. 51.3% of NHAL campers reported using some type of wheeled camping unit, while 48.7% reported tent camping.

The busiest campgrounds on the forest in 2024, measured by percent occupancy for June-August, were:

1. West Star Lake – 80.2% occupancy
2. Tie: Crystal Lake – 75.8% occupancy. Firefly Lake – 75.8% occupancy

The least busy campgrounds on the forest for the year by the same measure were:

1. Big Lake – 33.5% occupancy
2. Cunard Lake – 35.5% occupancy
3. Sandy Beach Lake – 37.6% occupancy

The biggest changes in use for campgrounds on a year-to-year basis (2023 to 2024) were:

- Increase: Carrol Lake +5.8%
- Decrease: Cunard Lake -15.4%

For the year there were 178 campsites on the forest that were booked 100 or more nights. Those 178 are included in the 608 campsites on the forest that were booked 50 or more nights.

The 5 most used campsites on the forest and nights booked in 2024 were:

1. Clear Lake Site 711 – 175 nights.
2. North Trout Lake Site 1412 – 163 nights.
3. TIE: Crystal Lake Site 482 – 162 nights, Firefly Lake Site 207 – 162 nights.
5. Razorback Lake Site 2143 – 159 nights.

The least used campsites for the year were:

1. TIE: Buffalo Lake Site 2050, Razorback Lake Site 2132.
3. TIE: Big Lake Site 1810, Big Lake Site 1868.
5. TIE: Razorback Lake Site 2111, Starrett Lake Site 1303, Starrett Lake Site 1319, Starrett Lake Site 1335.

The 3 most used reservable boat-in campsites on the forest and nights booked in 2024 were:

1. Nebish Lake Site 631 – 82 nights.
2. Bittersweet Wild Lakes Site 653 (Bittersweet Lake, Trapper's Cabin) – 78 nights
3. Bittersweet Wild Lakes Site 652 (Bittersweet Lake, Big Rock) – 77 nights.

The 3 least used reservable boat-in campsites for the year were:

1. Day Lake Site 621.
2. Clear Lake Site 643.
3. Allequash Lake Site 611.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOGRAPH

Upper Michigan

Hazelhurst



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Carrol Lake	Nebish Boat-in
Crystal Lake	Bittersweet Boat-in
Clear Lake	Allequash Boat-in
Firefly Lake	Day Lake Boat-in
Indian Mounds	Clear Boat-in
Musky Lake	

Wisconsin Resident Weekday: \$19.00 per night
Wisconsin Resident Weekend: \$20.00 per night
Nonresident Weekday: \$34.00 per night
Nonresident Weekend: \$35.00 per night

Big Lake	East Star Lake
Buffalo Lake	West Star Lake
Cunard Lake	Starrett Lake
North Trout Lake	Upper Gresham Lake
Razorback Lake	Sandy Beach Lake
Plum Lake	South Trout Lake

Group Campgrounds

Jag and Musky Group

Number of people: 1-80

Nightly rate: \$170

Weekends are defined as Friday and Saturday nights, with the exception of holiday weekends (Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights).

NHAL Legacy Leaves



Are you interested in donating to the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest in honor or in memory of someone? In 2023 we began a new donation recognition program here on the state forest in the form of a 'Donation Tree' known as 'NHAL Legacy Leaves'. This tree was installed on the exterior wall of the Crystal Lake Nature Center facing the parking lot and the 'leaves' of the tree contain names of those for whom donations have been made. The tree is shown in the included photo.



A leaf on the tree can be secured for a donation of \$750. Donations will be used to enhance recreational offerings on the state forest. We add names to the tree 1-2 times per year, depending on volume of donations. All donations are greatly appreciated and will help maintain and improve recreation on the NHAL State Forest for current and future generations.

For additional details regarding the NHAL State Forest donation program please ask at our Clear Lake or Crystal Lake Visitor Stations or contact:

Joe Fieweger
 Recreation Superintendent
 joseph.fieweger@wisconsin.gov
 715-385-3355 ext. 119

Nikki Kloes
 Deputy Recreation
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 nicole.kloes@wisconsin.gov
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MANAGEMENT

A milestone: 1925 - 2025



PHOTO CREDIT BRYCE RICHTER

Trout Lake LTER Base Crew.

TROUT LAKE STATION CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF BUILDING CAREERS AND COMMUNITY IN THE NORTHWOODS

Adam Hinterthuer
OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, UW MADISON CENTER FOR LIMNOLOGY

When Chancey Juday and E.A. Birge first began research on northern Wisconsin lakes in 1925,

they couldn't have known that their decision to base their efforts at Trout Lake would create the legacy that it did.

But, in early summer 2024, more than 120 Trout Lake Station (TLS) alumni gath-

ered in the Boulder Junction Community Center to celebrate a century of limnology in the Northwoods.

"Trout Lake was an amazing experience and completely determined the course of my profes-

sional career," said John Lyons, who worked at the station from 1980 to 1984 before going on to a career as one of the state's leading fish experts and a supervisory fisheries biologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Lyon's sentiment was shared by attendees young and old as people spent the celebration reminiscing about their time "On Station."

The seeds of the celebration were planted in 1925, when the two zoology professors headed north from the University of Wisconsin-Madi-

See Celebrate... page 33

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Celebrate

From page 31

son with an ambitious plan to survey 500 lakes in and around Vilas County. Their destination was Trout Lake, part of the ceded territory of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians who, for hundreds of years, have built a deep knowledge about the two basins of this clear, cold, deep lake.

Birge and Juday would end up forging their own relationship with Trout Lake, one that would help them develop what was then a new scientific field called "limnology" - the study of inland waters like lakes, rivers and wetlands.

Trout Lake Station was established as a central location to help scientists study the diversity of lakes in northern Wisconsin. Today, Trout Lake Station is a thriving, year-round field station. While scientists and their students still migrate up from Madison each summer, another team of researchers



PHOTO CREDIT TIM ASPILLUND

100th anniversary participants on the shores of Trout Lake.

lives full-time in the surrounding community and conducts research on northern Wisconsin lakes all year long.

In addition to maintaining its 44 years of

See **Celebrate**. . . page 34

Tomahawk



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Celebrate

From page 33

continued sampling on seven lakes in the region through the North Temperate Lakes Long Term Ecological Research program, current research initiatives and partnerships are growing our knowledge across many areas. Projects focus on regionally important waters and taxa and include; evaluating shoreline habitats and aquatic plants, such as wild rice and Eurasian watermilfoil; preserving walleye and cisco populations in the face of invasive species and climate change; and increasing access to remote and high frequency water quality monitoring capabilities.

Students on these projects join the generations of "Trout Lakers" – as folks who have spent a summer on station are affectionately called – and now share a bond that

See **Celebrate**. . .
page 35



PHOTO CREDIT BRYCE RICHTER
Trout Lake Surveying aquatic plants



PHOTO CREDIT MADDIE GAMBLE
Trout Lake Wild Rice Crew 2023

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Celebrate

From page 34

was initially forged back in the 1920's.

No matter what decade they have been "on Station," they share similar memories of a summer field season – baking in the hot sun in aluminum boats, swatting at mosquitoes, braving rain and winds to collect data, squinting into microscopes to identify plankton, and spending downtime with chilly lake swims, intense after-work volleyball games and evening campfires on the shores of Trout Lake.

And, like most visitors to Wisconsin's lake-rich landscape, the scientists, staff and students who have worked at Trout Lake Station come away changed by the experience - connected to what humans have known for centuries is a truly remarkable place in the world.



Trout Lake Limno sampling

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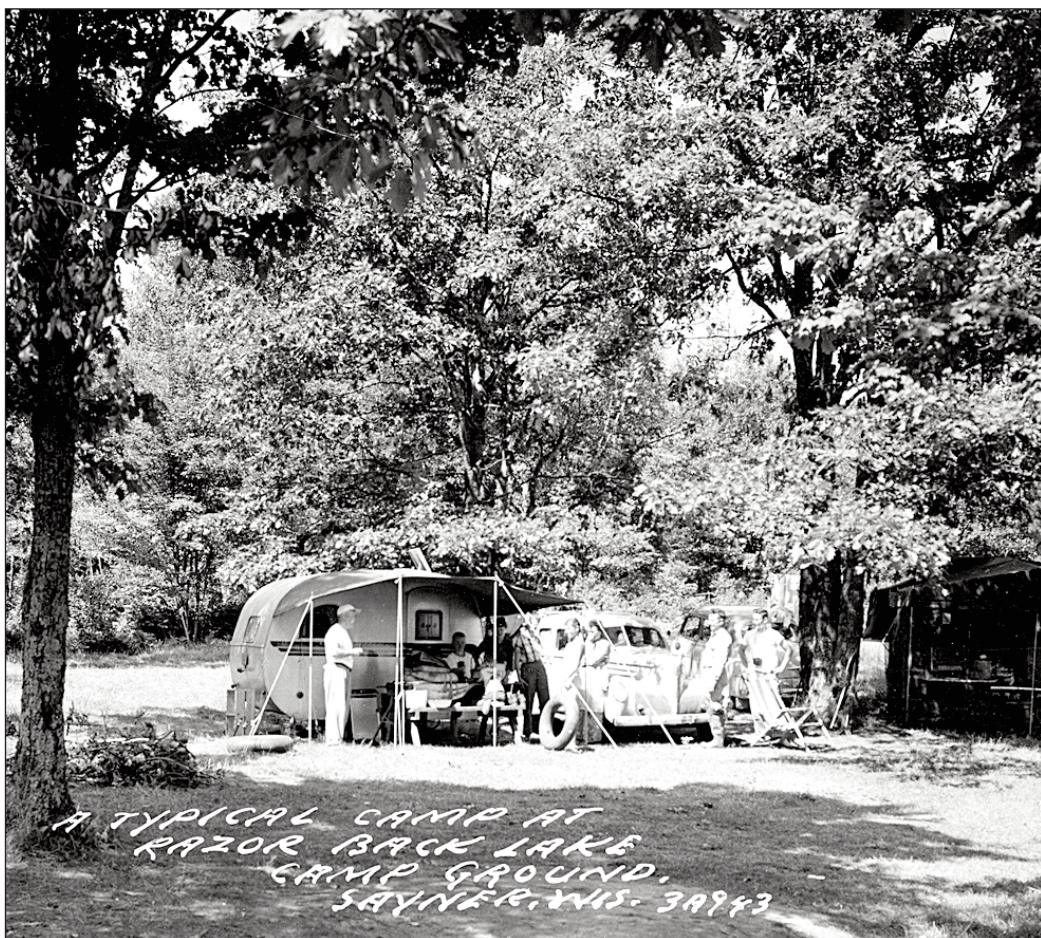


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BINGO

Build A Campfire (And Completely Extinguish It When You're Done)	Watch (And Try To Identify) A Bird	Visit The Landmark Pine Sign On County Highway M (South Of County N)	Visit A Beach	Go Fishing
Watch (And Try To Identify) A Mammal	Take A Scenic Selfie	Go Star Gazing	Find A Boot Brush Station And Learn About Invasive Species	Go Hiking Or Biking On A Trail
Watch The Sunset	Take A Tour Of The Art Oehmcke Fish Hatchery	Enjoy Your Time At The NHAL!	Visit The Crystal Lake Nature Center	Watch (And Try To Identify) A Fish, Amphibian Or Reptile
Wade In The Water	Take A Paddle In A Boat, Canoe Or Kayak	Watch The Sunrise	Watch (And Try To Identify) A Butterfly, Moth Or Other Insect	Stop By Trout Lake Headquarters And Learn About NHAL History
Have A Picnic	Visit A State Natural Area	Do A Tick Check	Identify A Tree	Take A Second To Be Still And Enjoy The Natural Beauty Of The State Forest

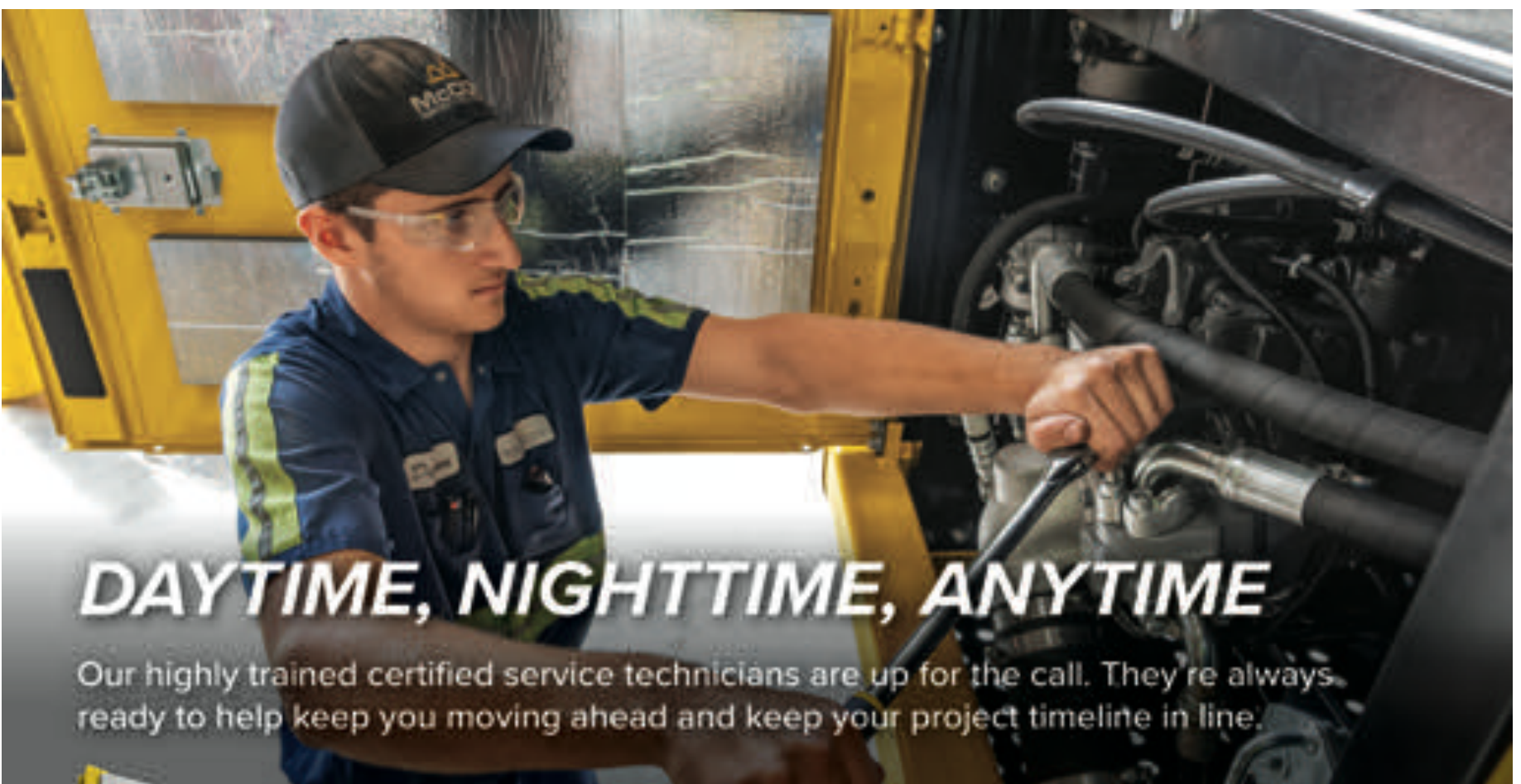
How many activities can you complete? The more the better! Complete in a straight or diagonal line, or 4 corners (and center). All participants are encouraged to complete the center square!

BINGO CARD INSTRUCTIONS

- ★ Complete 5 in a row, straight or diagonal. Or complete 4 corners and the center.
 - ★ First 100 participants to turn in a completed bingo card will get a first aid kit and a sticker. (One kit per family/group.)
 - ★ All participants will get a free centennial water bottle sticker (while supplies last)!
 - ★ To claim your prize, turn in your completed bingo card at Clear Lake Entrance Station, Crystal Lake Entrance Station, or the Woodruff DNR Service Center. Please check our website for location hours.
- ➔ **Clear Lake:** 8139-8295 Woodruff Rd, Woodruff, WI 54568
 - ➔ **Crystal Lake:** 3237 County Rd. N, Crystal Lake Rd, Boulder Junction, WI 545121
 - ➔ **Woodruff Service Center:** 8770 County J, Woodruff, WI 54568



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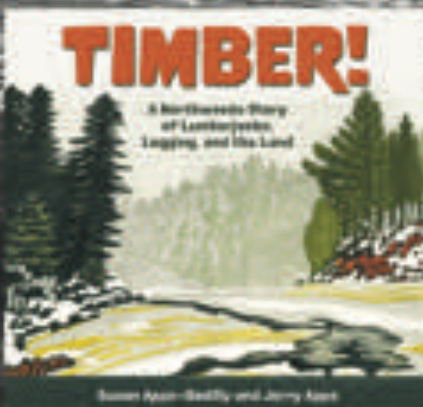
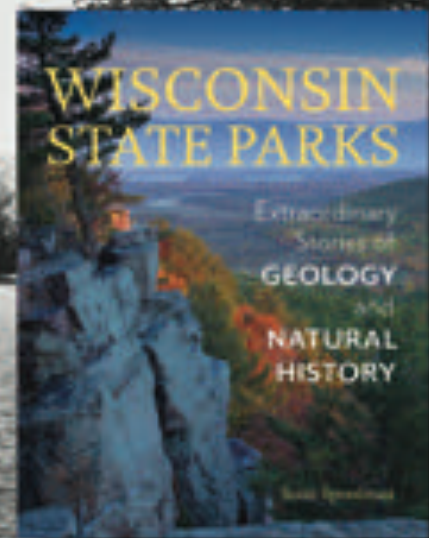
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