

# Minnesota State Parks and Trails

Portals to health and  
happiness



# Introductions

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- Double UMN alumna
- 10 years at the DNR
- Camper, hiker, nature lover
- Reader of novels
- Aspiring baker and gardener





## What does my job entail?

- Coordinating Parks & Trails Division volunteers (camp hosts!)
- Working with Friends groups
- External partnerships, including work with public libraries, healthcare organizations, and other groups
- Outreach to bring more diverse audiences into the outdoors
- Improving governmental partnership processes



# Today's presentation

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1. Share the health and well-being benefits of nature
2. Overview of MN State Parks and Trails
3. Highly recommended activities
4. Q&A



## Nature and Our Health

“A considerable body of evidence shows that spending time in and engaging with nature can improve human health and wellbeing.”



# Exposure to forests and trees:

- Boosts the immune system
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces stress
- Improves mood
- Increases ability to focus, even in children with ADHD
- Accelerates recovery from surgery or illness
- Increases energy level
- Improves sleep





Photo: Oregon Metro Parks



A photograph of a light-colored dog, possibly a Golden Retriever, swimming in a body of water. The dog's head is above the surface, and its reflection is visible in the water. The background is a blurred green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

# COVID-19 and the Outdoors

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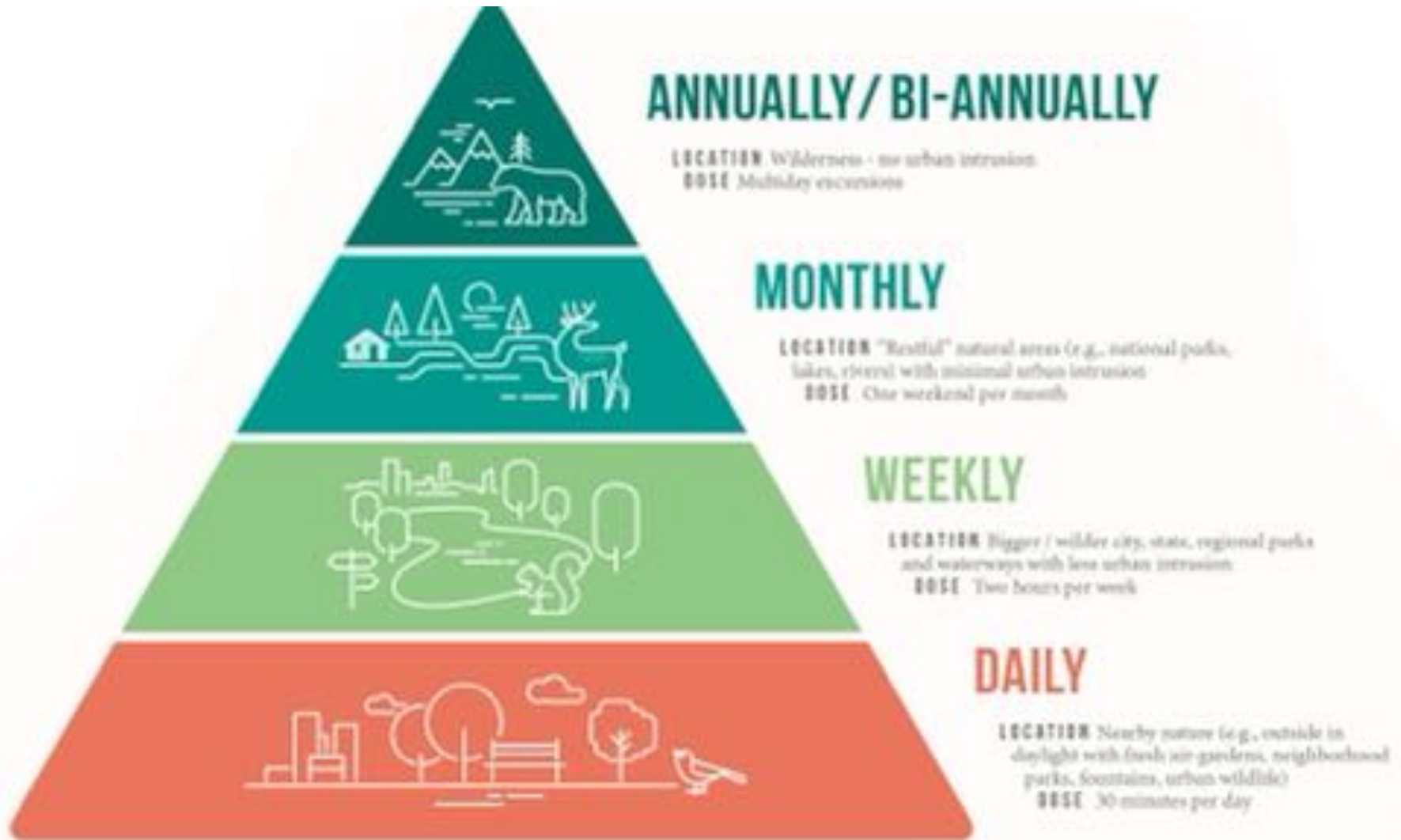
1. People spent more time in nature and **visited nature more during the pandemic.**
2. People generally visited nature for health and wellbeing benefit and **felt that nature helped them cope during the pandemic.**
3. Greater **land-cover greenness** within 250m radius around a respondent's zip code was **important in predicting higher levels of mental wellbeing.**

HEALTH & WELLNESS

# For Better Health During the Pandemic, Is Two Hours Outdoors the New 10,000 Steps?

The physical and mental damage inflicted by Covid has doctors, researchers and others racing to tap into nature's therapeutic effects

# 120 min/week (White et al., 2019)





Visit Minnesota State Parks and Trails!



# 75 State Parks and Recreation Areas





# 25 State Trails



# MINNESOTA STATE TRAILS

Click on a name for more information





# 35 State Water Trails



# Map of Minnesota state water trails





For Anyone Who Likes A Challenge





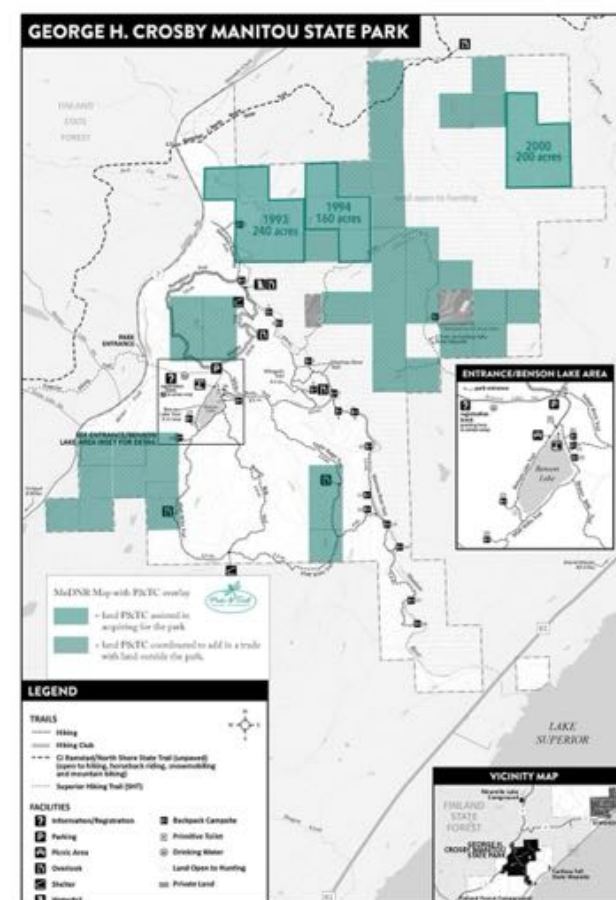
**68 trails statewide** (*\$14.95 at any state park nature store*)

- Choose your hike, follow the trail
- Find the password
- Update your log
- Get your rewards



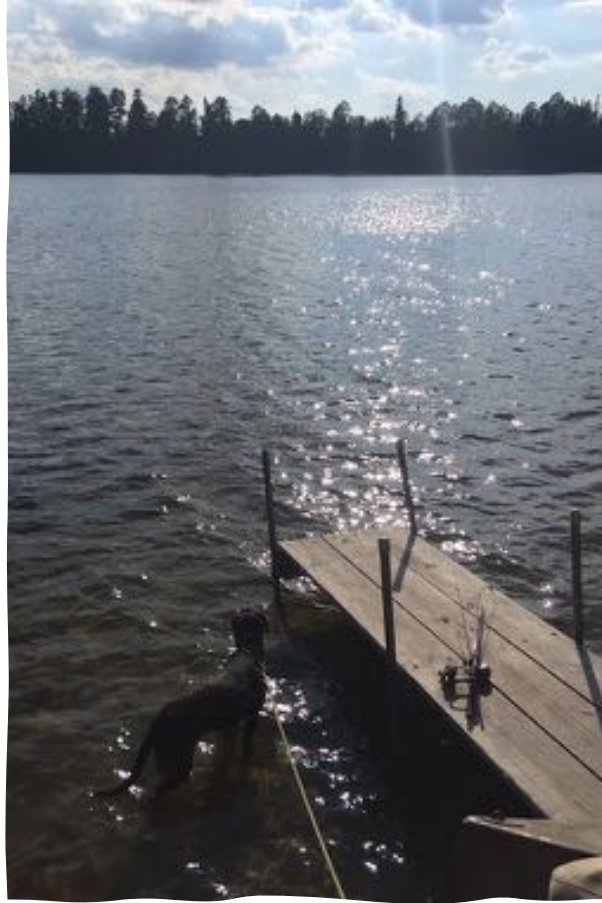
Visit each MN state park and rec area for a passport stamp!  
(*\$14.95 at any state park nature store*)

1. Pick a park
2. Get the stamp
3. Use your travel log
4. Get your rewards



Backpack camping  
at George H.  
Crosby Manitou  
State Park

Come to this north-country wilderness park where waterfalls cascade through a volcanic canyon surrounded by majestic forest.



## Canoe Camp at Scenic State Park

**With its pristine lakes,** virgin pines, swimming beach, and wilderness-like setting, Scenic State Park is well deserving of its name.

# Bike for miles on the Paul Bunyan State Trail

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The Paul Bunyan State Trail is 115 miles long, not including a couple of short on-road connections through the cities of Baxter and Bemidji. Extending all the the way from [Crow Wing State Park](#) to [Lake Bemidji State Park](#), it is the longest of Minnesota's state trails and the longest continuously paved rail-trail in the country.







For the family

Photo credit: AARP

# ParkFinder

## Find your perfect Minnesota state park adventure



[Purchase a park permit today](#) and get a year of unlimited visits to all of Minnesota's state parks and recreation areas.

### Make your selections:

Lodging ▼

- Camper cabin
- Accessible camper cabin
- Guesthouse or other cabin
- Group center
- Yurt
- Accessible yurt
- Tipi or wall tent

start over

### Your results:

View as: Map |

Click a dot for more information about that park. Use the [glossary](#) for recreation information.



Find your perfect adventure

[Mndnr.gov/parkfinder](http://Mndnr.gov/parkfinder)



Interpretive programs

# Minnesota State Parks and Trails Events Calendar

Find a fun activity at a park near you!



If you need an accommodation, please call or email the event contact at least two weeks prior to the event.



Showing 12 matching events on May 21, 2022.



[Beauty in the Little Things: A Nature/Art Practice](#)

**Interstate State Park**

May 21, 2022

10 a.m. to 12 p.m.



[Guided Glacial Potholes Tour](#)

**Interstate State Park**

May 21, 2022

2 p.m. to 3 p.m.



[Animal Mystery](#)

**Big Bog State Recreation Area**

May 21, 2022

10 a.m. to 11 a.m.



[Lore of the Loon](#)

**Mille Lacs Kathio State Park**

May 21, 2022

## Search

## Location





*I can*  
**CAMP!**

*I can*  
**PADDLE!**

*I can*  
**FISH!**

*I can*  
**MOUNTAIN  
BIKE!**

**ARCHERY**

## Outdoor skill programs for beginners

The **I Can!** programs from Minnesota State Parks and Trails will take you and the kids from "I've never done that" to "Wow, that was a blast!"

- Designed for families to try any or all for the first time.
- Hands-on instruction from experienced and friendly crews.
- Gear provided.
- Free to unbelievably affordable. (\$60 one night I can camp!)

# Cabins at Whitewater State Park

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- Swimming beach
- Interactive visitor center exhibit
- Naturalist programs
- Camper cabins
- Picnic area
- Fishing piers
- Not too many bugs!



## Nature Play Area at Nerstrand Big Woods State Park

Nature play is a critical part of human development. Playing in trees, forests, and with nature provides a safe space to assess physical risk, an environment to nurture good mental health, and promotes overall good physical health through activity.



# Swim at Flandrau State Park

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- Unique natural swimming pond near New Ulm
- Opens early June
- More developed experience
- Lifeguards on duty

(Bear Head Lake, Itasca,  
McCarthy Beach are other  
renowned swimming sites)





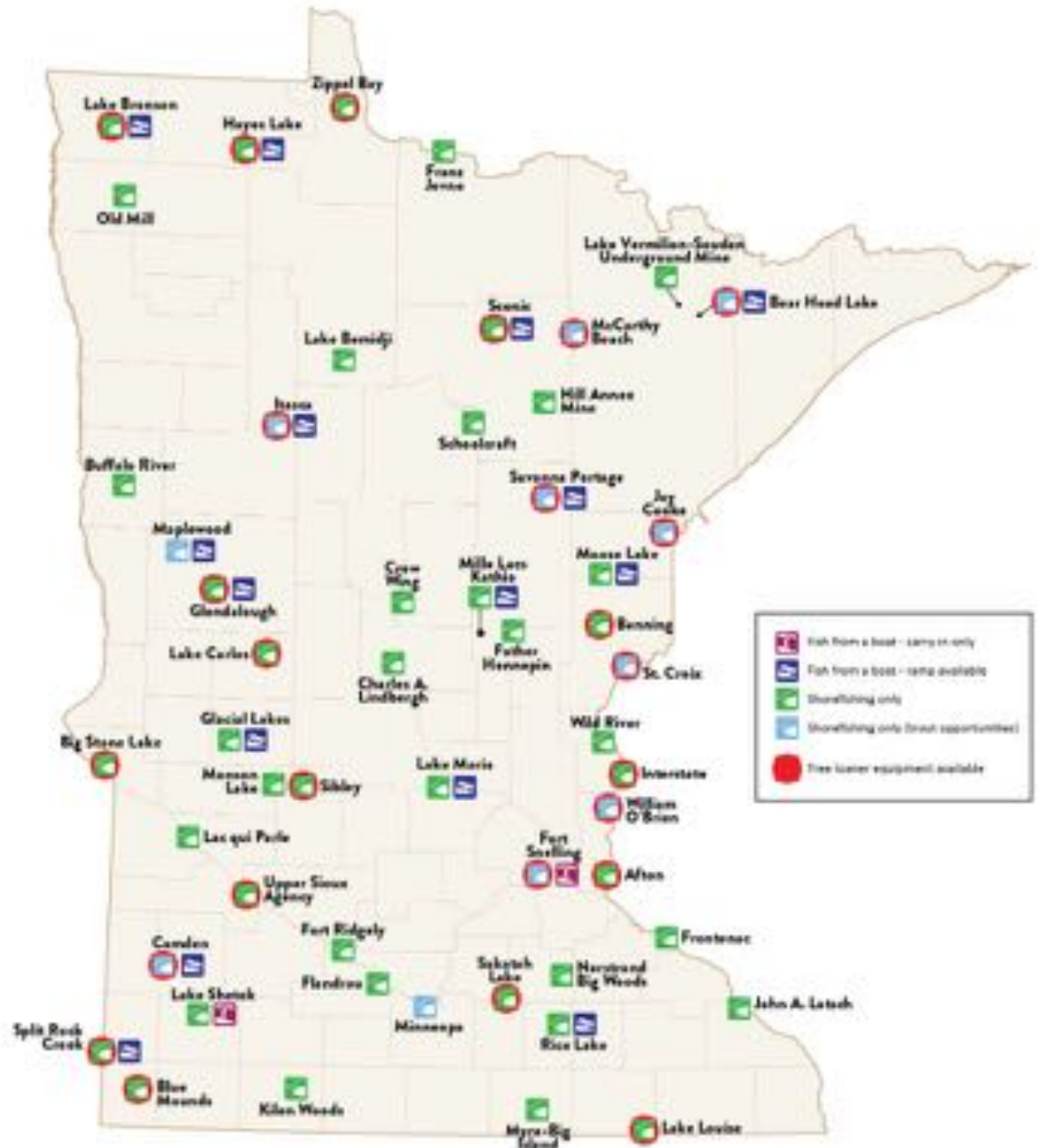
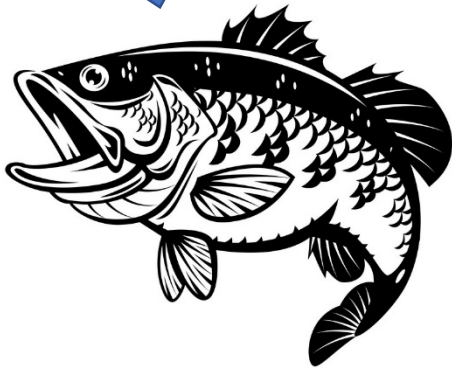
# Kid-friendly hikes (1 mile and under)

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1. Upper Bluffs Trail, Frontenac State Park
2. Big Bog Boardwalk, Big Bog State Recreation Area
3. Loon Island Trail, Lake Shetek State Park
4. Minneopa Falls Trail, Minneopa State Park
5. Big Spring Falls, Banning State Park



Fish without a license at most state parks



*At parks with trout fishing opportunities, a trout stamp must be purchased before fishing.*



## Additional loaner equipment

- GPS units
- Kids Discovery kits
- Fishing kits
- Birding kits

Available at many state parks, check the website first.

# Recommended Reading

- **Outside Kids in an Inside World** by Steven Rinella
- **There's No Such Thing as Bad Weather** by Linda Akeson McGurk
- **Vitamin N** by Richard Louv
- **Last Child in the Woods** by Richard Louv
- **The Nature Fix** by Florence Williams
- **Braiding Sweetgrass** by Robin Wall Kimmerer





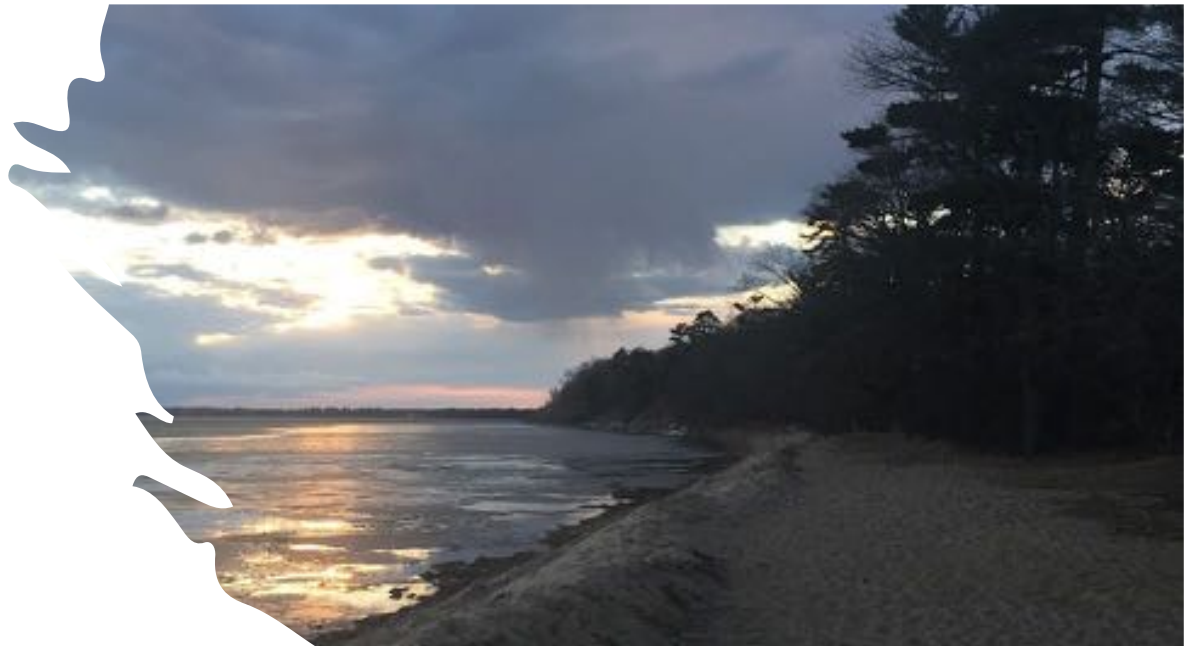
## Places for Solitude

- Carley State Park
- Kilen Woods State Park
- Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area
- Schoolcraft State Park



# ADA Accessible Camping at Lake Bemidji State Park


- 2 miles of wheelchair accessible trails at Lake Bemidji
- Nearby paved-multiuse accessible Paul Bunyan State Trail
- Naturalist programs
- Not too far from other attractions in Bemidji





## Highlighted Accessible State Trails

- Douglas State Trail
- Root River State Trail
- Willard Munger State Trail



# Try a new all-terrain wheelchair for free!

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Available at Camden, Crow  
Wing, Maplewood, and Myre-  
Big Island State Parks





# Volunteer Opportunities

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- Campground host
- Volunteer rainfall monitors
- Volunteer safety instructors (firearms, bow, ATV, snowmobile)
- Zebra mussel monitoring program
- State natural area volunteers
- Loon monitoring





## Camp Host

- Host for 4 weeks or more between April and October
- Be the “eyes and ears” of the campgrounds, help visitors and campers, keep the place neat and tidy
- Other opportunities based on interest, skill
- Application and training required

# Join a Friends Group

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- Volunteer at a specific park or trail on a regular basis
- Help make changes and improvements at a specific site
- Build relationships with regular visitors and DNR staff
- Parks and Trails Council of MN for listing of groups



Photo credit: Parks & Trails Council of MN



# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

## Minnesota Master Naturalists

The mission of the Minnesota Master Naturalist Program is to promote awareness, understanding, and stewardship of Minnesota's natural environment by developing a corps of well-informed citizens dedicated to conservation education and service within their communities.

# Necessary Details

## **Park fees**

- \$7/day or \$35 annual
- Camping reservations online, on the phone (no first-come, first-served)
- I can! program registration
- Free options on certain days, at libraries

## **Trail fees**

- Purchase is required for cross-country ski passes, horse pass
- Motorized vehicle and some watercraft registration required



# Questions and Comments