

# Visitor's Guide 2022

**FREE**  
Please  
take one!

## Welcome!

**T**here's a place "up north" that's home to more than 930 lakes and the headwaters of the Wisconsin, Flambeau, Manitowish, and Tomahawk rivers. It was sculpted by glaciers and grew massive timber that built the Midwest. In 1925, Wisconsin's legislature could see its importance to the future and set it aside as the American Legion State Forest (in Oneida County) and the Northern Highland State Forest (in Vilas and Iron Counties). Today visitors return each year for the rich outdoor recreation opportunities provided on what is now called the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, or NHAL for short.

BY CRAIG DALTON | NHAL SF PROPERTY MANAGER

The beginnings of Wisconsin Forestry are rooted on the NHAL. The first State Forestry Headquarters was officed on the property along with the first tree nursery in the state. In addition, the first ever documented aerial detection flight for wildfires was performed by Jack Vilas from a float plane based at Trout Lake. For a more in-depth discussion of Forestry history in Wisconsin please see forest historian Jim Bokern's article on *Wisconsin's Early Forest Rangers* on our property web page. New this year is the opening of the Camp Mercer Historical Interpretive Trail. Camp Mercer was a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) facility which operated on the property between 1933 and the start of World War II. Over 20 interpretive signs discuss Camp happenings throughout the area. A separate article about the trail is enclosed.

Across its 236,282 acres the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides lakes, rivers, and trails for exploration. In fact, there are over 930 lakes and many miles of streams within the forest boundary. Loggers were the first trail builders, and hikers, hunters and others still benefit from the woods roads and railroad grades they left behind.

Today, the forest is managed to balance economic, ecologic, and social values. This means that the forest is actively managed to provide forest products and a healthy, vigorous forest that provides other benefits like wildlife habitat, clean water,

clean air, aesthetics, and wild areas. The NHAL is the largest State Forest in Wisconsin managed by the DNR Division of Forestry. As a State Forest we are mandated to provide timber to the forest products industry in a sustainable manner. The forestry staff is tasked with coordinating management activities throughout the entire property while still being able to offer the full gamut of high-quality recreational opportunities. This balanced approach produces enough timber to build 3,500 houses a year while continually growing our forest and meeting our social and recreational needs.

Generations ago people started camping here at places like Clear Lake, Crystal Lake, Little John Lake, Carrol Lake, Sweeney Lake and many more. In the 1960s, funded by a tax on cigarettes, the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan built campgrounds, boat landings, trails, and picnic areas in the forest. Along the way some of the early campgrounds faded away and now there are 18 family campgrounds with a total of 856 campsites and two group campgrounds.

In 2022 look for all family campgrounds on the property to accept reservations. In addition, there are 17 remote campsites that can be reserved. The property offers nearly 100 canoe campsites, accessible only by water and located to accommodate trips from lake to lake or downriver. Those campers may stay one night at no fee and move to an-

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