

WILD FOR WISCONSIN WILDERNESS

Black River State Forest offers over 69,000 acres of recreational opportunity



Castle Mound is a great starting point for first-time visitors to the Black River State Forest.

“You don’t have to travel north to experience the wildest parts of Wisconsin,” says Peter Bakken of the Black River State Forest. “With just under 70,000 acres of state forest surrounded by over 200,000 acres of the Jackson and Clark County Forests and the Fort McCoy military base below us, this area has one of the lowest road, housing, and population densities in the state,” he says.

Peter has been involved with the Black River State Forest for 15-plus years, gaining experience in both the forestry and recreational aspects of the forest for 11.5 years before these roles were split into two positions. He currently serves as parks and recreation superintendent. “Forestry and recreation are two of the largest economic drivers in Wisconsin, and we have both right here,” says Peter.

The Black River State Forest, a working forest with timber sales each year, is 18 miles long running north and south from the bottom to top, and it is six miles across. Two hundred of these acres are located in Clark County. The forest is one of the largest state-owned properties in Wisconsin. “We’re so much larger than a state park, so we have something to offer everyone,” says Peter. “I call it dispersed recreation because you’re not concentrated to one area. We have opportunities for ATVing, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, camping, hunting, bird watching, canoeing, kayaking, and day use areas.”

Introduction to the Forest If you’ve never visited any part of the forest, Peter recommends Castle Mound as your starting point. The popular two-mile nature trail at this site is marked with interpretative signs. There’s a spur off the

trail that leads up to an old observation area where you can climb up to a rock area. “I recommend going up there for the view,” says Peter. “It’s a good starting spot if you live in the area.”

Another rich system of trails with a scenic reward lies in the Overmeyer Hills, several loops that join the Wildcat and Smrekar trails. This 24-mile multi-use trail system can be accessed from the parking lots located on North Settlement Road and Smrekar Road. During the spring and fall, you may find backpack campers hiking these trails and sleeping under the stars, as long as they are 100 feet off the trail. “Some cross-country skiers consider these some of the best trails in the state,” Peter says.

Not the hiking type? Another way to introduce yourself to the forest is through a visual tour down North Settlement Road. This route, with a Rustic Road designation, connects County Road O with State Highway 54. You’ll experience where some of the forest’s 34 miles of ATV trails are located, drive past Pigeon Creek, continue north to the Wildcat parking lot, and end with a more heavily forested area. The northern part of the forest is also home to Dike 17, a 5,000-acre part of the forest with several dikes and flowages. “In the 1930s, a series of manmade dikes were created under the Work Progress Administration to impound water and attract water fowl,” says Peter. “This is the area where the elk were initially reintroduced in 2015.”

Wildlife Enthusiasts’ Paradise Are you a wildlife photographer, birdwatcher, or just enjoy seeing wildlife? As Peter mentioned, the state forest is the place to go for abundant wildlife viewing opportunities. The northeastern portion of Jackson County lies in what is called the Curtis Tension Zone, named for John Curtis, a well-known Wisconsin plant ecologist who studied the area with his graduate students and



Peter Bakken, Parks and Recreation Superintendent



East Fork offers canoe access and nature trails with scenic views.

published a book in 1959 about their discoveries. The S-shape zone runs from the northwestern part of the state in Burnett County to the southeast corner of the state, ending in Racine County. Above the zone is the Northern Mesic Forest, below it, the Southern Broadleaf Forest. “Within this zone, you’ll find a combination of species representing both forest types,” explains Peter.

The forest is home to deer, turkey, grouse, coyotes, bobcats, fishers, wolves, the occasional black bear, and of course, elk. However, many of the elk sightings in the area tend to be on private land. You may also catch a glimpse of a hawk or eagle circling above or nestled in the treetops. “There are a lot of beautiful views. You may even have the chance to see some rare bird species,” Peter says.

Don’t forget to pack your lunch along with your camera or binoculars. The forest offers numerous areas to sit down for a picnic lunch at all three campgrounds and the day use areas at Perry Creek and Oxbow Pond.

Extended Stay Enjoying the great outdoors by camping in the state forest is a very popular activity, especially during the past two years with the pandemic. There are three family type campgrounds and two group camps with seasons ranging from year-round to mid-April through early October. While

it is difficult to say how many visitors visit the forest each year, there are more concrete numbers when it comes to camping reservations, which reached a record high in 2021, with around 26,000 campers calling the forest home for a night or many nights.

If you like camping, but enjoy modern conveniences, Castle Mound Campground is the most modern with some electric sites, flushable toilets, a shower house, and a dump station. This campground also has a reservable log cabin shelter with electricity, tables, and an outdoor cooking grill.

If you’re looking for a more rustic atmosphere, Pigeon Creek Campground, near Millston on North Settlement Road, or East Fork Campground, near Hatfield on Campground Road, are a rustic camping paradise. Pigeon Creek features a swimming beach, canoe launch, and

Two seasonal employees are hired each year to work in recreation. Parks and Recreation Superintendent Peter Bakken says this is a great opportunity for someone who likes to be outdoors.

access to a large trail system. “East Fork offers canoe access to scenery along the East Fork of the Black River and is close to our two group camps,” Peter says. “Canoers speak very highly of the Black River and its tributaries.”

In addition to the family campgrounds and group camp areas, visitors also partake in primitive camping, canoeing, backpack camping, or hunter camping. A large portion of the forest is open to public hunting. Once hunting season opens in the fall, you’ll notice many of the hunters choose to camp in the forest for the duration of their hunt.

Be A Good Steward Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints. You’ve heard it before, but it’s always a great reminder to be a good steward not only to nature, but also for others to have a positive experience. When visiting the forest, be sure to take your trash and recyclables with you, as it is unlawful to discard litter or debris on state property. It’s also important to be sure your campfire is fully extinguished before you leave. “If you’d like to volunteer, Friends of the Black River organizes an Earth Day clean up each spring,” says Peter. “They clean up garbage and debris in our use areas and roadsides, and end with a picnic lunch for the volunteers.”—*Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Advisor*

GET A STATE PARK PASS

A Wisconsin State Parks and Forests vehicle admission sticker is not required when parking in either the Wildcat or Smrekar parking lots, but they are required at any location with signage, to include any of the campgrounds or adjacent day use areas. Areas requiring a pass are marked with signage.

A pass allows you access to any of Wisconsin’s state parks and forests. An annual pass for a vehicle with WI license plates is \$28 (\$13 for residents age 65 and older) or \$8 for a day pass (\$3 age 65 and older) with the exception of Devil’s Lake, Peninsula, and Willow River State Parks, with daily fees \$10-\$13. An annual pass gives you the most value if you plan to visit several parks or the same location several times throughout the year.



2022 ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES

Jackson Electric offers rebates to members who purchase qualified energy efficient items and lighting. Qualified items must be purchased, installed, and operating (generating kWhs) on Jackson Electric’s service lines in 2022. Active memberships only. To receive a rebate, contact our office for an application form or go to www.jackelec.com to download a form. Please submit to our office your completed and signed rebate application within 60 days following your invoice date with the Energy Star label (if applicable) and paid receipt. **Your rebate application may be rejected if all required documentation is not completed and received.**

Rebate amounts less than \$250 will be issued a credit on the member’s billing statement. More than that amount, a check will be issued to the member on record.

Audit Recommended Improvements

Incentives are available for energy efficiency improvements completed to an existing home or farm. Energy efficiency improvements must be recommendations from an audit arranged by Jackson Electric Cooperative or a cooperative approved partner. Rebate not to exceed the cost of energy efficiency improvements up to \$500. For specific details on this program, go to www.jackelec.com or contact our office.

RESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC HEAT PUMPS	
Geothermal Heat Pump (new systems not allowed on cooperative’s load management program)	\$500/ton
Air Source Heat Pump and Mini Split (SEER rating must be 14+, HSPF 8.2+, or EER 11+)	\$500/ton
Variable Speed ECM Blower Motor (new furnace only)	\$35/unit

ELECTRIC WATER HEATERS	
100+ gallon (new)	\$300*
75 to 99 gallons (new)	\$150*
Heat Pump Water Heater	\$300
* Load management receiver must be installed and operating, and energy efficiency standards must be met to receive rebate. Rebate is deducted from the purchase price of the 100-gallon water heater if purchased from Jackson Electric.	

ENERGY STAR RESIDENTIAL LIGHTING	
LED Bulb (5 bulbs or more to qualify)	\$0.50/bulb
Occupancy Sensor	\$5
Please contact our office for information on non-residential lighting rebates.	

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGER	
Smart Electric Vehicle Charging Station with Integrated Metering. Charger must be purchased from Jackson Electric.	\$800
Must be controlled by Jackson Electric’s energy management program.	

ENERGY STAR APPLIANCES (must be Energy Star rated)	
Clothes Washer	\$150
Clothes Dryer (electric)	\$150
Heat Pump Clothes Dryer	\$150
Dishwasher	\$150
Dehumidifier	\$ 50
Inductive Range	\$150
Freezer (min. 10 cu. ft.)	\$150
Refrigerator (min. 10 cu. ft.)	\$150

AG., COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL PRESCRIPTIVE	
Contact the office or go to www.jackelec.com for qualification requirements.	
Exhaust Fan	\$1/inch
Circulation Fan	\$1/inch
Dairy Plate Cooler/Well Water Pre-Cooler	\$500/unit
Dairy Refrigeration Heat Recovery with Electric Backup	\$300/unit
Low/Zero Energy Livestock Waterer	\$50/unit
Scroll Refrigerator Compressor	\$30/HP
Variable Frequency Drive (VFD)	\$30/HP
Commercial Vending Machine Controls	\$25 each



That Jackson Electric employees traveled 1,169,029 accident-free miles from December 2014 through October 2021. Safety is part of our culture, and it also helps to keep the co-op’s insurance premiums manageable.

NEW YEAR, NEW BUILD?

Contact Jackson Electric now to schedule your line build



Even though it's only February, spring will be here before you know it and construction season will be in full swing. If you're planning for new construction in 2022, your first contact should be Jackson Electric. Beat the summer rush by contacting us now to begin discussing your plans and electrical service needs. The sooner we know your plans, the sooner we can get your new service installation scheduled.

Before finalizing your new home plans, make sure you check with us to find out what energy efficiency rebates and incentives are available for items you should consider installing in your new location. Jackson Electric offers generous rebates on geothermal and air source heat pumps, water heaters 75-gallons or greater, lighting, and Energy Star appliances. If central air conditioning is a must-have for your new build, we highly suggest seeking a bid for an air source heat pump. An air source heat pump will function the same as your central air conditioner in the summer months but can revert to an efficient and cost-effective heating source in the shoulder months.

For more information about Jackson Electric's new build process or energy efficient rebates, go to www.jackelec.com or contact our office.

GENERATOR Safety

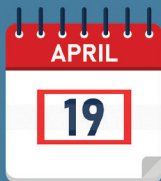
Avoid hurting yourself and others – including line workers working to restore power. Understand how to use your generator safely!

Learn more about preventing "backfeed" and more at:

Safe Electricity.org



JACKSON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE 85TH ANNUAL MEETING



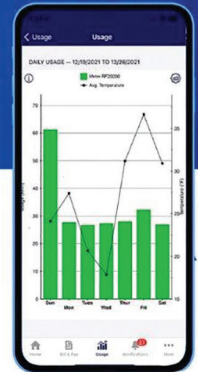
Tuesday, April 19, 2022, 7 p.m.
Lunda Theatre, Black River Falls



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