

Many Things to Many People



Greetings from the Black River State Forest! It has been five months since I began my duties as the property's Superintendent. During this time it has been my pleasure to interact with numerous individuals and organizations that use and enjoy the forest. Some people are interested and concerned with numerous aspects of the property and others have a specific use that brings them to the area.

Some of the people I have met see the State Forest as an important part of their livelihood. Each year approximately 854 acres are harvested in a sustainable manner from the forest. Loggers, paper companies, and other forest product industries rely on the availability of this timber. The state forest's certification status makes the timber harvested even more desirable.

To some people the Black River State Forest represents an annual hunting trip that their family has participated in for generations. They are concerned that the property continues to provide a quality hunting experience whether it is for deer, turkey, grouse, or waterfowl. Many people's favorite area on the forest is the Dike 17 wildlife area complex.

Some individuals see the property as a place to protect and conserve rare species. The Karner Blue Butterfly is perhaps the most famous of these. Remnants of barrens communities, a globally imperiled habitat, are found on the property. In addition the State Forest features three State Natural Areas that represent outstanding examples of Wisconsin's landscape prior to European settlement.

Many visitors come to the property primarily for motorized recreation. The state forest has 30 miles of ATV trails that connect up to Jackson and Clark County's trails. The 250 miles of ATV trails in the region are recognized as some of the best in the Midwest. There are also 51 miles of snowmobile trails on the property that connect to a larger regional trail system. These trail systems are very important to local economies through the tourism dollars they generate.

Another group of visitors are mostly interested in the "silent" sports. A local support organization, the Black River Forest Trail Foundation, works towards improving the hiking, biking, and skiing trails throughout the property. The cross country ski trails in the forest are particularly recognized as one of the best trail systems in the state. Backpacking in the state forest continues to grow in popularity.

For the Ho-Chunk Nation the forest is a spiritual place where past ancestors lived for generations and are now buried. The protection of these sacred sites is extremely important to their culture. The forest also represents a source of materials for many of the Ho-Chunks traditional activities including the construction of ceremonial lodges and basket making.

Another group of users are interested in water based recreation including fishing, swimming, kayaking, and canoeing. The state forest has five canoe landings, two canoe campsites, numerous fishing opportunities, and a swimming beach. A local organization, The Friends of the Black River, is dedicated to preserving and protecting the Black River and its recreation based uses.

There are many other types of users including campers, sightseers, birders, horse riders, snowshoe enthusiasts, and the list could go on and on. Many times individuals see their use as the most important. Often times this view point can cause conflict with a different user group. Balancing all of these needs is what makes my job an enjoyable challenge. The strength of the Black River State Forest is this wide diversity of uses. I encourage all of you to try out a new use on the property this year, the 50th anniversary of the Black River State Forest.

If you have any questions about the state forest please call (715) 284-4103 or visit our improved website at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/StateForests/SF-BlackRiver/>.