Year-round recreational opportunities in the Black River State Forest

**FISHING:**
Northern pike, muskellunge, smallmouth bass, catfish and walleyes can be found in the Black River and East Fork. Area fisheries have sunfish, suckers, bullheads, crayfish, largemouth bass and perch. Trout can be found in Halls, Hay and Robinson Creeks.

**HUNTING:**
Public hunting is allowed throughout most of the forest. White-tailed deer, black bear, ruffed grouse, turkey, squirrel, raccoon, opossum, beaver, mink, bobcat and skunk can be hunted. Public hunting is allowed in all areas as long as you have a valid Wisconsin hunting permit and are not hunting a species that is closed to public hunting due to special regulations.

**RECREATIONAL TRAILS:**
The State Forest has 33 miles of ATV/UTV trails and 48 miles of snowmobile trails that link up with Jackson County and Clark County for over 200 total miles of trails.

**Picnic Areas:**
Picnic areas can be found at all three family campgrounds. Limited picnic facilities are also available at the Perry Creek Recreation Area and Oxbow pond.

**Canoe/Kayak:**
The Black River from the Herford Dam to Hills Creek landing is rocky with Class I, II and sometimes III rapids. From Hills Creek landing to the Black River Dam is smoother with some Class I rapids in high water. Below the dam is calm with sandbars and unique rock formations along some banks.

**Camping:**
Three family campgrounds and two group camps provide year-round camping opportunities. Castle Mound Campground has fourteen electric sites and a comfort station with a building. East Fork and Pigeon Creek Campgrounds are rustic campsites with vault toilet buildings and hand-pump water. The Circle Campground has a four-season cabin that sleeps twelve individuals and an outdoor area that accommodates a maximum of 50 individuals. The rustic Outdoor Group Camp also accommodates up to 50 individuals. Primitive camping or backpacking is allowed throughout the State Forest with a special camping permit that must be filled out prior to camping. This permit is free and can be found on the State Forest website (dnr.wi.gov/topic/stateforests) or by calling the Forest headquarters. Backpackers must camp at least one mile from their parked vehicle and 100 feet from any trail.

**International River Classifications:**
- Class I: Easy – fast moving water with few and small waves.
- Class II: More Difficult – rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may or may not to aid and which can sweep a canoe.

**Origin of the name “Black River”**
Like many northern rivers, the Black River gets its dark color from tannic acid – a stain from the leaves, conifer needles and mosses of this region. Early explorers referred to the river as “Noire,” meaning “The Black River.”

**History of the Black River State Forest**
The Black River State Forest was established in 1957, after the Federal Government transferred 50,000 acres to the Wisconsin Conservation Department (today the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources). Through further land purchase, the forest has grown to its present size of approximately 68,990 acres. The property contains about 12 miles of the Black River as well as three miles of the Black River’s East Fork.

The State Forest lies on the edge of the driftless area (unglaciated) area of Wisconsin. Much of the forest landscape was strongly influenced by glaciation. After the glaciers retreated there was nothing to protect the sandy surfaces from erosion and weathering. Today, remnants of eroded Cambrian sandstone protrude above the forest floor forming boulders, sandstone hills and castellated bluffs like Castle Mound.

Like much of Wisconsin, Jackson County was heavily logged during the mid to late 1800s, with the heaviest logging done between 1860 and 1895. After the cutovers, settlers poured into the area buying up stump-riddled and fire-scarred properties, drawn by the promise of rich farm land. Most of these farms had failed by the 1930s due to the sandy soils and major drought conditions.

To help the struggling economy, the federal government purchased some of the farms. To help the struggling economy, the federal government purchased some of the farms. To help the struggling economy, the federal government purchased some of the farms. To help the struggling economy, the federal government purchased some of the farms.

The Black River State Forest uses natural regeneration whenever involved and the age of the stand. Shorter-lived species such as jack pine and aspen are clear cut, as their seedlings need full sunlight to establish a young healthy forest. Longer-lived species such as white pine, red pine and oak are selectively thinned once to several times prior to their final regeneration cut.

The State Forest uses natural regeneration wherever possible. However, in cases where natural regeneration is not adequate, sites are either aerially seeded or trees are planted.