



MECAN SPRINGS STATE NATURAL AREA

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Hollowed out by the last glacier and rimmed by steep, gravelly ridges lies a 20-foot-deep basin that forms the headwaters of the Mecan River in Waushara County. Seeping — and in some places nearly gushing — from the base of the ridges are numerous springs that coalesce into a 40-acre pond of exceptionally clear, cold water. The alkaline waters flow year-round, even on the most frigid winter days, as they issue forth at a constant temperature of about 49 degrees Fahrenheit. From the pond, water runs into the Mecan River, a renowned Class I trout stream and twisting, tree-lined waterway that offers enjoyable paddling. Aside from supplying water for streams and wetlands, springs lend scenic beauty to natural areas and often provide specialized habitat for rare species of plants and animals such as brook grass and the federally endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly. The Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey is in the process of updating a statewide database of springs by conducting an inventory of all high-discharge springs and documenting water flow rate, chemical and physical properties, ecological integrity and geological setting. When completed, the information will help us understand spring hydrology and the vulnerability of these groundwater portals to changes in surrounding land use and climate.

Mecan Springs is owned by the DNR and was designated State Natural Area #370 in 2002. It is part of the larger Mecan River State Fishery Area. A segment of the Ice Age Trail traverses the southern portion of the natural area and an unimproved landing provides access for small boats, canoes and kayaks. Visit dnr.wi.gov

and search "Mecan Springs" for a map, access directions and more information about this site and the State Natural Areas Program.

