

Big River

STATE FOREST



Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources



The Forest

Big River State Forest in western Illinois' Henderson County is 6 miles north of Oquawka on the Oquawka-Keithsburg blacktop. The forest is managed primarily to demonstrate sound forestry practices, with demonstrations and talks on these practices available to interested groups.

History

The 200-acre Oquawka Refuge, acquired by the state in 1925, contains the area's oldest pine plantation. Established in 1928 and known as the Milroy Plantation, the 17-acre area contains red, white and jack pines that tower more than 50 feet. Subsequent land purchases, beginning in 1941 and 1942, and a lease from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, have brought the forest to 2,9000 acres.

Natural Scene

Big River State Forest is a remnant of a vast prairie woodland border area that once covered much of Illinois. Among its vegetation are two endangered plants – penstemon, commonly known as bearded tongue, and Patterson's bindweed, which was documented in the forest in 1873 for the first time anywhere.

Some of the common plants found in the prairie are big and little bluestem, Indian grass, June grass, grama grass, flower-of-an-hour, cottonweed, prairie coneflower, pale prairie coneflower, prairie bush clover, purple prairie clover and blazing star. Also found are western sunflower, kittentail, lead plant, prickly pear cactus, flowering spurge, aromatic sumac, false dragonhead, Sullivan's milkweed, horsemint, goat's-rue and hoary puccoon.

Timber Stand Conversion

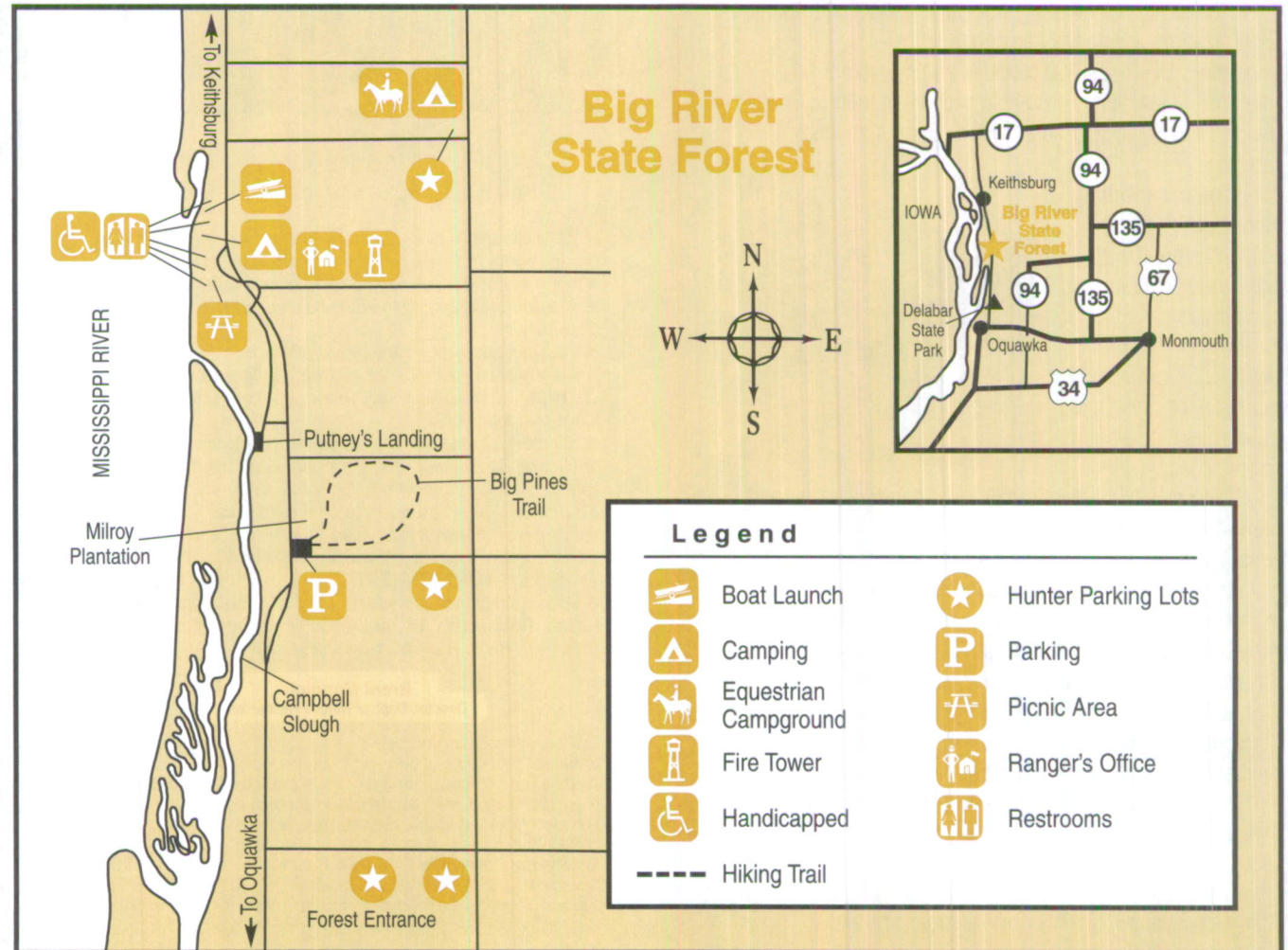
To demonstrate the feasibility of growing profitable pine forests on the type of sandy soil found in the area, much of the forest has been converted from scrub hardwood to pine. This "timber stand conversion" consists of removing scrub hardwood, salvaging the salable material for pulpwood, controlling hardwood reproduction

and planting rapidly growing white and red pines. Many area landowners have adopted these conversion practices and established hundreds of acres of thriving pine plantations throughout the area.

Forest Fires

A prominent landmark in the forest is its fire tower. Located at the headquarters area, fire fighting crews and equipment stand ready to protect the forest during peak fire periods.

To separate the forest into manageable components, 60 miles of firebreaks interlace Big River State Forest. When fires aren't a threat, hikers and horseback riders appreciate the trails that the firebreaks provide.



Facilities

Picnicking: There are several picnic areas along Campbell Slough and Putney's Landing, with shelter houses, tables, camp stoves and drinking water available.

Camping: Tent and trailer sites are available at the Riverview camping area and in the northwest corner of the forest. All campers must obtain a permit from the park office. Group camping is allowed, but groups of 25 or more must receive advance permission from the site manager.

Boating and Fishing: Three boat launching ramps are located along the Mississippi River. Boat rentals are not provided.

Boat and bank fishing are allowed. Among the fish most commonly found are crappie, bass, carp, buffalo, channel catfish, bluegill and bullhead.

In the winter, ice fishing is a popular sport along Spring Slough, north of Putney's Landing.

Hiking: Big Pines Trail provides an enjoyable 3 1/2-mile hike. In addition, the 60-mile network of firebreaks is used by hikers, backpackers, birders and nature study groups.

Horseback Riding:

Horseback riders also put the firebreaks to good use. An equestrian campground and stable is available to horse owners. Equestrians must stay on designated trails. Horse rentals are not provided.

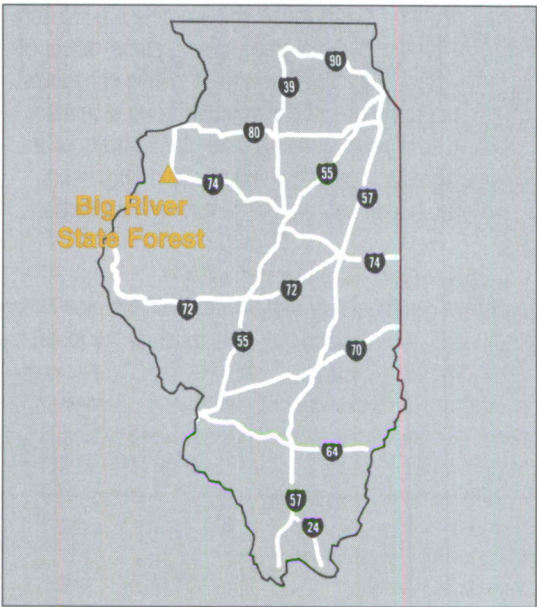


Hunting: with the Mississippi River providing water and prime habitat offered by the forest, Big River features white-tailed deer and numerous small game animals, including quail, squirrels and rabbits. To supplement existing food and improve habitat for upland game, food plots have been planted. During the waterfowl hunting season, the area is popular for its wood ducks, blue- and green-winged teal, mallards and Canada geese.

Snowmobiling: Big River State Forest has 30 miles of marked trails and a warming station.

Scenic Drives: Winding through the forest are 15 miles of scenic roadways.

For more information, contact Big River State Forest, R.R. 1, Keithsburg, IL 61442 or call (309) 374-2496.



Big River State Forest

RR 1

Keithsburg, IL 61442, (309) 374-2496

- While groups of 25 or more are welcome and encouraged to use the park's facilities, they are required to register in advance with the site office to avoid crowding or scheduling conflicts.
- At least one responsible adult must accompany each group of 15 minors.
- Pets must be kept on leashes at all times.
- Actions by nature can result in closed roads and other facilities. We hope you enjoy your stay. Remember, take only memories, leave only footprints.
- For more information on state parks, write to the Department of Natural Resources, Office of Public Services, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, call (217) 782-6302 or visit our website at <http://dnr.state.il.us>.
- For more information on tourism in Illinois, call the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' Bureau of Tourism at 1-800-2CONNECT.
- Hearing-impaired individuals may call the Department of Natural Resources' TTY number, (217) 782-9175, or use the Ameritech Relay Number, 1-800-526-0844.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; (217) 785-0067; TTY (217) 782-9175. This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the DNR Clearinghouse at (217) 782-7498 for assistance.