

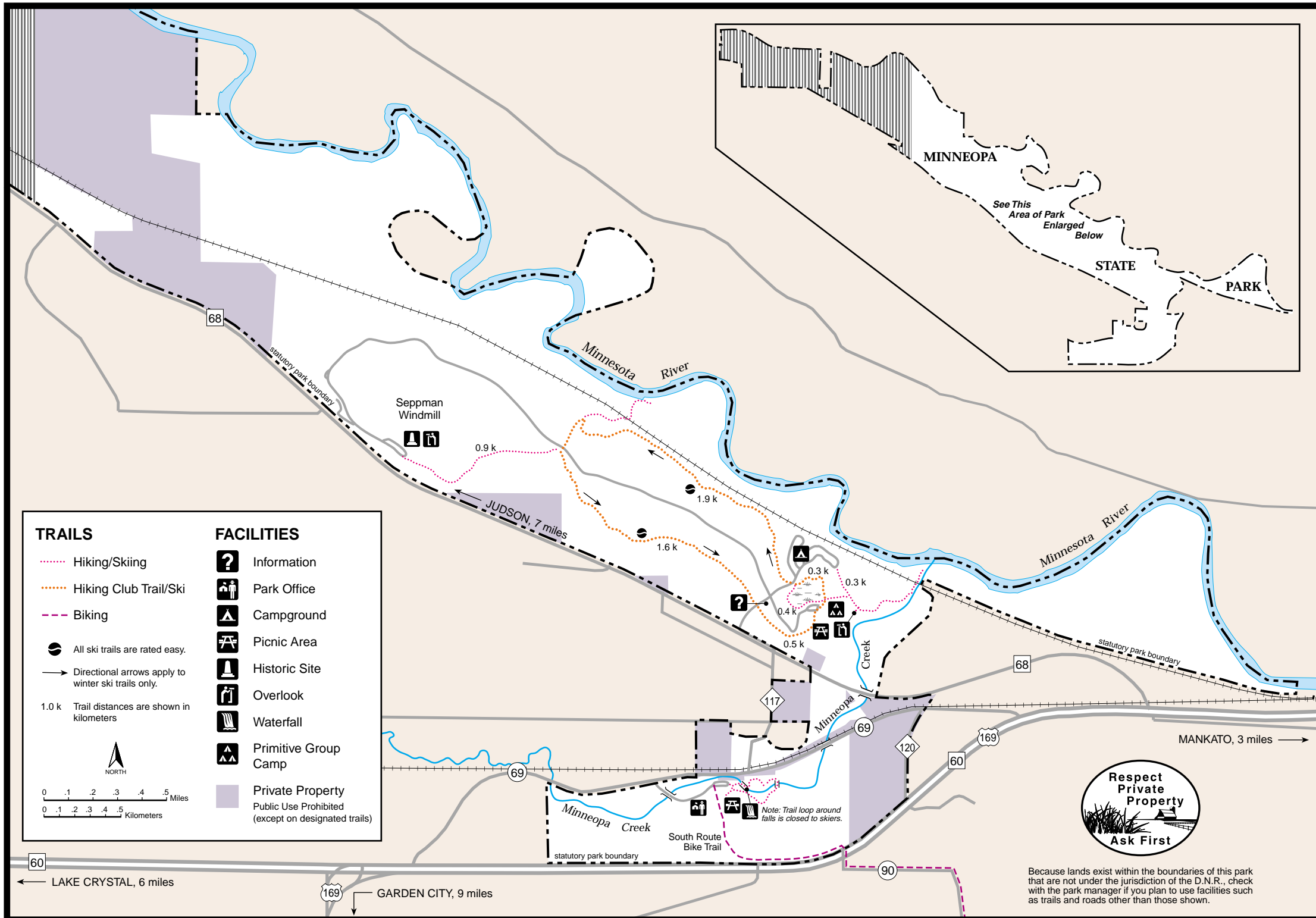
MINNEOPA STATE PARK

FACILITIES AND FEATURES:

- 2 picnic areas
- Picnic shelter w/electricity
- Semi-modern campground
- Heated camper cabin with electricity
- Hiking trails
- Primitive group camp
- Historic site
- Native prairie
- Visitor center
- Geologic formations
- Cross-country ski trails
- Volleyball court
- Horseshoe pit

VISITOR FAVORITES:

- Twin waterfall
- Seppmann Windmill
- Stream fishing
- Wildlife viewing
- Hiking
- Photography





MINNEOPA STATE PARK

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Minneopa State Park
54497 Gadwall Road
Mankato, MN 56001
(507) 389-5464

Department of Natural Resources
Information Center
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

(651) 296-6157 (Metro Area)
1-888-646-6367 (MN Toll Free)

TDD (Telecommunications
Device for Deaf)
(651) 296-5484 (Metro Area)
1-800-657-3929 (MN Toll Free)

Visit the DNR Web Site @:
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us>

MINNEOPA STATE PARK is located off U.S. Highway 169 and State Highway 68, five miles west of Mankato in Blue Earth County. Highway map index: 19-H.

Within Minneopa State Park is southern Minnesota's largest waterfalls and the remains of the Seppmann windmill. The park includes 1145 acres of old glacial river terraces on the south side of the Minnesota River and the beautiful Minneopa Creek gorge.

Changing with the seasons, the scenic double falls of Minneopa Creek can be enjoyed from numerous

vantage points along trails and walkways. The hiker and cross-country skier will enjoy the opportunity to stretch out on trails through woodland, floodplain, forest oak savanna, and grassland. Birders will be delighted to find species from woods and prairie in one park.

GEOLOGY: The park has two outstanding geological features—the double waterfalls and the giant boulders on the park's grassland areas.

The word Minneopa means "water falling twice" in the Dakota Indian language. This double waterfall is the result of Minneopa Creek cutting into and eroding layers of Jordan sandstone at different rates. In all, the water drops 45 feet. The deep gorge below the falls was formed by Minneopa Creek downcutting and removing the soft sandstone.

The park's prairie area was called "TINTA-INYA-OTA" or prairie with many rocks by the Dakota. In this grassland area, a thin layer of soil covers the boulders and limestone bedrock. The presence of gopher mounds is a good indicator of where the soil is deepest. The large boulders, or "glacial erratics," scattered about the grassland area were transported and deposited here by the glaciers over 15,000 years ago. These erratics were carried over a hundred miles from their bedrock source. Some of the larger rocks are split in two. It is not known whether the forces of nature or man are responsible for these fractures.

HISTORY: The first white settler to build a home on Minneopa Creek was Isaac S. Lyons. He built his cabin in July, 1853 and opened a small water-operated sawmill the following summer. Reports from pioneer settlers tell of their children playing lacrosse and other games with Native American children. A tribe that camped near the mouth of Minneopa Creek was known as the "Tribe of Sixes" because they always built their lodges in groups of six or multiples of six. In the spring of 1858, Miner Porter built a summer resort near the scenic Minneopa Falls. He planted trees and flowers and built winding walkways and arbors. The Civil War and the Dakota War of 1862 interfered with the success of the enterprise and it was abandoned in 1870.

The Seppmann windmill, in the northwest portion of the park, was donated to the state by Albert Seppmann, son of its builder. It was patterned after the mills in Louis Seppmann's native Germany. Built with the help of Louis' neighbor Herman Hegley, it was one of the first stone grist mills in Minnesota. The mill was completed in 1864, and in a favorable wind could grind 150 bushels of wheat per day into flour. People from 20-30 miles away hauled their grist to it. Natural calamities plagued the mill. Lightning struck two arms in 1873. They were replaced, but

when a tornado carried away both arms again in 1880, they were not replaced. By then, windmills had become unprofitable to operate.

The short-lived town of Minneopa was built around a depot near the falls. The townsite was laid out in October, 1870. There was a grain elevator, hotel, store, blacksmith shop, and a lumber yard. Foot bridges were built over Minneopa Creek near the falls, and large picnic excursions, some as large as 5,000 people, came from neighboring communities during the summer. Minneopa Village was destroyed by the great grasshopper plagues of the 1870s. All crops were wiped out for three consecutive years, and thus the village disappeared from the map.

In 1905 the state legislature passed a law establishing Minneopa State Park to set aside the area around Minneopa Falls for public use. Later purchases expanded the park to its present-day size.

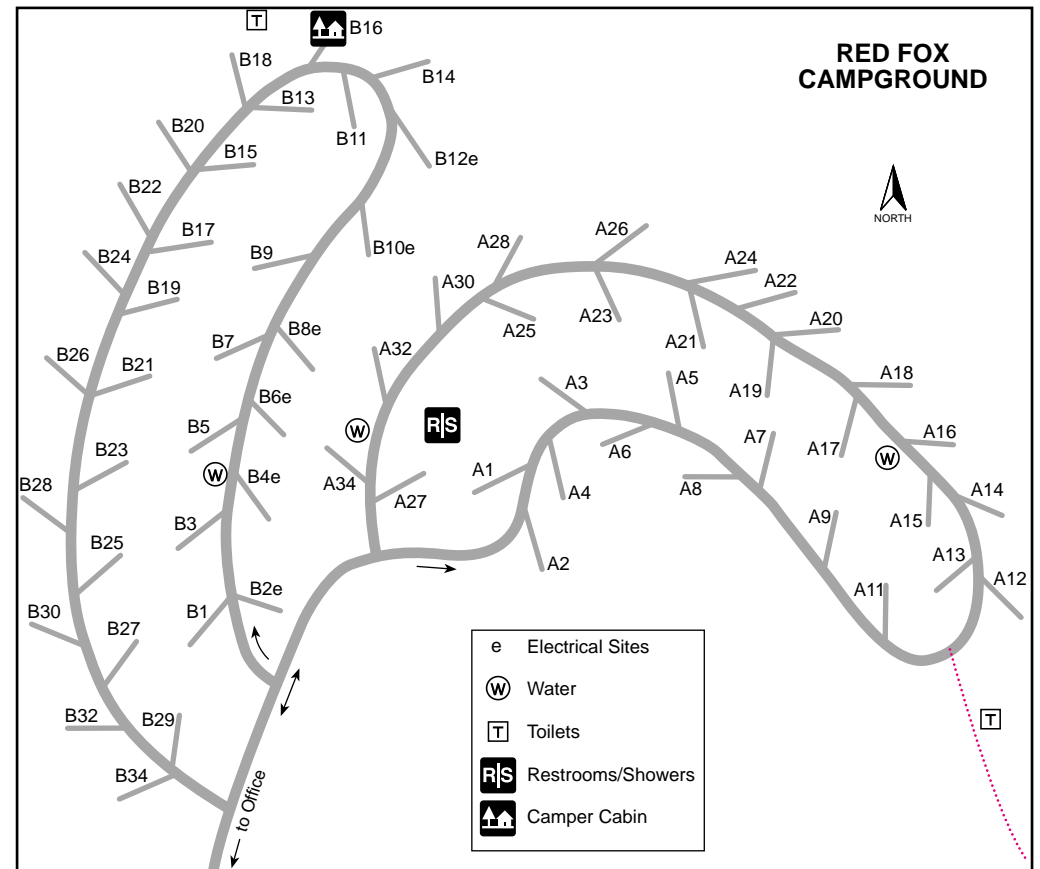
WILDLIFE: Minneopa's diverse habitats support a myriad of wildlife. Searching for insects, pileated woodpeckers carve out huge cavities in the dead and diseased trees of the park's woodlands. Western and eastern meadowlarks are commonly found throughout the park. Bluebirds dart between the bur oak and the grasses of the oak savanna. Look for them as they drop from low perches in pursuit of insects. Hidden in the sunny, short grasses, bobolinks fill the air with their sweet tinkling song.

Garter and bull snakes—both absolutely harmless—glide silently through the grass in search of insects and rodents. Shrikes hunt for mice and grasshoppers and fox squirrels bury acorns to be eaten later.

Belted kingfishers clatter and flash up and down the creek, stopping only long enough to dive for a minnow in the shimmering water. Gnawed, felled trees along the river are unmistakable signs of the largest rodent in the park, the beaver.

Restoration of the area surrounding the campground that once was prairie will create additional diverse habitat for wildlife. The "prairie" of Minneopa had been a sheep pasture for a long time before it became part of the park. The grazing sheep destroyed many of the native prairie plants, allowing weedy non-native species to thrive.

Present management of the prairie includes periodic burning. Prairie plants are rejuvenated by fire. The wildfires the pioneers spoke of, started by lightning or sometimes by Indians, actually made the grasses and wildflowers come back more vigorously than before. Controlled burns conducted by park personnel have the same invigorating effect on the plants. Many of the prairie plants, which disappeared over the years of grazing will have to be replanted to



create the prairie that was the Indian's *Tinta-inya-ota* hunting ground.

SO EVERYONE CAN ENJOY THE PARK...

- The park belongs to all Minnesotans. Please treat it with respect and help us to protect it by following the rules.
- The park is open year-round. On a daily basis, the park gate is closed from 10:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M. the following morning except to registered campers.
- Camp only in designated locations.
- The use of firearms, explosives, air guns, slingshots, traps, seines, nets, bows and arrows, and all other weapons is prohibited in state parks.
- Pets must be restrained on a leash no longer than six feet. Pets are not allowed in park buildings.
- Park in designated areas only.
- Motor bikes and other licensed vehicles are allowed only on park roads, not on trails.
- Enjoy park wildlife and plants but please respect them. Do not pick or dig up plants, disturb or feed animals, or scavenge dead wood.
- Build fires only in designated locations—fire rings or fireplaces. Wood is available for purchase from

park staff. Portable stoves or grills are permitted.

- Daily or annual permits are required for all vehicles entering a state park. They may be purchased at the park headquarters or the Information Center in St. Paul (see "FOR MORE INFORMATION" to left).

This information is available in alternative format upon request.

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