

General Overview

The Tri-County Area School District offers a school forest of approximately 320 acres. Located between the communities of Hancock and Plainfield, the school forest has been activity managed with the goal of maximizing ecological diversity and educational opportunities. The property comprises a diverse ecosystem including pine plantations, deciduous forests, open meadows, lowlands, a 40 acre marsh, four small lakes, and a restored prairie area. The trails which meander throughout the school forest make for a rich community resource.

Besides serving as a base for Environmental Education for the School District, many opportunities abound for hiking, picnicking, hunting, biking, skiing, bird watching, and other non-consumptive uses. Public camping is not allowed. Marked activity trails of various lengths and difficulty have been established for users seeking places to hike, bike, ski, or ride horseback. When adequate snow cover exists, volunteers ensure that the trail system is groomed for cross country skiing. At 1.4 miles, Timber view trail is the shortest trail, and it does not have hills. Whispering Pine trail is a bit more challenging, and rewards users with a beautiful view of the gently sloping shores of Bullhead Lake. Its entire length is 2.7 miles, while the 3.8 mile Lake Shore Trail offers more challenging slopes and a gorgeous view of Reeder Lake.

Near the center of the property is a shelter building which provides a home-base site for district school forest activities and it offers forest users a great place to stop and relax. The pavilion-style shelter offers some protection from wind and rain. If visiting the shelter house, take a moment to look at the painted animal silowettes and the solar power system located on the roof and in the rafters of the shelter. The solar power system provides a limited source of electricity for lighting portions of the shelter house during School District activities taking place in this location. Located nearby the shelter house are pit toilet bathroom facilities.

For those interested in obtaining a lovely view of Bullhead Lake, an amphitheater is nestled along the North shore. Aldo Leopold benches, complete with unique environmental quotations, offer welcome areas to rest throughout the forest area. They are scattered along the trails and throughout Liza's Prairie. One may also enjoy following the self-guided tree trail guide, which offers the opportunity to visit and observe 19 tree species throughout the forest. A structure commonly known as the observation tower combines a shelter house and a 400 square foot observation deck. This observation tower is situated towards the southwest corner of the property. Besides being a popular hiking and skiing destination, this unique structure enhances ones experience at the forest, as it offers forest visitors spectacular views of the forest canopy and night sky.

Hunting is allowed, except when the forest is in use by a school or community group. A sign is posted at the north entrance gate indicating if such a group is using the school forest. All federal, state, and local hunting regulations must be followed. Trapping is allowed only with a written permit. Maps and guides are available in the parking area located at W12409 County Road O. Many are available online as well. The school forest is a "walk-in-area" only. No Motorized vehicles are allowed. Violators will be cited for unlawful trespass. State statute 1.18.258 prohibits the use of tobacco or alcohol on school properties. Information concerning our school forest property and related environmental education program can be found on our website <http://www.tricounty.k12.wi.us/forest.htm>. Questions concerning our school forest property or related environmental education program can be directed to Joe Raboin who is available during school hours at (715) 335-6366 ext. 4350, or joeraboin@tcpenguin.net. We hope that you enjoy your visit.