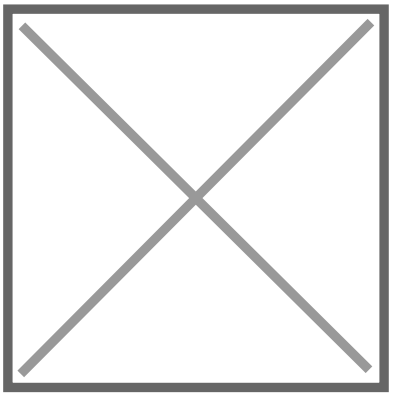

River Falls school and community forest

Description

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Hiking Trails in River Falls, Wisconsin

If youâ??re in the area of River Falls, Wisconsin you have free access to hiking trails on a beautiful piece of land. Approximately seventy acres of the land has been owned by the local school district since 1947, but it has been inaccessible due to being landlocked. Then, forty-four acres was purchased by the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust in 2021. This purchase then provided access to the school district land. Both areas are open for all people to use, but there are rules for using the areas.

Rules

Allowed in every area.

- Hiking
- Fishing according to state regulations
- Cross country skiing
- Snowshoeing
- Foraging for wild edibles for personnel consumption according to state regulations
- Wildlife observation
- Photography
- Walking a pet on a leash
- Environmental education and interpretation

Only allowed in the community part of the forest.

- Hunting and trapping in specific areas of the community forest according to state regulations
- Bike riding (The prairie loop on the school district property allows bike riding too.)

Prohibited everywhere

- Horseback riding
- Camping/spending the night
- Campfires
- Littering
- Motorized vehicles except by permit for ADA accommodations
- Firearms or other weapons unless engaged in a legal hunting activity
- Target shooting
- Personal Property left overnight

Description of the land

There are many trails that run through upland wooded areas, lowland wooded areas, prairie, and along the banks of the Kinnickinnic River. Some trails are wide enough to drive a car down, but others look like deer trails. The trails are marked, but some could be marked better. The community forest trails are easier to walk than the school forest due to being wider and more maintained.

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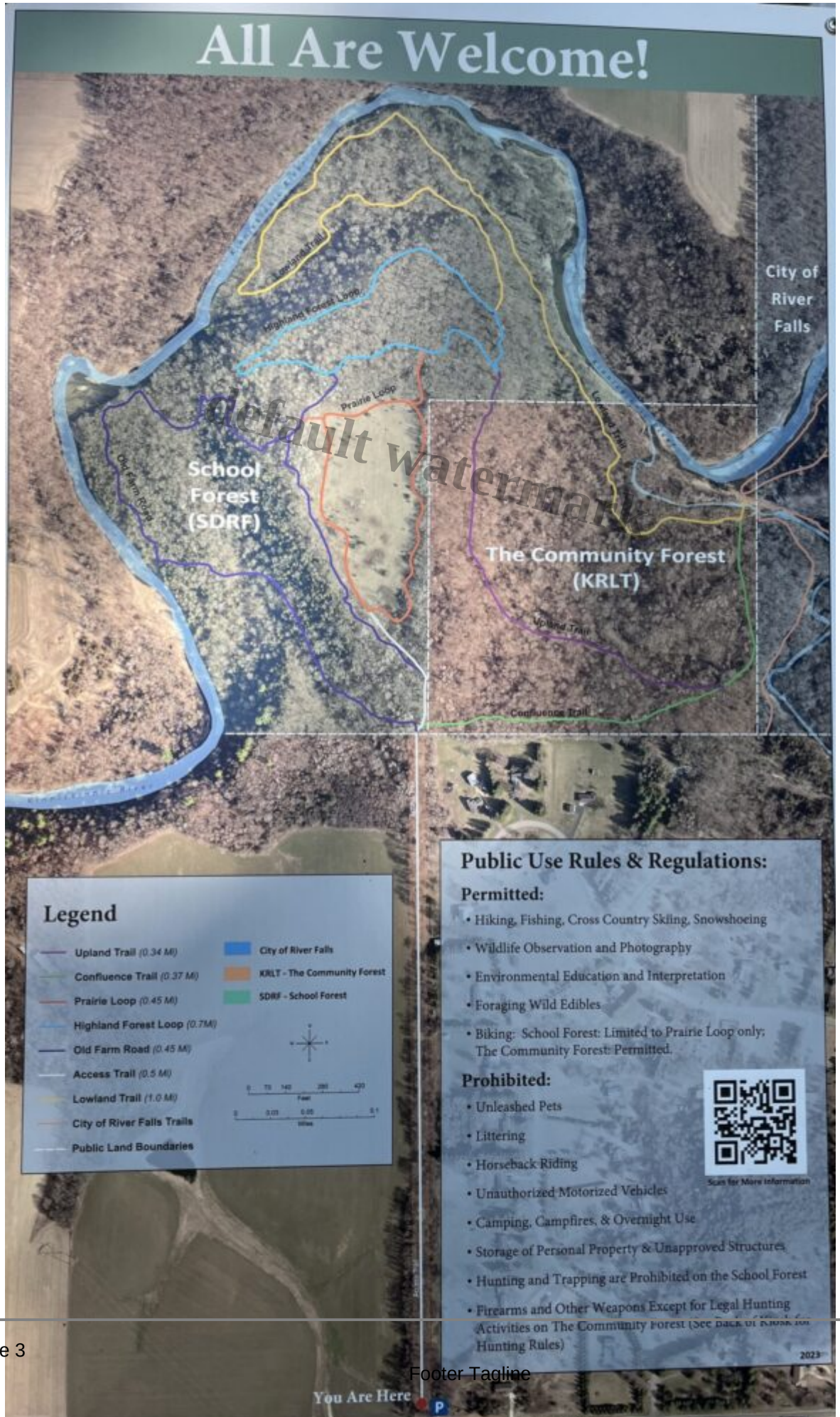
Old Farm Road sign

Yellow trail sign

Orange trail sign


All Are Welcome!
City of River Falls
School Forest (SDRF)
The Community Forest (KRLT)
Prairie Loop
Highland Forest Loop
Old Farm Road
Upland Trail
Confluence Trail
default watermark
Legend
Upland Trail (0.34 MI)
Confluence Trail (0.37 MI)
Prairie Loop (0.45 MI)
Highland Forest Loop (0.7MI)
Old Farm Road (0.45 MI)
Access Trail (0.5 MI)
Lowland Trail (1.0 MI)
City of River Falls Trails
Public Land Boundaries
City of River Falls
KRLT - The Community Forest
SDRF - School Forest
Public Use Rules & Regulations:
Permitted:
• Hiking, Fishing, Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing
• Wildlife Observation and Photography
• Environmental Education and Interpretation
• Foraging Wild Edibles
• Biking: School Forest: Limited to Prairie Loop only; The Community Forest: Permitted.
Prohibited:
• Unleashed Pets
• Littering
• Horseback Riding
• Unauthorized Motorized Vehicles
• Camping, Campfires, & Overnight Use
• Storage of Personal Property & Unapproved Structures
• Hunting and Trapping are Prohibited on the School Forest
• Firearms and Other Weapons Except for Legal Hunting Activities on The Community Forest
Hunting Rules)
2023
You Are Here
P

Map of trailsDescription of each trail

The trails are organized by colors. Each trail has square signs put on trees of the color that corresponds to that trail on the map. You will also see signs that tell you when you are entering the s[illegible]s letting you know where the boundary is for public land.

Prairie Loop Hiking Trail (orange trail)

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The orange trail is the prairie loop which is 0.45 miles long and makes a big circle with a prairie area in the middle. This trail is plenty wide and is also the only trail you can bike on in the school forest. This is a main trail that many of the other trails start from. The school is also planning on building a picnic shelter at the start of this trail which is at the end of the access road into the forest. In one section of the trail, they had placed some benches for an outdoor learning area.

I hope the school district works to improve the plants in the prairie area. It was once an old farm field that has been left alone for a long time. When I was there a few times in September of 2024, most of the plants I saw were goldenrod, common mullein, and thistles that were about twelve feet tall. This is not a healthy or quality prairie because it lacks variety in plant types as well as having actual prairie plants. The school district needs to do a prescribed burn in the spring and then replant with other prairie plants like big bluestem, little bluestem, black-eyed Susan, coneflowers, butterfly milkweed, blazing star, wild bergamot, and aster to name a few.

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thistle

Goldenrod

future site of picnic shelter

watermark

Trail (dark blue)

Donâ??t let the name of this trail fool you, Old Farm Road will lead you to the Kinnickinnic River and not a farm or field. The dark blue marked trail starts right where the access road enters the forest. It will be on your left and starts out wide enough to drive a car down, but then it will narrow at the bottom of the hill. Woodchips cover the beginning portion of this trail with a ravine on the left side. The trail will turn narrow and sandy as it gets closer to the Kinnickinnic River. The trail winds along the river, but it can get confusing because of people leaving the trail to go to the water. There are many places it looks like the trail goes a different way. If you see the signs along the way,

you will know youâ??re on the correct path. Eventually, the path will start winding its way up hill through the woods. When you get to the top of the hill, it will continue through the forest until you reach a spot where the trail goes left and right. If you go left, you will get to a path that will take you to the prairie loop or you can continue to the light blue trail. If you go right, you will continue for a little way in the woods and come out at the access road. After you travel the whole Old Farm Road trail, you will have gone 0.45 miles. Iâ??m not sure how accurate their map is because this trail seemed longer than about half a mile.

Highland Forest Loop Hiking Trail (light blue)

The Highland Forest Loop trail or light blue trail is about 0.7 miles long. You can access this trail from four other hiking trails which are the Prairie Loop (orange trail), Old Farm Road (dark blue trail), Upland Trail (purple trail), and Lowland Trail (yellow trail). This trail winds through the forest. It doesnâ??t have any big hills to go up or down, but it is a skinny single file trail. This trail can get confusing if youâ??re not sure where you are compared to other places in the forest. Sometimes trails that lead off this one are not adequately marked, so be careful not to get lost or turned around.

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Entrance from orange trail to light blue

leaving light blue trail going to orange trail

light blue trail

ırple trail)

After traveling on either the Confluence trail (light green) or the Highland Forest Loop trail (light blue) you can access the Upland Trail. This trail is 0.34 miles long and connects those two hiking trails together. It starts out wide when you are in the community forest part and narrow in the school forest part. There will be a sign letting you know when youâ??re entering the school forest if you are traveling from the Confluence Trail. Coming from the Confluence Trail you will have a ravine that will be on your right-side part of the way. You will also be traveling through a forest going downhill and then back uphill before you get to the Highland Forest Loop trail.

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Confluence Hiking Trail (light green trail)

The Confluence Trail starts at the same area as the Old Farm Road trail starts, right after you enter the forest from the access road. A map of the forest area is at this location. Take the trail to the right when looking at the map. This hiking trail will lead you along the edge of the community forest past houses and eventually connect you to hiking trails that connect to Glenn Park in the town of River Falls. You will gradually go downhill until you make it to a path that goes to the right and has some boards

crossing over a stream that is flowing into the Kinnickinnic River. If you donâ??t take the path to the right, you will eventually connect to the Lowland Trail or yellow trail. If you reach the yellow trail, you will have traveled 0.37 miles.

Lowland Hiking Trail (yellow trail)

Where the yellow trail enters the schoolâ??s property, and the trail starts getting confusing.

The Lowland Trail is one mile long which happens to be the longest hiking trail on the property. It is mostly down by the Kinnickinnic River and doesnâ??t make a loop. At one end of the trail, it connects with the Confluence Trail (light green). These hiking trails connect down by the Kinnickinnic River. The other end of the Lowland Trail connects with the Highland Forest Loop Trail (light blue) up on the hill away from the Kinni. I found this trail fairly confusing. The point that it turns into the school property is right by the river with tall grasses. The path is through the tall grasses, but there are so many paths leading off of this one from people accessing the water to fish or for other reasons itâ??s hard to tell which path is the correct path.

Access Points

To get to the property you can enter through property owned by the city of River Falls which is known as Glenn Park. If you follow the trails that go along the Kinnickinnic River, eventually you will reach a bench and a sign. The sign is meant to let people traveling on the river know that this is the last place they can exit the river for another couple hours, and they will have limited cell service. When you reach this point look for a path that will continue straight but veer a little to the left. It will go down to a stream with some wood boards going over it as a walkway. You will be entering the community forest part of

the land.

wood planks to cross the stream

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Rocky Branch tributary that you cross over

Sign at the access to the community forest from Glenn Park

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The other entry point is off of County Road FF. You will find a sign and parking lot on the northside of the road just past the dog park about 1 mile from highway 35. The parking lot is not very big, you can still park 4 or 5 cars there. There is a gate across the access trail that is wide enough to drive a vehicle down. The access trail is half-a-mile long. It is private property on either side of the access trail, so stay on the trail. When you get to the end of the access trail, you will notice a sign with a map similar to the one at the parking lot. There are also two port-a-potties at the end of the access point.

View looking back toward the parking lot.

Port-a-potties

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Access Trail

Category

1. Education
2. Hiking
3. Hobbies

Tags

1. #community forest
2. #education
3. #Prairie
4. #school forest
5. #trails

6. hiking
7. kinnickinnic river
8. nature
9. River Falls

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sherri

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