



## Learn More...

**Contact us:**  
 Kickapoo Valley Reserve  
 S.3661 State Highway 131  
 La Farge, Wisconsin 54639  
 (608)625-2960  
<http://kvr.state.wi.us>

**Regional Information:**  
[www.driftlesswisconsin.com](http://www.driftlesswisconsin.com)

**Statewide information:**  
[www.travelwisconsin.com](http://www.travelwisconsin.com)

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The Kickapoo Valley Reserve is open year-round for recreation, education and special events.

Located in the heart of the Driftless Area, the ridges and valleys carved by the Kickapoo River offer spectacular scenery.

The state-sanctioned Kickapoo Reserve Management Board is responsible for managing the 8,569-acre property on behalf of the State of Wisconsin and Ho-Chunk Nation. As a publicly protected property – subject to state, tribal and federal laws – visitors are asked to be aware of the rules and permit requirements covered in this brochure.

### “Driftless”

During the last ice age, between 2 million and 10,000 years ago, glaciers covered much of Wisconsin. The glaciers deposited vast amounts of sediment called drift; however, glaciers never covered this part of the state therefore it’s known as the Driftless Region.



## History

This magnificent public property exists today because of an abandoned flood control project.

Initiated through Congress in the early 1960’s, the original intent was to dam the Kickapoo River as a means of protecting downstream communities from frequent, devastating floods. As the project came closer to reality, the scope expanded with a promise to enhance tourism with a man-made lake.

The environmental movement of the early 1970’s, an escalating project budget, and academic analyses that showed the lake might not live up to recreation expectations all led to the demise of the dam and lake. Construction was halted in 1975, and the property sat idle until 1995. The broken promises of flood control, lake-based tourism and economic prosperity had a huge impact on the community and displaced residents.

In 2000, the US Army Corps of Engineers officially transferred ownership of the land to the State of Wisconsin and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Trust for the Ho-Chunk Nation to be managed by the Kickapoo Reserve Management Board. The Visitor Center opened in 2004 and has hosted thousands of guests from near and far.

### This land has come full circle...

For thousands of years, Native Americans lived here. While they left hundreds of archeological sites – more than 450 have been identified through surveys – they changed the land little. The Upper Kickapoo Valley Prehistoric Archeological District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These sites include rockshelters, burial mounds, petroglyphs and open air camp and village sites.

The Ho-Chunk were removed from this part of Wisconsin via the Treaty of 1837 which they were told allowed eight years until their removal from Wisconsin – and time to negotiate a better treaty; in reality, the treaty stated eight months. “Later the interpreter admitted that he was directed to deceive the Indians.” (Nancy Lurie, Anthropologist)

As settlers occupied the valley, they cut down the trees, plowed the land and harnessed the Kickapoo River for milling. Their numbers multiplied, and their use of the land contributed to and was impacted by the river’s periodic flooding. The proposal for a dam and lake sounded like a solution. Over 149 families sold or were forced to sell their homes and businesses for the dam and lake project.

In May of 2001, during the land transfer ceremony that formally created the Reserve, it was noted that now the land has come full circle, as it is now preserved for “all the people.”



## Education

While the Kickapoo Valley Reserve offers interactive exhibits and classroom space, the most exciting learning happens in the outdoors! Explore this 8,600-acre outdoor classroom.

**Students** – of all ages can find programs of interest year-round.

**Teachers** – tailor a field trip to fit your students’ need. Curriculum options are endless!

Educational programs are offered for a nominal fee. Check out the Education Page of the website for additional details – <http://kvr.state.wi.us>

*“As you walk the Reserve, you are part of the land and its spirit. Be humble in its presence and respect its power to change, provide and continue.”*

*The Ho-Chunk Nation*



## Natural Features

The property is recognized as a National Natural Landmark, a State Natural Area, an Important Bird Area and one of Wisconsin’s Wetland Gems. The combination of geologic features with abundant water resources result in magnificent sandstone cliffs and forested bluffs towering over the Kickapoo River.

### What’s so special?

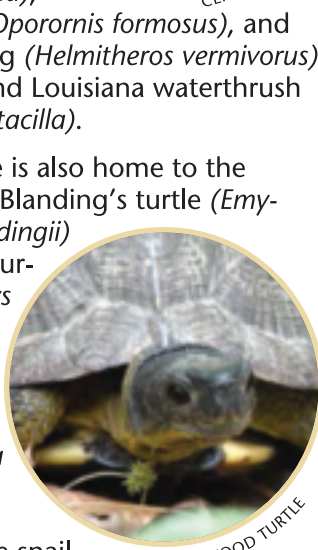
The shady, sandstone cliffs contain numerous seeps and harbor many rare plants that are restricted to cool, moist microclimates. These cliffs are an important habitat for one of Wisconsin’s largest populations of the federally threatened northern monkshood (*Aconitum noveboracense*) and the state endangered Lapland azalea (*Rhododendron lapponicum*), which is found at only one other site in Wisconsin.

Other rare cliff plants include drooping sedge (*Carex prasina*), muskroot (*Adoxa moschatellina*), purple-stem cliff brake (*Pellaea atropurpurea*), arctic primrose (*Primula mistassinica*) and the state threatened cliff cudweed (*Gnaphalium saxicola*), a central Wisconsin endemic found no where else in the world.

Noteworthy plant communities include oak savanna with an understory of native grasses, dry prairie remnants, hemlock, and pine relicts, river and yellow birch, and floodplain forest.

Over 100 species of nesting birds have been identified in the Reserve. Some rare species include red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), Acadian flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*), cerulean (*Dendroica cerulea*), Kentucky (*Oporornis formosus*), and worm-eating (*Helminthos vermivorus*) warblers, and Louisiana waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*).

The Reserve is also home to the threatened Blanding’s turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) and wood turtle (*Clemmys insculpta*) and of special concern is the *Hendersonia occulta*, which is a globally rare snail found on cool, moist, rocky slopes.



## Recreation

Hike, bike, canoe, kayak, camp, ride horse/mule, bird watch, star gaze, hunt, fish, cross-country ski, snowshoe, snowmobile...

- Camp at designated sites. All camping is primitive with no toilets or water (“roughing it”), and sites are first-come; first-served.
- Hiking and snowshoeing are allowed throughout the Reserve.
- Bike and equestrian riding are allowed on designated trails. Trails range from easy to challenging and all are guaranteed scenic. The “Old 131 Trail” is paved for a gentle bike ride with a mowed trail on the side for equestrians. All other trails are grass or natural surface.
- Canoe/kayak the Kickapoo River; bridges and access sites are labeled for convenience.
- Hunting, fishing and trapping are allowed throughout the property in accordance with state laws, bag limits and seasons.
- Cross-country ski and snowmobile trails are groomed when conditions permit. Winter trail map available in season.

## Special Events

### Two Annual Events you won’t want to miss...

**The Dam Challenge Triathlon** is held the first Saturday in October each year. Racers canoe/kayak 7 miles on the Kickapoo River, bike 14 miles on scenic roads in and around the Reserve and run 3 miles on wooded trails. Race registration opens in July – register early as it fills up quickly!

To highlight the beauty of the Reserve and get people moving after the holidays, the **Kickapoo Valley Reserve Winter Festival** is held on the first Saturday in January after the New Year. Guided hikes, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, horse-drawn sleigh rides, ice skating plus food, games and a live auction fill the day.



# The Kickapoo Valley Reserve

## Rules & Policies

"The Reserve will be preserved in a natural state and developed only to the extent necessary to enhance outdoor recreational and educational opportunities." (Memorandum of Understanding between the State of Wisconsin and the Ho-Chunk Nation)

To achieve the mission of preservation, rules have been established to protect the Reserve:

- **Pack it in, Pack it out** – take all your garbage with you; burn only paper or wood.
- **No Glass on the River** – broken glass can cause serious injury to other visitors.
- **Leave No Trace** – use existing fire pits; bury human waste (at least 200 ft from water source); use only dead-downed wood in moderation or purchase from local vendors.
- **Camping** – in designated sites only.
- **Archeological Sites** – are provided the utmost protection and any violations are subject to state, tribal and federal enforcement.
- **Trails** – equestrian and bicycle trail season is May 1 to Nov. 15; snowmobile trail Dec. 15 to March 31. Hiking allowed year-round. Trails are closed during rain/wet conditions. Old 131 Trail remains open in all conditions due to stable surface.
- **Motorized vehicles prohibited** – including E-bikes – disability access permits available upon request.
- **Respect private property boundaries** – the irregular border of the Reserve can be misleading, but it is your responsibility to know where you are – No Trespassing!
- **Dogs on Leash** – April 15 to July 31 dogs must be on a leash to protect ground nesting birds.
- **Permit Required** – trail, parking and/or camping permits are required. State Park permits do not apply.

A complete list of the Administrative Rules governing the Reserve and the subsequent penalties are posted at the Visitor Center and on the website.

## Fees & Registration

Please see our website for most current registration information. All fee revenue is used to maintain, improve, and protect the Reserve!

### Fees:

- **Camping** – \$15/ten people per night for vehicle accessible sites; \$10/ten people per night for hike/paddle-in sites.
- **Trails** – \$5/day per individual; \$15/day for family of four or more; \$20/person annual; \$35/family annual (visitors 16 & younger are not required to have a trail permit).
- **Parking** – \$5/vehicle per day at river access sites maintained as part of the Reserve. Those with camping, trail or annual permit need not pay for parking.

Contact the Visitor Center for additional assistance - (608) 625-2960; email [kickapoo.reserve@krm.state.wi.us](mailto:kickapoo.reserve@krm.state.wi.us).

## Trail Etiquette

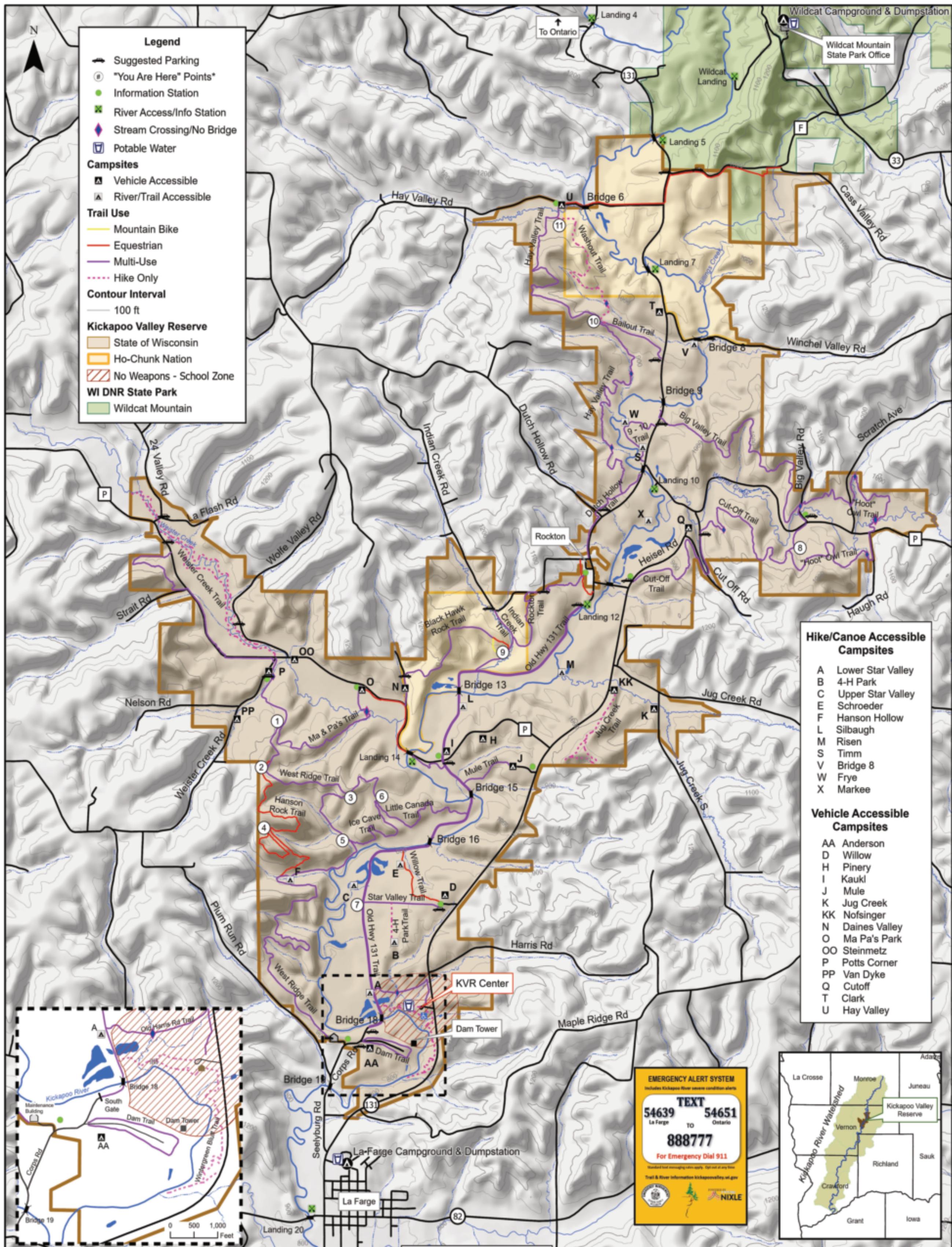
Hikers and Bikers yield to horses; stop and engage in conversation with the equestrian rider so the animal does not spook. Use extra caution on multi-use trails to reduce the risk of accidents. Stay on designated trails!

## Safety First!

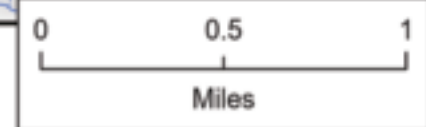
**On Land:** visitors are often surprised at the steepness of the terrain in the Reserve; use caution – don't overexert, carry plenty of water, know where you are and let someone know where you're going and when you expect to be out. Note: cellular phones, GPS and other electronic devices are often unreliable in this terrain. Plan accordingly.

**On the River:** this gentle and scenic river is highly susceptible to flash floods. Keep an eye on the weather alert systems like NIXLE during rain events. Real-time river gauges at Ontario and La Farge are excellent resources to check the condition of the Kickapoo River. Visit <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wi/nwis>.

**During Hunting Seasons:** visitors need to be aware that the Reserve is open to public hunting – the most popular are during spring turkey and fall – small game, pheasant and deer seasons. Wear bright clothing. Hunters need to be especially cautious when near recreation trails, the river, campsites and private property to ensure public safety. State laws apply on the entire Reserve: State-owned and Ho-Chunk Nation Trust lands.



\*\* "You Are Here" Points correlate to numbers at trail intersections. Note: The Kickapoo Valley Reserve is not part of WI DNR Park System. DNR Park vehicle stickers and trail passes do not apply for KVR use.



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