



FRIENDS OF

Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Season of Celebration
- A Message from the President
- A Message from the Park Superintendent
- Friends Annual Meeting
- Upcoming Programs
- CCC Interpretive Trail Update
- Straight Lake takes Center Stage
- The People behind the Parks
- Growing for the Future
- Autumn Adventures Await
- 2026 - A year of making a difference
- Membership Dues Update
- Board and Park Staff Information

A Season to Celebrate — and a Future to Build

Fall is one of the most beautiful times to visit Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks. The forests begin their annual transformation, cooler days invite us back onto the trails, and familiar views take on an entirely different look.

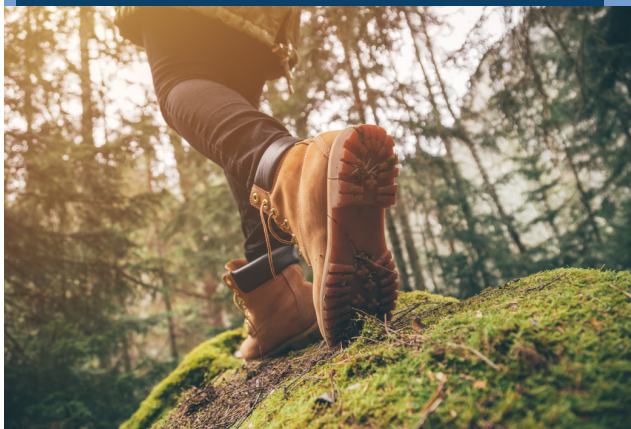
It is also a good time to look back.

Throughout 2026, a tremendous amount has been happening at our parks. Projects have been completed, trails improved, programs offered, habitats restored, visitors welcomed, and new ideas have begun taking shape for the future.

None of this happens by accident.

It happens because park staff, volunteers, Friends members, donors, community organizations and local businesses believe these parks are worth investing in. In this Fall newsletter, we want to share some of what that partnership has accomplished, introduce you to a few of the people helping make it happen, and look ahead at where we hope to go next.

There is much to celebrate—and much more still to do.



Message from the President

Looking Back — and Looking Ahead

This has certainly been an interesting year for the Friends of Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks.

As many of you know, I recently moved from Vice President into the role of President following Dani Mortenson's decision to step down. I want to thank Dani for her service and for the time and energy she has given to our organization and our parks. Taking on this role has given me an opportunity to think about where we have been and, more importantly, where we want to go.

When you look around Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks, it is easy to see what Friends members, volunteers, donors, park staff and community partners can accomplish together. From the restoration of the historic Horizon Rock Shelter and the creation of the CCC Camp Trail, to educational programs, habitat projects and new visitor experiences, we have much to be proud of.

But now it's time to look beyond the next project.

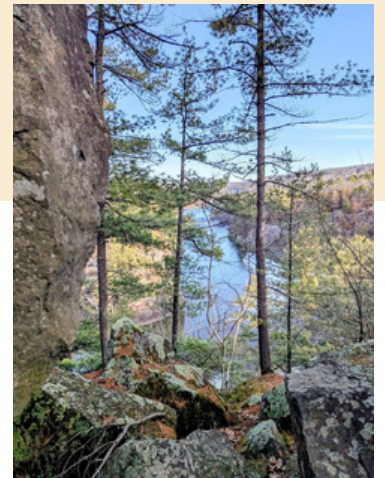
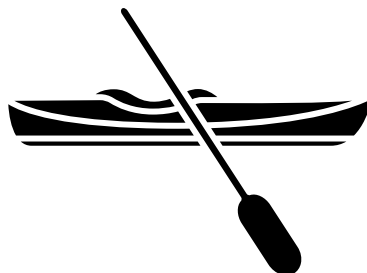
Thanks to a generous \$10,000 grant from the St. Croix Valley Foundation, we will begin a strategic planning process to help us determine where we want our Friends organization to be three to five years from now, where we can make the greatest difference, and how we can get more people involved. And we don't want that vision to belong only to the Board. We want to hear from our members, volunteers, park staff and everyone who loves these parks. If you have an idea, a dream for the parks, or simply want to become more involved, we want to hear from you.

Our purpose is simple—to help make Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks even better for those who enjoy them today and for the generations who will follow.

There is plenty of work ahead, but there is even more to be excited about.

Thank you for being a Friend of our Parks!

**Art Anderson
President**



Message from the Park Superintendent



Interstate Park Superintendent's Update

First of all, I want to thank the Friends for all the support you have provided to Interstate Park this past summer. From helping keep the Ice Age Interpretive Center open for our visitors to supporting 20 new fire rings in the North and Group Campgrounds, five new CCC interpretive signs, the new 1,100-foot CCC Trail, the ribbon cutting of the Horizon Rock Shelter, and many programs, your help makes an impact and ensures that our visitors have an amazing experience at Interstate Park.

I also want to say thank you to the staff at Interstate Park. This summer has been quite a challenging one, with LTE staff turnover, work restrictions, construction, wildfire smoke, and the hot, humid days of summer. Even with these challenges, staff continued to put forth a great effort to keep the buildings and grounds in good shape for our visitors. At times, everything may not have looked exactly how we would have wanted it to, but sometimes that is what happens during a challenging year. We are fortunate that several LTE staff members will be staying with us into the fall, and I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish.

As we move into fall, two significant construction projects will begin. The week of September 8 will start with mobilization for sewer replacement in the beach area and repaving of the park road. The sewer project will replace the line beneath the beach parking lot leading to the lift station. During the week of September 14, there will be a day when the park road will be closed to traffic so the sewer line can be replaced beneath the road.

Road repaving will include the main park road from the Pothole Trail parking lot through the River Bottoms Picnic Area, as well as the beach parking lot. There will be delays in accessing some areas of the park during the week, along with temporary closures to ensure the work can be completed safely and efficiently. For construction updates, please check the Interstate Park webpage or contact the park office.

Please remember to mark the Annual Meeting on October 14 on your calendar. I will be there, and I would love to hear what you have to say about Interstate, Straight Lake, or anything else you would like to talk about.

Thanks for all your support, and remember to get outside and enjoy the amazing fall weather in the parks you love!

Matthew Densow
Natural Resources Property Supervisor
Interstate/Straight Lake/Gov Knowles Rec Team



Friends of Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks Annual Meeting

Being a Friends member is about being part of a community that cares about Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks.

Your membership helps support educational programs, special events, trail and habitat improvements, historic preservation and projects that make our parks even better. Whether you give your time, share your talents, provide financial support, or simply believe in what we're doing—every member makes a difference.

Thank you for being a Friend and helping care for these special places.



Friends Annual Meeting Wednesday, October 14 at 5:00 p.m. Interstate Park Ice Age Interpretive Center



Friends members, please join us for our Annual Meeting and an evening of good food, conversation and a special program! We'll enjoy a catered meal from Village Pizzeria, share some of what we've accomplished this year, talk about what's ahead for the Friends and our parks, elect new board members, celebrate volunteers and most importantly, spend some time together!

Come enjoy dinner, visit with fellow Friends members, share your ideas and celebrate another year of supporting Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks.

Good food, good friends—and a few feathered guests! We hope you'll join us!

Following the Annual Meeting ...

Owls! A presentation by the Wildlife Science Center



When daylight ends, some of nature's most fascinating predators become active. Often heard, seldom seen, owls rule the night sky. Meet some of the most amazing raptors, and learn about the amazing adaptations these nocturnal birds of prey rely on to find prey, hide, defend territory, and take care of their young. **You'll have an opportunity to see these incredible birds live and up close while learning more about owls and their fascinating adaptations.**

Check out the exciting programs coming to Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks!

Be sure to check out our Website, or scan the QR code to see our events.



FRIENDS OF
Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks



Fall Celebration & Interstate Park Anniversary Weekend!

Saturday, September 19

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Ice Age Center

Stop in at the Ice Age Center for arts and crafts, explore animal pelts and skulls, and fall snacks.

Sunday, September 20

Free Park Admission!

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Ice Age Center

Stop in at the Ice Age Center for arts and crafts, explore animal pelts and skulls, and fall snacks.

10:00 a.m. - Noon | Celebrating the CCC Interpretive Trail

Join us at Camp Interstate and explore the newly improved CCC Interpretive Trail. Help us celebrate the new interpretive signage telling the story of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the important role they played in Interstate Park's history. Enjoy cookies inspired by recipes from the CCC Camp Cookbook while discovering a little more about the people who helped shape the park we enjoy today.

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. | Raptors of the Great Lakes Region

Join us at the Ice Age Center where Christian Cold will share a fascinating presentation about the raptors that call the Great Lakes region home. Learn about these remarkable birds of prey and get an up-close look at live raptors during the program.

Celebrate Interstate Park and the Fall with us!

Straight Lake State Park Candlelight Night Hike

Saturday, Oct 24th 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Experience the magic of Straight Lake State Park along a candlelit trail! Enjoy softly lit trails, listen to the sounds of nature and enjoying the peaceful ambiance. This serene, family-friendly event offers a unique way to connect with the outdoors after dark—perfect for all ages looking to explore the park in a whole new light. **Watch for more Information Coming Soon.**



A Wisconsin State Park vehicle admission sticker is required unless otherwise stated. Outdoor programs are weather dependent—check our Facebook page for any programming cancellations due to weather.

Straight Lake State Park, 2700 120th Street, Luck, WI 54853

Interstate Park, 851 State Highway 35, St Croix Falls WI 54024

Scan the QR code to contact us with any questions



CCC Interpretive Trail Update



If you have spent any time hiking in Interstate Park, enjoying a swim at the beach, picnicking at rock shelter building, or taking in the views of the St. Croix River from one of the many trails along the cliffs and dalles, then you have inevitably done so because of the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

The summer of 2026 saw the near completion of a new 0.25 mile accessible trail at the site of the CCC camp near the river bottoms at Interstate Park. This new trail includes 10 beautiful interpretive panels that tell the story of the CCC and their impact at Interstate Park. The panels dive into the daily lives of a CCC worker – exploring the origins of the federal program and the men that made up the camp, exploring life at Camp Interstate, and the ingenuity used to move and break rocks. While other panels highlight special projects, buildings and discoveries made at the park.

This monumental effort would not have been possible without the interest, research and dedication of Friends member Nancy Beck. Her passion with this project began with her time as board director and was carried forward even after her term expired. A great thank you is extended to her for this project! Additionally, we have to thank Beth Mittermaier and Trudy Lorenz who spent numerous hours creating and reviewing the interpretive panels. We also extend a huge thank you to park staff and Friends members Dwight and Dave that helped with their installation. Finally, a huge thank you must be extended to Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program that provided matching grants for these projects!

Please join us this September 20 at the site of the CCC Camp, for a celebration of this project on Interstate Park's 126 th Anniversary! Beverages and cookies made from recipes of the CCC days will be provided.

Please visit our website for more information and for many historical photos about the CCC at Interstate Park.



Straight Lake Takes Center Stage

A New Fall Tradition Begins

On Saturday, October 24, from 5:00–8:00 p.m., the Friends of Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks will host the park's first Fall Candlelight Night Hike.

For anyone who has visited Straight Lake during the day, you already know what a special place it is. But after sunset, the park takes on an entirely different personality.

Trails that are familiar during the day become quieter. The sounds of the woods seem a little closer. And on an October evening, with fall in the air and the trail softly illuminated, it should be a pretty special experience.

Our goal is to create an evening that families, friends and visitors of all ages can enjoy. Plans include a lighted hiking route, Trolley rides between the parking area and trailhead, and a warm gathering area where hikers can relax after returning from the trail. And because this is our first year, we are sure we will learn a few things along the way!

We hope this becomes more than a one-time event. We would love to see the Straight Lake Candlelight Night grow into an annual tradition that people look forward to every fall.

Why Straight Lake Matters

Interstate Park may be the better-known of the two properties our Friends organization supports, but Straight Lake State Park is every bit as important to our mission.

Its quiet lakes, forests, wetlands and trails provide an experience very different from the dramatic cliffs and river views of Interstate Park. That difference is exactly what makes supporting both parks so rewarding.

We hope you'll join us October 24 and experience Straight Lake after dark.

Maybe we'll be starting a tradition together.



Straight Lake State Park
— where time lingers

Join the adventure— Volunteer with us!



Scan the QR
Code for more
info

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PARKS Volunteers Make It Happen

It's easy to see a finished project. It is harder to see all the people behind it. **Someone** helped clear the trail, **Someone** staffed the Gift Shop. **Someone** helped a child with a craft. **Someone** checked in runners. **Someone** pulled invasive plants. **Someone** helped set up chairs before a program—and stayed afterward to put them away. **Someone** planted. **Someone** painted. **Someone** answered a question from a visitor.

AND QUITE OFTEN, THAT SOMEONE WAS A VOLUNTEER

The Friends of Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks is a volunteer-driven organization. Our work depends upon people willing to give a little of their time to help make these parks better. The good news is that volunteering doesn't have to mean taking on another full-time job. Sometimes we need someone for an afternoon. Sometimes we need help at a single event. Sometimes we need someone with a particular skill. And sometimes we simply need another pair of hands.

THERE'S PROBABLY A PLACE FOR YOU

You could be the **SOMEONE** we are looking for
Volunteer opportunities can include:

Assisting with special events, educational programs or in the gift shop, trail and habitat projects, pollinator garden, invasive species removal, membership and community outreach, fundraising and so much more!

We are Looking for Volunteers Interested in ...

Joining the Board of Directors

Marketing and Outreach

Gift Shop Manager

Graphic Design (Newsletter/Posters)

Serving on Committees

Volunteer Coordination



GROWING FOR THE FUTURE

Emerald Ash Borer has taken a heavy toll on Interstate Park, forcing the removal of hundreds of ash trees that have become diseased and unsafe. Now it's time to look ahead. By planting new native trees, we can begin restoring the shade, habitat and natural beauty that make the park so special. Every tree we plant today is an investment in the park's future.

Rebuilding the Forest One Tree at a Time

If you have visited Interstate Park recently, you have probably noticed something missing, trees. The Emerald Ash Borer has impacted hundreds of trees throughout the park. Many have already been removed, particularly in campgrounds, parking areas and other locations where dead and weakened trees could create safety concerns.

Seeing mature trees disappear from familiar areas of the park isn't easy. However, removing trees is only part of the story. Now comes the opportunity to begin growing the next generation. This year, the Friends dedicated our GiveBIG campaign to helping purchase larger replacement trees for Interstate Park. We know we cannot replace every tree that has been lost, nor can we replace decades of growth overnight. What we can do is work with park staff to strategically plant new trees in areas where they will make a difference—providing future shade, restoring the landscape and helping maintain the character of the park for generations to come. It is one of those projects where the real results may not be fully appreciated for many years. Someone planted many of the trees we enjoy today knowing that they might never sit beneath their full-grown branches. Now it's our turn.

PLANTING FOR SOMEONE WE MAY NEVER MEET

There is something special about planting a tree. We may enjoy watching it grow for a few years, but the people who truly benefit may be the children and grandchildren of today's park visitors. Someday, a family may spread a picnic blanket beneath one of these trees. A camper may appreciate its shade on a hot July afternoon. A child may discover a bird's nest among its branches. They probably won't know who planted it. But they'll be glad someone did.



Autumn Adventures Await!

So Many Hikes, So Little Fall!

With miles of scenic trails to explore, fall may be the best time to hit the trails at Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks. Crisp air, brilliant autumn colors and changing views around every bend make even a familiar trail feel new again.

Climb the bluff trails at Wisconsin Interstate Park for spectacular views of the St. Croix River framed in fall color, or slow things down among the quiet forests, lakes and wetlands of Straight Lake State Park. Whether you're looking for a short walk or a longer adventure, there's a trail waiting for you.

Fall doesn't last forever—and neither do those beautiful colors.

So lace up your hiking boots, grab a friend and get outside. The trails—and fall colors—are waiting!



Why I Volunteer at Interstate Park

By Kathy Scharfenberg

My name is Kathy Scharfenberg, a longtime resident of St. Croix Falls and a volunteer at Wisconsin Interstate Park. I have been volunteering at the park for more than eight years and currently serve on the Friends Board.

I find volunteering at the park very rewarding because there are so many different ways to become involved with both people and nature. The park staff is always supportive and pleasant to work with, and I have also enjoyed getting to know many of the other volunteers.

For the past three years, I have served as the coordinator for Nature Storytime. Each Friday at 10:00 a.m., families with children up to age 8 gather to explore, learn about nature, and enjoy time together outdoors. The program is open to everyone. Registration through the Friends website is appreciated so we know how many families to plan for, but registration is not required to participate.

I also enjoy volunteering in the Gift Shop. Visitors come from all over the country—and sometimes from around the world—and it is always interesting to hear their stories and learn what brought them to Interstate Park. Working in the Gift Shop is another great way to become involved and meet people who share an appreciation for the park.

Hiking is another activity I especially enjoy. Interstate Park has so many wonderful trails, and it brings me great joy to help visitors discover them and experience some of the beautiful places that make this park so special.

Volunteering at Interstate Park has given me the opportunity to meet wonderful people, spend time outdoors, and give something back to a place that means so much to our community.

2026 — A Year of Making a Difference

Programs, Events, Projects & Accomplishments

It has been a busy year for the Friends of Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks! Working alongside park staff, volunteers, presenters, donors and community partners, we have continued to invest in experiences and improvements at both parks.

Programs & Special Events

- First Day Hikes at Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks
- Interstate Park Candlelight Night
- Numerous bird, flora and fauna hikes at both parks
- Free fun weekend with a number of educational programs
- Snake Discovery – Snake, Rattle and Roll, featuring native reptiles, amphibians and a live Burmese Python
- Mindful Hike on the Silverbrook Trail
- Nature Journaling and Colored Pencil/Watercolor workshops
- 6th annual Ice to Water Race
- More than 30 programs and special events provided for park visitors so far in 2026
- Approximately 44 Nature Storytime programs, offered every Friday for younger children
- Fall Celebration & Interstate Park's 126th Anniversary, including the CCC Camp Trail celebration, kids' activities and crafts, and Christian Cold's Raptors of the Great Lakes Region live raptor program
- Straight Lake State Park's first Fall Candlelight Night Hike, planned for October 24

Projects & Park Improvements

- Celebrated Horizon Rock shelter reopening with a ribbon cutting and public open house
- Completed the new CCC Camp Trail at Camp Interstate, with funding from a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant
- Installed five new CCC interpretive signs telling the story of the Civilian Conservation Corps at Interstate Park
- Continued work on Nature Journaling Trail interpretive signage
- Continued development of new pollinator interpretive signage
- Supported efforts to replace trees lost to Emerald Ash Borer and hazardous-tree removal
- Dedicated the 2026 GiveBIG campaign to planting new trees at Interstate Park
- Purchased and helped install 20 New Campsite Fire Rings with a matching grant from Friends of Wisconsin State Parks.
- Completed a major remodel and update of the Ice Age Interpretive Center Gift Shop
- Continued planning for interactive educational displays at the Ice Age Interpretive Center, with approximately \$13,000 raised toward the project

And We're Not Done Yet!

Every program offered, tree planted, trail improved, sign installed and project completed represents people working together for our parks.

Thank you to our Friends members, volunteers, donors, park staff, presenters and community partners who continue to make all of this possible.

Two Parks. One Friends Group. A Lot Accomplished in 2026.

Membership Dues

Membership Dues to Increase in 2027

The membership dues for the Friends of Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks will be increasing starting January 1, 2027. While it is never an easy decision to raise membership dues, it was decided that we needed to do so to accommodate the ever increasing operational costs of the organization – everything from postage and printing to internet and website maintenance fees. To help with our decision, we investigated the membership dues for a number of friends organizations across the state. We are looking to add additional membership perks and events in the future for both current and new members.

Level	Old Rate	New Rate	Benefitis
Friend (Individual)	\$10/Year	\$20/Year	- E-Newsletters and Annual Report 10% Discount at Gift Shop - Invites to Members Only Events and Workshops - One Vote at Annual Meeting
Family	\$20/Year	\$40/Year	- Friend Benefits + 2 Votes at Annual Meeting
Good Friend	\$25/Year	\$50/Year	- Friend Benefits + - New/Upgrading Members Receive Friends T-Shirt
Best Friend	\$100/Year	\$100/Year	- Friend Benefits + - New/Upgrading Members Receive Friends Sweatshirt
Best Friend Life (Individual)	\$250/Once	\$250/Once	- Friend Benefits + - New/Upgrading Members Receive Friends Sweatshirt
Corporation or Business Life	\$500/Once	\$1,000/Once	Recognition on Social Media, Website, etc.



Be a part of something bigger!

Whether through donations, membership, or volunteering, your support makes a lasting impact.

All members and donors will be acknowledged in our Annual Report, to be published in February 2027

Every gift—big or small—helps protect and enhance Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks!

Name

Address

City, State, Zip code

Email and Phone Number

Friend - \$10/yr. ☐

Family - \$20/yr. ☐

Good Friend - \$25/yr. ☐

Best Friend - \$100/yr. ☐

Best Friend Life - \$250/Life ☐

Corporation - \$500/Life ☐

Enclosed Membership \$

Enclosed Donation \$

Enclosed Endowment \$

You can also sign up online with PayPal at:

<https://friendsofinterstateandstraightlakeparks.org/membership/>

Please Send To: Membership, Friends of Interstate Park, PO Box 703, St. Croix Falls WI 54024

Legacy Giving Corner: Leave a Lasting Impact

For 125 years, Wisconsin Interstate Park has been a beloved natural sanctuary, offering stunning landscapes, outdoor adventures, and rich history. Help preserve the park's beauty and legacy for generations to come through legacy giving.

By including Wisconsin Interstate Park and the Friends of Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks in your estate plans, you create a lasting impact that supports conservation, educational programs, and visitor experiences for years to come. Whether through a bequest, trust, or other planned gift, your generosity will help preserve these special places.

To explore legacy giving options, contact Heather Logelin at the St. Croix Valley Foundation (715-386-9490) or email info@scvfoundation.org.

Thank you for being a steward of Wisconsin Interstate Park and Straight Lake State Park's future!

Board of Directors and Park Staff

Friends of Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks 2026 Board of Directors

🌿 Dedicated to Preserving and Enhancing Our Parks 🌿

Executive Board

- ♦ **President:** Art Anderson – acaenator@gmail.com
- ♦ **Vice President:** Kirby McDonald – Kirbymcdonald1@gmail.com
- ♦ **Secretary:** Derek Anderson – derekanderson06@gmail.com
- ♦ **Treasurer:** Sandy Anderson – sanand56.sa@gmail.com

Board Members

- ✓ Barb Ceder – barbara.ceder@gmail.com
- ✓ Kathy Scharfenberg – kathyscharfenberg299@gmail.com
- ✓ Kevin Rogers – kjrogers1208@hotmail.com
- ✓ Carol Wickboldt (Membership Chair) – carolwickboldt@gmail.com
- ✓ Dani Mortenson – dani.mortenson@yahoo.com

Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks Staff

Park Superintendent: Matthew Densow – matthew.densow@wisconsin.gov

Park Manager: Hannah Reed – hannah.reed@wisconsin.gov

🇺🇸 The Friends of Interstate and Straight Lake State Parks is a volunteer-driven organization committed to supporting the parks through conservation efforts, educational programs, and community engagement.

On a mission to fit all the puzzle pieces into a masterpiece for our Parks!

