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The Midwest's Aerobic Recreation Magazine

# silent

## SPORTS

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Magical Forest**  
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# The SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST for All Your Silent Sports & Family



## Patrick Lapinski

*Editor's Note: Patrick Lapinski is a freelance writer from Superior, Wisconsin. Since 1990, he has written extensively on the Great Lakes Maritime industry, the Great Lakes region, and tourism for the chambers of commerce in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Snowshoeing in the Lake Superior Municipal Forest is Patrick's favorite way to enjoy the forest; traversing the ravined topography within a blanket of silence provides unique experiences for a person with curiosity, which show in his writing.*

Superior, Wisconsin, is in close proximity to heavily forested areas, with land under all levels of ownership, from private to governmental. Also, in its collective backyard, Superior has the third largest urban forest in the country: the 4,442-acre Superior Municipal Forest.

The Superior Municipal Forest is a place where you and your family can turn off the outside noise, reconnect with your inner self, and focus on being in the moment as you pursue the many Silent Sports that enrich your spirit. In the cyclical change of seasons, we note the passing of time and adjust our activities accordingly. And Superior is a premiere place to explore and enjoy.

## Glorious Distance & Beautiful Variety

With 17.75 miles waiting for you in the Superior Municipal Forest, groomed ski trails run the gamut from short, beginner's loops, to challenging, hilly advanced trails. All trails take adventurers to scenic views, including vistas from the bluffs of Chase's Point overlooking the St. Louis River and Clough Island.

And don't forget your pets! A growing population of skiers love to skijor through the wilderness the Superior Municipal Forest offers. Also, the Superior Municipal Forest offers snowshoeing alongside groomed ski trails or off-road through deep woods beneath towering



You can ski for yourself and ski with the family at the Superior Municipal Forest's many miles of well-groomed beginner to expert ski trails.

PHOTO BY JOE POLECHECK, COURTESY OF TRAVEL SUPERIOR.

pine trees where the only sound is the wind sighing through the treetops.

## A History of Steady Progress

Under the management of the City of Superior and the Department of Parks, the Superior Municipal Forest has struck a well-planned and managed balance between meeting the outdoor needs of the community, as well as helping pre-

serve portions of the forest for the rigid scientific research taking place within its boundaries. Linda Cadotte, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry for the City of Superior, said the approach has been steady but slow, while maintaining the wilderness integrity in their decisions on trail spurs, conservation easements, and development.

Cadotte added that the Municipal Forest draws about 4,500 visitors annually.



Arguably, the two most popular and well-known attractions in the forest are the off-leash dog park and the Superior Municipal Forest Disk Golf Course. Established in 2019, the disk golf course is still developing, but its Lake Superior Open, with a purse of over \$15,000, drew 344 participants this past September. As a disk golf town, the City of Superior is ranked No. 3 in the nation in the small town (under 50,000) category.

## Getting There & Getting Going

The busiest entry point for the average forest user is the Millennium Trailhead at 28th and Wyoming. This 2.8-mile paved trail is popular with day hikers, families, and inline skaters/roller skiers. The Millennium Trail is relatively flat and wide, making it enjoyable for visitors of all ages to experience. It's wheelchair accessible and, during winter months, the city hosts a warming shack for skiers to use.

Cyclists converge on the forest daily to wind their way through on the Pokegama Trail, which begins off of Hwy. 105, taking riders inland for roughly four miles before its end. According to the MTB Project, a national mountain bike website dedicated to the sport: "As the trail progresses, you'll encounter numerous quick drops and short punchy climbs while making your way to where the trail dips to a boardwalk creek-crossing. Old-school fiends will love the presence of chunky roots to rattle your bones and sap all of your speed, and the occasional log-over keeps things interesting." Maintained by volunteers from the Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS), the Pokegama Trail is characterized as an intermediate to difficult ride.

## Superior Amenities

Whether you are part of a club, an athlete in training, a family in search of exploration, a birder, or a soloist looking for an immersive experience, the Superior Municipal Forest is just a 10-minute ride from all the amenities the City of Superior has to offer. Out of town guests can find a variety of lodgings, from major hotel chains to quaint cottage experiences on the outskirts of the city. Multiple dining options are available, from traditional take-out to sit-down restaurants.



Within the Superior National Forest, ever-changing beauty awaits your speedy Silent Sport of choice as well as the leisurely family sightseeing tour, no matter the season.

PHOTO BY JOE POLECHECK, COURTESY OF TRAVEL SUPERIOR.



Researchers from the Lake Superior Estuarine Research Reserve collecting samples to return for review at a water collection site.

PHOTO BY THE LAKE SUPERIOR ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE, COURTESY OF TRAVEL SUPERIOR.



The new primitive boat launch on the Pokagema Bay, opened in September 2021.

PHOTO BY THE LAKE SUPERIOR ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE, COURTESY OF TRAVEL SUPERIOR.



For those with a thirst to quench, downtown Superior's historic North End is where you can step back in time to Superior's maritime heritage at the Anchor Bar & Grill. The downtown district is also the place to sample some of the locally brewed craft beers on the outdoor patio at the Earth Rider Brewery, or wash down a great slice of pizza at Thirsty Pagan Brewing.

Superior is also a great place for gift shopping, where you can come away with everything from authentic Northwoods clothing to unique gifts from local artisans. And don't forget to take some time to visit the Richard I. Bong Veterans Historical Center ([bongcenter.org](http://bongcenter.org)) to appreciate the sacrifices and contributions of the Northland's military veterans, as well as restored, historical aircraft, tanks, and other equipment of note. Or step further back in time when you visit the stunning Victorian-era Fairlawn Museum ([superiorpublicmuseums.org/fairlawn-mansion/](http://superiorpublicmuseums.org/fairlawn-mansion/)).

Superior is also home to one of the busiest commercial ports on the Great Lakes, drawing visitors from around the world during the shipping season. For a

close-up look at this rich heritage, a tour of the historic whaleback vessel *Meteor* on Barker's Island will take you back to the origins of this shipping community and is within an easy walk to the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve's headquarters on Barker's Island where you can learn about Lake Superior, our greatest natural resource ([superiorpublicmuseums.org/ss-meteor/](http://superiorpublicmuseums.org/ss-meteor/)).

Check out all the outstanding museum tours Superior has to offer Silent Sporters and their families at: [superiorpublicmuseums.org](http://superiorpublicmuseums.org).

### Boreal Forest

The Superior Municipal Forest was established in 1942 when Douglas County deeded the 4,442-acre parcel of land to the City of Superior. Since its inception, little has changed. There are only two unpaved roads that access the forest as well as several trailheads. The forest is an exemplary example of a Boreal (clay plain) forest. This type of forest is predominantly comprised of white spruce, balsam fir, paper birch, northern white cedar, eastern white pine, eastern hemlock, balsam-poplar,

and quaking aspen.

Many creatures great and small call the Superior Municipal Forest home, from black bear to the endangered wood turtle, plus numerous species of small mammals such as wobbly porcupines and secretive American martens and fishers. As a hobbyist pursuit, birding is popular in the Municipal Forest due to its proximity to major flyways. Among the rarest of species making the forest their home are the blackburnian warbler, Cape May warbler, and northern harrier, as well as the resurgent bald eagle.

### On the Water

While ownership and management of the forest fall under the purview of the City of Superior, the forest is encompassed by the larger Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve. Executive Director Deanna Erickson heads a team of biologists and scientists that conduct field studies within the forest and its adjacent waterways.

Spring, summer, and fall bring the most visitors to the forest. These seasons see an influx in hikers, berry pickers, and



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Whether après ski, bike, hike, skijor, snowshoe, run, or family nature-exploring fun, you can then enjoy the welcoming and often unique amenities the City of Superior has to offer, such as a tour of the SS Meteor, the last surviving ship of the unconventional whaleback design. Check out [superiorpublicmuseums.com](http://superiorpublicmuseums.com). To the SS Meteor's right is the Lake Superior Estuarine Research Reserve building and, to its right, is the Lake Superior Estuarium, offering a visitor's center where you can learn more about the estuary.

PHOTO BY JOHN HEINO, COURTESY OF TRAVEL SUPERIOR.

mountain bikers, but they also bring into focus the waterborne activities that have transcended eons of time from the aboriginal, first nation inhabitants to the era of fur trappers and loggers. These wonderful woods, with their tall overstory, are awesome to walk beneath, or ski, snowshoe or bike, but there is another dynamic component greatly enriching the Superior Municipal Forest: its waterways.

The Pokegama River, part of the St. Louis River Estuary Water Trail, provides an excellent canoe, kayak, or paddleboard route to Dwight's Bay, where the Pokegama opens out into Spirit Bay and the St. Louis River.

"Pokegama" is a word that comes from bakegamaang, and bakegamaang means in Ojibwe a bay or a lake that opens out into another," explained Deanna Erickson, Executive Director of the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve. Erickson described the experience of paddling down the Pokegama from the new site: "It gets wider and wider and wider, and then, eventually, you come into this little beautiful wetland area behind Clough Island and you come out into Spirit Lake. It's just like the full grandiosity of the estuary itself. And really, that river, those wetlands back there, the wild rice that still exist in Pokegama Bay. I think that's a really special place; a really special

waterway."

This past September, the new Pokegama boat launch was dedicated with a day of activities designed to celebrate the addition of this new facility, which includes restrooms, parking, a dock, and paddle craft launch. The launch site dedication comes within a year of the federal recognition of the St. Louis River Estuary Water Trail. The Pokegama Launch was designed using federal funds from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and constructed using federal funds from the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, both part of the Office for Coastal Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Department of Commerce, according to a press release issued by the Research Reserve. In addition, funds for construction were provided to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension with matching funds from the City of Superior.

### Superior: A Forest & Community for Everyone

"We've got a ton of amazing resources and superior, more green space than most communities," Codette said. "We've got one of the largest sand spits in the world on the largest freshwater lake, Wisconsin

Point; we've got Barker's Island, the municipal forests."

Plans are underway for development of ice fishing amenities and shoreline stabilization of Woodstock Bay as the city of Superior continues its slow but steady management of the Superior Municipal Forest as a destination point for everyone, near and far, to experience and enjoy. For outstanding Silent Sports experiences in multiple disciplines, with also so much to do and experience for the entire family, to then take things slow, to observe and learn, with great restaurants and accommodations awaiting you, Superior has it all.

The next time you pack your bags for an outdoor adventure, put the Superior Municipal Forest at the top of your list. You and your family will be glad you did.



Ah, the Millennium Trail! No matter your footwear, or the Silent Sports wheels you choose to use, or pace of travel, the well-maintained Millennium Trail takes you there for miles and miles in beauty and style.

PHOTO BY JOE POLECHECK, COURTESY OF TRAVEL SUPERIOR.