

Educational Corner—Submitted by Mindy Koch Michigan's Hidden Gems

Michigan State Forest Campgrounds have a long and rich history that dates back to the early 1900's providing a unique rustic camping experience. The first State Forest Campground was established in 1921 near Mio, Michigan.

The goal of the campgrounds was to provide affordable outdoor recreational opportunities and to promote the conservation of the State's natural resources. Campgrounds were originally established in areas where people informally gathered. These popular areas generated concern that unregulated, frequent concentrated use was a wildfire threat to the state forest. Creating camping opportunities with amenities was to aid in protecting public land from wildfire. Today, State Forest Campgrounds provide amenities such as vault toilets, water, picnic tables and fire rings.

The campground system has expanded over the years and now offers 142 campgrounds with 14,100 camp sites and over 900 miles of trails in the largest State Forest system in the nation. The campgrounds provide public access for many outdoor activities, such as access to lakes and rivers for boating, fishing, and swimming; trail access for hiking, biking, cross country skiing, equestrian activities, snowmobiling and off-road vehicle use; and access to public land for hunting.

State Forest Campgrounds are a great deal at \$20 a night. A Recreation Passport is also required to utilize the campgrounds.

Michigan State Forest Campgrounds play a critical role in conservation efforts and promoting environmental awareness. They continue to be a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts desiring to enjoy the beauty of Michigan's landscape.

