

Overview



Whether it's a morning trek, a family weekend ride or a part of your weekly fitness regime, hike, pedal or roll along over 45 miles of trails offered throughout the county that serve not only as recreational amenities, but as valuable resources that link communities, schools and neighborhoods. Cycling is a great way to enjoy the outdoors, experience nature up close and get some exercise. The Prairie Trail stretches 25.5 miles from Algonquin to just shy of the Wisconsin State Line and connects eight McHenry County communities in between, including Algonquin, Lake in the Hills, Crystal Lake, Prairie Grove, McHenry, McCullom Lake, Ringwood and Richmond.

The trail follows the former Chicago and Northwestern rail line that ran from Kane County into Wisconsin.

There are several scenic and recreational stopping points along the Prairie Trail, including the Fox River and Larsen Prairie. Main access points are located north of Algonquin, along Main Street in Crystal Lake, at Petersen Park in McHenry, and in Glacial Park north of Ringwood. The trail is opened daily, sunrise to sunset.

From the Prairie Trail, users have access to over 100 miles of trails including the Hebron Trail, Ridgefield Trace, the Fox River Trail, the Great Western Trail, and the Illinois Prairie Path.

Trail Facts

- **The Hebron Trail** is built on the former Kenosha Division Railroad that carried passengers, mail and freight from Kenosha, WI to Rockford, IL which ran from 1860 until its final voyage in 1939.
- **Glacial Park** is home to the Lost Valley Visitor Center. This 3,400-acre site also lies within the boundaries of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge.
- **Sterne's Woods** (Owned by Crystal Lake Park District) contains Wingate Prairie Illinois Nature Preserve and is the most wooded and hilly section of the trail.
- **Diverse City Prairie**, located between Virginia Road and Route 14, was planted with native prairie plants, demonstrating the beauty of McHenry County's original plant heritage by students from School District 47.
- **Larsen Prairie** is a 20-acre site featuring prairie and fen plant communities, which offer a display of colors throughout the seasons.
- **Between the Kane County line and Route 14** in Crystal Lake, the Prairie Trail is built on the former Chicago and Northwestern rail corridor.
- **The Prairie Trail** crosses the Fox River in Algonquin on the original limestone pillars of the railroad bridge. South of Algonquin Rd. the trail then links to Kane County's Fox River Trail.
- **Long-distance cyclists** have the option to pull off and tent camp overnight at North Branch Conservation Area, Richmond. April–December. No formal amenities, see website for guidelines and pricing. Call 815-338-6223 for a permit at least 7 days in advance.



Trail Etiquette

- **Park** in Conservation District lots or appropriate street locations along the trail.
- **Leash all pets** and remove any animal waste.
- **Be courteous to other trail users.** Stay to the right side of the trail. Ride single file when in groups. Move to the shoulder if you have to stop. Bicycles yield to pedestrians.
- **Ride at controlled, safe speeds.** Announce your intentions to pass by saying, "passing on your left."
- **Approach horses slowly** and allow extra room. Never pass a horse on a bridge.
- **Remain on the trail.** Show respect for adjacent property owners and natural areas by staying on trail surfaces. Be cautious of wildlife both on and off the trail.
- **Ensure your equipment** is in working order. Carry supplies for your personal safety and comfort.
- **Help keep your trails clean.** Please remember to Pack-In-Pack-Out and bring all trash with you when you leave.



Trail Uses



Sites open sunrise to sunset.
Check for trail closures and alerts at MCCD.me/Status

PRAIRIE TRAIL SOUTH

Algonquin to Ringwood (19 miles)

This paved section provides recreational opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, roller bladers and cross-country skiers. While most of the trail is relatively flat, between Lorraine Ave. and Hillside Rd. in Crystal Lake (through Sterne's Woods) the trail is quite hilly.

PRAIRIE TRAIL NORTH

Ringwood to Wisconsin line (7 miles)

This original rail ballast/gravel trail offers a travel route for hikers, bicyclists, horseback riders and snowmobilers.

Prairie Trail to Hebron Trail (4 miles)

This trail connects to the Hebron Trail, westbound through North Branch Conservation Area.

Ridgefield Trace (7.5 miles)

Access trail at Walkup Rd. in Crystal Lake for 7.5 miles to Lake Ave. in Woodstock.



McHenry County
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

815.338.6223 • MCCDistrict.org

Report concerns or suspicious activity

Main Office: 815-338-6223

Police: 815-338-6223

Police after hours: 815-338-2144

For complete trail rules and ordinances, visit MCCD.me/SiteRules

Prairie Trail

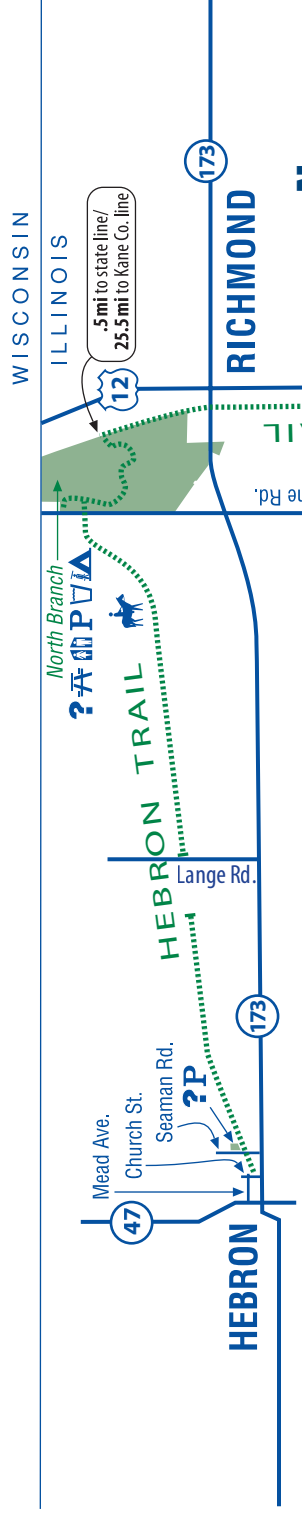
including the
Hebron Trail & Ridgefield Trace



07/2024 2500 (SP)

McHenry County
Conservation District

815.338.6223 • MCCDistrict.org



Prairie Trail – 25.5 miles
Ridgefield Trace – 7.5 miles
North Branch trail link – 1.5 miles
Hebron Trail – West 2 miles; East 2.5 miles

SYMBOLS KEY

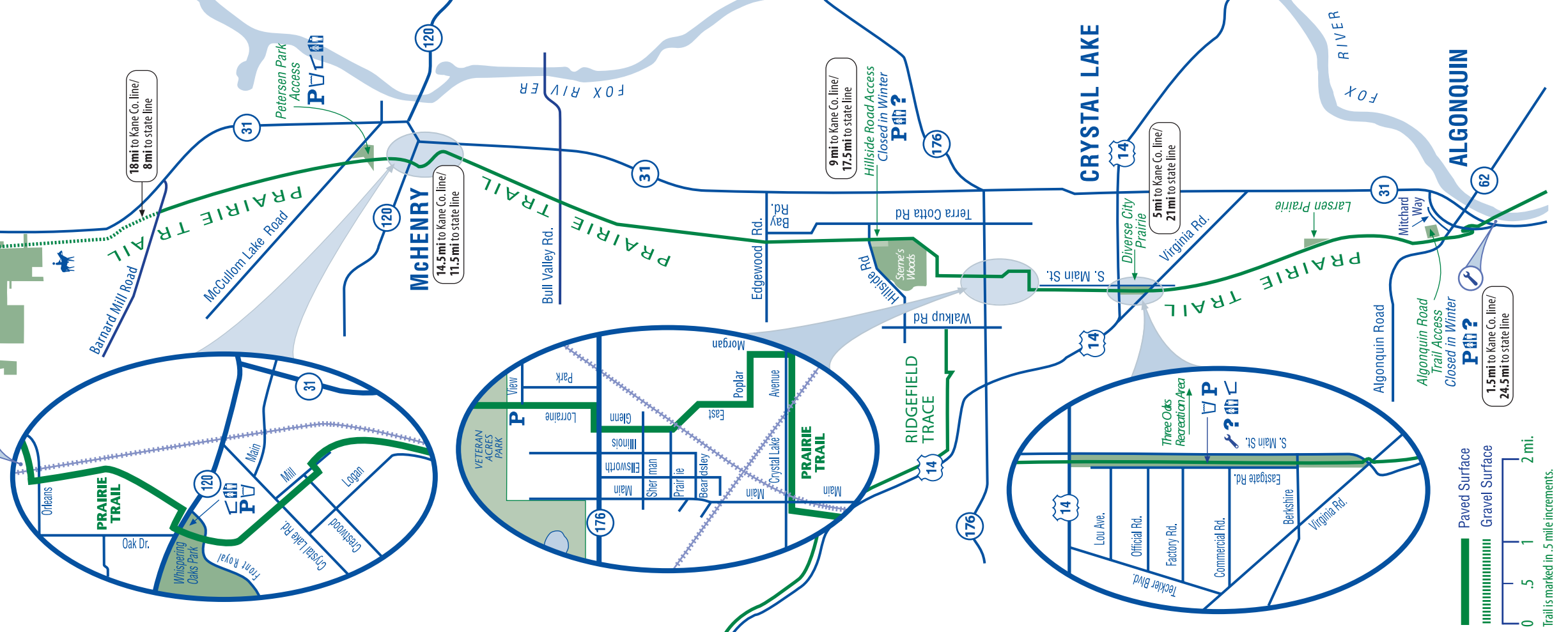
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Shelter
- Picnic Area
- Information
- Drinking Water
- Horseback Riding (gravel surfaced sections)
- Tent Camping
- Overnight pull off for cyclists only, permit required*
- Bicycle Repair Station

Trail Highlights

- ◆ **North Branch Conservation Area**
 A 1.5 mile trail link connects the Prairie Trail to the Hebron Trail. The oak savanna, sedge meadow, wetland complex and winding banks of Nippersink Creek provide a home to numerous birds, butterflies, fish and wildflowers.
- ◆ **Glacial Park** Home to the Lost Valley Visitor Center, this 3,400 acre site lies within the boundaries of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge and includes prairie, savanna, marshes, kames and Nippersink Creek.
- ◆ **Petersen Park** Owned and managed by the City of McHenry, offering many recreational amenities.
- ◆ **Whispering Oaks Park** Owned and managed by the City of McHenry, this park features Fort McHenry playground and playing fields.

WOODSTOCK
 E. Kimball Ave.
 Lake Ave.

- ◆ **Ridgefield Trace**
 Access the trail at Walkup Rd. in Crystal Lake for 7.5 miles to Lake Ave. in Woodstock.
- ◆ **Sterne's Woods** Owned and managed by Crystal Lake Park District, the area contains Sterne's Fen and Wingate Prairie Illinois Nature Preserve. It is the most wooded and hilly section of the trail.
- ◆ **Diverse City Prairie**
 Native prairie plants, demonstrating the beauty of McHenry County's original plant heritage.
- ◆ **Larsen Prairie** A 20-acre site featuring prairie and fen plant communities offering a display of colors throughout the seasons.
- ◆ **Fox River** The trail crosses the Fox River in Algonquin on the original limestone pillars of the railroad bridge. The trail then links to Kane County's Fox River Trail.



Trail is marked in .5 mile increments.