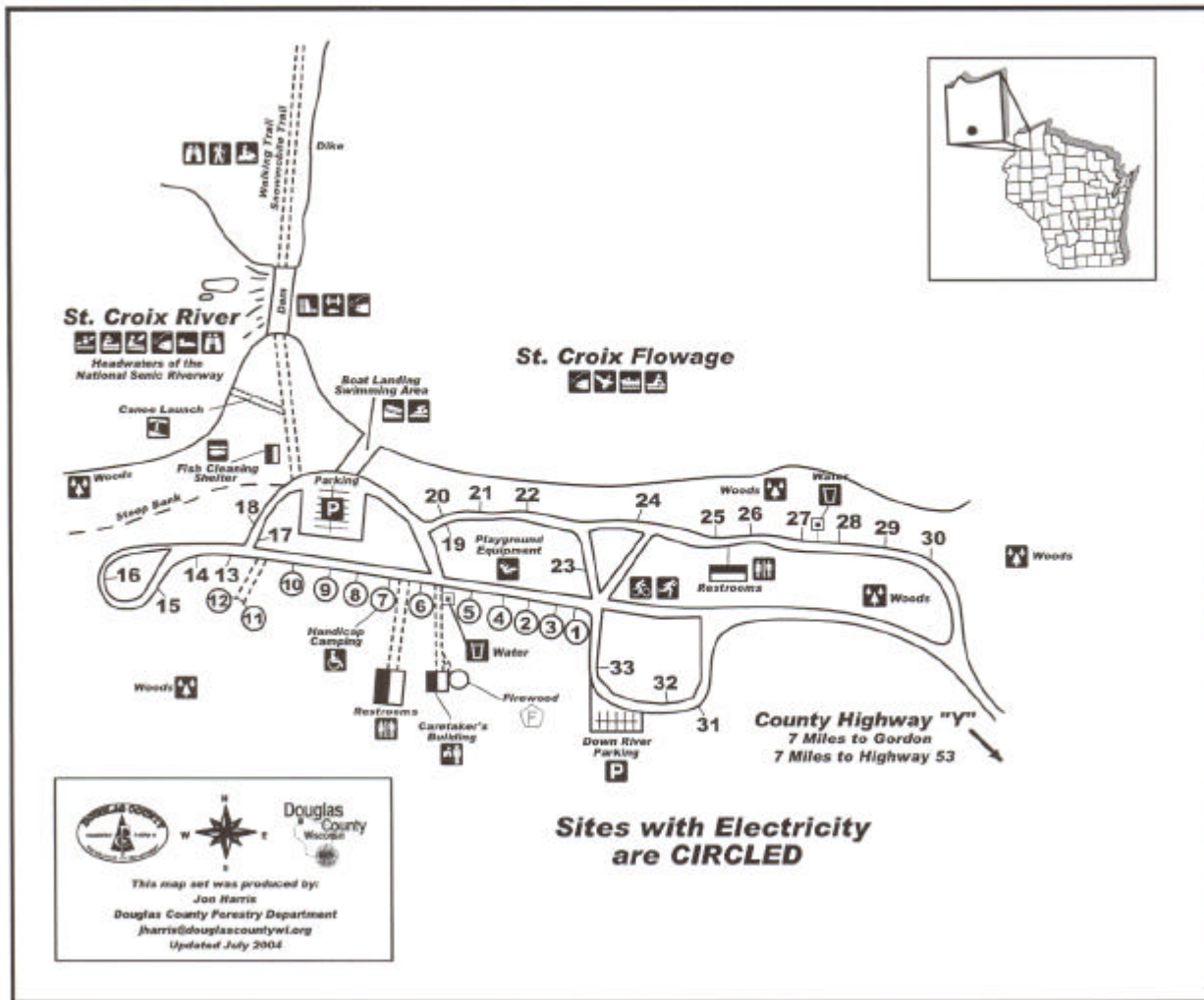


There are many picnic areas, some handicap accessible, with tables, grills, and fire rings located throughout the 15 acre park overlooking the water. There is a playground for the children, a 24 foot handicap accessible dock complete with lighting, a handicap accessible fish cleaning house, and a

canoe launching site. For camping enthusiasts, there are 21 campsites without electrical hook-ups and 12 campsites with electricity. Admission to the park is FREE, however, there is a small fee for camping and, as with all of our camping facilities, we take no reservations, it is on a "first come, first served" basis.



The Douglas County Forestry Department



Gordon Dam County Park



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Gordon Dam County Park

One of the most scenic areas in Douglas County is located at the St. Croix Flowage Dam lying seven miles downstream (west on County Hwy Y) from the town of Gordon, Wisconsin. The St. Croix Flowage Dam is rich in history dating back from the Native American tribes, which first occupied this area, through the early traders and missionaries, the logging boom of the late 1800's, the W.P.A. workforce of the 1930's, to the ongoing development of Gordon Dam County Park of today.

A large Chippewa village occupied one of the most beautiful spots on the St. Croix River just above the present dam site. Chief Kabemabe, a peaceful and friendly chief and one of the signers of the 1837 treaty document, presided over a village located about one-half mile upstream from Namai Kowagon (Sturgeon Fish Dam) on the east side of the St. Croix River. This dam showed evidence of originally being constructed by the Native Americans with rocks and sticks for the purpose of fishing.

The Native American village was located near the heavily wooded islands, which now can be plainly seen from the high "over-look" area on the south side of Curly Franks Bay. All traces of this village have now disappeared under water, however, the Douglas County Forestry Department, with the help of the Wisconsin Conservation Corps, has erected a historical marker at this "over-look" commemorating Chief Kabemabe and his village. The view of the St. Croix Flowage from this vantage point is one of the most panoramic vistas in Douglas County.

The St. Croix Flowage is part of the original river route used by early explorers, traders, and missionaries. In the early 1600's, Champlain claimed to have discovered and explored the Bois Brule and the St. Croix Rivers. In 1680, Du Lhut and his voyagers traveled this water highway in birch bark canoes from Lake Superior to the Mississippi River. It was Perrot, a French trader and explorer, who was the first man to officially

Proclaim this river as the "St. Croix" in 1689, when he claimed for France all of interior North America. The French kept the St. Croix trading route open until 1760 when the French war ended and England began to take possession of the French trading posts.

In 1837, Nicollet mapped the Mississippi headwaters and its tributaries, including the St. Croix River. His notes included a very accurate history of Native American life. He wrote of the flourishing village of Chief Kabemabe, "He that sits to the side", and Kabemabe's son, Nodin, "The wind", who had a band downstream. He described the extensive wild rice growing in the St. Croix Flowage and the large garden in the village which contained potatoes, squash, pumpkins, and a scalp pole in the same field.

In the late 1800's, the St. Croix River territory was surrounded by huge stands of virgin timber, mainly White and Norway Pine of superior grade, making this a profitable area to begin logging operations. With the large sawmills being located downstream, the only means of transportation for the logs was to float them down the river.

It became necessary to provide reservoirs to hold large volumes of water for each spring logging drive. In 1884, a logging dam was built out of rock and logs at the same site as the present dam. This dam formed what is now known as the St. Croix Flowage, the key to the water supply for all of the logging operations along the upper St. Croix River and its tributaries. The original dam had five 18-foot gates, which were 11 feet 8 inches in height, in the half-moon style.

The spring logging drive always started as soon as the lake opened, usually the beginning of April, and lasted until early July. 300 to 400 men would raft the logs and take them by steamboat down to the dam. It was not unusual for one logging camp to put in four to six million feet of logs during a drive. After the Norway and White Pine were depleted, the Jack Pine was taken, with the last and final drive being made in 1912.

Sometime after 1914, the log dam burned. A plank board walk was roughly constructed to gain access by foot across the remaining rock piles.

In 1935, the W.P.A. began construction of the present dam structure, which was completed in 1937. Although no longer used for logging operations, 1937 figures show that the water levels in 30 lakes are affected by this dam.

The current structure, completely renovated in 1988, creates the 1913 acre, 28 foot deep Flowage to the east and marks the head of the 89 mile long St. Croix Scenic Riverway to the west. The dam is 106 feet long, 12 feet high and has a fenced, 8 foot wide boardwalk for easy access to the north side of the Flowage.



The dam is a popular fishing spot, as is all of the St. Croix Flowage and River. You can expect to catch Musky, Northern Pike, Bass,

Walleye, Panfish, and Bullheads. If you are lucky, you might even hook a Sturgeon. There are several islands and peninsulas within the Flowage's 29.1 miles of meandering shoreline, making both the St. Croix Flowage and River very popular areas to explore by canoe.

Adjacent to the park, a state-maintained hiking trail leads through pines and oaks to a panoramic overlook of the St. Croix River. The mixed conifer/hardwood forests interspersed with swamps along the St. Croix River system create perfect locations for the viewing of an abundance of wildlife. White-tailed deer, bear, and an occasional moose may be observed. Cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hare, raccoons, squirrel, coyotes, and red fox are common. Mink, muskrat, otter, and beaver are plentiful and waterfowl, including the mallard, wood duck, black duck, ring-necked duck, blue winged teal, and the Canadian goose nest along the river and flowage banks. Wading birds such as the great blue heron and American bittern are commonly observed and trumpeter swans are also known residents of the flowage.