

# Overview



The McHenry County Prairie Trail stretches 26 miles from Algonquin to the Wisconsin State Line. The trail follows the former Chicago and Northwestern rail line that ran from Kane County into Wisconsin. By building the Prairie Trail along portions of the corridor that were abandoned by the railroad and complementing the existing active rail with adjacent trails, the District has recycled an old mode of transportation into one for the future.

The Prairie Trail's 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. There are also several scenic and recreational stopping points along the Trail, including the Fox River and Larsen Prairie. The Prairie Trail is open daily, sunrise to sunset.

The Hebron Trail follows the old K.D. Railroad line, connecting to the Prairie Trail at North Branch Conservation Area near Richmond and continuing 5.5 miles to Church Street in Hebron.

# Trail Facts

- ◆ Between the Kane County line and U.S. Highway 14 in Crystal Lake, the Prairie Trail is built on an abandoned rail corridor. From U.S. Highway 14 north to Ringwood, the trail is built adjacent to an active rail line, making it one of the country's longest trails along an active rail corridor.
- ◆ The Prairie Trail connects eight McHenry County communities, including Algonquin, Lake in the Hills, Crystal Lake, Prairie Grove, McHenry, McCullom Lake, Ringwood and Richmond.
- ◆ From the Prairie Trail, users have access to over 100 miles of trail network including the Hebron Trail, the Fox River Trail, the Great Western Trail and the Illinois Prairie Path.
- ◆ The Hebron Trail is built on the former Kenosha Division Railroad that carried passengers, mail and freight from Kenosha, WI to Rockford, IL. The K.D. line ran from 1860 until its final voyage in 1939.



# Site Rules

**Park** in District lots or appropriate street locations along the trail.

**Leash all pets** and remove any animal waste.

**Stay to the right side of the trail.** Bicycles must yield to pedestrians.

**Remain on the trail** unless signs indicate that there is another trail or rest area for your use. Please show respect for adjacent property owners and natural areas by staying on designated trail surfaces.

**Help keep your trails clean.** Deposit all litter and waste in designated receptacles.

**Carry appropriate equipment** and supplies for your personal safety and comfort (i.e. water, snacks, clothing, first aid kit, safety whistle, cell phone, etc.). Ensure your equipment is in working order.



**Be a good neighbor.** Look out for fellow trail users and report any problems or suspicious activity to a Prairie Trail Safety Watch volunteer or District police officer through the McHenry County Sheriff's Department at (815) 338-2144. During weekdays, call the District's Main Office at (815) 338-6223 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

# Trail Uses



## Algonquin to Ringwood (19 miles)

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

## Ringwood to Wisconsin line (7 miles)

This original rail ballast/gravel trail offers a travel route for hikers, horseback riders, bicyclists (road bicycles are not recommended) and snowmobilers (with more than 4" of snow).

## Prairie Trail to Hebron Trail (7 miles)

Prior to reaching the Wisconsin border, the Prairie Trail connects to the North Branch trail, westbound 1.5 miles, and links to the 5.5 mile Hebron Trail.



McHenry County  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

18410 U.S. Highway 14, Woodstock, IL 60098



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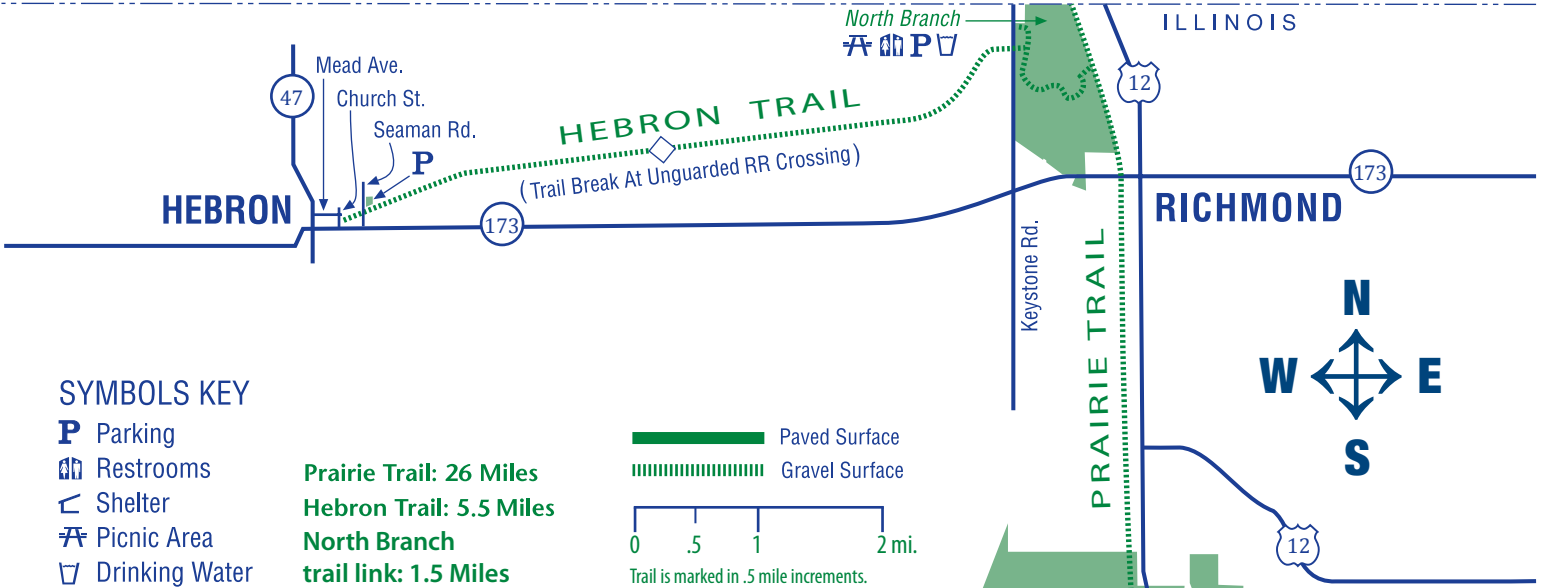
# Prairie Trail

including the Hebron Trail



McHenry County  
Conservation District

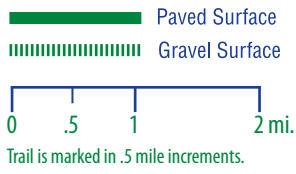
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**SYMBOLS KEY**

- P** Parking
- Restrooms
- Shelter
- Picnic Area
- Drinking Water

**Prairie Trail: 26 Miles**  
**Hebron Trail: 5.5 Miles**  
**North Branch trail link: 1.5 Miles**



# Points of Interest

- ◆ **North Branch**  
 A 1.5 mile trail link connects the Prairie Trail to the Hebron Trail through this 521 acre site. 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 3,200 acre site is the crown jewel of the District. This natural area contains prairie, savanna, marshes, a bog, Nippersink Creek and a variety of geologic wonders, including kames.
- ◆ **Petersen Park** Owned and managed by the City of McHenry, this area hosts many recreational facilities.
- ◆ **Whispering Oaks Park** Owned and managed by the City of McHenry, this park features Fort McHenry, an extensive children's playground, playing fields and open lawn areas.
- ◆ **Sterne's Woods** Owned and managed by Crystal Lake Park District, this natural area contains an Illinois Nature Preserve and Wingate Prairie. It is the most wooded and winding section of the trail.
- ◆ **Diverse City Prairie** Located between Virginia Road and Route 14, School District 47 planted this area with native prairie plants, demonstrating the beauty of McHenry County's original plant heritage.
- ◆ **Larsen Prairie** Located in Lake In The Hills on the west side of the gravel mining area, this 20 acre site offers visual relief from the surrounding development. The prairie and fen plant communities offer a stunning 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 crossing offers a picturesque view of the water below, especially during the autumn change of colors.

