

turtle river

canoe route



CHIPPEWA NATIONAL FOREST

SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

www.fs.fed.us/r9/chippewa

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The Route

The Turtle River begins at Lake Julia, 12 miles north of Bemidji and flows through the Turtle and Three Island Lakes into Turtle River Lake. The river flows out of Turtle River Lake to enter the Chippewa National Forest, where it moves through Big Rice Lake, Kitchi and finally into Cass Lake on the Mississippi River.

Water depth and rate of travel depend on the amount of rainfall and the season of the year. During the late summer months, wild rice beds may partially obstruct the route. The river is well suited for canoe travel and there are no portages along the route. Small rapids along the way provide a pleasant change of pace.

Your trip can be easily started or terminated at the bridge on Beltrami County Road 22 or just below the junction of County Road 20 and Forest Road 2177 opposite the Hanson Farm. There is also a public campground and access at Knutson Dam, three miles east of the mouth of the Turtle River, or a private access off of County Road 12 on the east side of the river.

History

The Turtle River was used extensively as a travel route by Native Americans long before Europeans came into the area. French fur traders and explorers in search of the North West Passage were probably the first Europeans to travel the route. In 1680, LaSalle sent M. Dacan to search for the Mississippi River's source. Father Hennepin's party described a lake, later named Julia by Count Beltrami as the source. American explorers Carver, Lewis and Clark and Pike all showed the source of the Mississippi as Turtle Lake. It was not until 1832 that Lake Itasca proved to be the true source of the great river.

In the early 1900's, Europeans began to settle along the Turtle River. Two of the first white families to live with in the present National Forest boundary were Lockman and Hillard, who in 1908, sold to Hanson and Hale families. By 1916, a large portion of the land along the Turtle River had been homesteaded.

Points of Interest:

A. Gull Lake: This beautiful lake offers a pleasant resting spot and access to Gull River. Watch for *amik*, the beaver or *nigig*, the otter, along the smaller river.

B. North Turtle River: The junction of Turtle River and North Turtle may be difficult to distinguish because of the wide open rice fields. North Turtle provides an upstream route to Pimushe Lake, a popular fishing area.

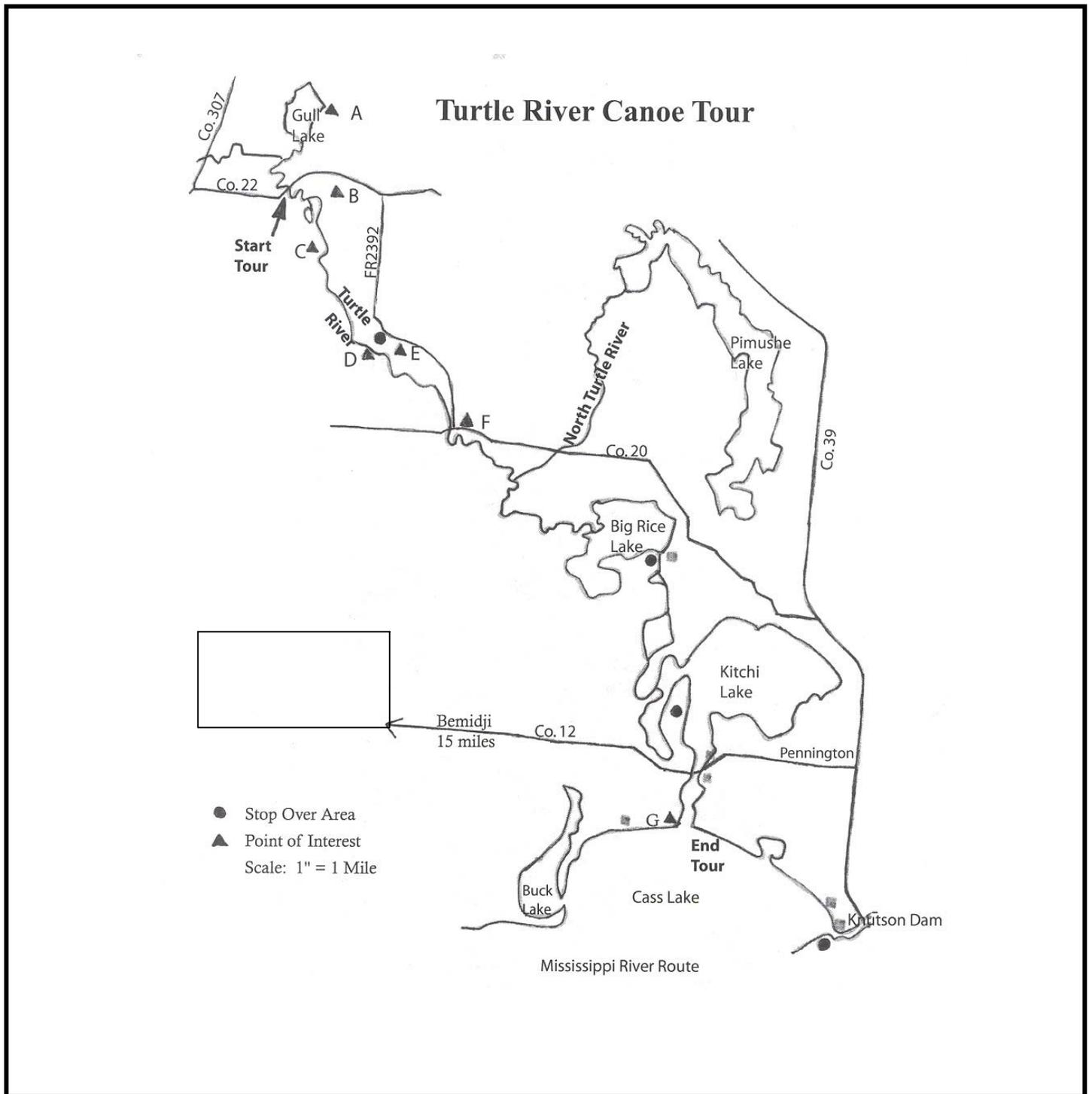
C. Big Rice Lake: One of the more widely known wild rice lakes in the area. Wild rice, or "manoomin" in Ojibwe, is an important cultural food of the Ojibwe People, a critical food source for waterfowl, and habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Wild rice harvesting begins in late summer and early fall, so August is Rice Making Moon, or Manoominike-Giizis.

D. Sawmill Site: The Hale family operated a sawmill and built a small farm on this site. Like many early homesteaders, Hale and Hanson tried to grow potatoes and perhaps wheat without much success. The combinations of short growing seasons and soil types worked against them.

E. Hanson Farm: The cut-over timber claim was acquired in 1908 by the Hanson family. The land was cleared of large white pine stumps by hand grubbing and the use of a horse-powered "stump puller".



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For More Information:

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