

Rules and Regulations

The following is a partial summary of rules and regulations that apply to the most common activities on the Forest. Forest visitors may review the complete text for rules and regulations by contacting a Hoosier National Forest (NF) office.

Please call one of [our offices](#) for more information on these items.

General Camping Rules

- Campers may stay up to 14 consecutive days within a 30-day period. Campers may not stay on the Forest more than 30 days total in a calendar year.
- At least one person must occupy a camping area during the first night after camping equipment has been set up. Camping equipment cannot be left unattended for more than 24 hours.

Backpacking

- Backpacking is allowed on National Forest lands. No permit is required.

Dispersed Camping

- Dispersed camping is allowed throughout most of the Forest with these exceptions: within campgrounds; along roads, parking areas, or day use areas within developed recreation areas; at day use trailheads or parking areas, including boat launches; within Pioneer Mothers Memorial Forest; within the Hickory Ridge Lookout Tower site; within Hemlock Cliffs area.
- If camping with a vehicle, use established pull-offs. Your camping equipment or vehicle must not block a trail, gate, or road.
- Camping and campfires are not allowed within 300 feet of trailheads or wilderness access points, or within 100 feet of trails or water bodies, or within rock shelters.

Developed Campsites/Recreation Areas

- Fees are required in season (generally mid-April through mid- to late-October).
- No more than 8 people may use a single campsite, no more than 16 for a double campsite.
- Dogs must be on a leash six feet or less and are not allowed at beaches.
- No glass containers are allowed on the beaches.
- Quiet hours are in effect 10:00 P.M. – 6:00 A.M.
- All vehicles and camping equipment must be placed on a hardened surface.
- Not more than two transportation vehicles may be parked at the site in addition to a camping vehicle (RV, pop-up, etc.) and boat. More than two tents, bicycles, and motorcycles are allowed if they fit reasonably on hardened surfaces. Additional fees may apply.
- Fire rings must be used for campfires. All fires must be in rings, with wood that fits within it.
- Day use areas are closed between 10 PM and 6 AM except for fishermen on the water.
- Alcohol is prohibited at German Ridge Lake and Beach.

- During the off-season, some portions of recreation areas may be gated. Pedestrians may enter these areas for the purpose of walking, picnicking, or fishing.

Horse Camps

- Campers may camp anywhere in the following camps as long as roads are not blocked: Shirley Creek, Blackwell, Young's Creek and Hickory Ridge. There is no fee. The German Ridge Horse Camp requires a fee and campers must camp in a designated site. A fee is required to have horses within the horse camps and to ride Hoosier NF trails (see Trail Use on reverse side).
- Day users must park in the day use parking area at German Ridge. Day users at other camps may park anywhere as long as roads are not blocked.
- Non-horse campers may use these camps but should be mindful of safety around horses.
- Only individuals camping on the site are allowed between the hours of 10 P.M. – 6:00 A.M.
- Hitching, tethering, or hobbling a horse or other saddle or pack animal to other than established hitching posts, highlines using tree saver straps, fences or within corrals is prohibited.
- Quiet hours are in effect between 10:00 P.M. – 6:00 A.M.
- Stock may not move faster than a walk.

Campfires and Firewood

- Any firewood brought onto National Forest System land must meet one of the following requirements to reduce the spread of pests and pathogens that harm the forest ecosystem.
 1. It is kiln-dried scrap lumber with no bark.
 2. It is purchased on-site.
 3. It is from your home or other Indiana location and has all bark removed.
 4. It has an Indiana DNR compliance stamp.
- Use of on-site firewood must only be from dead, downed material. Standing trees, living or dead, may not be cut or defaced.
- Small, open fires are permitted except during fire bans.
- Use a fire ring or grill if one is provided. Firewood must fit within the fire ring.

Swimming

- Swimmers may use designated beaches during daylight hours only. Public nudity is prohibited.
- Swimming is not allowed within 100 feet of a boat ramp.

Charles C. Deam Wilderness

- Use of wheeled vehicles, including carts, wagons, or bicycles is prohibited. Mechanized or motorized equipment, including generators, is prohibited.
- Hunting is permitted but target shooting is not. Paintball is prohibited.
- Group size is limited to 10 people or less.
- Camping within 100 feet of trails or water bodies is allowed only on designated sites.
- Geocaching is prohibited.

- Alcohol is prohibited at Hickory Ridge Tower.
- Camping is restricted within 300 feet of designated trailheads, wilderness access points and horse camps.
- Roadside parking and camping are prohibited along Tower Ridge Road adjacent to the Wilderness.

Collecting

- Mushroom hunting is allowed for personal use only.
- Small leaf collections are allowed.
- Some recreational mineral collecting, such as low-impact gold panning or gathering small numbers of geodes for personal use, is allowed with certain restrictions.
- Metal detecting is allowed only in developed recreation areas for items having no historical value. Only surface collecting is allowed (no digging), except at designated beaches where sifting through the sand for modern items is allowed.
- Disturbance of archaeological sites or artifacts is prohibited.
- Possessing, storing, or transporting any part of a tree or other plant in violation of existing state or federal law is prohibited.

Rock Climbing and Caving

- Rock climbing is permitted on most National Forest land except for a portion of Hemlock Cliffs.
- Forest caves are closed to visitors from September 1 through April 30 to prevent the disturbance of hibernating bats and reduce the spread of white nose syndrome in bats.

Trail Use

- Horse and bicycle riders must stay on trails specifically designated for bicycle or horse use. Stock may not be tied within reach of any living tree.
- Hikers may hike anywhere except where an area is posted closed. Shortcutting a switchback on any designated trail is prohibited.
- A fee is required for using a horse or bicycle on trails, trailheads, and horse camps.
- A fee is not required for riders 16 years of age and younger, or on the Hardin Ridge Beach access trail.
- Off road vehicles are not allowed on the Hoosier.

Hunting, Trapping, Fishing & Firearms

- Hunting is allowed anywhere on National Forest land except in recreation areas with designated boundaries, the Pioneer Mothers Memorial Forest, or where posted.
- State laws on hunting, trapping, and fishing are enforced on National Forest lands, requiring either a resident or nonresident license. Fishing is prohibited in designated swimming areas.
- Discharging a firearm (including a bow and arrow) is prohibited in or within 150 yards of a developed recreation site (including trails), a residence, or any place where people are likely to be.
- Discharging a firearm, air rifle, or gas gun from, into, or across any parking area, trail, boat ramp, body of water, or road which is open to motorized vehicle traffic is prohibited.

- Target shooting is permitted in the general forest area (except in the Charles C. Deam Wilderness).
- No posting of targets onto trees, other natural resources, or in areas where there is no adequate dirt-type backstop to ensure the stoppage of fired rounds (regardless of caliber). No firing or handling of firearms or dangerous weapons (as defined by state law) while or after consuming alcoholic beverages or unlawful controlled substances.
- No person(s) who engages in target shooting shall fail to remove from national forest system lands all shell casings, targets, and other debris resulting from the target shooting.
- No person shall shoot glass of any kind, appliances, furniture, vehicles, or other items determined to be garbage or refuse by an enforcing officer.
- Target shooting is prohibited from one half hour after sunset to one half hour before sunrise.
- Paintball is prohibited in the Charles C. Deam Wilderness, within developed recreation areas, or other special areas.

Boating

- **Only electric trolling motors are allowed on the following lakes: Tipsaw, Indian, Celina, Saddle and Springs Valley.**
- Vehicles and trailers must park in designated areas. No boats may be left on the national forest.

Fireworks

- Possessing, discharging, or using any kind of firework or other pyrotechnic device is prohibited.

Business Activities

- Selling merchandise or services, posting, or distributing any information, or conducting meetings or events requires a permit.