



STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA: GOOD EARTH STATE PARK

Completed in 2014, South Dakota's first proposed Forest Legacy project preserves the largest intact forest within the Blood Run National Historic Landmark. The property is both historically and ecologically significant, and its conservation through the USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program led to the creation of the Good Earth State Park, a new destination for both the local community of Sioux Falls and international tourists.



Project protects **236 acres** and complements an **additional 536 acres** of protected lands, including the **12 acres** of the Spring Creek Tract II in 2016 and **1.2 acres** of the Vanderpan addition in 2017.

The National Park Service (NPS) designated the Blood Run National Historic Landmark (Blood Run NHL) as a nationally significant cultural heritage site in 1970. In the 1980s, the National Congress of American Indians passed a resolution supporting its preservation. Unfortunately, the property's landmark designation does not ensure protection, and Blood Run was consistently listed on the NPS's "Landmarks at Risk" report since 1985 due to a lack of funding. This risk was compounded by local population growth in Sioux Falls and the increasing



risk of conversion from intact forest and agricultural land to subdivision for residential dwellings.

The property was identified as the highest priority by the Governor for the President's America's Great Outdoors Initiative in 2011. Its acquisition and establishment as a state park complements nearly 536 acres of land already protected in South Dakota and Iowa within the Blood Run NHL. Consistent with the State Forest Action Plan's focus on the conservation of bottomland forests, the property is managed with an emphasis on reforestation of cropland to expand the forested area, restore native grasslands, and support biological diversity.

The unique combination of wooded wetlands along the Big Sioux River, 160 foot high river bluffs, upland and bottomland forests, native prairie grasslands, and surrounding rolling farmland create a rare island of natural habitat for neo-tropical migratory birds like wood thrush.



Recreation drives economic activity on the property, particularly through the creation of Good Earth State Park. On average, 50,000 visitors enjoy the park each year, and 2020 saw an increase of more than 10,000 visitors over the previous year. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wildlife watchers spend nearly \$167 million a year in South Dakota.

According to over a century of academic and government research, Blood Run NHL is the largest documented site of Oneota culture. The property was in use from 1300 to 1750 A.D. as a ceremonial and trade center. A woodland-dependent culture, the Oneota were drawn by the area's forests which were home to food sources and building materials.

The acquisition of 236 acres of Blood Run NHL led to the creation of Good Earth State Park, a recreational boon to both the city of Sioux Falls and the State of South Dakota. The property also now provides a critical link to 760 acres of contiguous protected habitat as well as offers a fascinating glimpse into the landscape and life of the Oneota civilization.

"The cultural, educational, natural beauty and opportunity for outdoor activities of this site is of immeasurable significance to our state and the nation."

— Former Governor Dennis Daugaard



Species found on the property include the state-endangered lined snake, the silver-haired bat, which is a species of greatest conservation need as listed in the South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan, and the river otter.



AT-A-GLANCE



South Dakota's **first proposed Forest Legacy project**.



Preserves the **largest intact forest** within the Blood Run National Historic Landmark.



Project protects **1.6 miles** of frontage along the Big Sioux River and **50 acres** of floodplain.



On average, **50,000 visitors** enjoy the Good Earth State Park each year.



Acquisition of **236 acres** of Blood Run NHL led to the creation of Good Earth State Park.



Property now provides a critical link to **760 acres** of contiguous protected habitat.

Top L: Picture taken with drone of Good Earth State Park forest. (Photo: SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources); **Bottom L:** Trail through Good Earth State Park forest. (Photo: SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources); **Middle R:** The view of the Big Sioux River from an overlook deck. (Photo: SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources); **Middle R:** Blood Run project site. (Photo: Claire Harper, USFS)

For more information, visit

<https://danr.sd.gov/Conservation/Forestry/ForestLegacyProgram/default.aspx>.