

Governor Quinn Celebrates 100th Anniversary of Starved Rock State Park

Written by Andrew Mason

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Proclaims "Starved Rock State Park Day" at Popular Illinois Destination

UTICA – October 30, 2011. Governor Pat Quinn celebrated the 100th anniversary of Starved Rock State Park in Utica and proclaimed today "Starved Rock State Park Day" in Illinois. The state purchased 280 acres and created Starved Rock State Park in 1911. Today the park includes more than 2,800 acres along the Illinois River in La Salle County, and is one of the state's most popular tourist destinations.

"Our state parks are valuable resources, allowing families to enjoy Illinois' natural, undisturbed habitat," said Governor Quinn. "Starved Rock State Park has been an important part of our history for 100 years, and I want to encourage everyone to see its spectacular rock formations in person."

Starved Rock State Park is home to 18 canyons formed by glacial melt water and stream erosion. The park is best known for its rock formations, primarily sandstone, laid down in a huge shallow inland sea more than 425 million years ago and later brought to the surface. Today, Starved Rock State Park is one of the most visited state parks in Illinois, welcoming more than 2 million visitors each year. The park's visitors provide tens of millions of dollars of direct economic activity and support hundreds of jobs throughout La Salle County and north-central Illinois.

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“The topography of Starved Rock State Park is so unique, it almost looks as though it was carved out of different landscape and set here for all to enjoy,” Illinois Department of Natural Resources director Marc Miller said. “It is one of the great wonders of our state.”

French explorers built Fort St. Louis at Starved Rock in the winter of 1682-83 to take advantage of its commanding strategic position. They abandoned the area in the early 1700s after conflicts with Iroquois during the French and Indian War (Seven Years War). According to legend, in the 1760s a group of Illiniwek warriors were trapped on top of the 125-foot sandstone butte by opposing Potawatomi and Ottawa fighters. Surrounded and unable to flee, the Illiniwek starved to death, giving rise to the park’s name. The butte area was designated a U.S. National Historic Landmark in 1960.

The park is also among the state’s most popular destinations for bald eagle watching. Starved Rock State Park, and adjacent Plum Island Eagle Sanctuary, provide ideal winter roosting habitat for bald eagles. In 2004, then Lt. Governor Quinn spearheaded an effort with the Illinois Audubon Society and other environmental groups to save the 55-acre island from development.

Governor Quinn has continued his efforts to support state parks since becoming Governor. Within the first two weeks of becoming Governor in 2008, Quinn reopened 11 state parks that had been closed.

To learn more about Starved Rock State Park or other state parks, please visit www.dnr.illinois.gov

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