

## Riverside Trail at William O'Brien State Park

### Ginny Gaynor

If you ask the rangers at William O'Brien State Park where to photograph spring wildflowers, they will most likely send you to the Riverside Trail. This 1.6 mile trail is probably the busiest at the park and on a warm spring day it's likely to be crowded, so go early in the day. In April, the trail heading north from the Lake Alice parking lot is a gem – with hepatica poking through fallen leaves and hundreds of skunk cabbage and marsh marigold near the creek and wetlands.

**Bloom status:** I visited on a chilly April 15 and hepatica blooms were just starting to recover from the recent snowfall. Skunk cabbage were in full bold bloom and the marsh marigold had small leaves and tight buds.

**Website:** [https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state\\_parks/park.html?id=spk00283#homepage](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00283#homepage)

**Location:** About 13 miles north of Stillwater MN.  
<https://goo.gl/maps/xotzkV7SY1S5qRLj6>

**Parking and amenities:** There are large parking lots by the Interpretive Center and by Lake Alice. Vault toilets, picnic tables, swimming beach.

**Public status, fee:** MN State Park, park sticker required

**When you're there:** The Riverside Trail is easiest to access from Lake Alice parking lot. [https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/state\\_parks/spk00283\\_summer.pdf](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/state_parks/spk00283_summer.pdf)

### Mike Chrun

William O'Brien S.P. has multiple hiking trails, but my favorite for photography is the Riverside Trail in the spring. Follow the road signs to the lower area and there is a large parking lot by Lake Alice. The trail is a loop and, despite a beach, a campground, and a large picnic area; in the spring it's easy to get away from people. The spring ephemerals, especially **bloodroot** and **hepatica**, can be quite profuse. At the northern end of the loop is a small creek that is an excellent spot for **marsh marigolds**. In the fall in the morning, you can get great morning light, especially on **foggy mornings**. If there is no wind, Lake Alice has **great fall color reflections**

