

ST. JOE STATE PARK - Monsanto Lake Water Trail

Monsanto Lake

This lake's name comes from the Monsanto Co., which supplied the dynamite used to blast open the lead mines. Rainwater held back by mine tailings created this 25-acre lake. Come paddle with us and learn about this unique ecosystem.

A. Dolomite Glade

Glades are dry, rocky openings typically found on west- or south-facing hillsides. The shallow soils of glades limit their ability to grow tall forests. Instead they support stunted trees, wildflowers, grasses and sedges. Occasionally, eastern red cedar will shade out this native diversity. In this desertlike habitat, snakes and lizards use the warm rocks to bask in the sun while scorpions hunt for insects.

B. Snag

Snags are standing dead trees. They look like empty shells but beneath the surface, many different mammal species live inside the hollow roots, limbs or trunks. Bats will even roost under loose bark. Hollows provide great spots for songbirds and owls to build a nest or ride out winter storms.

C. Native Grasses

Big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass, switchgrass and river oats are some of the native grasses you may see along the shoreline. Area woodlands were historically more open, which allowed sunlight to reach the ground and support a higher diversity of understory plants. These grasses provide food in the fall and throughout the winter for birds and small mammals.

D. Shortleaf Pine

Missouri's only native pine, shortleaf pine is distinguished by its small needle length. Shortleaf pines did not recover after the lumber boom at the turn of the 20th century as shading from new oaks and reduced natural fires hindered their seed germination. St. Joe State Park is located on the fringe of its current range, though historically the pine would have had a stronghold throughout the county.

E. Powerline

From either side of the lake, you can still see the clear cut from the old powerlines that went to the mine. Look closely at the clearing. What appears to be tree stumps are actually remnants of former power poles. This was once part of St. Joe Lead Co.'s sprawling power network, which was also responsible for providing electricity to local communities of the Lead Belt.



F. Sycamore Tree

The tops of these trees have exposed white limbs because the bark characteristically sheds. Sycamores give off a scent that many associate with a "river smell." People often marvel at their leaves as some may get as large as a dinner plate. The trees along Monsanto Lake are still fairly young and not as large as you might typically see along a river.

G. Old Lead Belt

St. Joe State Park sits atop the world's highest quality vein of lead. The sandy material in the park is called tailings and is actually crushed dolomite left over from the mining process. During the mining process, the tailings were mixed with water and pumped throughout the valleys. By 1972, operations stopped here and mining in other areas of Missouri flourished.

H. Rock Outcrops

Dolomite boulders are especially susceptible to wear from the environment. Eastern red cedar takes hold in cracks dissolved by the acidity of rain. Other organisms help in the weathering process, too. Mosses do not require deep root systems and thrive in shady, cool spots. Lichens, a symbiotic algae-fungus organism, absorb nutrients from the rock that enrich the soil once they die.

I. Tree Stumps

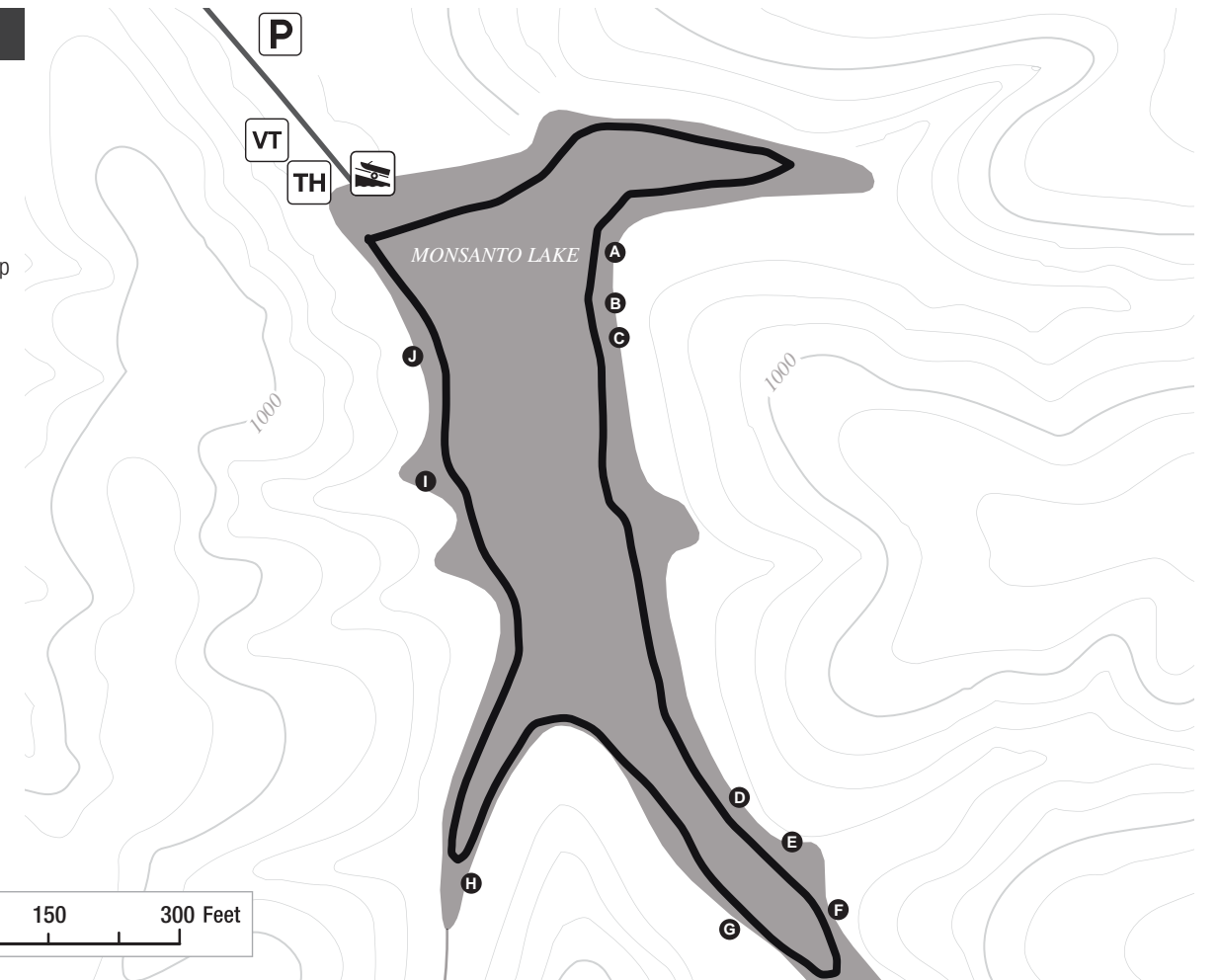
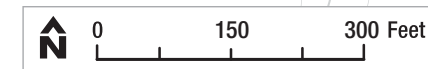
After the tailings created a dam, rainwater flooded the valley, creating Monsanto Lake. The trees in the valley died as they were not adapted to growing with submerged roots. Afterward, insects moved in to decompose the wood above water, which resulted in the current state of barkless trunks. Fish enjoy the secluded habitat as a place to hide.

J. Fishing

Monsanto Lake is popular with area anglers because the 25-acre lake is stocked with catfish, crappie, bass and sunfish. Surveys completed by anglers help determine which species to restock. St. Joe State Park is open year-round so bring your fishing pole and drop a line!

LEGEND

- Road lines
- Land contour
- Water
- Trail
- Paddling
- Interpretive Stop
- Parking
- Trailhead
- Vault toilet



TRAIL INFORMATION

TRAIL NAME	MILEAGE	BLAZE COLOR	APPROVED USAGE	RATING
Monsanto Lake Water Trail	1.25	(red)		Easy

YOU MAY EXPERIENCE: Unexpected waves; Changing water levels; Surface or submerged objects.