

America's State Parks

Oklahoma's *Beavers Bend State Park*

Beavers Bend State Park is a 1,300 acres Oklahoma state park located in McCurtain County. It is approximately 10.5 miles north of Broken Bow on SH-259A. It was established in 1937 and contains Broken Bow Lake.

National Public Radio reported that the park generated \$1,787,731 in 2011, excluding \$414,255 in revenue from Lakeview Lodge. Thus, gross earnings were around \$2.3 million. The report did not list the number of visitors, but stated that this had the second highest attendance of any Oklahoma state park during the year.

Built on the site of an old Choctaw settlement, Beavers Bend State Park was named after John T. Beavers, a Choctaw intermarried citizen. The "bend" in the park's name refers to an area of the park where a portion of Mountain Fork River meanders sharply, making an almost 180-degree turn. This area is commonly known as the River Bend, and is a popular area for trout fishing, canoe rentals, and swimming. Also in the River Bend area is the Broken Bow Hydroelectric Plant, which generates energy from the waters of Broken Bow Lake.

Beavers Bend State Park offers a variety of individual and group activities. Eagle watches are available from November through February. Trout fishing, fly fishing clinics, guided horseback rides, and hayrides throughout the park are other activities offered at Beavers Bend.

A year-round naturalist and a well-stocked nature center make possible a program lineup that includes campfire programs on the banks of the Mountain Fork River, nature hikes, arts and crafts classes, water sports, bingo, sunset hikes, nature films, and astronomy outings. 14,000 acre Broken Bow Lake is also a favorite of scuba divers. Other park diversions include golfing, miniature golf, archery, tennis, jet skiing, bumper boat rides, boating, and canoeing.

The David L. Boren Trail offers 16 miles of hiking trails with 4 miles of multi-purpose trails that wander along ridge tops, over creek bottoms, through tall stands of timber, and into areas so remote one can almost experience what early-day explorers must have felt upon seeing the Ouachita National Forest for the first time. The same trail can also be divided into a variety of short and long hikes for those not wishing to make the entire trek.

