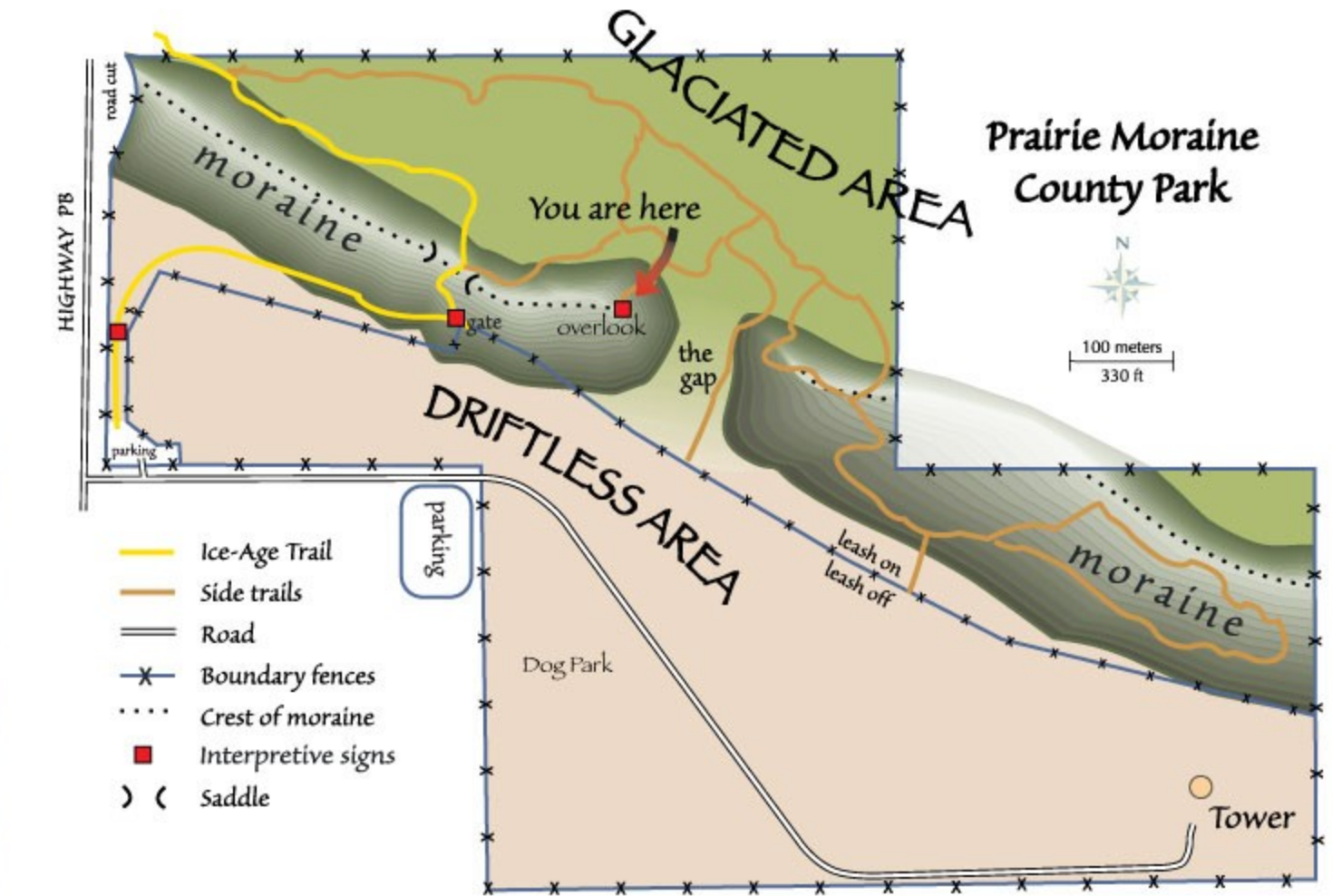
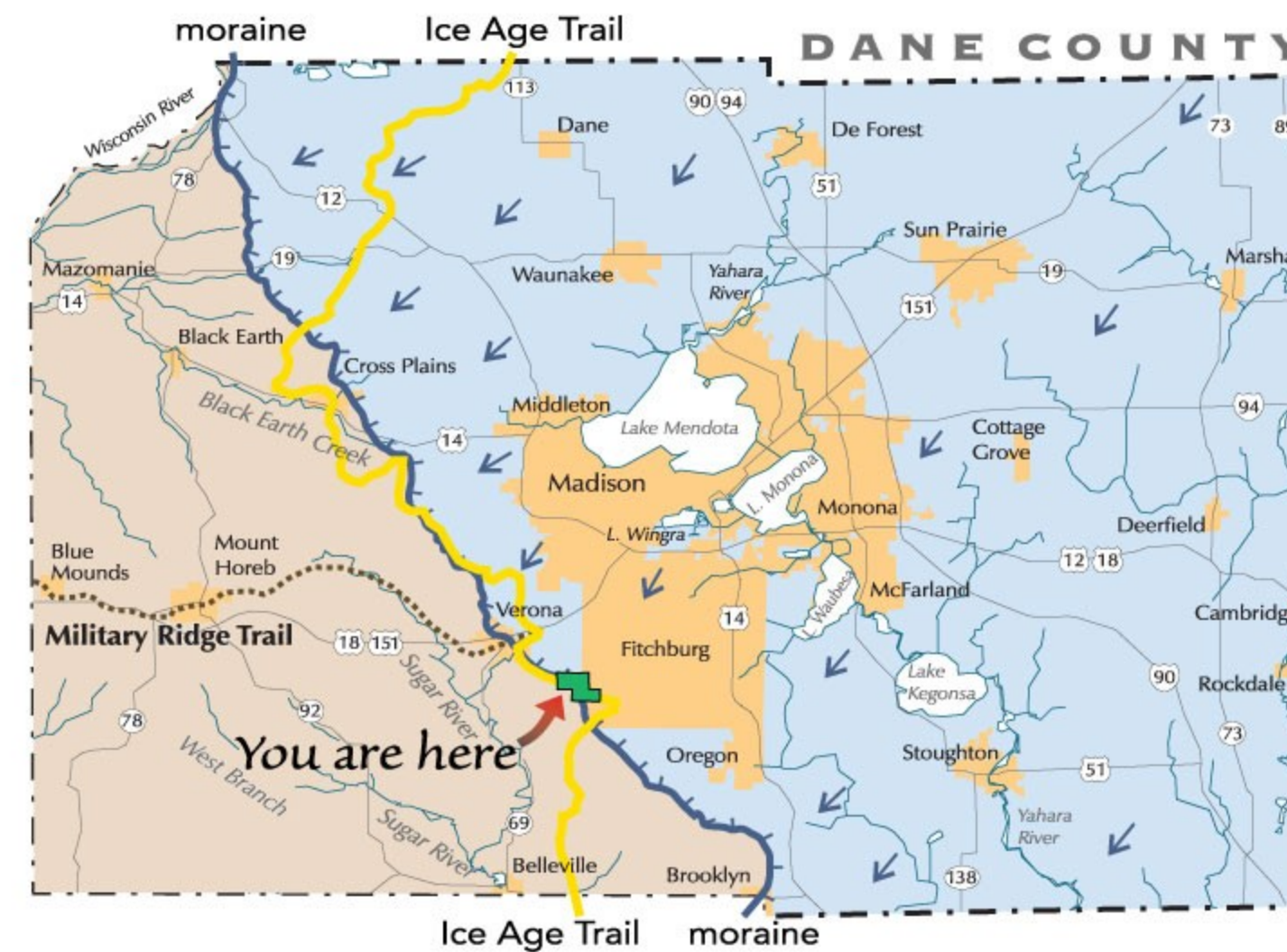
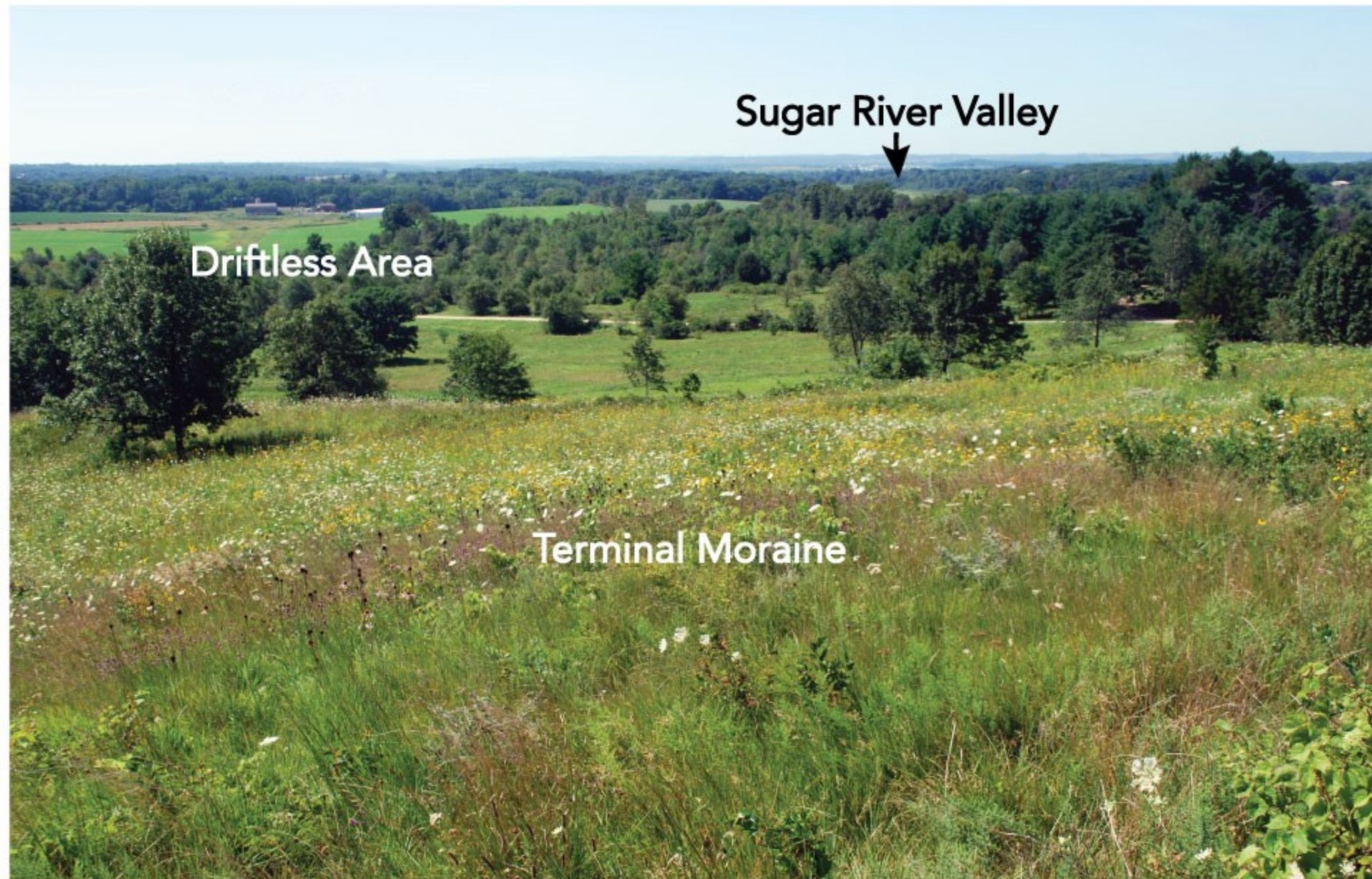


What the Glacier Left Behind



The Driftless Area and the Sugar River Valley

The land in front of you starting at the bottom of the moraine in the park and stretching southwest is widely known as the "Driftless Area." There is no solid evidence that this part of Wisconsin was ever glaciated. The many valleys and narrow ridges of the "Driftless Area" have been carved over hundreds of millions of years by rivers of water rather than rivers of ice. As a result of this, a large concentration of cold water streams provide fantastic trout habitats. The highest point is West Blue Mound, with an elevation of 1,719 feet (524 m), in Blue Mound State Park, in Iowa County.

However, the Sugar River Valley, you are looking toward, was greatly affected by the nearby glacier. Many thousands of tons of debris flowed off the melting ice and were deposited as "glacial outwash" by the meltwater rivers coursing through the valley. These sand and gravel deposits can be over 100 feet deep and are found all along the Sugar River Valley from Verona southward. It is common today to find commercial sand and gravel quarries that mine these "gifts of the glacier" along the Sugar River.

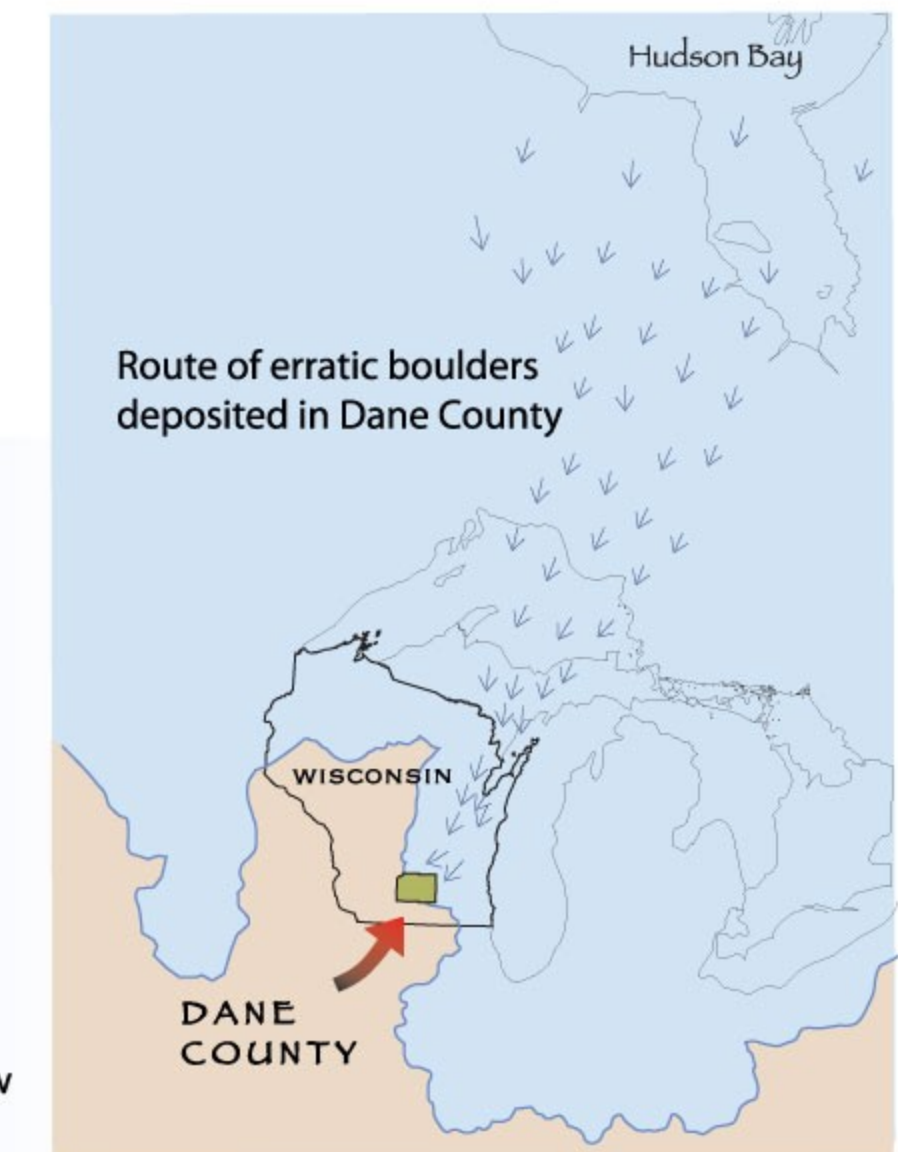
Glacial Erratic Boulders

Up until the early part of the 19th century, geologists were puzzled by the boulders erratically scattered over much of Europe and North America. Many of the boulders are composed of rock types that outcrop far to the north. Many geologists thought that these "erratics" had been washed to their present position by Noah's flood. But, by the 1860s most agreed that they were brought here by the Ice Age glaciers.

Glacial boulders are abundant in the glaciated part of Prairie Moraine Park north of the fence between the off-leash and the on-leash areas. They are generally absent south of the fence, because the glacier never advanced beyond the moraine.

Boulders are present throughout the glaciated part of the park, but in many places they are buried under soil developed on wind-blown silt (dust or loess), which on level areas may be a few feet thick - thicker than most boulders. Glacial boulders can be seen where this fine-grained material has been eroded away. Here, boulders are abundant on the upper part of the south slope of the moraine. On the lower slope, they have been buried under soil washed down from the upper part.

Boulders and other smaller, glacial rock fragments in southeast Wisconsin are composed of the kinds of rock types found for a thousand miles to the north and northeast. Many kinds of igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary rock of Precambrian age are present, including granite, gneiss, basalt, and graywacke which are widespread on the Canadian Shield between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay. Some of the more unusual rocks include native copper from northern Michigan, red porphyry from eastern Lake Superior, and graywacke with spherical calcite concentrations from the Belcher Islands in Hudson Bay. Limestone and sandstone boulders, cobbles, and pebbles were carried from eastern Wisconsin.



Interpretive signage provided by:

- Ice Age Trail Alliance
- Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey
- Dane County Parks
- Prairie Moraine Friends