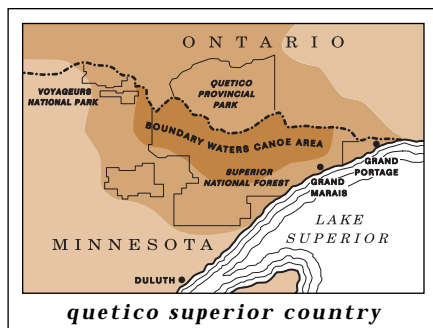


Wilderness News

FROM THE QUETICO SUPERIOR FOUNDATION FALL 2008



The Quetico Superior Foundation, established in 1946, encourages and supports the protection of the ecological, cultural and historical resources of the Quetico Superior region.

“The loss of silence in our lives is a great tragedy of our civilization. Canoeing is one of the finest ministries that can happen.”

*– Reverend Paul Monson, Board Member of the Listening Point Foundation and a strong believer in the restorative value of camping and canoeing.
July, 24 1937 - October 28, 2008*



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Near Tettegouche State Park. Photo by Jim Gindorff.

Crossing Boundaries for the Border Lakes Region

By Charlie Mahler, Wilderness News Contributor

In an era of increasing partnership in the Quetico Superior region, the Border Lakes Partnership provides a model for what cooperative efforts can accomplish.

The collaborative has been at work since 2003 developing cross-boundary strategies for managing forest resources, reducing hazardous forest fuels, and conserving biodiversity in the region. Members like the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station, Superior National Forest, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Voyageurs National Park, Quetico Provincial Park, and The Nature Conservancy have worked to identify land management options that will help its partners achieve mutual goals.

The Border Lakes Partnership is set to release the first fruits of its efforts this fall: the results of a modeling study aimed at determining the potential effects of timber production, fire management, and natural disturbance on the Quetico Superior landscape. A draft of the report suggests forest management activities that cross jurisdictional boundaries could indeed yield mutually desired ecological and socio-economic objectives.

Post-doctoral researcher Doug Shinneman, who led the Border Lakes Partnership modeling project, said the collaborative effort was unique in the Midwest and uncommon overall.

“It’s not that there aren’t other collaboratives that are interested in similar types of objectives,” he said. “I think one of the things that makes this collaborative unique is that the interested parties got together because of a sense of common purpose. In other cases, some of these more collaborative groups that have worked across agencies have gotten together because there’s been conflict or issues they needed to resolve.”

Shinneman, himself, embodies the shared nature of the Border Lakes Partnership’s efforts. “My position is really a unique one,” he said. “It is a joint position between The Nature Conservancy and the USFS. Thus, while I am technically a TNC employee, I am housed at the Northern Research Station here in Grand Rapids, and I really work for both organizations.”

Initial efforts to have stakeholding agencies and organizations in the region work together predated Shinneman’s arrival to the Quetico Superior. The group’s formation can be traced to a 2003 workshop where many of the current members gathered as part of The Nature Conservancy’s Fire Learning Network to discuss issues related to fire ecology and fire safety. Shinneman began work on his project in 2006.

Shinneman notes that the Border Lakes Partnership now generates technical materials that support the broadly-based Heart of the Continent Partnership, which gathers a larger collection of regional stake-

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The Changing Nature of Wilderness Protection

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act from 1978 to Today

By Alissa Johnson, Wilderness News Contributor

October marked the 30th anniversary of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act. Signed into law on October 21, 1978, its passage sought to bring resolution to years of debate over the best way to use and protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. It was a tall order. The inclusion of the BWCA in the 1964 Wilderness Act had sparked a series of disagreements and lawsuits over the Act's provisions for multiple use, like logging and motor use. The disagreements brought the livelihoods of local communities and outside interests looking to preserve the region's unique characteristics into conflict; aggressive public demonstrations resulted during the 1970s as President Nixon banned snowmobiles in all wilderness areas, and as the larger multiple-use debate reached the U.S. Congress. The Senate struggled to resolve the issues, and the BWCAW Act of 1978 was the fourth bill set forward during the 1970s. Even then it was passed hours before the end of the legislative session and seen as a compromise by nearly everyone. It was challenged all the way to the Supreme Court, which refused to hear the case and let the Act stand.

The BWCAW Act still stands today, and while there have been flare-ups in the disagreement over its implementation, the debate is less prominent and perhaps unknown to many of the 200,000 people who visit the wilderness each year. On the eve of the Act's anniversary, *Wilderness News* set out to assess the state of the Wilderness today. What's on the minds of residents and activists alike? What are the lingering discussions over the act itself? And where are the conversations over one of the most unique regions in the country headed? Interviewing individuals with a wide range of perspectives in the Twin Cities and Ely, MN, where the 1970s' controversy settled most heavily, revealed that while land use debates are still taking place, a shift may be occurring in regional conversations.

The 1978 Act, Today

Lingering issues remain over the implementation of the Act, including unresolved motor use quotas and the reroute of the Royal Lake snowmobile trail. The disagreements have wrestled largely with the interpretation of language in the act and the data used to implement its directives.

The 1978 Act directed the Forest Service to establish motor use quotas on par with the established levels of 1976, 1977 or 1978. The Act stipulated that homeowners and resorts located on motorized lakes would retain motorized access on "that particular lake" on which they lived. Disagreement arose when the Forest Service interpreted "that particular lake" as a chain of connected lakes. Advocacy groups challenged this definition in court, and the resulting ruling ordered a recalculation of the quotas restricting "that particular lake" to a single lake. These quotas were then challenged on the grounds that they were based on data that misrepresented actual use during the mid-1970s. A second recalculation was ordered, and new quotas are still being determined.

The reroute of a snowmobile trail that originally cut through Royal Lake in the BWCAW has also attracted attention. The proposed route follows a ridge outside the BWCAW but still visible and within earshot of Royal Lake. It has been challenged on the grounds that it disturbs the wilderness character of the BWCAW, which the USFS has been charged to protect by the Wilderness Act of 1964 and 1978. The trail is still under litigation and remains unresolved.

A Shift In Perspective

A decades old debate between multiple use and preservation lies at the heart of both disagreements, and the outcomes are deeply personal for many – particularly those who are directly affected and the advocacy groups on both sides of the issue. And the decisions do set precedents for future management of the Wilderness. In many respects, however, they represent only a fraction of a larger conversation that is beginning to take shape around the BWCAW – a discussion that, at its heart, is recognizing that the Wilderness does not exist in a vacuum. Where the issues at hand were once dominated by the direct use of the Wilderness itself, the conversation is increasingly cognizant of the fact that activities and issues outside of the Wilderness are invariably connected to its health.

The notion isn't new. As part of its management practices, the Forest Service routinely assesses the impact of proposed activities outside of the BWCAW for their impact on the Wilderness itself. For example, a proposed timber harvest outside the Wilderness would be assessed for changes to the visual aesthetic, noise pollution, potential runoff and other factors. These assessments are conducted and shared with the public in accordance with the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA), and they play a critical role in protecting the BWCAW's wilderness character. But determining acceptable impact can be subjective. In some cases, environmental organizations have demanded more stringent protection by using the mandate to protect wilderness character as grounds to challenge Forest Service activities outside of the BWCAW, like timber harvests.

These types of lawsuits have the potential to become hot button issues, championed as effective tools by groups favoring stricter wilderness protection and challenged by others as a political tool inhibiting resource management. But from a broader perspective, they also represent a shift in public awareness that is leading to new questions and concerns. There is no buffer zone around the BWCAW. In a world where external changes increasingly infringe upon BWCAW boundaries, how do we protect its character and still effectively manage state and national resources and create vibrant local communities? Recent mining developments on the Iron Range exemplify this challenge. Discussions include possible mines in the Ely area, on the same watershed as the wilderness. They would create much-needed jobs to stimulate the local economy but raise concerns about pollution control for many.

Beyond Land Use Debates

It is also becoming clear that discussions will not be limited to land use. In a region where the controversy has been tied so closely to a fierce love for the physical land itself, it would be impossible to ignore the impact of larger climate forces on the issues confronting the region today. Some Ely residents have already noticed seasonal changes – Tennessee warblers arriving in May instead of June, crocuses blooming two weeks ahead of schedule, and ice out coming early – and long-term impacts are becoming part of the local discussion. Dr. Lee Frelich, Director of the University of Minnesota Center for Hardwood Ecology, has spoken in Ely several times – to packed auditoriums.

And even as residents and experts work to understand climate change impacts, other natural and manmade events are shaping the region. Some have been high profile, like the 1999 blowdown and the Cavity and Ham Lake Fires, yet others are less obvious to the untrained eye, like invasive species. By all accounts, these forces have brought new challenges to Wilderness management. They have demanded high levels of coordination and cooperation: the Forest Service partnered with state agencies and the Friends of the Boundary Waters to produce a booklet educating the public on identifying and removing invasive species, and the community network activated to monitor and communicate fire risk following the blowdown included a wide range of resorts and businesses in local communities. Managing the wilderness and responding to the evolving challenges takes more than an involved community: it requires a dedicated staff and budget. Just as the BWCAW is not immune to the global climate changes, funding is not immune to the economic and political climate taking shape today.

A New Approach

As the questions facing the management and health of the BWCAW evolve to include resource management in surrounding communities, global climate forces and even national economic forces, the importance of community-wide conversations and solutions becomes more evident. Forest service partnerships and the formation of the Heart of the Continent Partnership, which has formed to create cross-border collaboration across the Ontario/Minnesota border lakes region, provide ongoing efforts to do just that. Yet it also begs the question: when it comes to BWCAW, can we set aside or learn from the differences of the past?

To Be Continued...Part II of this story will appear in the Spring 2009 issue of Wilderness News.



"Early Voyageurs at Portage," tempera, by Nellie G. Best (1940). Image courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

The Canoe: A Vehicle for the Spirit Childhood Memories Evoke the Stirrings of Wilderness Experience

By Pat Kallemeyn, Wilderness News Contributor

One of my most vivid childhood memories is of the voyager art installed in my hometown's post office in White Bear Lake, Minnesota; "Early Voyageurs at Portage," a tempera by Nellie G. Best (1940), dominated the walls and ceiling. At an early age the painting stirred something in me, beckoning me. I remember considering these men with their lonesome yet resigned expressions. While my mother collected the mail I would gaze up at them picturing myself in their midst. The smell of canvas and heat in the WPA era public building enveloped my senses, pulling me into the painting. The idea of belonging to an age of exploration and discovery appealed to my young mind.

Now, taking a second look at their faces I also sense satisfaction and hopefulness. The artists' depiction elicits an emotion similar to what I would expect the actual experience to produce. In some ways the artistic lens magnifies the essence of what is being conveyed. The feeling that my childhood communion with the voyageur painting produced comes to me still. The power of nature has become the essence of my spirituality. Wind singing through the top of giant white pine gives me pause and hints at something bigger while vast expanse of natural wilderness makes me keenly aware of my vulnerability.

Unlike the voyageurs our lives have become insulated from hunger, rain, disease and in many ways from the direct connection we once had with the land. Don't get me wrong, I appreciate the fact that my kids don't go hungry and that we have a roof over our heads. But because technology gives us so much it's easy to ignore the war that is being waged between technology and spirituality. Technology gives us proof so we no longer need to rely on faith. Eliminating the feeling of vulnerability impairs our ability to connect spiritually. Without putting yourself at risk you're not letting nature have any real power over you. Imagine viewing a lion at the zoo its massive paws flexing its hot breath coming in pants. Now take away the bars... the difference in the experience is palpable. Our connection with the environment lies in its grave as technology shovels on dirt.

Crawling out of our safe little techno bubbles will require some effort. Like a diet or getting in shape. Shedding the gadgets, and taking on some personal risk can produce a more satisfying wilderness experience. I'm not saying you should risk your personal safety. Start by risking your convenience. Leave your GPS at home and try it with a map and compass. Get lost for a little while, feel the anxiety build, then the relief and satisfaction as you realize you're still on course. This was everyday stuff for the now extinct voyageur.

What I find fascinating is that the voyageur has vanished but the canoe has not. For all practical purposes the canoe should be a distant memory, a sepia tone image, slowly decomposing next to the threshing machine at the county fair. Our refusal to scrap the canoe suggests that it has become much more than transportation. It has evolved into a vehicle for the spirit helping us to connect with the environment, symbolic of a time when we were more vulnerable. The painting, too, stems from an era of vulnerability. Many post office murals, including this one, were commissioned through the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture in the 30's and 40's. While the great depression was devouring the hubris of the roaring 20's artists were producing works that speak of a collective consciousness. The vulnerability of that era seeps into the artwork and is captured here alongside that of the voyageurs.

Getting lost in art can be an adventure. A vehicle for your imagination, transporting you back in time alongside the voyagers or where ever you might want to go.

The mural is currently "missing." It is thought that the entire wall with the mural was cut out in the late 1970s – early 1980's when the old Post Office was remodeled. The location of this mural is unknown.

Volunteers Come Together to Preserve BWCAW Hiking Trails

Well-known for over 1,500 miles of canoe routes, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness doesn't always get the attention it deserves for its hiking opportunities. Yet the hiking trails provide a unique view of the Wilderness Area – and unique management challenges, like keeping the trails cleared. The Boundary Waters Advisory Committee, founded in 2002, trains and organizes volunteers to maintain trails in the BWCAW, where all maintenance work has to be done with hand tools.

Maintenance of wilderness hiking trails is a time consuming effort. In October BWA Committee volunteers cleared a section of the six-mile Brule Lake Trail in the BWCAW using lumberjack style cross cut saws and loppers to cut tree falls, balsam firs and brush obstructing the path.

"We use hand tools because many volunteers come to enjoy the quiet and solitude in the forest. Safety is also very important to us, especially when working far away from medical help, and hiking or backpacking deep into the wilderness," said Martin Kubik, president of the BWA Committee.

Although the BWCA Act of 1978 allows mechanized maintenance for administrative purpose, the Forest Service's own BWCAW management plan created in 1993 does not. The US Forest Service provided housing and tools for the volunteers, and McKenzie Map Company contributed maps to all volunteer participants. Midwest Mountaineering provides office and meeting space in Minneapolis.

For more information about the BWA Committee and upcoming volunteer opportunities, <http://bwac.homestead.com>.



Above: BWA Committee volunteers clear the Brule Lake Trail using hand tools. Below: Volunteers take a break on Eagle Mountain, the highest point in Minnesota. Photos courtesy of the BWA Committee.

run silent

Run silent

*through wintry wilderness
splendor.*

*Majestic pines laboring
under heavy burdens
of fresh snow
clinging.*

*Ancient boulders brooding
in morning stillness.*

*Shadows from sunshine bright,
casting shades of gray,
intriguing
upon quiet shorelines.*

*North country solitude
shattered
by piercing yelps
of huskie dogs
straining restraints.*

*Wild barking frenzy,
excitement rising
tension mounting—
ready to run!!*

*More than ready
to pull sled and musher
into a burst
of powder flying
strength in action,
power in motion.*

Run free.

Run silent

*in the thrilling spirit
of adventure.*

– February 2001

Larry Christianson



Found Lake Camp, BWCAW, 2007. Photo courtesy Rob Kesselring.

BWCAW Cold Weather Camping

The Winter Camping Rendezvous Comes to Ely, MN

By Rob Kesselring, Wilderness News Contributor

More than 200,000 people camp in the wilderness of the Boundary Waters and Quetico every year. Almost all of them choose to pitch their tents in the months between April and November. But there is a growing cadre of hardy individuals who insist that the acronym BWCA really stands for: Best Winter Camping Area! Over the weekend of October 24-26 over a hundred of these folks gathered in Ely at the Winter Camping Rendezvous to celebrate, make preparations and share information about cold weather camping. This event has been held for many years in central Wisconsin, but this year Paul Schurke, Dick Pula, Kevin Kinney and Mark Carlson brought it back north. For three days white cotton tents with black stove pipes poking out like stray whiskers graced the grounds of Vermillion Community College. Participants gathered at thirty seminars to learn about everything from sewing wool shirts to ice fishing.

Those who think winter camping means shivering in a nylon dome tent nailed to a frozen lake are mistaken. Although there were seminars on sleeping beneath the stars at thirty-below and building snow caves and quinzees, most of these campers were interested in learning more about a new, gentler trend in winter camping: pulling a toboggan (or pulk) across frozen lakes and camping in wood heated tents. As a camping method it's really not so new. It evolved when the aboriginal people of the northern forests adapted new materials – cotton tent fabrics and tin stoves – to their timeless traveling traditions. These days it is earning a growing following. At one of the final presentations Dick Pula summed up the call of the winter wild when he talked about his solo trips deep into the BWCAW. He spoke about sitting inside his tent wearing just a t-shirt sipping tea and stoking a fire in his stove that results in an 85-degree temperature difference from the world just outside the canvas. He revealed with passion the astonishing renewal that happens when his soul is awakened by the silence of January in the Quetico Superior wilderness.

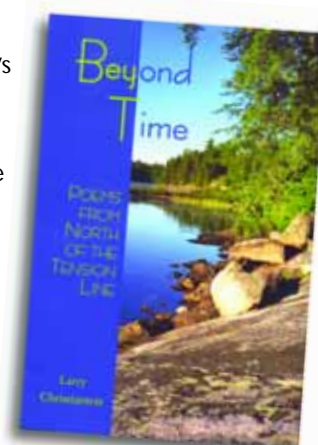
Book Review

Beyond Time Poems from North of the Tension Line

by Larry Christianson
\$9.95 Paperback
ISBN 0-87839-292-0

Poet and pastor Larry Christianson captures the essence of the wilderness experience in a new book of poems that draw from 35 years of canoe country travel. *Beyond Time, Poems from North of the Tension Line* brings to life the wilderness moments that lend themselves to quiet reflection or sudden insight, from careful contemplation of the twilight hour to a night-time visit from a black bear. Christianson also delves into the inner wilderness in all of us, where we seek renewal and insight from our intuition and inner strength.

A resident of Waconia, MN, Christianson's focus on the upper Midwest and the Boundary Waters Wilderness Area Wilderness, but wilderness canoeists everywhere will see elements of their own experiences reflected in his poems. In a down-to-earth, simple style he captures all parts of the "up north experience," from moments on trail to the gateway roads and communities leading there. It's all "north of the tension line," and Christianson's new book allows canoeists to bring a piece of the experience into their living rooms.



continued from page 1

holders and is focused on more than just collaborative research and forest management.

The 111-page Border Lakes Partnership report titled “Exploring Collaborative Options Restoring Forests and Reducing Fire Risk in the Border Lakes Region,” authored by Shinneman, Cornett, and the Northern Research Station’s Brian Palik owes its existence to the original collaborative effort in the region.

The study, funded by the USFS National Fire Plan, computer-modeled the effects of various forest management regimes on forest health and composition. Shinneman and his colleagues wanted to know whether cross-boundary management plans could affect outcomes on the landscape that would be socially and ecologically beneficial.

“We were curious about the trajectory we’re on now – the current types and levels of fire management, fire suppression, timber harvest, and so on – where was that going to take our landscape 100, 200 years from now – or ten years from now, for that matter – versus other possible alternatives” Shinneman explained. “And those other alternatives included options like coordinating our management.”

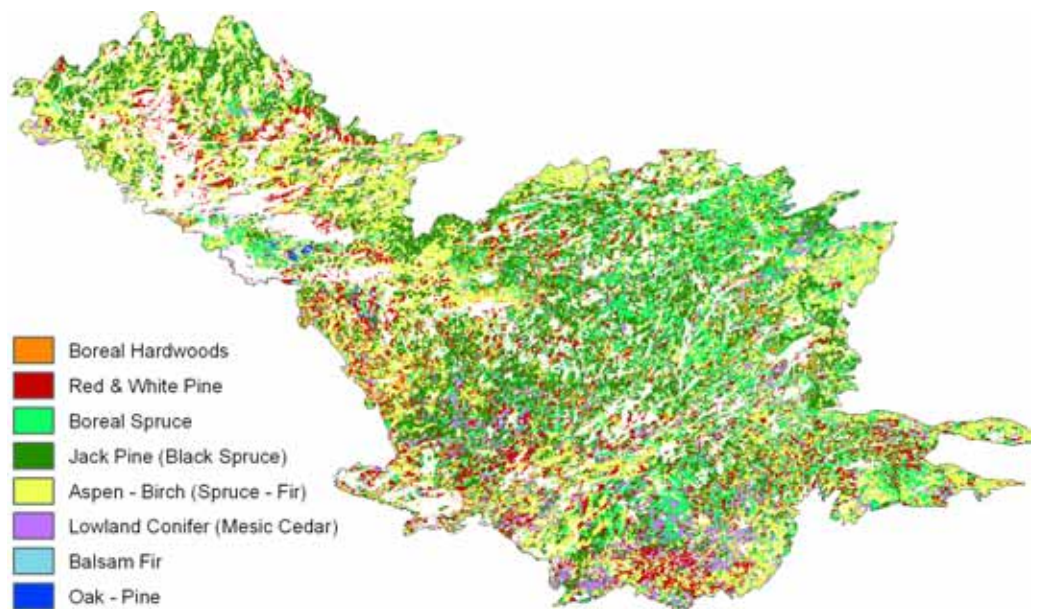
As it is now, the Quetico Superior is a 5 million acre landscape managed by an array of local, state, provincial, and federal agencies in both the United States and Canada. Shinneman’s team wondered if management which crossed jurisdictional boundaries could help develop a Quetico Superior landscape that met more of the ecological and economic needs of the region.

“The agencies themselves had recognized that that was a direction they were interested in going, and there had been some talks and consideration of having, say, fires burn across the border between Quetico and the United States,” Shinneman said.

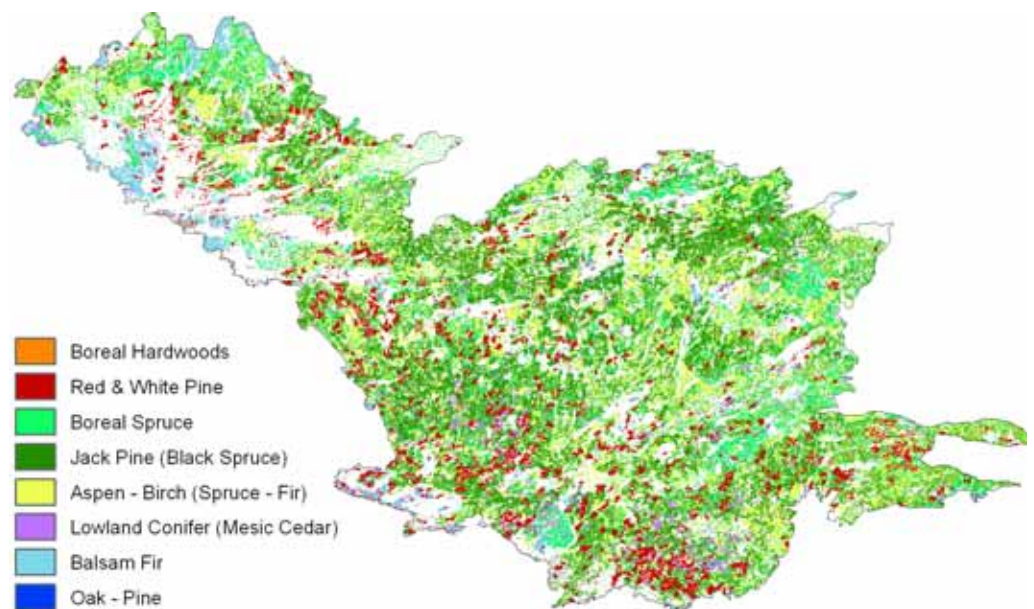
Shinneman modeled five management scenarios for the region: a “Current Management” scenario that reflected current fire suppression and timber harvest policies, and four “Restoration Management” scenarios that included greater use of fire, timber harvest that emulated natural disturbance patterns, and cross-boundary coordination. Two additional scenarios were modeled for comparison purposes, to distinguish the effects of fire from timber harvest. A “Natural Disturbance” scenario was simulated to reflect pre-settlement disturbance patterns, and a “Contemporary Natural Disturbance” scenario to reflect natural disturbances within the context of current fire suppression policies.

Shinneman and members of the Border Lakes Partnership were eager to see if management practices that more closely mimicked natural disturbance – namely, allowing more fires to burn in wilderness areas and designing and concentrating clear-cuts to mimic the size and footprint of natural disturbance – would create a long-term trajectory that could lead to a more historically representative forest.

The Quetico Superior at Present: This representation shows forest composition bifurcated between early successional species like aspen which dominate many areas outside the BWCAW and Quetico Provincial Park and late-successional spruce-fir forests are increasingly dominant in the wilderness areas.



A Model of the Quetico Superior in 200 Years: The modeled results of the “Restoration Management” regime where timber harvest mimicked natural disturbance patterns and ignored management boundaries and where a prescribed fire zone straddled parks and wilderness area boundaries. (White areas that are not lakes represent recently burned regions.)



Images courtesy of Doug Shinneman from “Exploring Collaborative Options Restoring Forests and Reducing Fire Risk in the Border Lakes Region,” by Shinneman, Cornett, and Palik.

Researchers and managers were especially keen to see if jack pine regenerated at its historical rate and if red and white pine forests could be conserved. They wondered, too, if their techniques would establish a less bifurcated landscape – today, early successional species like aspen dominate many areas outside the BWCAW and Quetico and late-successional spruce-fir forests are increasingly dominant in the wilderness areas.

The model’s results were instructive. “More fire does help to restore these forests – relatively quickly, in terms of 100 to 200 years – to a more jack pine dominated southern boreal forest type,” Shinneman said. “That’s high-severity fire. Low-severity fire, that was limited to red and white pine areas which is the historical fire regime for those types, maintained those patches of red and white pine on the landscape.” Keeping red and white pine in its historic place on a future landscape proved difficult, however.

“None of the scenarios protected red and white pine very well,” Shinneman admitted. “I think that’s because it’s already so greatly reduced and scattered on the landscape that indiscriminant

harvest or stand-replacing wildfires that burn across the landscape are going to take out some of the remaining red and white pines. Despite efforts to return low-severity fire in some of these stands and using silvicultural techniques to keep them on the landscape, other things were going on that caused them to decrease.”

Shinneman cautioned that both the hoped-for conditions and the less desirable results of the study aren’t certain predictions for the future. Computer models are only as sound as the information provided to the model. No model can take into account all the factors that impact something as complex as a 5 million acre forest.

“Modeling is just a way to look at possibilities,” Shinneman cautioned. “Models are always wrong to some extent. The question is, are they useful, do they tell you something, do they give you an indication of potential affects of these kinds of dynamics? Do they give you some sense of where we’re heading in the future?” □

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parks update

A New Superintendent for Voyageurs National Park

Voyageurs National Park welcomed Mike Ward as its new Superintendent in August. Formerly Superintendent of Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site (NHS) in St. Louis, MO, Ward's involvement with the NPS was sparked at a young age. He participated in the Youth Conservation



Voyageurs National Park Superintendent Mike Ward. Photo courtesy of the Voyageurs National Park Association.

Corps at Lincoln Home NHS in 1983, and from there became a seasonal employee until landing his first permanent assignment at Ulysses S. Grant NHS in 1992. He became Site Manager in 2002 and Superintendent in 2005. While at Ulysses S. Grant NHS, Ward led maintenance and restoration teams on projects throughout the Midwest.

“Mike has proven himself to be an effective leader and will be a real asset at Voyageurs,” said Ernest Quintana, Regional Director of the National Park Service's (NPS) 13-state Midwest Region. “His strong background in park planning and developing park partnerships will serve him well in this new assignment.”

As he brings his expertise and experience to Voyageurs, Mike Ward said of his appointment, “I am honored to have the opportunity to work at such an incredible national park full of fabulous resources and opportunities to experience these wonders. My family and I look forward to becoming new members of the community at International Falls and the surrounding area and I look forward to working along side those communities towards our common goals.”

conservation

Historic “Review” Islands Protected Island home of legendary conservationist Ernest Oberholtzer to remain undeveloped

Last September the Minnesota Land Trust and the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation announced the permanent protection of the Review Islands – the Rainy Lake home of conservationist Ernest C. Oberholtzer. Ernest Oberholtzer was a central figure in the wilderness protection of the international border lakes region that today includes Voyageurs National Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. “Ober,” as he was called, lived on one of the “Review Islands,” Mallard Island, for 50 years where he constructed a series of buildings using native materials that blended with the landscape.

The four Review Islands comprise 18 acres and approximately 10,000 feet of shoreline. All four islands are now protected by a permanent conservation easement held by the Minnesota Land Trust. Funding for the project consisted entirely of private donations from members of the Minnesota Land Trust, the Rainy Lake Conservancy and the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation.

Beth Waterhouse, executive director of the Oberholtzer Foundation notes that although there were some protections already in place, “we wanted to make a statement to future boards of directors, to the state and the community about the importance of what Ober called ‘the university of the wilderness.’”



The Review Islands on Rainy Lake. Photo courtesy Jean Replinger and the Oberholtzer Foundation.

The Review Islands will remain under the ownership of the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation, which continues to conduct its mission-based programs. The Minnesota Land Trust will visit the Review Islands annually to ensure that the terms of the easement remain intact.

Wilderness News

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