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QUETICO SUPERIOR COUNTRY

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

Wilderness can be appreciated only by contrast, and solitude understood only when we have been without it. We cannot separate ourselves from society, comradeship, sharing and love. Unless we can contribute something from wilderness experience, derive some solace or peace to share with others, then the real purpose is defeated.

- Sigurd F. Olson

### Wilderness News

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French River Rapids (oil on canvas), 1848-1856; by Paul Kane. Used with permission of the Royal Ontario Museum copyright ROM.

## Painting History

The site depicted in "French River Rapids" is revealed, yielding new insights into Quetico Provincial Park's fur trade past.

By Alissa Johnson, Wilderness News Contributor

In 2006, Quetico Provincial Park's French River proved impassable by kayak—so Ken Lister crawled upriver through the slippery, overgrown underbrush. His destination? French River Rapids. As assistant curator of anthropology at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), Lister suspected that an oil painting of the same name by Canadian artist Paul Kane (1810-1871) portrayed the rapids. If correct, he would disprove widely held notions about the painting's origins as a river flowing into Georgian Bay, and possibly discover a new understanding of the fur trade. He was, and he did.

## A Window into the Fur Trade

Lister's use of Paul Kane's art to look back at the fur trade has a sweet sort of synchronicity. Kane was the first Canadian artist to live in and explore the Great Lakes region, even staying at a Hudson's Bay Company outpost and traveling with voyageurs. Between 1845 and 1848, he produced over 600 pencil on paper, watercolor on paper and oil on paper sketches of Canada's frontier. They would become the basis from which he later produced over 100 romanticized oil paintings that represented frontier life without being exact replicas of what he saw. A Toronto exhibition of Kane's work in 1848 gave many Canadians their first glimpse of the Great Lakes, the Rockies and even Native Americans.

In many ways, Lister's suspicion that Kane's work could once again shed light on the fur trade returned to the paintings to their original purpose. Yet Lister has always been intrigued by the ability of art to inform anthropology, and he wondered if Kane's field sketches (unlike his romanticized paintings) were accurate renderings.

"I wanted to know, when we look at a Paul Kane sketch, can we assume we're looking at what he saw?" said Lister. If the answer was yes, then Kane's work could be used to identify real-world sites critical to the fur trade. So when Lister arrived at French River Rapids and found that the placement of rocks in the water and a crack in a giant rock wall matched the sketch exactly, it was worth the arduous upriver scramble.

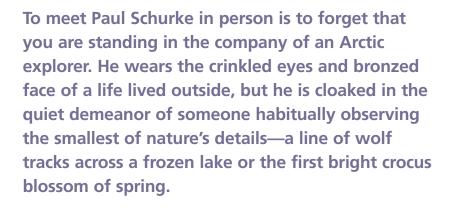
Continued on page 5



French River Rapids today, photo courtesy Ken Lister.

# Wilderness News Profile: Paul Schurke

By Alissa Johnson, Wilderness News Contributor



The iconic Wintergreen hat perched on his head is the only nod to the adventurer underneath, a man who conducts life from the helm of a dog sled swishing through winter woods and slipping across the frozen tundra. And yet it is through his drive for adventure that Paul created a mainstay business in Ely and broadened the vision of canoe country wilderness to include the coldest, snowiest season of the year.

#### **A Political Beginning**

Paul found his way to dog sledding through what he likes to call the back-door—political engagement. When he graduated from college in the late 1970s, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area was the stage of a great debate over ambiguities in the Wilderness Act of 1963. Proponents of motor use argued that their banishment from the wilderness would also banish the elderly, the blind and the disabled. Paul and his friend Greg Lais took issue with this notion, and in 1977 they set out to prove it wrong, traveling into the Boundary Waters with a mixed group of able bodied and disabled campers. A New York Times reporter accompanied them, and the success of the trip was a political score for the case against motors. But for Paul and Greg it was also the turning point in their careers.

Sensing they were onto something big, the men launched Wilderness Inquiry (WI) as an organization dedicated to making wilderness accessible to everyone. Demand quickly outpaced the pair's ability to accommodate canoe trips, and in less than two years they were setting their sites on winter as a way to serve more groups. That led them to dog sledding and a "recluse" by the name of Will Steger, living in a little log cabin, running Lynx Track Winter School and mushing dogs. He helped WI run its first dog sledding trip in 1979.

"I knew right then and there that winter was where it was at," Paul says.

Winter was the optimal playground for physical and mental challenge—the perfect stage for what he sees as a great game of truth or consequence. He moved to Ely and immersed himself in dog sledding, becoming good friends with Steger and soon meeting his wife, Sue. By the early eighties Paul and Sue had taken over Lynx Track, and Paul left WI to Lais. The winter school became Wintergreen, and Sue launched a line of outdoor gear under the same name, outfitting Paul and Steger in her iconic red parkas on the first unassisted trek to the North Pole in 1986. Paul has returned four times since, including a trip to magnetic north, and he continues to guide clients across the globe by dog sled. This winter, he will lead groups through Hudson Bay's Polar Bear National Park, the world's largest birthing sanctuary for polar bears.



Paul with pups Odin and Romeo. Photo courtesy of Layne Kennedy.

#### **A Livelier Wilderness**

Paul is almost nonchalant about his transition from mixed abilities canoe trips to dog sledding and arctic exploration. He sees it as the natural result of being a self-described edge seeker, building adventure into everything—even when that's as simple as taking a new route home from town. But while his personal quest for adventure has taken him to the extremes of the earth, his business has played an important role in showing wilderness seekers closer to home that winter does not have to be a cold and scary place.

"Most [clients] think it will be an endurance test, that they will grin and bare it so they can tell stories when they get home. Most are pleasantly surprised by how comfortable they can be," he says.

Dog sledding provides enough activity during the day to stay warm, and groups are rewarded for their efforts with a more personal wilderness encounter. Where canoe groups are lucky to see one or two animals per trip during the summer, Wintergreen groups cross paths with wildlife every day, coming across their tracks in the snow or actual sightings. And this "wilder and woollier" place comes without bugs, less gear (no need for that rain jacket) and no portaging. Most groups don't even bother to set up the tents at night, opting instead to sleep out under the stars after a leisurely night in front of the campfire.

## **Uncertain Future**

Yet for all the success that Wintergreen has achieved, Paul does not encourage his children to take over the family business. He has seen the mark of global warming across the northern landscape—polar ice once 10, 12 and 20 feet thick is now 2 or 3 at best, and in Ely, ice out occurs earlier every year, the crocus bloom two weeks ahead of schedule and the Tennessee Warblers arrive in May instead of June. As the ice disappears near the pole, Paul knows that the days of his projects there are numbered; where he used to count on a two-month window for trekking—March and April—he now relies on only a couple of weeks.

"So few of us have had an opportunity to witness this change. Our observations as laymen might differ from the government, but we see the impact not only on the landscape but on the towns and the Inuit. A few years ago, quite a bit [of media] focused on them. In the last year, [climate change] has accelerated on such as vast scale that the focus on the Inuit has been sidelined. The iconic figure of the polar bear and the sea hunting activities are still out there, but where decisions are being made they are largely ignored."

It is this attention to the human and cultural story that makes Paul more than a thrill-seeker. He embodies a curiosity that influences his Arctic travels (which frequently offer clients the chance to meet Inuit and learn about their culture) as well as his treks closer to home in the Boundary Waters and Quetico. Paul recently canoed through Jack Fish Bay for the sole purpose of poking around on the forest floor for the foundations of an old village once located there.

"Suddenly, that point has a whole new dimension. And there are a lot of [places like that] out there. At one point there were between 3,000 and 5,000 people traveling through the [Boundary Waters] area—Native Americans, loggers, trappers. It was a lot of activity in what is now a quiet land. So many canoers pass by unaware."

And that, perhaps, embodies Paul Schurke at his best: to simply be aware.

# Canoe the Heart of the Continent Centennial Canoe Voyage

By Alissa Johnson, Wilderness News Contributor

Last July, the Canoe the Heart Expedition commemorated the centennial of Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada and the centennial of Superior National Forest in Minnesota. It also promoted the continued efforts of the Heart of the Continent Partnership to encourage collaboration among the government agencies, nonprofit organizations, citizen interest groups and communities that have a stake in the health and vitality of the region.

Eight paddlers and one navigator at a time, a total of sixty paddlers covered 350 miles in a 27-foot canoe in 18 days. They made appearances in parades and presentations at local community centers to spread their message of collaboration and promote the heritage of the region, and when necessary, they hoisted the 300+ lb boat onto their shoulders and worked in concert to climb up and down hills and over rocks. Once, they got lost. Or rather, they got so involved in their conversations that they missed a turn and had to decide as a group to turn back or reroute. Corporate consultants couldn't have come up with a better exercise in team building—and that was exactly the point: cooperation.

"We literally had to be all coordinated while paddling. That was a lesson that had to be learned over and over," John Craig, expedition cook and the only person to complete all six legs of the journey, laughs. He is surprisingly good-natured about his role, even though it meant waking up at 4:30 a.m. every morning to get the group up, fed and on the water by seven ("I'm not much of a morning person") and paddling all 350 miles of the trip.

"People ask me, 'Did you paddle?' Well, yeah! I never knew it was an option." His good humor seems to stem from the good things he saw come out of the trip—he didn't have to think very long to cite the biggest benefit: "The conversations that happened between people of different organizations. There were some pretty good debates. Like how the wilderness is viewed from the outside. And how campsites are different [on either side of the border] and the philosophy behind it. The Canadians were more, 'You need to let things be the way they are. Americans always navigate by campsite.' Americans wanted to give campers as much of the wilderness as possible, but to keep them from leaving a mark, they give them certain things." (Like fire grates and latrines.)

It might sound inconsequential to debate the merits of developed and undeveloped campsites, especially when it includes intense discussions over latrines and how to avoid "cat holes" in the woods (look for two crossed sticks over freshly disturbed dirt). But at it's heart, it's a conversation



July 1st Canoe Parade on the Atikokan River, photo by Barry Wojciechowski.

about Leave No Trace ethics, and it's a debate these particular people don't get to share very often: the Canadians were Quetico Provincial Park rangers, and the Americans were Forest Service employees. They were joined by representatives of groups like the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, the Quetico Superior Foundation, and on one leg (though admittedly not part of the cat hole conversation), a member of Canada's parliament. Living and working on opposite sides of borders, and often management issues, opportunities for philosophical conversations are rare.

When it comes right down to it, the Canoe the Heart Expedition was one big ice breaker. Yes, it commemorated the rooth anniversary of Quetico Provincial Park and Superior National Forest (encompassing the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and adjacent to Voyageurs National Park). And yes, it carried the message of HOCP as a non-political collaborative group to the public. And yes, members made presentations to the public about invasive species (even decorating the hull of the canoe with artist renderings of invasive species). But HOCP encompasses all of the people, agencies and organizations invested in northern Minnesota and southern Ontario's recreation areas. By changing up the crew every few days and bringing together as many of these "stakeholders" as possible, creating new relationships was a critical part of the trip.

"We have talked about movement toward collaboration. This is a symbol of that," trip participant and newly appointed Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness director Paul Danicic said. "It's relationship building. I know people came with one idea of the Friends and left with a different idea."

And it went both ways. He formed more accurate ideas of other organizations and management agencies by listening to real people talk about their jobs and what they do. And though he knows there may still be management and policy disputes in the future, he is optimistic. "There are several people I can make a phone call to. The dialogue is open."



Above: Fall Lake Celebration, photo courtesy Andy Wright. At center: Portaging, photo by Ann Schwaller. At right: Beaver dam pull over on Slim Lake, photo by Tim Eaton.





Not everyone shares Paul's optimism. While official estimates speculate that 10,000 people witnessed the Canoe the Heart Expedition at parades, presentations and throughout the journey, one participant admitted to being disappointed by the low level of quality public engagement while paddling.

"We had a mission to talk to as many paddlers as we could. [We saw] fewer paddlers than we thought." The lakes were large, and it wasn't always realistic to paddle a mile out of the way to track down a group spotted across the water. "When we did see groups, few people stood up to take the lead...

There was a lack of energy there. It was a little less than I hoped for."

It speaks to the inherent challenge in identifying the intangible outcomes from a relationship building experience, especially one that brings together different personalities and goals—it's the challenge inherent in any group canoe trip. Add that a desire to measure visibility and impact, and it can sometimes be difficult to truly assess the trip's significance.

But tangible outcomes have resulted from the expedition. The Forest Service has since procured funding for HOCP to rehire its former coordinator, Brett Hesla. As an agency that follows strict policies against involvement with political groups, this says a lot for HOCP's continued commitment to creating conversation, not policy. And members have discovered a renewed energy and common purpose around the need for community-based initiatives. The group is gearing up to focus on new goals at its next meeting, like funding local participation in Gateway Community Training, a formal course on marketing, planning and promoting a community on the edge of a wilderness or park. For HOCP chair Rich Kelley, it feels good to turn the focus from simply creating connections to setting specific goals.

"We've been operating at 10,000 feet," he said. "We're now moving down onto the ground to be part of individual communities, and we want to welcome anyone who wants to participate.



## Canoe the Heart The Route and Highlights

## Leg A: Quetico Provincial Park, Canadian Crown land and Voyageurs National Park

July 1-4 — 103 miles

Route: Atikokan River east to Perch Lake to Calm Lake to the Seine River to Shoal Lake to Grassy bay on Rainy Lake to Sand Point Island to International Falls, MN Highlights: Canada Day ceremonies and parade in Atikokan, Community events at the First Nations Village on the Seine River and International Falls July 4th Parade

## Leg B: Voyageurs National Park

July 5 — 32 miles

Route: Ash River on Kabetogama Lake , south to Namakan Lake to Sand Point Lake to King Williams Narrows on Crane Lake

*Highlights*: Rendezvous at Voyagaire Lodge, Crane Lake

## Leg C: Voyageurs National Park, Quetico Provincial Park and BWCAW

July 6-9 — 98 miles

Route: King Williams Narrows on Crane Lake, south via the Loon River to Loon Lake, west to Lac la Croix to Crooked Lake to Basswood Lake to Newton Lake to Fall Lake near Ely, MN Highlights: Superior National Forest events at Fall Lake Campground, including voyageur canoe rides for the public, games, and presentations by Canadian and USDA Forest Service dignitaries

## Leg D: BWCAW and Quetico Provincial Park

July 10-13 — 54 miles

Route: Fall Lake, west to Moose Lake to

Knife Lake to Cache Bay, Canada on

Saganaga Lake to the Chik-Wauk Lodge
at the end of the Gunflint Trail

Highlights: Chik-Wauk Lodge celebration
with the Gunflint Trail Association, including presentations, book signing, slide
show, canoe rides and children's activities

#### Leg E: Lake Superior

July 14 — 35 miles

Route: Grand Marais harbor east to Grand Portage National Monument Highlights: events at the North House Folk School in Grand Marais, celebration and presentation at Grand Portage National Monument

#### Leg F: Lake Superior

July 15-17 — 69 miles

Route: Grand Portage National

Monument north on Lake Superior to

Historic Fort William in Thunder Bay,

Ontario

Highlights: Paddling the big lake, the reception and Rendezvous at Historic Fort William, and the Dragon Boat Festival

## Participating Groups and Organizations

Cook County Emergency Services Fort William Historical Park

Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness

Friends of Quetico

**Grand Portage National Monument** 

Heart of the Continent Partnership

Lakehead University

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness

Parliament of Canada

Quetico Foundation

Quetico Provincial Park

Quetico Superior Foundation

**Superior National Forest** 

U.S. Forest Service

Voyageurs National Park

Voyageurs National Park Association

**Archeology** 

## Teasing History from Art and

As Lister put it, identifying French River Rapids as the site in Kane's painting "rejoined that particular site with its history." Kane's journals and maps indicate that it was used for what anthropologist's now call a transitory site: voyageurs camped upriver, started paddling at four or five in the morning, and paused at the start of the French River Portage for breakfast. In more recent times, water levels have changed as the result of an upstream dam, and the portage landing has shifted to a different location. The significance of French River Rapids was literally lost to history.

But with the sketch to point the way, Lister was able to engage Archeological Services Inc (ASI) for a test dig in 2007. Their work revealed a metal hook, a piece of fine china likely European in origin and part of a clay pipe. The hook was of particular interest: Kane's painting shows voyageurs gathered around a fire, above which a pot hangs from a metal hook and a tripod. The findings were significant enough to warrant a more thorough dig in partnership with Quetico Provincial Park last summer, just in time for the Park's Centennial. Their efforts were once again fruitful, uncovering glass seed beads, glass tubular beads and the sharpened end of a pole, which might be part of a tripod.

Though small in number, the significance of the artifacts is not. They establish what can be



French River Rapids by Paul Kane, 1845 or 1846, oil on paper. Courtesy Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas.

expected at a transitory site, which due to the nature of its use is less likely to produce as much archeological evidence as a campsite. This information can in turn inform future archeological discoveries. But perhaps most significant is the reaffirmation of the understanding that can be gained when art and archeology converge. It's a type of connection that isn't often made.

According to Lister, however: "It probably could happen [more] if people were paying attention and asking the right questions." Or, perhaps, took the time to scramble up slippery riverbanks in search of the past.

The French River Rapids artifacts will be on display this winter at the Royal Ontario Museum as part of a French River Rapids exhibit exploring the link between art, archeology and anthropology. Afterward, they will be returned to Quetico Provincial Park. For more information on the exhibit, visit http://www.rom.on.ca/.



# Zenolith on Crooked Lake

When the **Canoe the Heart Expedition** stopped at the Crooked Lake Pictographs this summer, Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness summer intern Kate Logan noticed a splotch of dark, black rock embedded in the pink granite rock face. A master's student in environmental policy and natural resource management at Indiana University, she offers this explanation of its significance:

What we see in this picture is very special, a geologic moment and process forever frozen in time.

The darker rock is called a zenolith. It's formed when an intrusive magma body (molten rock), in this case the pink granite, invades an area of country rock (whatever rock was there originally). The darker material was the country rock in this example.

The dark basalt was pulled off from a larger piece of country rock perhaps minutes or years earlier. While the pink granite was still molten and very hot, it melted the surrounding country rock. The magma slowly melted its edges until just this tiny piece remained. For some reason, it never melted completely: perhaps the magma was caused by a hot spot that had moved on, or a descending plate became inactive. In any case, there was not enough heat to melt the last little piece of dark basalt. Around it, the magma cooled slowly, underground, over thousands of years. This allowed the growth of various crystals that give granite its characteristic appearance, and the dark basalt embedded in it was preserved as a glimpse into the past.

Here's an analogy: It's like putting a sugar cube into a glass of water and then sticking it in the freezer. The water is like the pink granite, dissolving the dark basaltic sugar cube. By freezing the whole glass you would preserve something very similar to your picture. You would have a bunch of ice with a piece of sugar starting to dissolve into the water.

The Crooked Lake Pictographs are located on the west shore of Crooked Lake, just north of Lower Basswood Falls.



Crooked Lake Zenolith, photo by Tim Eaton.

**Book Review** 

## **Our Neck of the Woods**

Edited by Daniel J. Philippon Published by the University of Minnesota Press (2009, 277 pages, \$19.95 Softcover) Reviewed by Alissa Johnson

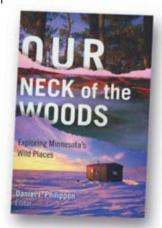
"Dense woods or mountain valleys make me nervous. After once visiting Burntside Lake north of Ely for a week, I felt a fierce longing to be out," late Minnesota author Bill Holm once wrote. The urge was so strong that he crept to his car in the middle of the night and fled back to the prairie, only to stand in a moonlit field and sing at the top of his lungs. The spitting image of insanity? Perhaps. But pick up a new collection of essays edited by Daniel J. Philippon, Our Neck of the Woods: Exploring Minnesota's Wild Places, and you'll see that Holm was simply being Minnesotan.

In Minnesota, it seems, we forget our sensibilities when it comes to loving our state. Ask Philip C. Whitford. He studies frog populations, standing on the side of the road with his hands cupped to his ears in the middle of the night. Seem curious? The highway patrol thought so, too. Or, ask Hal Crimmel. He scrambled down a river slope and flagged down a kayaker to "borrow the paddler's clammy life jacket, strip to his underwear, climb into the kayak, and shove off." There is also Terri Hutton, dedicated vegetarian so curious about hunting that she bounced

down the Echo Trail in the cab of a hunter's truck, intent on finding out: why? And of course, Holm makes an appearance with his modest admission to inventing "islands on the prairie" as a boy.

As essay collections go, Our Neck of the Woods is more of a confessional than a nature tale. Up and down the state, and via every outdoor pastime (fishing, hunting, skiing, canoeing, camping), writers confess to a love Minnesota so intense it motivates them to ski through dark, bone-chilling cold to watch the sunrise on Lake Superior, fish a creek with no fish, or spend the lunch hour in a Wendy's parking lot just to catch site of a bird. It is this diversity that makes Our Neck of the Woods best suited for random reads: open to a different essay whenever you feel the need to flea. You won't always relate—if you are, say, a prairie person like Holm, you might not long to see Sigurd Olson's trapper's cabin in the woods. But there is sure to be something to

take you back to your own little island of reprieve, that place where you unabashedly sing at the top of your lungs.



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## **PolyMet Update**

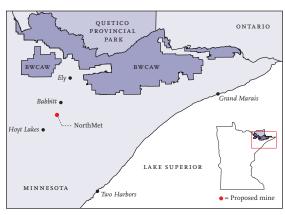
By Charlie Mahler, Wilderness News Contributor

With the late-October release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for PolyMet Mining Company's proposed NorthMet mining operation in Northeastern Minnesota, the fate of what could be the Quetico Superior's first non-ferrous mine draws near.

Plans call for an approximately 1,000-acre open pit mine near Babbitt, MN on land currently a part of the Superior National Forest, as well as a processing operation at the former LTV Steel plant in nearby Hoyt Lakes.

The release of the Draft EIS for the project that proponents say will bring 400 full-time jobs to the beleaguered Iron Range area and provide an important domestic source of copper and other necessary metals, kicked off a public comment period on the document that will help determine whether the \$600 million project will be permitted by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Opponents of the project are concerned that mining copper, nickel, and precious metals from the sulfide rock where they reside will likely lead to drainage of sulfuric acid into the nearby



PolyMet Mining Company's NorthMet project is located south of Babbitt in Northeastern Minnesota.

waterways. Sulfide-containing rocks produce sulfuric acid when they come in contact with air and water.

Historically, sulfide mines have a poor track record. Environmental advocates have pointed to deadened waterways with discolored, acidic water in some instances. Mine proponents stress that modern mining and mitigation techniques, along with the relatively low sulfide content of the Northeastern Minnesota rock greatly reduces environmental concerns.

Special attention will be paid to the manner in which PolyMet, a start-up mining company based in Vancouver, British Columbia, will seek to protect its waste rock from air and water beyond the life of the mine, which is pegged at 20 years. Financial assurances to protect against acid drainage should PolyMet go out of business are also a likely matter of contention.

As part of the Draft ElS's public comment period, which runs until February 3, 2010, the Minnesota DNR and the Army Corps of Engineers are hosting two public meeting to discuss the project, on December 9, 2009 in Aurora, MN and December 10, in Blaine, MN.

Wilderness News Online will follow the news from the public meetings and during the course of the public comment period for the project. Find our online companion to Wilderness News at: http://www.queticosuperior.org/blog/.

Interested citizens may submit comments to: Stuart Arkley, EIS project manager, DNR, Division of Ecological Resources, Environmental Review Unit, 500 Lafayette Road, Box 25, St. Paul, MN 55155-4025; or to Jon K. Ahlness, EIS project manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Branch, 190 E 5th Street, St. Paul, MN 55101. ONLINE UPDATES

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## What's New Online

- Ely Guides Concerned with Regulations Ely-area outfitters recently voiced concerns about U.S. Coast Guard regulations for businesses that guide clients on federally navigable waters.
- Hopes for Vermilion State Park Dimming
  Time and money seem to be working
  against efforts to establish a new state park
  along the shores of Lake Vermilion. The
  State of Minnesota isn't expected to renew
  efforts to buy land for the park from U.S.
  Steel until the spring of 2010.
- Watershed Forum Scheduled
   The 2010 International Lake of the Woods
   Water Quality Forum is set for March 10
   and 11. The forum will be held at Rainy
   River Community College in International

Falls, MN.



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