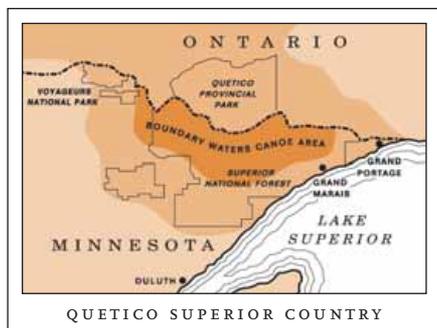


# Wilderness News

FROM THE QUETICO SUPERIOR FOUNDATION SUMMER 2007



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

*“For all this a price was paid. One cannot with impunity rob Mother Nature of her treasures, for truly the sins of the fathers are avenged unto the third or fourth generation. The price we must pay for the rapid use of our forests is a vast area of wastelands for generations, or else a wise and vigorous policy of reforestation.”*

— Agnes Larson, *White Pine Industry of Minnesota*



## Wilderness News

Published by the Quetico Superior Foundation  
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The Ham Lake fire viewed at midnight on May 7, 2007 from the Palisades on the north side of Seagull Lake. © Layne Kennedy 2007

## One Big Fire

By Michael Kelberer, Wilderness News Contributor

**In July of last year, a lightning strike ignited the Cavity Lake fire in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCWW). Over 32,000 acres burned in what was then called the largest fire in the region since 1894. But it turns out that Cavity Lake was to be only part of the largest fire since 1894. In May of this year, the Ham Lake fire burned more than 75,000 acres right next door.**

**“The area is essentially dormant during the winter,” says Lee Frelich, Director of the University of Minnesota’s Center for Hardwood Ecology. “With only two months of growing season separating them, as far as the forest is concerned they were one big fire.”**

This one-fire reality is easy to see from a hill on the portage between Seagull Lake and Paulson Lake. “As you look to the west,” says Frelich, “everything is the Cavity Lake fire. As you look to the east, everything is the Ham Lake fire. The land is black as far as you can see, all the way to the horizon.

The Ham Lake fire started from a campfire on May 5th. “The conditions that day were just incredible – off the charts,” says Frelich. The region was in a prolonged drought (“You could pick up a handful of dirt and throw it into the air and it looked like flour.”) winds were gusting from 30 to 40-miles-an-hour and lasting all day and night. “Even one little spark is going to blow up

into an uncontrollable fire within a few minutes under those conditions. And that’s what we saw.”

The “we saw” isn’t figurative. Frelich and two companions were camping on Seagull Lake when they saw the first plumes of smoke on May 5th. They watched as the fire moved rapidly northwest from Ham Lake, hitting Seagull Lake’s east shoreline and moving around it toward their campsite. They were relieved when the wind shifted to the west and pushed the fire northeastward away from them. “That’s when we made our escape,” says Frelich. (read “Survival” page 2). The fire then burned a wide swath between Seagull Lake and Gunflint Lake further to the east, moving rapidly across the Granite River to burn a large area in Canada. On May 11th, a finger descended back into the U.S. around the east end of the Gunflint. By May 19th, the U.S. portion of the fire finally succumbed to rainfall and the efforts of the fire-fighting teams.

*continued on page 5*



# Stories From the Ham Lake Fire

Three stories from the recent fire offer perspective: in a healthy forest, fire nourishes and revitalizes the soil and the landscape, and that in life, adversity can create new opportunities and new beginnings.



Dr. Lee Frelich; Trail's End Campground  
© Layne Kennedy 2007

## Survival

By Michael Kelberer, Wilderness News Contributor

On Friday May 4th, Lee Frelich, Gus Axelson, and Layne Kennedy were on assignment in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness doing a story on global warming. One day later, they found themselves in the midst of a warming of a decidedly different sort, as the Ham Lake fire roared up the east side of Seagull Lake and headed for their campsite at the Seagull Palisades. Here is Lee's account:

"On the morning of the 5th of May we were on Three-Mile Island in Seagull Lake looking at the ancient cedars. We started to paddle away from the island when we saw this puff of smoke way to the south of us. We decided to land on Eagle's Nest Island and climb the hill to investigate the smoke. By the time we arrived, only 20 minutes later, this plume of smoke was already covering most of the sky. That's how fast the fire grew."

"I teach classes on forest fires at the University of Minnesota, so I'm familiar with fire behavior. And, with 40-mile-an-hour winds in a really dry conifer forest, I knew this fire was going to be a major event. We paddled back to the Palisades where we had made camp. We spent the next two days climbing hilltops trying to figure out which way the wind was blowing and where the fire was headed next—we were trying to plan where we would go."

"During the day, all we could do was assume that the direction of the densest smoke was probably where the fire was. But at night, when we climbed up on the Palisades, we could see balls of flame that were probably 150 feet high. We could see that it had reached up as far north as the southern part of Saganaga, and with the wind still coming from the southeast, we were worried that it would get around the east end of Seagull Lake and then head towards us."

"In fact, Sunday night, you could walk around in the forest without a flashlight—the whole eastern sky was completely orange, like sunrise at midnight."

*continued on page 5*



Remnants of Superior North Outfitters  
© Layne Kennedy 2007

## Devastation

By Alissa Johnson, Wilderness News Contributor

Wilderness Canoe Base grew out of the Plymouth Christian Youth Center in 1956 to give urban youth a Christian community away from the distractions of daily life. Its prime island location on Seagull Lake has been ideal for introducing youth to the spirituality of Minnesota's Northwoods. This spring, however, it was directly in the path of the Ham Lake fire. The fire leveled nearly forty of the site's sixty buildings, razing much-needed facilities and decades of memories. Yet according to director Jedidiah Scharmer, the shock and sadness were quickly tempered by an outpouring of support.

Volunteers, financial support, and building supplies flooded in immediately. A full time staff person was brought in just to answer the inquiries. With this tremendous support and the remaining facilities, there was never reason to doubt whether WCB would remain open. The base could still support the more than seventy scheduled high school canoe trips, and affiliated camps would run the remaining residential programs. From there, a massive clean up effort began.

Volunteers and staff removed scrap metal and crumbled foundations, and combed the ground with large magnets to remove nails. Debris was hauled to the docks, transferred across the lake by boat, and carted by trailer to a county-hosted demolition site twelve miles away. All the while staff training needed to be run and decisions made about rebuilding.

A recent partnership with Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp had already sparked discussions and dreams for the future of Wilderness Canoe Base. The Ham Lake fire accelerated the timeline for acting on them. To balance short-term needs with long-term goals, temporary shelters support this summer's programming. Long-term rebuilding will take place over the next few years with the input of the WCB community and professional guidance. Though everyone is anxious to see Wilderness Canoe Base fully recovered, no one is willing to sacrifice the time to do it right.

*continued on page 5*



Ben Seaton plants a white pine seedling  
© Tuscarora Outfitters 2007

## Renewal

By Alissa Johnson, Wilderness News Contributor

As the Ham Lake fire neared containment and evacuated Gunflint Trail residents and business owners set their sights on returning home, the uncertainty of what they would return to made it difficult to tackle one big question: "What next?" Many would return to homes and land ravaged by the fire. Among the displaced were members of the Gunflint Trail Association, and they wanted to do something to help. Their discussions led to an idea: give residents tree seedlings as the Trail reopened so they could carry with them a sense of renewal as they returned.

As association members made arrangements under the guidance of Nancy Seaton, co-owner of Hungry Jack Outfitters and chair of the Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway Committee, local property owner Dyke Williams learned of their plans. A Quetico Superior Foundation board member, Williams coordinates its white pine initiative, a major planting effort to restore the declining health of the white pine in the north country. He arranged for the donation of 6,000 white pine seedlings, and QSF covered handling and shipping. Volunteers secured a variety of additional seedlings, and what began as a simple gesture grew into a 2-day event over Memorial Day weekend.

Just days after the Trail reopened, area residents and volunteers gathered at Blankenburg Landing on Sea Gull Lake to begin planting. Thanks to media coverage that included the *Star Tribune* and Minnesota Public Radio, volunteers came from as far away as the Twin Cities to help. Seaton estimates that 200 or more people planted over the course of the weekend, but emphasized that it was important to let property owners approach the day in their own way. While some were excited to receive help, others chose to plant alone as they came to terms with the effects of the fire.

*continued on page 5*

# Wilderness Between the Cracks

By Kevin Proescholdt

Many people would think that once Congress designates an area as wilderness, the area finally is safe and protected. At such a point, wilderness advocates could turn to other pressing matters, secure in the knowledge that that particular Wilderness has been protected forever.



U.S. border, South Lake.

Unfortunately, however, this rosy scenario usually doesn't turn out as hoped. Wilderness conservationists documented the shortcomings of this wishful thinking with a report released in April entitled *"Wilderness Between the Cracks: Where Motor Use and Other Wilderness Violations have Degraded the Eastern Part of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness."*

The 20-page investigative report, conducted by the Izaak Walton League of America, Sierra Club North Star Chapter, Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, and Wilderness Watch, took over a year to complete. The report contains over twenty photographs that help document an extensive number of violations of wilderness laws and regulations in the eastern part of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) in northeastern Minnesota.

The 1.1-million-acre BWCAW is the most popular and most visited unit in the entire National Wilderness Preservation System. An original wilderness of that system under the 1964 Wilderness Act, that law unfortunately contained compromise provisions that singled out the BWCAW for continued logging and motorboat use. Congress passed new – though still not yet complete – protections for the area in 1978 with the passage of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act, Public Law 95-495.

The 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act eliminated logging in the area, tightly restricted mining, eliminated snowmobiling within the wilderness except for two short access routes for snowmobiles less than 40 inches in width, and reduced motorboat use from about 62% of the water surface area of the wilderness to about 21% today after a number of long phase-out provisions.

The report documents snowmobile violations on Saganaga Lake; the international border portages from South Lake eastward through Rat, Rose, Rove, Watap, Mountain, Moose Lakes to the Fowl Lakes; Stairway Portage; Pine and Clearwater Lakes; illegally-large outboards on the Fowl Lakes and Saganaga Lake; towboat problems on Saganaga; incursions of All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs); and chainsaw use on international border portages. The full report can be read on the Izaak Walton League's web site at <http://www.iwla.org/publications/wilderness/wilderness-btwcracks.pdf>.

Among the many disturbing findings of the report is the lack of enforcement of the 40-inch regulation for snowmobiles on the Saganaga Corridor. The 1978 law allowed snowmobile access on the corridor on Saganaga, but only for snowmobiles that were less than 40 inches in width. This was an effort by Congress to limit the growth of snowmobiles to sizes only manufactured in 1978, and to try to minimize the degradation to wilderness values by allowing only smaller machines. Unfortunately, the Forest Service has rarely, if ever, enforced this provision, and virtually all of the snowmobiles that now drive this route north into Canada exceed 40 inches in width.

In recent years, wilderness advocates became aware that snowmobiling had continued within the BWCAW – illegally – on another trail called the Tilbury Trail between McFarland Lake and North Fowl Lake near the end of the Arrowhead Trail north of Hovland, Minnesota.

Though the trail had been used prior to passage of the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act, the use of motorized vehicles on the portion of the trail within the BWCAW became illegal in 1978. Yet snowmobiling continued on this trail for another 25 years, until the Gunflint Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service discovered the trail. Snowmobilers still used the Tilbury Trail for several years after this discovery despite barricades and signs erected by the agency. As an outgrowth of that issue, the same conservation organizations became curious about the existence of other uses or activities within the eastern portion of the BWCAW that might also violate wilderness regulations. *"Wilderness Between the Cracks"* was the result of their investigations.

The four wilderness organizations recognize that law enforcement in a designated wilderness is a challenging endeavor for the Forest Service, complicated by lack of easy accessibility, declining budgets and personnel, incomplete understanding of wilderness regulations at all levels of the agency, and other agency priorities. Forest Service Law Enforcement personnel are stretched thin and often pulled away from the Superior National Forest to help deal with other pressing enforcement or emergency activities. The Superior National Forest budget, for example, sustained another cut in Recreation, Wilderness, and Heritage for FY 2007. Such cuts provide continuing challenges for proper wilderness stewardship of the BWCAW.

Further complicating the BWCAW law enforcement picture is the presence of U.S. Border Patrol agents along the international border. The Border Patrol, part of the Department of Homeland Security, has been exempted from complying with most laws in some of the recent homeland security laws passed by. Among the laws from which the Border Patrol is exempted are the 1964 Wilderness Act and the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act. As a result, Border Patrol officers can legally utilize snowmobiles and other motorized travel within the BWCAW. Some of the snowmobile tracks documented in this report may indeed have come from Border Patrol activities, though the wilderness advocacy organizations still believe that illegal recreational snowmobile activity accounted for at least some of the tracks within the BWCAW.

While the photos in this report came from 2006 and cannot assist in real-time enforcement, the four groups believe nonetheless that many of the photos depict areas of recurring violations. They hope that this report will assist the U.S. Forest Service in targeting its enforcement activities and so enhance the agency's wilderness stewardship of this precious area. They believe that the Forest Service shares their concern that protecting the BWCA Wilderness shouldn't fall "between the cracks" in the agency's many other functions.

*Kevin Proescholdt directs the Izaak Walton League of America's Wilderness and Public Lands Program. Kevin helped pass the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act and was the lead author of the 1995 book, Troubled Waters: The Fight for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act, the story of that struggle.*



## Update: White Pine Initiative

The Quetico Superior Foundation's recently announced initiative to restore the white pine tree to healthy and sustainable populations within the Quetico Superior region got off to a fast start in May. Before the ground had cooled from the Ham Lake fire, the Foundation had purchased 6,000 seedling trees and donated them to the Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway Committee for planting by volunteers over the Memorial Day weekend. (story in this issue: One Big Fire—Renewal)

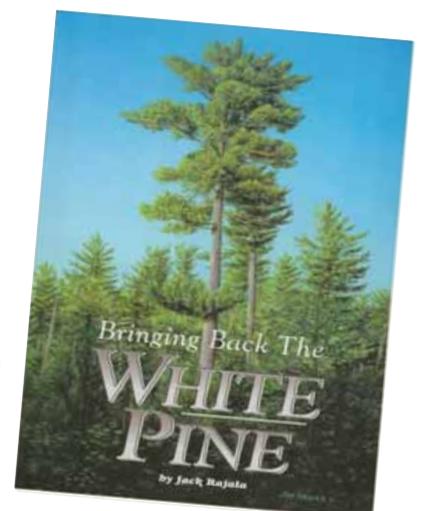
The 2007 goal of the initiative, to distribute and plant 1 million seeds, which could conservatively yield 100,000 mature trees in 20 years, is well underway. Ten pounds of white pine seeds (275,000 seeds) were distributed to youth camps, cabin owners associations and individuals this spring. In early May, when the ground was moist and accepting, Dyke Williams and the Wilderness Canoe Base planted 2 pounds or 55,000 seeds around the burned over areas near Seagull Lake. The next period for successful seeding will occur in late fall, prior to the first snow. White pine seeds and information on how and when to successfully plant can be obtained from the Foundation. The seeds are the hard-to-find blister rust resistant variety and native to the Quetico Superior area. Jack Rajala's informative book, *Bring Back the White Pine*, is also available through the Foundation at \$15 a copy.

**For more information and/or to place orders contact Dyke Williams, Project Manager; by phone at 1-952-473-1856 or by email at [Auldbear@aol.com](mailto:Auldbear@aol.com). Individuals and cabin owner associations are asked to purchase their seeds while the Foundation continues to donate supplies to the youth camps and non-profit organizations. Packages of 1,000 seeds sell at \$10.00 per pack. Half-pound bags which yield 13,500+ seeds sell for \$75.00. One pound bags yield 27,000+ seeds and sell for \$120. Shipping costs are included, along with detailed planting instructions and tips for greater survival rates.**

### Why replant white pine?

The great white pine and red pine forests of the Quetico Superior region were logged off by the turn of the 20th century. The remnants of white pine that remain today are not sufficient in number to be sustainable. White pine blister rust, pine weevils and deer predation are killing thousands of white pine trees each year. The remaining mature trees cannot produce the numbers of seeds needed to remain a sustainable species in the Superior National Forest. Today, only about 25% of seedlings survive to become successful seed sources themselves. Many experts believe the only way to restore the white pine is to plant huge numbers of trees to numerically increase the reseeded, maturation and survival of the species.

Recommended reading:  
*Bring Back the White Pine*,  
by Jack Rajala



Visit the new web site at: [www.queticosuperior.org](http://www.queticosuperior.org)

## Quetico Superior Foundation Launches Web Site

For over sixty years, the Quetico Superior Foundation has been a supporter of the Quetico Superior region. Its involvement has ranged from co-funding projects with partner organizations to fully funding grant proposals, on issues ranging from land acquisition to park trail maintenance to tree planting. The Foundation is the legacy of the Quetico Superior Committee, formed in the 1930s in response to the threats of mining, logging, and dam-building in the region. Since then, its voice as an organization has been understated, and in every issue the group tries to view both sides, take a balanced perspective, and then help promote what seems to be in the best interests of both the land, water, and people of the border lakes region.

*Wilderness News* has been the Foundation's most visible form of outreach, and while it reaches over 17,000 readers every year, many subscribers are still unfamiliar with the group behind the newsletter. In July of 2007, the Quetico Superior Foundation launched its web site—[www.queticosuperior.org](http://www.queticosuperior.org), to offer the public more information on the organization, and much more.

### Highlights from the new web site include:

**Grant Activity** – A selected overview of the Foundation's grantmaking activity, the grant projects reveal how the Foundation's commitment to stewardship has an impact on the land and people.

**Hot Topics** – Check out some of the most critical issues surrounding the area, related links, and more.

**History** – A brief history of the region and the role of people in this unique landscape.

**Wilderness News Online** – Check out past issues of *Wilderness News*, or subscribe to the newsletter via email! If you've ever wanted to retrieve a past issue, or if you are new to our newsletter, check out the 'archive' of past issues in PDF format. With each new issue of *Wilderness News*, we will post the cover story and the full issue on the web site. If you would like to help us reduce mailing costs, you may subscribe to the RSS feed, or receive the newsletter PDF via email.

**Donate & Support** – The Quetico Superior Foundation does not solicit membership or annual donations, but if you would like to make a contribution to the Foundation, see the 'Contact Us' section; or, if you would like to support this newsletter, go to the 'Wilderness News' section and click on 'Support.'

### Subscribe to Wilderness News Online!

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[www.queticosuperior.org](http://www.queticosuperior.org)

### The ecological impact.

"I don't think we lost anything ecologically; the real losses are the buildings, and the displacement of people from their homes," says Frelich. For the forest itself, the fire was a perfectly normal physical event; in fact, this type of forest is fire-dependent and all the Ham Lake fire did was allow the forest to begin regenerating itself.

"The fire has also created a rich research laboratory for forest ecologists," says Frelich. A recent patchwork of fire events is giving scientists an opportunity to study how a forest regenerates after multiple burns over different time intervals. Much of what burned this summer is jack pine forest that had grown in since the major fires of 1910. The fire also re-burned forest that had burned recently in the 1995 Sag Corridor fire, which itself had re-burned an area that had burned over in 1974.

The forest's regeneration process starts quickly. Jack pine and black spruce seedlings have already begun to take hold, although they only manage a half-inch or so of growth in the first year and will be difficult to spot. But the Bicknell's geranium, strawberry blight (which is neither a strawberry nor a disease), corydalis and fireweed are growing strong, with the geraniums reaching a foot in height by the end of the summer.

Like many fire species, geraniums bury seeds in the soil that wait for the next fire to come along,

however long it takes. One batch at the end of the Gunflint Trail has been awaiting their chance since the 1910 fires. Another part of the Ham Lake fire zone hasn't burned since 1801, and seeds that will germinate there are over 200 years old. Fireweed has a different strategy: its seeds are always present, but are only successful when fire clears the competition and the canopy.

Another species taking advantage of post-fire conditions is the black-backed woodpeckers. They feed on a beetle that makes its home in the bark of standing dead trees. These woodpeckers are normally considered quite rare in the Quetico Superior region, but started to arrive in strength after the big blowdown in 1999 created a boom in the beetle housing market. Now the recent fires have produced new crops of dead trees for the beetles to live in. "It used to be you'd see one black-backed woodpecker a year up here," says Frelich. "Now you can sit down for lunch and see five of them."

### Just the beginning?

Despite the press given to forest fires caused by human carelessness, it turns out that the net effect of humans on forest fires in the BWCAW area has been to dramatically *reduce* their frequency. Based on data from the 18th and 19th centuries, Ham Lake-like fires should burn the entire BWCAW between one and two times per century. But, during the 20th century, less than one-fifth of it has burned. Why? "Two major

forces are at work," says Frelich. "The first, is forest fragmentation. Historically, the fires that burned the Boundary Waters area actually started further south and burned their way into it. But now this rarely happens because there are no longer vast tracts of forest to the south; roads, farms, and development have led to forest fragmentation on a large scale." And, says Frelich, "much of the remaining patchwork of forest has converted from conifers to less-flammable Aspen."

"Another major factor in the diminishing frequency of fires is climate change. When the Little Ice Age ended in the late 1800s and the climate started warming again, the weather patterns were actually less favorable to fire, mainly due to higher humidity. For most of the 1900s we just didn't get the type of fire weather that occurred in the 1700s and 1800s," says Frelich.

However, the climate change influence may be in the process of flip-flopping. While the early stages of a warming climate are often associated with wetter conditions, further warming tends to dry things out. More frequent droughts (along with earlier springs) set the stage for an increase in fire frequency and size. "It is still too early to say for sure", says Frelich, "but the back-to-back Cavity Lake and Ham Lake fires may be a harbinger of things to come." □

### Survival – continued from page 2

"We were threatened by the fire, but we were trapped by the winds. It was just a few days after ice-out, and the water was near freezing. With a 40-mile-an-hour wind on a lake that big, you're not going anywhere in canoes. Even the crossing of Seagull that we made from Eagle's Nest Island to the Palisades was probably the worst crossing I've ever made: 34-degree water, with the bow of the canoe clearing by only an inch as we went into each wave."

"Finally, on Monday morning, the winds shifted to the west and diminished, blowing the fire away from us, and making an escape by canoe possible. We took advantage and paddled from the Palisades to Dominion Island where the Wilderness Canoe Base is located. The camp was on fire, we turned north and headed up the Seagull River to the Trail's End campground. As we made our exit, the east side of the Seagull River was on fire while the west side, where the campground is, had just a few trees torching up."

"When we landed at the campground a hot-shot crew came down and asked if I was Lee. They had been waiting for us, because, of course, we had filed our permit and they knew we were in the BWCAW on Seagull. In fact, we were the only party out there." □

### Devastation – continued from page 2

In the meantime, reforestation efforts are underway. White pine seeds donated by Dyke Williams and the Quetico Superior Foundation have been dispersed. The University of Minnesota Forestry Department, which uses WCB as a base for Boundary Waters studies, has planted trees to study the fire's effects on red and white pine. Natural reforestation is also at work. The jack pines are returning and the landscape is greening. Though WCB may look like a fraction of its former self, its essence remains intact. Youth continue to forge connections to nature, to their traveling companions, and to their faith and their God.

In a healthy forest, fire nourishes and revitalizes the soil and the landscape. In life, adversity can also create new opportunities and new beginnings. Through their dedication and determination, the staff and volunteers at Wilderness Canoe Base have transformed the Ham Lake fire from a story of tragedy to one of hope and faith. Scharmer says it best, "Out of it all we are finding hope, a hope to rebuild, a hope that comes in tight knit communities that live together in love through difficult times and a hope that occurs because over and over we see campers, guests, work crews and alumni who come here and are overjoyed with the hard work and possibilities that this fire has provided."

To learn how you can help Wilderness Canoe Base in its efforts to rebuild, visit the website at [www.wildernesscanoebase.org](http://www.wildernesscanoebase.org) □

### Renewal – continued from page 2

The event undoubtedly created the sense of renewal organizers had hoped for. By the end of the weekend, the seedlings were the only green to dot the landscape; it was a welcome site. Seaton spoke of one resident in particular who chose to plant alone that first Saturday. Returning the next day, he confided that it felt like a rebirthing to plant on his land; it had given him the ability to look forward again. On Sunday, he invited volunteers to help him plant more trees.

The weekend was such a success that plans are forming for a second annual event. Seaton and the committee are working to expand the planting beyond private land through a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. Planting is scheduled for May 3, 2008 to take advantage of more favorable growing conditions in early spring.

As for this year's seedlings? Sue Ahrendt of Tuscarora Lodge and Outfitters, who participated in the planting, reports that weather conditions have been ideal for growing since Memorial Day. There has been plenty of rain, and the ferns have come up, providing protection for the seedlings. What began as an act of hope by residents has been continued by Mother Nature's gradual restoration of the land. Both serve as a reminder that with faith and courage, the Gunflint Trail and the lives of the people who call it home will renew. □

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**Wilderness News**  
Summer 2007

- One Big Fire ..... 1
- Stories From the Ham  
Lake Fire..... 2
- Wilderness Between the Cracks... 3
- Quetico Superior Web Site ..... 4
- White Pine Update ..... 4
- Echo Trail Lawsuit ..... 6

[www.queticosuperior.org](http://www.queticosuperior.org)

CONSERVATION ISSUES UPDATE

# Echo Trail Lawsuit

By Charlie Mahler, Wilderness News Contributor

As often happens with such matters, the U.S. Forest Service's Echo Trail Area Forest Management Project finds itself before a judge.

A coalition of environmental groups led by the Sierra Club's Northstar Chapter filed suit in late June against the USFS over the forest management plan which would log trees on more than 12,000 acres – roughly 19 square miles – of land surrounding the Trout Lake unit of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The Trout Lake Unit is located southwest of the Echo Trail; it is the western, non-contiguous section of the BWCAW.

The environmental coalition asked the federal court to halt logging and road building for the Echo Trail Project until the USFS complies with what it sees as legal obligations to analyze the timber sales impacts to the nearby BWCAW, preserve the wilderness character of the BWCAW, protect the Canada lynx, and ensure the area's "natural rich diversity of species" is maintained.

The coalition asserts that logging and road-building in close proximity to the wilderness area will have detrimental impacts on the wilderness from machinery noise, habitat disruption, and invasive species advancement. The groups also maintain that project planning did not fully address impact on the federally endangered Canada lynx in the region.

The USFS rationale for the Echo Trail Project stresses the need to manage the forest in a way that adds young jack pine to the ecosystem of this historically jack pine/black spruce landscape. "The jack pine in the Echo Trail Area is old and mature and as it declines, there is concern that the jack pine cover type will be lost to other species," the summary states. "Adding young jack pine stands to this ecosystem would contribute to a Forest Plan desired condition."

"We are saddened that the agency is risking clean water, wildlife and special qualities of wilderness clearly intended for protection by Congress," Lois Norrgard, Forest Protection Co-Chair of Sierra Club's Northstar Chapter said in a media release. "We are disappointed the Forest Service has not obeyed the law."

The suit focuses on the Forest Services alleged failure to consider direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the logging on the BWCAW and its failure to preserve wilderness character as required by section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act states: "Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, each agency administering any area designated as wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area and shall so administer such area for such other purposes for which it may have been established as also to preserve its wilderness character. Except as otherwise provided in this Act, wilderness areas shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use."

Forest industry advocates have noted that the current plan has addressed many concerns expressed by environmental groups. The industry opposes with what they see as the environmental organizations' attempt to extend wilderness protections beyond the boundary of the wilderness area.

"The wilderness is a wilderness," Wayne Brandt, executive vice president of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association, told the *Star Tribune* recently. "There's a line around it, and outside of that wilderness the law says that the forest is to be managed for multiple benefits."

Planning for the Echo Trail Project has been underway for nearly four years.

## Web Site Review



[www.Canoeing.com](http://www.Canoeing.com)

## The Ultimate Web Site for Canoeists

If you're passionate about canoeing, there's a new route for you – online. Canoeing.com calls itself 'The Ultimate Guide' to canoeing, paddlesports, gear, and destinations. Use the 'Destination Guide' to start planning a trip – find maps, outfitters, lodging, permit information and more for canoe parks in Minnesota, Western Ontario and Eastern Manitoba. The 'Beginner's Guide' is a great resource for a first trip, and the 'Advanced Paddler' will inspire even the most seasoned trippers. The 'Canoe Guide' covers almost every aspect of canoes – from design to choosing a canoe, but even more exciting are the over 500 canoes to explore, all in one place. The 'Nature & Environment' section will provide resources for environmental issues in canoe country, and they are soon to launch a blog to report on all canoeing news. The 'Rendezvous' is the paddler's community – connect with other enthusiasts in the 'Message Board & Forums' or post pictures from your favorite trips in the 'Photo Galleries.' Beautiful photography and fresh feature stories throughout the site will keep you coming back for a daily dose of paddle-dreams.

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