

QUETICO-SUPERIOR COUNTRY



FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • FALL 1975

## Quetico-Superior Foundation 1975 Institute

The challenge of using and, at the same time, protecting the Boundary Waters Canoe Area continues to stir concern and debate. This was apparent at the Quetico Superior Foundation Institute held at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, on May 9, 1975. The one-day program, funded by the Quetico Superior Foundation, was arranged and coordinated by Robert W. Merz, U.S. Forest Service (retired). Thirteen speakers gave their views and answered questions on topics ranging from mining to logging to ecological research in the area. A crowd estimated at 200 attended the symposium.

### Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Keynote speaker was Robert L. Herbst, Minnesota Commissioner of Natural Resources. Mr. Herbst emphasized that the Department of Natural Resources assigns highest priority to management of the BWCA. The DNR seeks to preserve the canoe country in order to provide users with the ultimate wilderness experience and, at the same time, to protect the quality of the resource. It is one of the greatest challenges facing the DNR today, according to Mr. Herbst. He felt that the BWCA does not have to be "all things to all people." The canoe country should be reserved for a wilderness experience while neighboring forest around can accommodate greater development and a place for "less strenuous activities." In accordance with the findings of the Selke Commission, Commissioner Herbst believes logging should continue to be permitted in mature and overmature stands of the Portal Zone. In the Interior Zone, fire management should be adopted to preserve wildlife species such as the whitetail deer and ruffed grouse.

### Superior National Forest View

The day's second speaker was James F. Torrence, Forest Supervisor,



Question and answer session which included speakers E. Vandermillen, James Torrence, Bud Heinselman, and Jon Waters.



Audience attending Quetico-Superior Foundation Institute.

Superior National Forest. His talk stressed that the BWCA is "one of a kind" not only because of Section 4(D)(5) of the Wilderness Act, which allows timbering and motorboats in the wilderness, but also because of the way which the people of Minnesota perceive the area. Mr. Torrence pointed out that heavy commercial and special interests are active in the BWCA to a greater degree than in any other wilderness unit of the forest system. Such interests range from logging to canoe outfitting, snowmobiling, motorboating, and the Boy Scouts. Too many people view the BWCA from self-serving standpoints.

Mr. Torrence stated,

We must come to grips with the growing use pressures that are continuing to take their toll of this

fragile area. We are going to have to regulate ourselves so we may enjoy what the BWCA has to offer in terms of a primitive recreation experience and, at the same time, we will be absolutely certain to preserve the wilderness character of this area for future generations to come.

In a subsequent question-and-answer session, Mr. Torrence announced that the Forest Service had just begun exploratory meetings to consider the possibility of using fire as a management tool in the BWCA. Within six months a plan could possibly be developed. Two years of intensive data gathering, evaluation, and coordination would follow before a fire program could begin.



## Wilderness News

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## MECCA Position

Dr. Darby M. Nelson, Professor of Biology, Anoka-Ramsey College, expressed the MECCA viewpoint. He said some people believe that the INCO and AMAX projects do not represent a potential threat to the BWCA. Dr. Nelson disagrees. He emphasized that watersheds and prevailing air systems serve as the determining influence on potential environmental damage, and particularly the proposed copper-nickel development on the South Kawishiwi watershed poses danger to the BWCA. This development can only be licensed if the mining company can assure that its technology will permit no degradation of the water and air quality. The risks are high. Close examination of possible impact on the continued integrity of the BWCA is very much in order. In addition to the potential harm from highly toxic chemicals, the tranquility of the surroundings could be affected by trucks and trains hauling ore. Dust from open pit blasting, ore handling, and unstabilized tailings sites also represents a potential threat to the canoe country's wilderness preservation.

## Timber Industry View

Boise Cascade Corporation's Communications and Environmental Affairs Manager, Arthur F. Ennis, offered the industry view of logging in the BWCA. Mr. Ennis contended that softwood is in short supply in Minnesota. Harvesting of softwood supplies in the Portal Zone of the BWCA is necessary to meet Minnesota's needs, and this harvesting can be accomplished without harming the recreational resources of the canoe country. He urged that the people of the State of Minnesota approach the issue of timber needs and cutting from an unemotional, informed, and scientific viewpoint based on complete analysis of the economic, as well as environmental, problems involved.

## Canoe Country Expansion

Jon M. Waters, President, Canadian Waters Outfitters, Ely, proposed an expansion of the boundaries of the

BWCA. The enlargement would involve eleven new areas to assist in accommodating the large number of present visitors and to take care of an expected increase in the number of future users. The new areas would include land at Kawishiwi Lake, Isabella Lake, South Kawishiwi River in the vicinity of the Minnesota Outward Bound School, the north shore of the North Kawishiwi River, the Hegman Lake area, three sections of land south of Big Lake, the Moose River loop, south of the Echo Trail, and the Little Indian Sioux River access points off the Echo Trail. Waters declared, "We cannot afford the luxury of watching as civilization continues to encroach upon the incredibly beautiful Boundary Waters Canoe Area. The time for action has arrived!"

## Forest Service Environmental Impact Statement

Mr. E. Vandermillen, Project Leader for the USFS Copper-Nickel Project, cautioned that the proposal for copper-nickel development south of the BWCA must be viewed objectively. If copper-nickel mining is to develop at the South Kawishiwi, it must be safe. The Project Group must operate within the framework of: (1) National Environmental Policy Act and (2) the Mineral Policy Act of 1970. The National Environmental Policy Act demands that, if a proposed activity can have significant environmental impact, an Environmental Impact Statement must be accomplished. This Act seeks to weigh the positive against the negative aspects of a proposal to determine whether the potential damage to the environment can be minimized and also acceptable to society. The Mineral Policy Act seeks to encourage sound and environmentally suitable mining activity. Thus, the Forest Service has two laws guiding it — one seeking to minimize environmental damage, the other promoting development. The Forest Service's "Action Plan" challenges the project group to arrive at

answers to the complex questions and to remain truly objective in accomplishing this.

## The Effect of Heavy Metal Toxicity to Aquatic Animals

Through a series of slides, Dr. Kenneth E. Biesinger of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency showed the detrimental effect of toxic metals on fish. He discussed the metal contamination of waters resulting from mining operations and factors which influence the toxicity of metals. The talk left little uncertainty in the minds of those attending the conference that metal toxicity spreading from mining wastes has the capacity to seriously deform fish. Dr. Biesinger concluded, "Careful consideration must be given to the treatment and control of mining wastes in areas near the BWCA to assure protection of aquatic life."

## Environmental Awareness

Author and naturalist, Sigurd Olson, traced a history of battles to save wilderness areas. He emphasized the need for protection of our remaining wilderness resources and the consequence we face should these resources be wasted. Mr. Olson concluded on an optimistic note, saying that people today throughout the world are much more aware and concerned about dangers to the environment than ever before. The future is not at all gloomy. Mr. Olson observed,

A few years ago we had a day called Earth Day, in which all the colleges and universities across the country celebrated the idea of a new attitude toward the earth. It had tremendous impact. For the first time the word ecology was understood as meaning living in harmony with the earth and with all living things. For the first time people clear across the land began to change their attitudes towards not only the BWCA but all other areas.



ROBERT L. HERBST



JAMES F. TORRENCE



SIGURD OLSON



## Timber Cutting in the BWCA

Dr. M.L. Heinselman, U.S. Forest Service (retired), pointed out that there are 160,000 acres of virgin forest in the Portal Zone where timber cutting continues to be permitted, and he argued that very adequate acreage of pulpwood timber exists in Minnesota outside of the BWCA. He urged that the BWCA should be maintained as a true wilderness area devoid of timber cutting. Dr. Heinselman recommended that fire be introduced into the BWCA, as the canoe country forests are a fire-dependent ecosystem. Fire is part of the natural wilderness system which will provide the continuing forest habitat for deer, moose, wolves, bear, and beaver.

## Ecological Research

A representative of the North Central Forest Experiment Station, Lewis F. Ohmann, described the goal of wildlife research as an effort to provide information to: (1) administrators — to aid management of this unique resource — and (2) public users — to increase appreciation of the area.

The purpose of vegetative research is to classify and describe plant communities. Results from vegetative research have substantiated an earlier conclusion that vegetation following a disturbance, such as fire, is closely related to the previous community; whereas, vegetation following a disturbance associated with logging shows a high proportion of broadleaf trees (aspen — birch — maple), rather than pine and fir, and does not follow its previous community. Animal studies on moose, deer, lynx, wolf, and eagles are still continuing and have shown, among other results, that the number of deer in the BWCA are down appreciably since 1968 and 1969. This has caused a decrease in the size of the wolf population, as well.

## Visitor Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in the BWCA

Principal Geographer at the North Central Forest Experiment Station, David W. Lime, stated that the BWCA has more visitors than any other wilderness in the United States. Visitors numbered 163,000 in 1974. Today there is growing concern about increasingly heavy use of our wilderness areas and the impact of this on both the natural resources and the visitor experience. From his studies Mr. Lime has concluded that overuse and congestion are sources of dissatisfaction in the BWCA. The conflict between the non-motorized and motorized craft in the BWCA is intense and one-sided. Although total motorboat use is not great, it has a disproportionate impact on enjoyment of the wilderness by the non-motorized visitors.

## Visitor Use of Selected Campsites

Dr. Lawrence C. Merriam, Jr., Professor, College of Forestry at the University of Minnesota, provided information on campsite studies in the BWCA. A total of 33 campsites were studied during the period of 1968 through 1972 to determine the effect of visitor use on the sites. Among other findings, it was determined that "a continuing trend is that sites tend to be redesigned by the public to their needs along lines of least resistance." This means that sites have to be designed with an understanding that the site will probably be expanded by the public. Sites without easy landings or with a covering of trees, and hence insect problems, will be chosen last. Open, rocky sites are being used more often than the heavily forested sites. Shrubs play an important role in preventing expansion of the site area.

## Minnamox Exploration Project

Project Manager of the Minnamox Exploration Project, Mr. John B. Malcolm, assured those gathered for the conference that AMAX is concerned about the environmental impact of its future mining developments. He explained that AMAX has scientists studying water quality, aquatic biology, wildlife, plant life, soils, and weather conditions on the periphery of the proposed site near Babbitt. Malcolm is confident that AMAX can develop potential mineral resources available at Babbitt without ruining the environment. AMAX feels that the need for development of potential mineral resources is greater than ever before in history. Malcolm pointed out that in a 30-year period from 1940 through 1970 in the United States we have consumed more metals than the entire world had used prior to 1940.

## Sierra Club View

Charles K. Dayton, Counsel for the Sierra Club, emphasized his belief that Minnesota has adequate timber resources outside of the BWCA and the economic impact of eliminating logging would be minimal. He said that less than 40 jobs would be affected by the elimination of logging in the BWCA. He also pointed out that the timber industry advertising campaigns had tended to shift to a view that logging would be "good for the BWCA area" rather than "important to supply timber needs." Dayton summarized the legal status of the MPIRG and Sierra Club lawsuits to stop BWCA logging and told of the results of the Sierra Club and Minnesota Federation of Ski Touring Clubs' appeal to the U.S. Forest Service to ban the use of snowmobiles in the BWCA.

## BWCA UPDATE

You can have a bound booklet of talks delivered at the Institute by sending \$2.00 to Robert W. Merz, 1357 West Ryan, St. Paul, Minnesota 55113.

## RECENT BWCA DEVELOPMENTS

### Silent Night

Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, John McGuire, in May reversed an earlier decision and banned the use of snowmobiles in the BWCA. His action was the result of an appeal by the North Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Minnesota Federation of Ski Touring Clubs. The two organizations had contended that snowmobiles are inconsistent with the 1964 Federal Wilderness Act. The Chief of the U.S. Forest Service also ordered that the use of herbicides in the BWCA be greatly restricted.

### Tarnished Copper Prices

In July International Nickel Company said that it would not make a firm decision whether or not to mine copper-nickel ore at the Kawishiwi River site before 1978; and, if an affirmative decision is reached, the actual open pit mining would not begin before 1980.

### Copper-Nickel Assay

The Environmental Quality Council hired a former official of Northern States Power Company, Robert Poppe, to head the task force preparing the environmental impact statement on potential copper-nickel mining in northeastern Minnesota. The action drew criticism from environmentalists who questioned whether Mr. Poppe's previous role as an NSP industry spokesman qualifies him as an impartial administrator in his new job with the EQC. Subsequently, the EQC voted to make the task force committee report directly to its chairman, Peter Vanderpoel, rather than to the heads of the PCA and DNR. Opposition to this action suggested that the EQC has neither the past record, the technical expertise, nor the freedom from political influence to effect an adequate or impartial environmental impact statement.

### Rest for the Weary Chain Saw

U.S. District Judge Miles Lord in August banned all logging in the virgin forest of the BWCA, having concluded that such logging was prohibited by the 1964 Wilderness Act. The decision means that roughly half of the 412,000 acres in the Portal Zone will be protected from logging while the other half will remain open to timber cutting.



## Filtered Water

The Minnesota PCA said in September that toxic metals could be draining off an INCO copper-nickel mining test site near the South Kawishiwi River on the edge of the BWCA. The PCA was concerned that toxic metals — including copper, iron, and zinc — could harm fish and other aquatic life. William Mounce, INCO's Minnesota resident manager, said that remedial steps would be taken at the site.

## Boundless Waters International Re-Creation Area

In mid-October a bill to divide the

present BWCA into a separate wilderness and separate recreation area was introduced in Congress by Eighth District Congressman James Oberstar. The bill also included a 12% increase in the size of the BWCA. The increased land would be added to the "Boundary Waters National Recreation Area." Logging, motorboating, and snowmobiling would be prohibited within the 626,700-acre "Boundary Waters Wilderness Area" but permitted in the 526,000-acre "Boundary Waters National Recreation Area." The bill designates large sections of the canoe country to be permanently open to motorized traffic.

## The King Is Dead

by John Coulter\*

In Africa the lion is king. In the northern hemisphere of our continent the Moose, a silent vegetarian, truly an animal with majestic qualities, is one of our natural rulers. His rules — travel the wooded forest of our land, mate, and watch his number slowly multiply, harm few who interfere with his life. Man's rules — set aside a wilderness area, profess to protect wildlife, disallow mining, lumbering, snowmobiles, metal cans and bottles. In this area, one of our last natural frontiers, man also protects the eagle, the beaver, even the wolf that has been virtually destroyed.

But alas! The king must be destroyed — shot in a wilderness area designed for the protection of wildlife. It is necessary for man to hunt this huge, lumbering, slowly multiplying natural animal in a designated wilderness area. Man's priorities are in order. Politically, the hunter is satisfied. He can make his kill

of a 800 to 1,000-pound animal in the deep protected woods. He will extract the antlers, some meat, and leave the carcass for the rest to consume and enjoy — the wolf, the scavenger, and the canoeist.

Canoeing mid-September heading north on the Sawbill trail, we watched an inexperienced hunting party destroy a moose. A magnificent setting: fisherman, canoeist, and naturalist traveling in a protected area — along with an army of jittery hunters. Five shots to kill the animal were necessary as the hunters were indeed remarkable marksmen. Shouts of glee from a few over the kill — sadness of many that watch the unnecessary destruction.

Another three days of silent canoeing punctuated with the numerous shots of the hunter. A slow painful conclusion:

The hunter must be allowed in a designated wilderness area. A political truth, as it satisfies the minor wants of a very few. Even though few in number, the needs of the miners, the lumberjacks, and snowmobilers must also be satisfied, compared to the multitude that enjoy the majestic and natural protection of the BWCA.

Our priorities of human needs are truly set!

*\*The article arises from a trip Mr. Coulter made in mid-September from Sawbill Lake to Cherokee Lake and back. The views expressed are those of the author and should not be construed necessarily as opinions of the Foundation.*

## VOICES FROM THE RAPIDS



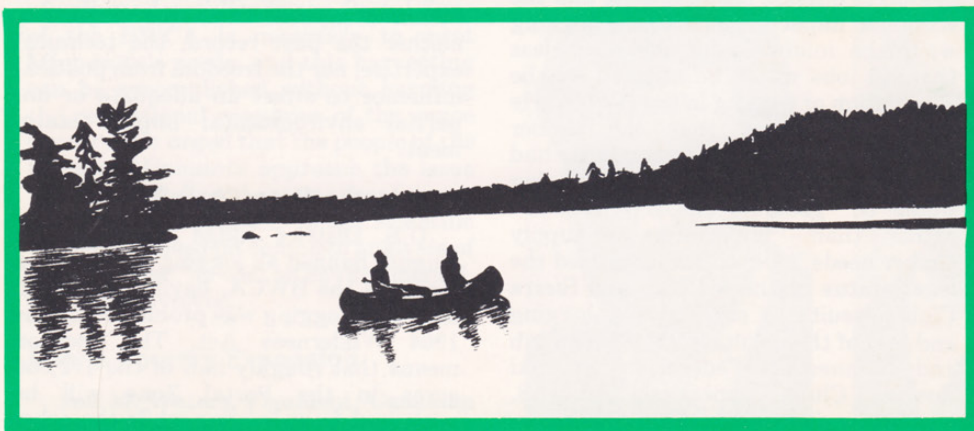
Crew Leader Douglas Birk and diver utilize a metal detector in their search for fur trade artifacts in the waters at Fort Charlotte at the Pigeon River end of the Grand Portage.

"There was no sound in the eerie underwater world except the air rushing into my lungs through the regulator, and the bubbles rumbling as they headed for the surface," writes Robert C. Wheeler as he recalls his first dive into the waters along the Minnesota-Ontario border in a search for fur trade artifacts. "I stared through my mask at the scene below. Untouched for two centuries lay wrought iron axes, beaver spears, musket balls — lost along the voyageur highway from some canoe capsized long ago. I could almost hear the voices of the French-Canadian voyageurs screaming as they tumbled into the rapids."

The experience is one of many recounted in *Voices from the Rapids: An Underwater Search for Fur Trade Artifacts, 1960-73*, published in May by the Minnesota Historical Society. The book is the authoritative, detailed report on thirteen years of underwater research and recovery of fur trade materials by the Quetico-Superior Underwater Research Project conducted by the state society and the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. It tells how the chance find of 17 nested brass kettles in northern Minnesota sparked a unique scientific project which has brought international acclaim to Minnesota and to the Minnesota Historical Society.

The authors — Robert C. Wheeler, Walter A. Kenyon, Alan R. Woolworth, and Douglas A. Birk — have all been personally associated with the innovative project which has recovered a prodigious amount of unusual historical fur trade artifacts.

*Voices from the Rapids* is available by mail from the Minnesota Historical Society, Order Department, 1500 Mississippi Street, St. Paul 55101, at \$7.26 including sales tax, postage and handling.



Late afternoon on Lake Cherokee by Lucy Bruntjen.