



FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • FALL 1991

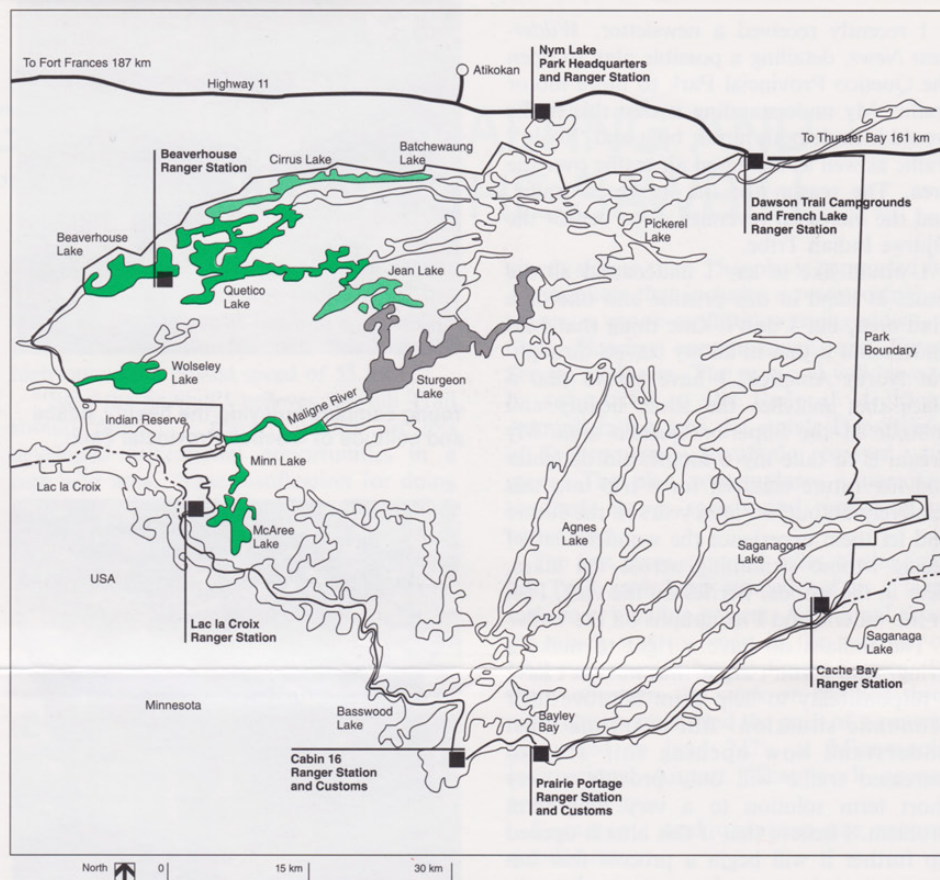
QUETICO PARK CONCERNS

The spring issue of *Wilderness News* warned of the possible opening of certain Quetico Lakes to motorized use. On June 3, 1991, Bud Wildman, Ontario's Minister of Natural Resources, announced that he had opened on an interim basis three new lakes within Quetico Park to motorboat use for Lac La Croix Indian Band members. The three lakes are Cirrus, Jean and Conk, all located in the northwestern part of the park near Quetico Lake. The order allowed motors up to a maximum of 10 horsepower for the purpose of guiding.

The Lac La Croix Indian Band with a population of about 300 live in a village without road access at the west end of Lac La Croix, approximately 15 miles northeast of Crane Lake. In addition to the interim opening of the three lakes, Wildman said the ministry will commit \$500,000 to the construction of a road or trail to the community. Members of the community are unsure whether they want a road to the village. The ministry has also hired four band members to serve on a fire protection crew for the park.

The opening of the three lakes was termed "interim" until May 1992, when a more permanent decision will be issued. The band wants motor access to three additional lakes and is requesting the right to fly float planes into Sturgeon Lake in the park's interior. The three additional lakes are Budside, Rouge and Sturgeon. The band has been allowed to operate motors up to 10 horsepower for several years in Quetico Park on Beaverhouse, Quetico, Wolseley, Minn, McAree and the Maligne River up to and including Tanner Lake. A number of park users feel that if the six lakes are granted in May 1992, the decision will greatly compromise the wilderness character of the park.

At a meeting held at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul Campus in October 1990, Shan Walshe, Quetico Park's gifted naturalist who died in the spring of 1991, warned of serious pending compromises to the wilderness character of Quetico Park.



Quetico lakes marked in dark green are Quetico lakes where Indian guides from the reserve have been allowed to operate motors up to 10 horsepower. Lakes marked in light green were opened on an "interim" basis in June, 1991. Lakes marked in grey are additional lakes the band is seeking for motor use in May, 1992.

He warned wilderness advocates that they needed to speak up and defend the park against intrusion in the form of motorized lakes, planes, roads, and commercial enterprise.

The number of readers of *Wilderness News* have responded to our feature article in the spring issue detailing the motor threat to Quetico. Several of their letters follow:

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SPARKS FROM THE CAMPFIRE

I am voicing my opinion in support of Quetico Park as it stands presently.

Please do not allow any fly-ins. Please do not allow any additional lakes to be open to motors for Indians or anyone. These modifications are the rumors I have been hearing lately.

The park is a complete get-away as it is. We love the remote wilderness and we love the fact that it takes some hardship to get into. The value of this park will become greater and greater as the years go by.

Let's keep it unique.

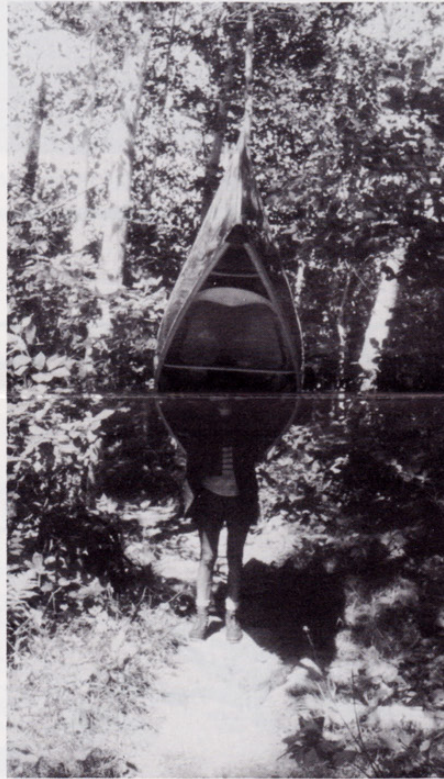
Bill Klein
Madison, Wisconsin

I recently received a newsletter, *Wilderness News*, detailing a possible plan to open the Quetico Provincial Park to more motor traffic. My understanding is that this traffic would include both motor boat and "fly-in" traffic as well as increased air traffic over the area. The reason for the increased traffic, and the increased revenues, is to benefit the Ojibwe Indian Tribe.

I would like to say I understand all the issues at hand in this pristine and one of a kind area, but I don't. One thing that I do understand is that in all my travels throughout North America, I have yet to find a place that matches the sheer beauty and solitude of the Superior/Quetico area. My dream is to take my 6 month old daughter and her future children for a trip into this relatively untouched area years in the future and let them experience the wonderment of seeing Moose swimming across the lakes, Bear in the woods, Berries on the vine, Fish in the waters, and Pictographs on the walls.

The Indians do have a right to make a living. And I won't argue that we don't have a responsibility to help them improve their economic situation. But everyone must understand how opening this area to increased traffic will only provide a very short term solution to a very long term problem. I believe that if this area is opened up further it will begin a process that has been repeated over and over again throughout North America, exploitation of the land for short term gain and creating damage for the long term.

There have to be other solutions. The Ojibwe could start their own guide service with support and guidance from their Tribal Council and the Park Service. They could receive a portion of the permits already allowed into the area. If allowed to, the free market will decide if the Ojibwe or the white man has a better service to provide. This system would provide the Ojibwe with the "reins." They will have the ability to create a better life for themselves while the park itself is protected. This proposition doesn't



Young campers enjoying the beauty, peace and solitude of Quetico Provincial Park.



take into account the "rights" of the current outfitters and may not be an ideal solution.

I will stay tuned and I hope for all our sakes that a small trickle doesn't develop in this dam. Because we all know what happens when dams develop leaks. A flood isn't very far behind.

I will be sending a copy of this letter to:
The *Wilderness News*
The Quetico Foundation
The Wildlands League
The Federation of Ontario Naturalists
Friends of Quetico Park

Tom Ward
Downingtown, Pennsylvania

I experienced anger and sadness upon reading your article regarding the possibility that motors may be allowed in part of Quetico Provincial Park (*Wilderness News*, Spring 1991). Having had the opportunity to visit the park on three occasions for canoeing/camping trips I appreciate the unique wilderness experience the park offers. Not only are motors incompatible with the ambience and timeless aura of the park, but allowing motors on selected lakes crosses a boundary which may lead to the motorization of the entire Quetico. I would be most grateful if you could send the names and addresses of parties that will have the final say on this issue, or the organizations to which I could direct a letter expressing my opposition to allowing motors in Quetico Park. Thank you much.

Robert S. Stelzer
Iron Mountain, Michigan

Editors Note: *Individuals with decision making authority on this issue to whom letters should be addressed:*

The Honorable Bob Rae
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queens Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

The Honorable Bud Wildman
Minister of Natural Resources
Room 6323, Whitney Block
99 Wellsley Street West
Toronto, Ontario M7A1W3

I would like to add my name to the protest of motorizing the Quetico Wilderness area.

Perhaps if you published the names and addresses of the decision making people in Canada we could write them and express our concerns over this potential abomination.

It would indeed be sad if our children and grandchildren could not experience a true wilderness opportunity.

I look forward to this information in the next *Wilderness News* or perhaps this list could be mailed to the Foundation's mailing list.

Glenn Schwanberg
St. Cloud, Minnesota

I just read the Spring 1991 issue of the *Wilderness News*.

Please do everything you can to protect the Quetico.

Our planet is fast approaching a point of no return as a viable place to sustain life of almost any kind. A great many of the crimes against our world have been under the banner of economic development.

I am sympathetic to the Indian tribe in this instance. But the permanent destruction of one of the jewels on the North American continent cannot be allowed for what would in the long run be a temporary and stopgap economic impact.

I'm sure that there are many of us who would be willing to contribute, through an increased user fee or some such thing, funds that would be earmarked specifically for help to these people.

Perhaps it is a marketing problem. Let the Indian guides guide canoe trips. There are many who would be afraid to take on this kind of thing by themselves, who if properly exposed, could become enthusiasts for wilderness everywhere. My wife, when we mar-

ried, was really afraid of this kind of trip, till I exposed her on a trip run by the Sigurd Olson Foundation. She was hooked after that.

At any rate, keep up the pressure. If there are things that I can do, please let me know. I first experienced the Quetico in 1942, and I would love to think that my grandchildren will have the opportunity to have a semblance of the experiences that I have had there and in the Boundary Waters.

William O. Kletzien
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

WIDENING, GRADING, ASPHALTING AND "PROGRESS" SLATED FOR THE SAWBILL

The Sawbill Trail begins in Tofte on Lake Superior and reaches 24 miles to Sawbill Lake on the edge of the BWCA. The first three miles above Tofte are paved and the remaining 21 miles of the trail weave through Superior National Forest to Sawbill Lake without pavement. The trail serves one outfitter on Sawbill Lake and two year-round households as well as several summer cabins. Its quiet traffic consists mainly of loggers or those seeking primitive recreation.

Proposed changes will transform the first fifteen miles of road into a 55 mph modern highway. In some areas the clearing of vegetation will be five times the width of the present right-of-way.

Cook County, Minnesota, has planned to spend millions of dollars of state and federal funds on the project. Safety is the main justification for widening, straightening and paving the Sawbill. The question remains whether the road is unsafe if travelled at a speed appropriate for conditions. Members of "Save the Sawbill Trail Association" question whether a faster highway may not be actually more dangerous because the seriousness of accidents will increase with speed. Robert Streeter of Hovland, Minnesota, has written, "We continue pouring millions of our hard earned tax dollars into new improved highways with relatively little investment in alternatives. Is it really healthy or vital to Americans to continue to travel as Valvoline voyagers on another 15 miles of paved highway through undeveloped public land?"

"Save the Sawbill Association" explains, "The expense of the road building effort will be enormous. Ulland Brothers won the bid

for the first three miles (Phase 1) for \$709,514. This does not include paving which will take place as funding is procured. Until then the Sawbill will be a gravel highway with a posted speed of 55 mph."

"Save the Sawbill" believes Sawbill Trail should remain a travel corridor to less developed recreational opportunities in a rare wild area. "One justification for doing a project on this scale is that its funding sources demand these particular specifications. In other words, if you use state and federal money you have to do it their way. A reasonable alternative strategy would be to make a serious attempt to find whatever flexibility there is in the current funding system. What is needed is a restructuring of design specifications to make them more consistent with site-specific circumstances and concerns."

The Forest Service has concluded that an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed for Phase 2 of the road upgrade (the only section for which the Forest Service has forest assessment responsibility) because it "will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment." The "Save the Sawbill" group states, "We support work necessary to ensure safe and adequate roads. We oppose systems of highway funding that don't take local needs into account. In the case of the Sawbill Trail, Cook County should be able to get assistance to make necessary improvements in a manner that will allow the Trail to retain its character as a scenic and aesthetic forest road."

In the fall, 1991, a compromise to a paved highway for the Sawbill Trail appeared possible. A gravel alternative for the trail, with

speeds slower than 55 mph, is supported by a committee that includes a resort owner, a logger, a canoe outfitter, a trail resident, a Cook County commissioner, and Forest Service engineers. The proposal will have to be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and the state's Department of Transportation to obtain required variances. The plan contemplates a narrower roadbed, slower speeds and replanting of native trees.

The first three unpaved miles of the Sawbill Trail have been gouged out in a large scale road building project. Additional clearing which was to begin in the summer of 1991 was stopped by the Forest Service. To many observers the work on the first three miles closely resembled the path of a runway engineered to land 747's at Minneapolis International Airport. That work opened everyone's eyes.

Comments and opinions are recommended to:

Dr. David A. Filius
Forest Supervisor
Superior National Forest
515 West 1st Street
P.O. Box 338
Duluth, MN 55801

Representative James Oberstar
2209 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

For further information write to:

Chel Anderson
Box 2204
Tofte, MN 55615

KTC SEEKS TRAIL CLEARING HELP

The Kekekabic Trail Club (KTC) is an organization formed in 1990 by a group of people headed by Mark S. Konings, 837 South Cleveland Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55116. The Kek Trail was originally built in the 1930's as an access trail for fire fighters to the interior portions of the area now called the BWCA. It crosses approximately 40 miles of the BWCA from Snowbank Lake to Gunflint Lake. The U.S. Forest Service, because of budgetary limitations, stopped maintaining the trail in 1982. The trail has since fallen into significant disrepair because of downed trees.

During the summer of 1990, 60 Kekekabic Trail members cleared almost 800 trees from the Kekekabic Trail. Help for the project included Bill Rom, a retired canoe outfitter from Ely, who made a donation of \$500 for

clearing interior portions of the trail. Outfitters provided canoe towing and lodging for workers. The U.S. Forest Service provided canoes, paddles and equipment.

Major clearing of the trail was accomplished but an unprecedented storm on October 17, 1990 dumped 6-12 inches of snow across the forest and the BWCA. As a result of that storm the Kekekabic Trail was covered once again with more than 800 wind-fallen trees. The organization completed a major tree clearing effort by Memorial Day weekend.

The Kekekabic Trail is looking for long-term funding help. The club is seeking \$7,000 in cash and equipment to support 70 people for five days to clear the trail. In addition to the Kekekabic Trail there are other trails in the BWCA that the U.S.

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Forest Service maintains. The club hopes to restore many of these trails to usable status.

ELY PINES WILL BE SPARED

In July, Hedstrom Lumber Company of Grand Marais agreed not to cut 29 acres of old growth white pine forest close to the Kawishiwi River south of Ely. The growth of white pines has been called the "Kawishiwi Pines."

In the agreement the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, which originally

sold the timber, will substitute an area of young white and Norway pines to satisfy terms of the original agreement.

Portions of the timber sale will be used by the Department of Natural Resources for planting new white pines. New white pine strains resistant to blister rust will be planted. The goal is to maintain biological

diversity in the forest. The Hedstrom Lumber Company has indicated that when their crews cut the new area they will leave some of the larger trees standing to provide shade to make it easier for white pine seedlings to grow.

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