



QUETICO-SUPERIOR COUNTRY

Wilderness News



Spring 1975

THE DNR RESPONDS

The State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on March 1 recommended some significant changes to the bill authored by Minnesota Congressman James Oberstar that would change the boundaries of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and alter existing management policies.

"Representative Oberstar is to be commended for his forthright and thoughtful efforts toward resolving the long standing conflicts over uses of the BWCA, such as logging and motorized travel," said DNR Commissioner Robert Herbst.

The Commissioner said he had appointed a special review team comprised of staff specialists in the fields of forestry, wildlife, waters, minerals, recreational planning, and land management to study the Oberstar bill.

He explained that the Department of Natural Resources has jurisdiction over 26 percent of the total area within the BWCA, or 260,000 acres, and therefore has an "inescapable responsibility" for the future of the BWCA.

"As an agency with a long and close association with the BWCA's resources and problems," said Herbst, "we had a duty to study the proposal and offer our comments and suggestions."

The BWCA in northeastern Minnesota comprises an area of more than one million acres, of which about three-fourths is under the administration of the U.S. Forest Service as part of the 3 million acre Superior National Forest.

The BWCA presently is managed primarily for its wilderness values, with certain limited exceptions for logging and motorized travel. For example, within the "Interior zone" of management, consisting of 618,000 acres, no logging is allowed.

In the balance of the BWCA, or the "Portal zones", logging is permitted with certain restrictions.

Oberstar's bill would redesignate substantial acres of both the "Interior" and "Portal" zones as "National Recreation Areas", one of which would bi-sect the

existing BWCA. Within the new "National Recreation Areas" logging, mechanized travel, and more intensive recreational uses would be liberalized.

The boundaries of these new National Recreation Areas would include about 115,000 more acres than the old "Portal" zones.



ROBERT L. HERBST

Three major portions of the "Interior" zones would be designated as "Boundary Waters Wilderness" and their management would be similar to that of other units in the National Wilderness System which ban logging and use of motors of any kind. The boundaries of these new Wilderness Areas would include about 7,000 more acres than the old "Interior" zones.

While praising Congressman Oberstar's objective of resolving the conflicts in the area, Commissioner Herbst said the Department disagreed with the concept of removing the BWCA from the protection offered by the Wilderness Act and related federal and state laws, court decisions, and administrative action.

For example, he said he specifically could not support an assertion of federal jurisdiction over waters in the area, as

proposed in the bill. He also urges retention of the present framework of restrictions against low level aircraft flights and permanent roads within the BWCA.

He said the Department also objects to the National Recreation Area "corridor" that would be cut through the heart of the BWCA Interior zone into the Basswood Lake area north of Ely, dividing it into sections.

He said these actions would unnecessarily complicate land management and regulation of use within the boundary waters area, and would create a host of new problems (particularly in regard to mining) in the areas not now in the BWCA but which would become National Recreation Areas.

Federal mining permits or leases have been issued in these areas in the past and certain of these are active at the present time. Similarly, state mineral lands have been offered for lease in the past in these areas and are anticipated to be offered in the future.

Herbst says the Oberstar bill creates uncertainties in regard to water jurisdiction; mining; hunting, fishing and trapping; certain types of recreation development and future protection.

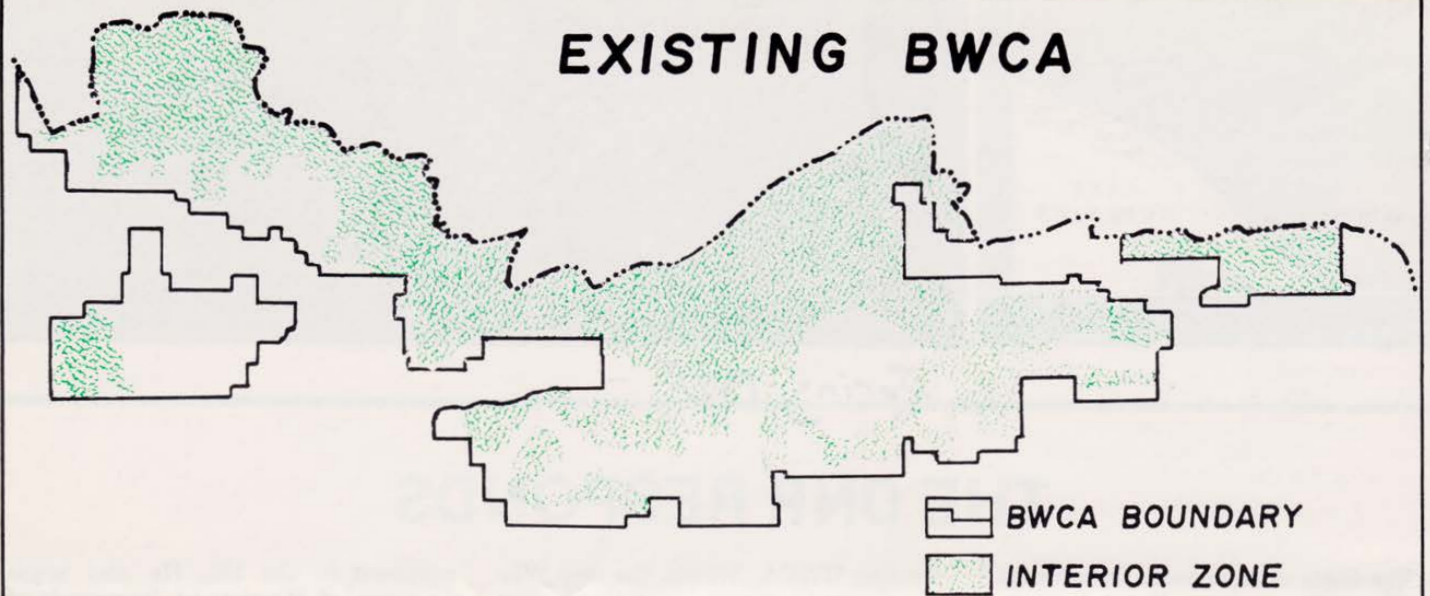
He believes that years of effort by individual citizens, organizations, and legislative, judicial, and administrative bodies that led to present management regulations would be jeopardized or undone by the measure.

Herbst offers an "alternative proposal" aimed at the same objective as Congressman Oberstar (resolution of conflicts relating to logging and motorized travel). The Commissioner's plan would not change the present size or external boundaries of the BWCA or change its status as a component of the National Wilderness System.

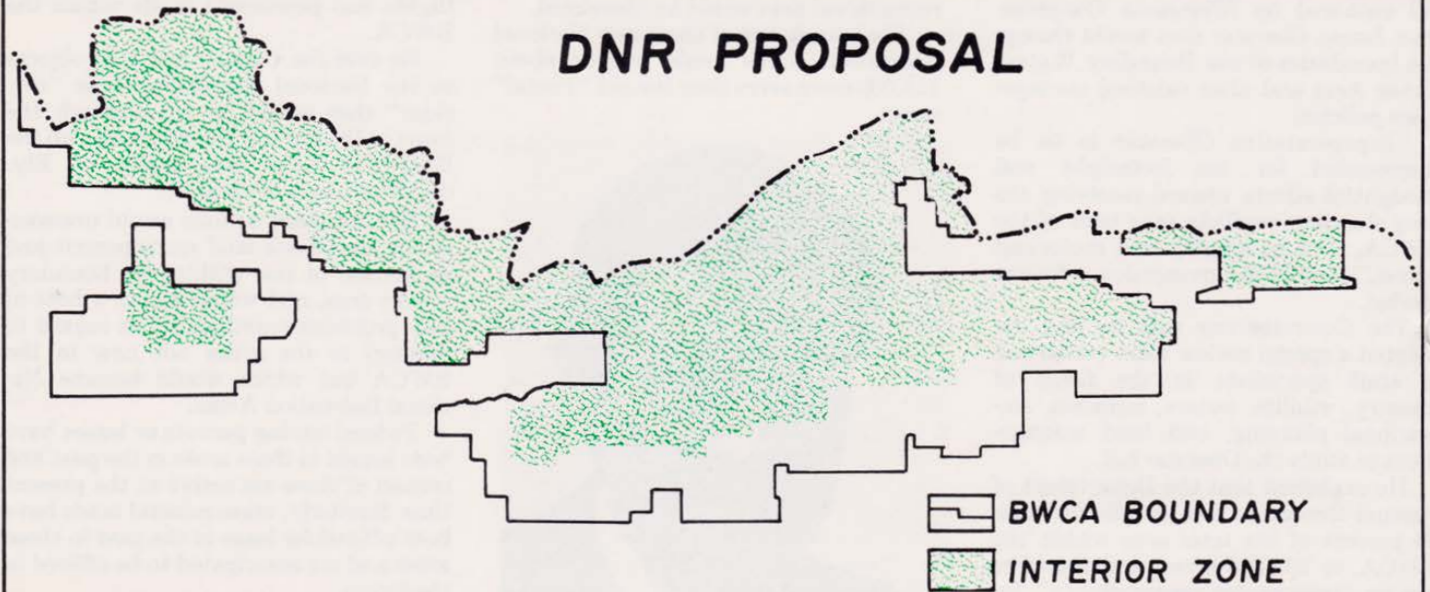
In the DNR proposal, the boundary between the Interior and Portal Zones would be realigned to protect substantial acreages of remaining virgin forests by including them within the Interior zone.

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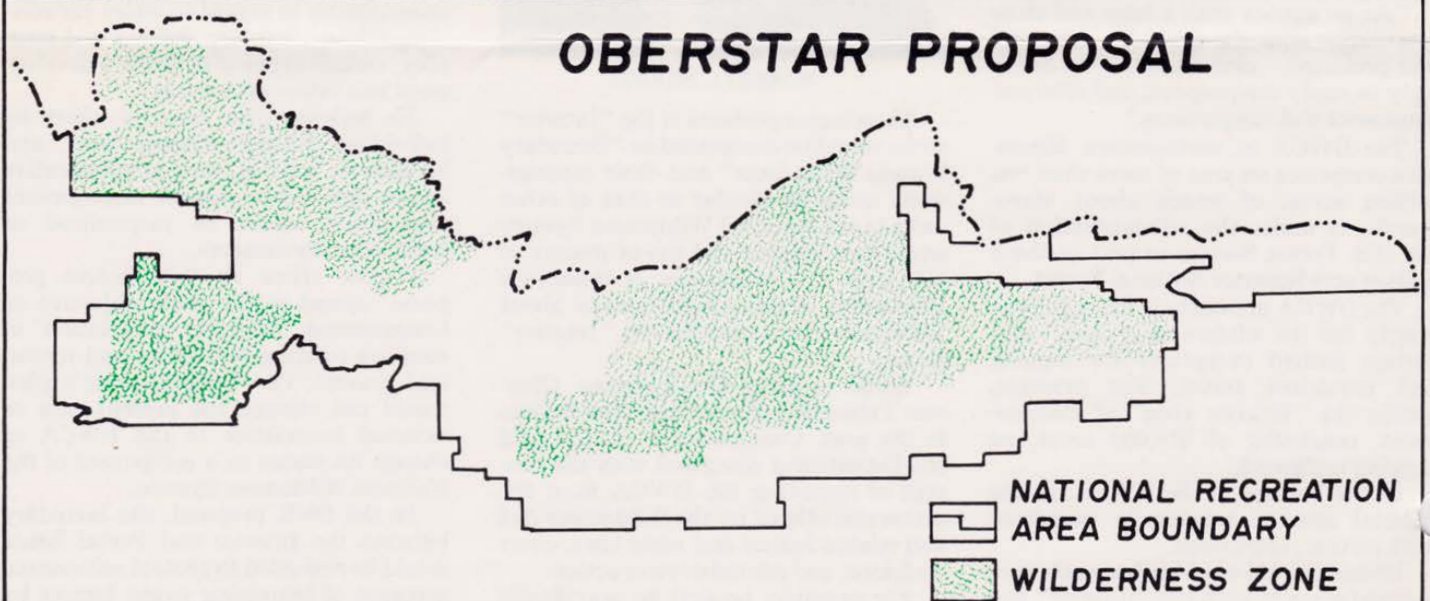
EXISTING BWCA



DNR PROPOSAL



OBERSTAR PROPOSAL



DNR Responds

(continued from page 1)

The Portal zone would remain open to the use of motors and to logging except as restricted under the Shipstead-Norton Act and related state law.

Herbst says this would mean that motorboats and snowmobiles would be allowed throughout the newly-defined Portal zone. In the DNR proposed Interior zone both types of uses would be banned except for seven routes leading directly to the International Boundary Waters.

After 1980, snowmobile use would depend on the recommendations of a committee that the DNR proposes be appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to study winter recreational uses of the BWCA.

Herbst emphasizes that mining would be prohibited except under a congressionally legislated national emergency.

Under the DNR proposal the size of the Interior zone would increase from its present 618,000 acres to 746,000 acres while the size of the Portal zone would shrink from its current 412,000 acres to 284,000 acres.

Herbst feels that the addition to the Interior zone of about 130,000 acres of water and substantially virgin forest area is an adjustment that all interested persons should be able to agree upon when the entire 3 million acre Superior National Forest is taken into consideration.

"Much of the timber land never cut in the BWCA would remain uncut in this realigned Interior zone," Herbst stated. "Some virgin timber in the Portal zone, together with previously logged Portal zone areas would be available for harvest, except in Shipstead-Nolan areas."

These changes, he says, would also facilitate management in an area where logging will be banned and motors will be largely excluded.

Herbst says he has presented the Department's suggested amendments to the bill to Oberstar and to Senator Walter Mondale and that the two are presently reviewing the DNR's proposal.



Hooray for spring! Ice is out of the Temperance River.

RECENT BWCA DEVELOPMENTS

Zinging vs. Singing Wilderness

John R. McGuire, chief of the U.S. Forest Service announced in early November a decision to reverse for one year an April order banning snowmobiles from the BWCA. The decision had been the center of considerable dispute. Eighth District congressman James L. Oberstar said the reversal of the ban "is a big victory for the people of northeastern Minnesota and will allow them to continue virtually the only kind of winter recreation available to people in that part of the country."

Lean to Compromise

A compromise bill on logging of state-owned land in the BWCA was introduced into the Minnesota Legislature in February. The compromise gave the DNR discretion over which stands of timber in the portal zone should be protected from logging. The bill bans mining, peat harvesting and commercial development in the state-owned lands. A Senate bill to regulate logging on state lands in the BWCA was subsequently withdrawn by its sponsor, Senator John Milton, White Bear Lake, because of lack of support.



KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

Persons wishing to make long-term reservations for overnight BWCA travel permits for the 1976 summer season may do so by writing: Forest Supervisor, P.O. Box 338, Duluth, MN 55801.

Applications for reservations should include the following:

1. Name or number of the entry point
2. Entry date
3. Name(s) of group members

A separate permit is required for each group of ten or less persons.

The cutoff date for making long-term reservations for June is May 15; for July, June 15; and for August, July 15.

The Fall 1975 issue of "Wilderness News" reported on Congressman James Oberstar's bill to divide the BWCA into a separate wilderness and separate recreation area. The DNR proposal after review of the Oberstar bill is summarized in the foregoing article. "Wilderness News" welcomes responses from readers as to merits of the Oberstar and/or DNR proposals and will endeavor to publish readers' views in the next issue.

The U.S. Forest Service is interested in having public opinion on the question of continued use of motorized craft in the BWCA. Whether you are in favor of or opposed to snowmobiles and motorboats in the BWCA, you are urged to send your views to:

Robert W. Long
Assistant Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C.

VISITOR DISTRIBUTION AND DESIGNATED SITE CAMPING

Superior National Forest Supervisor, James F. Torrence, in January announced that for the period June 1 through September 6, 1976, the number of overnight visitors in the BWCA will be limited from each entry point. In addition, all campers will be required to use only developed campsites. The new program has been drafted because of the need to protect the canoe country's land and water quality. Also, it will help to achieve a satisfactory wilderness experience for users.

The regulations are designed to shift groups from heavily-used entry points to points that receive less use. In addition, the provisions should result in users being spread more evenly throughout the summer. Total daily visitors from each entry point will be based upon the ability of the travel route from the entry location to accommodate overnight use. Campers will be required to use the developed campsites only. A developed campsite is identified by a firegrate and a "wilderness box latrine."

Travel permits will be divided into a long-term and short-term reservation system. Twenty-five percent of the daily quota of overnight travel permits may be given out under the long-term reservation portion of the plan. Persons wishing to reserve a travel permit may do so by writing the Forest Supervisor, U.S. Forest Service, P.O. Box 338, Duluth, Minnesota 55801. Alternate starting dates and/or entry points may be given in case the desired entry point is filled for the applied-for date. Only one application is necessary for a party of ten or less who will travel together.

The remaining 75 percent of overnight travel permits will be available 48 hours prior to the departure date. These permits may be reserved by calling the Voyageur Visitor Center in Ely, the Grand Marais Ranger Station for the Gunflint Trail area, the Tofte Ranger Station for the Sawbill-Brule Lakes area, the Isabella Ranger Station for the Isabella and Kawishiwi Lakes points, and the Cook Ranger Station for the Trout and Lac la Croix areas. Permits will not be available for overnight use at outfitters in the Twin Cities and Duluth.

Mr. Torrence said that in most cases there will be enough permits available to handle demand. During busy weekends in July and August, however, some parties may be asked to use alternate entry points. This is an initial program to distribute users and will not be as



Bald eagle's nest at Basswood Lake by Lucy Bruntjen.

precise or as controlled probably as in future years. It is a period of adjustment. At present it doesn't appear to be necessary to turn anyone away from the area. In future years, if demand continues to increase, this may not be the case.

"ANTIDegradation" COULD HAVE DEGRADED BWCA

A Minnesota House bill calling for a ban on peat harvesting and mining on state-owned lands in the BWCA contained an "antidegradation" clause which, according to Sierra Club attorney Charles Dayton, would have provided the BWCA less protection than the Environmental Policy Act offers the rest of the State.

At the insistence of Senator John Milton, White Bear Lake, and Representative B.J. Philbrook, St. Paul, the antidegradation clause was eliminated. On April 6 the bill was then unanimously passed by the House and Senate and sent to the Governor. The bill contained an appropriation of \$147,000 for starting a mineland reclamation program.

Although environmentalists were disappointed that the bill failed to provide meaningful regulation of logging on state-owned lands, it nevertheless represents a decided step forward in protection of the BWCA.

AH, WILDERNESS?

Forest Supervisor James Torrence announced that the total number of groups entering the BWCA in 1975 was

44,275. This represented an increase of 5.7% over 1974. The greatest increase was in the eastern one-third of the BWCA. Visitor days increased from 1,061,130 in 1974 to 1,105,208 in 1975. A visitor day is defined as a 12-hour use by one person. The information was compiled from BWCA travel permits.

Use by travel method was as follows:

Travel Method	Percent of Groups	
	1974	1975
Paddle Canoe	51.0	53.6
Motor Canoe	10.6	9.3
Motorboat	29.3	27.9
Snowmobile	4.7	4.9
Hiking	3.0	2.5
Other	1.4	1.8
	100.0	100.0



Wilderness News

Published by Quetico-Superior Foundation
2400 First National Bank Building
Minneapolis, Minn. 55402

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