



Wilderness News



FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • SPRING 1984

AFTER THE SHOUTING STOPPED: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BWCA WILDERNESS ACT

by Kevin Proescholdt

Over five years have passed since Congress passed the 1978 Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act, Public Law 95-495. This legislation addressed many of the resource and management issues such as logging, mining, and mechanized use which have repeatedly surfaced during much of this century.

The Forest Service has had primary responsibility for implementing the many provisions of this complex piece of legislation. This task has been a difficult one at times. With some notable exceptions, in my view the Forest Service has done a good job of implementing the provisions of the Act and in following the intent of Congress. The following sum-

mary briefly describes the performance of the Forest Service in implementing the Act, and discusses each issue in the order in which the Act addressed them.

Motorboats — The Forest Service has authorized the use of "kickers" or trolling motors in addition to the maximum motor size allowed by P.L. 95-495. The Forest Service has also authorized possession but not use of motors in two specific restricted areas to provide access to homes in motorized areas outside the Wilderness. In January 1984 the Forest Service solicited public comments on a proposal to allow possession of motors in three non-motor areas; a decision had not yet been reached at the time of this writing.

Motorboat use terminated on January 1, 1984, in accordance with provisions of the Act, for Knife Lake, Knife River, Carp Lake, Birch Lake, Crooked Lake, Basswood River, and a part of the international boundary portions of Basswood Lake.

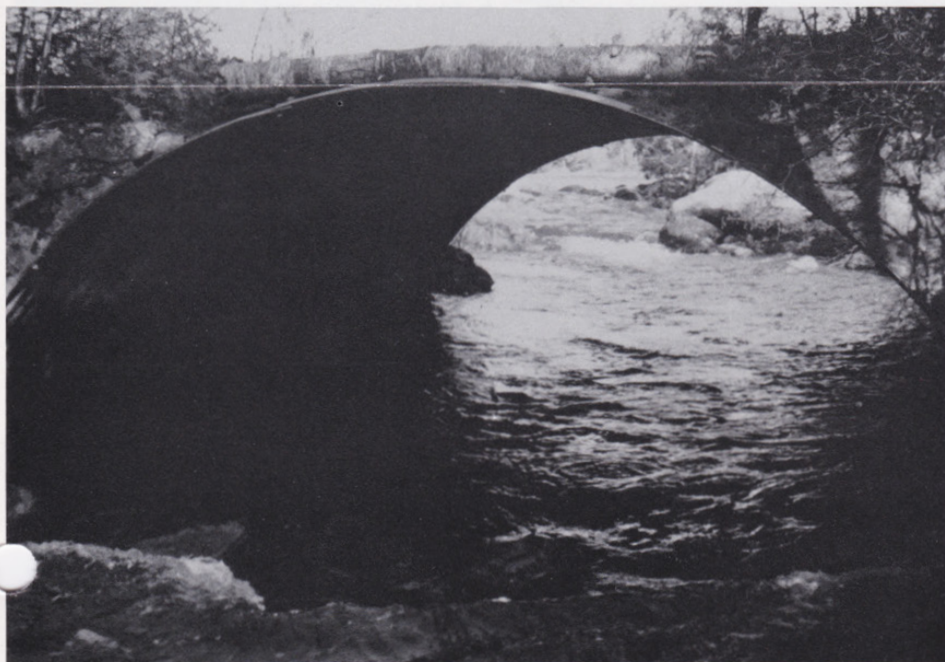
In a controversial decision, the Forest Service has decided to allow towboats past the January 1, 1984 termination date if the towboats meet the 25 horsepower limitations on the Moose Lake Chain, on Saganaga, and other 25 horsepower lakes. Environmentalists claim this decision ignores the letter of the law and the intent of Congress; local users contend that the Act does not mandate a towboat ban.

Future motorboat phase-outs under the Act will close Brule Lake to motors in 1994, or sooner if the resort on that lake ceases operation, and most of Seagull Lake on January 1, 1999.

Snowmobiles — Four special use permits for cross-country ski trail grooming by snowmobiles within the Wilderness have been issued by the Forest Service (only three are current) for day use trails near resorts which existed at the time of enactment.

Violations of motorized use regulations increased immediately following passage of the Act, but have generally declined since then.

On January 1, 1984, three temporary snowmobile trails were closed in accordance with the Act. These trails ran from Lake Vermilion to Trout Lake, Moose Lake to Saganaga Lake via Vera Lake and the international border lakes, and from East Bearskin Lake to Pine Lake via Alder and Canoe Lakes. Two permanent snowmobile trails remain to provide winter access to Canadian cabins: Crane Lake to Little Vermilion Lake, and north along the eastern shore of Saganaga Lake.



Large culvert and road still crossing the Isabella River.

Motorboat Quotas — The Forest Service established motorboat quotas at the maximum level allowed by law, supplementing their published travel permit data with estimates which environmentalists contended were too high and motorized use interests argued were too low.

Mechanical Portages — In a decision disputed by environmentalists and local users (but for different reasons), the Forest Service has indicated that the three mechanical portages slated for a five-year phase-out will continue to operate past the 1984 termination date provided by the Act as long as the portages are economically viable.

BWCA-edge Resorts — The Forest Service has acted promptly to purchase resorts which have required such purchase under provisions of the Act. By January, 18 resorts had been acquired for a total cost of nearly \$6.1 million. Over \$3.7 million in financial assistance have reached remaining resorts and outfitters.

Logging — The Forest Service halted logging of virgin forest in the BWCA in accordance with the Act, and ameliorative actions have been taken to remove some of the logging impacts on the land. A notable exception has been the Forest Service decision to not remove the road and culverts across the Isabella River, just west of Isabella Lake. The Forest Service has expended over \$19 million to intensify timber management outside the BWCA, as provided by Congress.

Private Inholdings — The Forest Service has acquired 20 privately owned parcels totaling over 5200 acres within the BWCA Wilderness at a cost of nearly \$2.7 million.

Mining — The Forest Service has not moved aggressively in acquiring mineral rights in the BWCA Wilderness and the Mining Protection Area, as directed by the Act. The Forest Service has been constrained by a lack of appropriations and by the complexity of severed mineral ownership.

Dams — In another controversial decision, the Forest Service plans to maintain eight dams within the BWCA Wilderness. Maintenance of these dams is not permitted by the Act or by the intent of Congress.

Increased Recreational Opportunities — Following the directives in the Act, the Forest Service has constructed many new recreation sites to offset any loss of motorized recreational opportunities and to bolster local tourism, including 9 boat accesses, 15 trailheads, 154 miles of trails, and 62 dispersed campsites outside the BWCA Wilderness. The Forest Service has developed a user education program to reduce visitor impact and to help interpret the wilderness. The Forest Service has also begun developing a disabled visitor program based in part on and assisted by an existing program, Wilderness Inquiry II.

These findings come from a detailed study of the Act's implementation, copies of which should soon be available. For more information, please contact Minnesota Audubon Council, 2929 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 0, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408.

BWCA MOTOR PHASEOUTS EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 1984

In accordance with the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act, five snowmobile routes in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area were reduced to two on January 1. The purpose of the phaseouts is to provide greater protection to the most heavily used wilderness domain in the U.S. Forest Service System, the BWCA.

"The Forest Service is working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to lessen the impact these phaseouts will have on some BWCA visitors," said Chuck Anderson, Superior National Forest recreation staff officer. "Both agencies are building more snowmobile trails outside the wilderness and

improving public access to lakes and other areas of Superior National Forest."

"We will also provide alternative opportunities to fish for lake trout and other species by intensifying fisheries, management and lakes still accessible by snowmobile or motorboat," he said.

In early January, an updated version of the Superior National Forest recreation map folder became available. The map's scale is 1/4 inch = one mile and it will show current snowmobile and motor boat routes. The map folder will also describe all recreational opportunities available in the forest.



Portage wheels being used to portage a motorboat.



Snowmobiles — two trails remain open after January 1.

A SEPTEMBER QUETICO TRIP

September 23. Our lakes ahead were French, Pickerel, Sturgeon, Kawnipi, Mackenzie, Cache, Trousers and back into French. Off early in light rain and luckily calm weather to cross Pickerel. This was a morning of dark skies, light rain and some chill. The good luck of the day was gentle winds and great ease in coming down Pickerel Lake which is probably a twelve mile stretch to Pine Portage. We had lunch in the light mist at west end of Pickerel Lake. Pine portage and Dore Lake passed behind us in the quiet afternoon. The low marshy Deux Riviere into Sturgeon Lake was memorable for its clay bottoms and difficult passages. Ducks flew up at many turns. We reached a glorious camp site on Sturgeon at 5:00 and it was clearly time to set up for the evening. Tomorrow would be a full day as well. Our great reward was relaxation by the fire and a fine steak dinner. As night settled in we saw no other campfires on the lake. What a superb time of the year to canoe the Quetico! Andromeda and Pegasus lighted our clear autumn sky.

September 24. The fog was beginning to dissipate about 6:30 a.m. as we lighted the campfire. Flocks of geese were overhead on their southward trek. Off by 8:30 a.m., and as we crossed Sturgeon Lake to explore the area of the Ranger Cabin, the wind rose briskly from the northeast. The poplars and birches on the Sturgeon Lake hills were bright yellow and the red maples combined to make the shoreline absolutely spectacular. At Chatter-on Lake we heard stories of very aggressive bears. Even with a clanging of pots and pans, the bears would not retreat and finally the campers retreated to other sites. The Keats and Shelley Lakes area is forested primarily in spruce and jack pine. We saw little fall color in this territory. Our camp at 5:00 p.m. was on Kawnipi Lake just north of Kasie Island. The evening was lovely, warm and very pleasant for a swim. We relaxed with bourbon and Kawnipi branch water on the rock point. We devoured dinner with the appetite of lions. The moon shone with an almost daytime brightness.

September 25. The morning broke with heavy fog on the lake. After a substantial breakfast and packing of the gear we headed out on Kawnipi Lake by compass because the shores around us were shrouded in fog. As the bright sun of day burned off the fog we were rewarded by spectacular aspen and birches on the high hills of Kawnipi. The lake was perfectly calm and we passed only one group of campers on the entire paddle of Kawnipi. Paddling was lovely over big water. We crossed into McKenzie Lake to see the pictographs south of the large peninsula. The Indian grave on the island of fifteen Norway pines was eerie. Our campsite on an island on Mackenzie Lake was beautiful with views both to the setting sun and the golden eastern shores. The lake was ours alone.

September 26. The wind had been northeast. We found another bright and sunny day awaited us this fine morning. The trapper's cabin with accounts of summer visits and win-



View from sand beach at the Sturgeon Lake Ranger cabin.



Superb island campsite on Mackenzie Lake.

ter trapping made fascinating reading. The two mile portage north into Cache Lake was memorable indeed. We struggled through low bog and downed trees and after a two hour forty-five minute exercise we found ourselves on the lovely and remote shores of Cache Lake. It was early afternoon and we set up camp on the west shore where a low point reaches into the lake. The birch trees above on the cliffs over Cache Lake were at top color. The lake trout were just where we were told they would be. We released all with the exception of our dinner trout which revealed a full store of spawn. The evening in this remote lake was lovely. After dinner we paddled out on the lake and listened to the moose feeding in the shallows. The loons serenaded us.

September 27. The next morning after a bountiful breakfast we waded across the two mile portage north of Cache Lake into Trousers. We crossed the Cache River and

reached Trousers in two hours and fifty-five minutes. Somehow it did not seem as far as the portage from the south into Cache Lake. The weather was overcast for the first time since our first day. Trousers Lake felt remote. The misty rain quieted all the land around us. On Baptism Lake we ate lunch just behind the old trapper's cabin on the west shore. The portages and winding river down Baptism and into the French River took a great part of our afternoon. We pulled over beaver dams and crossed many portages and bridges. It was a hard afternoon. By the time we were well into French River, rain had settled in permanently. As we proceeded down the shallow river we encountered our first people in more than two days. Then about 5:30 p.m. French Lake opened before us. Rain and wind swept the pines and aspens along the shore. We pulled in at the gravel bank close to Shan Walshe's house. It had been a good trip, certainly hard enough, and it was fine to be back.

RULES FOR ACCESS TO BWCA MODIFIED

To reduce operating costs, the Forest Service, USDA, has announced several changes in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA) permit and reservation system for 1984.

Permits to enter the BWCA are required from May 1 through September 30, according to Charles Anderson, Superior National Forest recreation and wilderness staff officer. Prospective visitors may make reservations by mail or in person beginning February 1. Although reservation applications will be accepted up to the date of departure, Anderson emphasized that written confirmations will not be mailed for reservations received within the last seven days. Thus, it is the party leader's responsibility to verify that a permit is still available.

A \$5.00 nonrefundable service fee must accompany each reservation request. Any change will be treated as a new reservation so visitors should be certain of their desired entry point and date before sending in their requests. Any unreserved permits may be picked up in person without paying the \$5.00 reservation fee within the 48-hour period before the entry date.

"No-shows" (unused reservations) will not be reissued. To compensate for these no-shows, entry point quotas will be increased based on the previous year's no-show data.

Forest Service permit-issuing stations will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily from May 10 through Labor Day, although specific stations may choose to stay open longer if the need is justified. Before and after these dates, Forest Service offices will be open during normal business hours. Permits may also be picked up at any of more than 80 businesses near the BWCA. These businesses are open extended hours.

Motor quotas for day use will be tracked on a daily basis only for those lakes where motor use is not expected to approach the quotas. Motor use will be monitored on all other BWCA lakes to ensure that motor day-use

does not exceed the 1976-78 levels decreed by law. This eliminates the need for visitors to make day-use reservations for most entry points. Those entry points for which reservations will be accepted and are advisable will be named well before the reservation period begins.

Anderson explained that these decisions were made with public involvement and will improve public service and streamline administration, as well as reduce operating costs. For more information on the 1984 permit and reservation system, contact any of the following Forest Service offices:

Aurora Ranger District
P.O. Box 391
Aurora, MN 55705
(218)229-3371

Isabella Ranger District
2759 Hwy. 1
Isabella, MN 55607
(218)323-7722

LaCroix Ranger District
P.O. Box 1085
Cook, MN 55723
(218)666-5251

Virginia Ranger District
505 12th Ave. W.
Virginia, MN 55792
(218)741-5736

Gunflint Ranger District
P.O. Box 308
Grand Marais, MN 55604
(218)387-1750

Kawishiwi Ranger District
118 S. 4th Ave. E.
Ely, MN 55731
(218)365-6185

Tofte Ranger District
Tofte, MN 55615
(218)663-7981

Forest Supervisor
P.O. Box 338
Duluth, MN 55801
(218)727-6692, Ext. 323

VNPA Files Suit To Block Trapping

The Voyageurs National Park Association joined by 8 other environmental organizations will file suit in U.S. District Court in Minneapolis against the U.S. Interior Department and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to block trapping at Black Bay, adjacent to Voyageurs National Park.

VNPA had initially opposed the removal of Black Bay from the 219,000 acre park. But they agreed in 1982 to drop their opposition, provided that the bay would be open only for waterfowl hunting and not for hunting of other animals nor for trapping. Hunting and trapping is banned in national parks.

VNPA contends that it was clear from the language of the law and from the intent of Congress in the 1982 land exchange with Minnesota that hunting in Black Bay would be limited to waterfowl. The state plan, however, as approved by the Secretary of Interior on September 27, 1983 allows trapping as well as hunting in the deleted area of the park.

Wilderness News

Published by Quetico-Superior Foundation
2200 First Bank Place East
Minneapolis, Minn. 55402

President Frederick Winston
Vice President Charles A. Kelly
Secy.-Treas. Worth Bruntjen
Asst. Secy.-Treas. Walter E. Pratt
Treasurer James C. Wyman

DIRECTORS

Worth Bruntjen, Paul Clement, Wallace C. Dayton, John de Laittre, Russell W. Fridley, Edward M. Hall, William R. Hibbs, Charles A. Kelly, Ernest K. Lehmann, Walter E. Pratt, R. Newell Searle, Elizabeth M. Winston, Frederick Winston, Elizabeth W. Wyman, James C. Wyman.

QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION
c/o GORDON HEINSON
2200 FIRST BANK PLACE EAST
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. 55402

RETURN REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.

U.S. Postage

PAID

Minneapolis, Minn.

Permit No. 3479

Wilderness News

