

QUETICO-SUPERIOR COUNTRY



FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • SUMMER 1977

## The BWCA Debate

Field hearings for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area were held in St. Paul at the State Office Building Auditorium on July 7 and in Ely at the High School Auditorium on July 8. Opposing sides urged their membership to attend the hearings and speak up for their beliefs. The Friends of the Boundary Waters encouraged their supporters to attend and describe to Representative Bruce Vento, who chaired the hearings, why they support HF 2820, the Fraser bill.

The International Snowmobile Industry Association and North Central Marine Association sent their membership a Federal Legislation Alert advising membership: "Hundreds of snowmobilers must attend the two hearings and let Congressmen know what they want. There will not be a second chance to save the BWCA for snowmobiling." They advised their membership that Representatives Vento, Fraser, and Nolan are the elected representatives of some 1,400,000 Minnesotans. Of these, some 255,000 are snowmobilers.

More than 300 people packed two hearing rooms in St. Paul on July 7. Men and women from Minnesota and other states including Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and from the Province of Ontario spoke eloquently in behalf of the Fraser bill. Charles Erickson of Nym Lake, Ontario said that 25,000 canoers visited Quetico Provincial Park in 1976. 94% of these visitors were from the United States and less than 6% from Canada. Crowding and campsite degradation are a concern to Canadian park authorities. He emphasized that the United States needs more, not less country reserved for canoeing, and urged passage of the Fraser bill. Both Becky Rom and Bill Rom, Jr., of Ely, spoke in favor of Fraser's bill to preserve the wilderness canoe country.

In opposition, Dennis Kmit, representing a labor union, emphasized the loss of logging jobs which the Fraser bill would cause today and for the future. He urged passage of the Oberstar bill based on the economic need for jobs.

Owners of resorts on the periphery of the BWCA spoke for the Oberstar bill and the need for continuation of motorboat and snowmobile routes in the BWCA. In St. Paul the pro-Fraser speakers definitely outnumbered the pro-Oberstar group.

Over 700 people attended the second day of testimony on the BWCA in Ely. Logging trucks assembled outside the Ely High School to demonstrate logging support for the Oberstar bill. Even in Ely, the number who testified in support of the Fraser bill were said to outnumber those in favor of the Oberstar proposal.

Testimony from the hearings will be reviewed by the Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs, chaired by Phillip Burton of California. Hearings on the BWCA, originally scheduled before the congressional recess on August 5, have been postponed until after the Congress returns to Washington in September.



### Quetico Distribution Plan

The increase in public interest in and use of Quetico Provincial Park has brought about the implementation of a Visitor Distribution Program for the 1977 season. The obvious purpose of the program is to provide a high quality experience and at the same time to

minimize deterioration of the Park's physical environment.

Like the program started in the BWCA in 1975, this program will encourage visitors to use those areas receiving normally less use. It will be accomplished by controlling the number of people who use the Park and the locations at which they enter the Park. In general, a shifting of people from the heavily used southern areas to the less heavily used northern areas will be encouraged. This system is designed to ensure that once entry into the Park has been obtained, the users will have complete freedom of movement while within the Park.

The program is in effect from June 1 to September 5 of the 1977 season. Daily entry quotas have been established for each Park entry station based on the number of interior campsites served by that particular station. Quotas vary from station to station and dictate the number of camping permits which can be used daily. Park entry stations are located at Cache Bay on Saganaga Lake, Prairie Portage and Ottawa Island on Basswood Lake and at Lac La Croix, Beaverhouse Lake, Nym Lake, and French Lake.

An advance reservation system has been developed whereby 40% of each daily quota has been set aside for advance reservations and the remaining 60% will be available on a first come-first served basis. The cutoff date for advanced reservations is three weeks before the starting date of the trip.

Interior Camping Permits must be claimed by the reserving party at the Quetico entry station where the reservation has been confirmed. Reservations may be picked up 24 hours prior to entry but must be picked up by 5 PM local time of the departure date. Reservations can be held if the delayed party advises the park headquarters of the delay. The fee payable for an Interior Camping Permit is \$2.00 per watercraft per day up to and including 9 days. For a stay of 10 days or longer up to a maximum of 16 days, the fee is \$20 for the period. This fee covers the occupants of a single boat or canoe.

(Continued on Page 2)



## Ernest C. Oberholtzer 1884-1977

In this edition of Wilderness News, we commemorate the passing of a distinguished and beloved conservationist, Ernest Oberholtzer. 'Ober' in the late 1920s organized and led the Quetico Superior Council to become the first successful coalition of conservationists to challenge unlimited exploitation of timber and water resources on the Minnesota-Ontario border.

Ober had been prepared for his role as a pioneer in conservation by no established routine. After graduating from Harvard in 1907, his search for significant directions for his life sent him exploring widely outside his native Iowa. Rainy Lake on the Minnesota-Ontario boundary was early a favorite region. Also, he traveled in Europe, studying, writing, lecturing. In June 1912, back in Minnesota, Ober started from Lake of the Woods with one of his Ojibway friends and paddled north to Hudson's Bay, mapping a route no white man had traveled before.

By 1915, Ober's direction was set. He acquired his Rainy Lake island home: The Mallard, and throughout the ensuing years he built the collection of functional and imaginative buildings which made The Mallard the hospitable gathering place for his friends from far and near. At The Mallard, Ober established his working base for study and association with the Indians and their language, the wildlife, the forests and waterways of the north country.

The ramifications of the vast lumber empire of E.W. Backus, constantly increasing its grip on the resources of the region, caught and held Ober's attention from the beginning.

Then in the late 1920s came the news that the Backus companies were seeking a permit to build a series of dams on the Minnesota-Ontario boundary including an 80-foot dam at Loon Lake between Sandpoint Lake and Lac La Croix to generate power to serve their interests. Opponents claimed the dam would flood more than 6,000 acres, drowning forests, wildlife, islands, and beaches of the boundary waters wilderness.

That was the Call to Arms, and Ober responded. Ober's host of friends rallied promptly to the cause, and these were joined by new comrades who heard Ober speaking on the crisis at gatherings large and small, read his writings in letters, newspapers, and magazines, and caught his fervor.

Not limited to just opposing the Backus plans, Ober had a larger vision: he saw the possibility of preserving in its natural state, before it could be destroyed by 'development', a vast region, which would include Superior National Forest and beyond, stretching from the shores of Lake Superior in Minnesota westward to Lake of the

Woods. Across the border in Canada, a similar wilderness preserve could be created out of the existing Quetico Provincial Park. Thus future generations — caught in the mechanical age — could have the experience of wilderness and know its grandeur. The whole wilderness preserve would be established as an international peace memorial: an International Memorial Forest dedicated to the memory of the Americans and Canadians who had given their lives in service to their countries in the First World War.

As an initial step toward what seemed a not-too-impossible dream, and to attack directly the immediate problem of the proposed dams, the Quetico Superior Council submitted a bill to the 1928 Congress. The bill called for removing from the Federal Power Commission the authority to grant permits to control water levels of the boundary waters and transferring that power to Congress.

The bill received the sponsorship of Minnesota's Senator Shipstead and Congressmen Newton and Nolan. The committee hearings on the bill held during the early months of 1930 were experiences of high drama for those in Washington fortunate enough to attend.

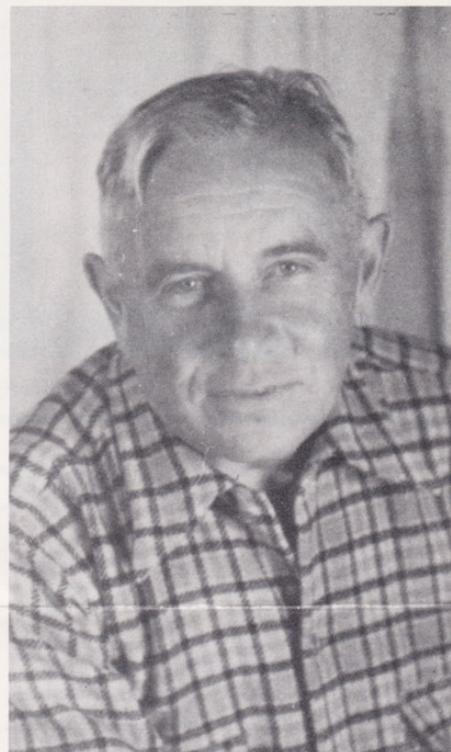
The issue: Economic Advancement vs Conservation of Natural Resources brought forth into the limelight the thinking and personalities of the outstanding committee members. But standing out above all were the two champions: E.W. Backus, successful giant industrialist, and Ernest Oberholtzer, dedicated pioneer conservationist. The testimony presented by each of these proponents could be called classic for all time on the issue.

As the hearings progressed, Ober's testimony fired facts and figures to refute equivocal statements made by his opponent. They hit their mark, and the Shipstead-Newton-Nolan Act passed the Congress before the end of 1930 without a dissenting vote.

Without this victory, so skillfully steered by Ober, we would not have the BWCA today.

Typical of the visionary crusader, Ober could never compromise. It was left to his colleagues on the Quetico Superior Council to negotiate regulations with the Forest Service for timber cutting in the Quetico Superior area, as they felt compelled to do in order to make the wilderness reserve acceptable to the local people and their politicians.

Ober had a leading part in creation of The Wilderness Society in 1935. He continued active in the Isaak Walton League, one of the important nature and wildlife groups providing constant support to the Quetico Superior Council. Membership in the Explorer's Club of America gave Ober unending pleasure, recalling his expedition to Hudson's Bay at the beginning of his career. He



ERNEST OBERHOLTZER

was a key member of the President's Quetico Superior Committee, an advisory committee on conservation matters in the Quetico Superior area established during the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Ober leaves with us the memory of a truly unique man. Perhaps our deepest regret at losing Ober this summer may be that he did not live long enough to see the significant changes, already underway, in public awareness and concern for the wilderness values he cherished.

Nothing could give greater fulfillment to the life of Ernest C. Oberholtzer than a positive swing toward true wilderness guardianship, even at this late date.

*(Continued from Page 1)*

### Quetico Motor Ban

Cheers and applause could be heard south of the border as the Province of Ontario officially classified Quetico Provincial Park as a wilderness park. In order to maintain the wilderness qualities of the park and ensure the best possible wilderness experience for park users, all motor powered watercraft will be prohibited as of April 1, 1979.

Under phase 1 of this program, which was initiated April 1, 1975, motors of 10-horsepower or less are permitted on the following lakes:

- French Lake
- Pickerel Lake
- Beaverhouse Lake
- Quetico Lake
- Wolseley Lake
- Minn. Lake
- McAree Lake



(Continued from Page 2)

- Wawia River (down to the mouth of Kawa Bay)
  - Maligne River (up to Tanner Lake)
  - The International Boundary Waters
- On all other park waters, watercraft motors will not be permitted.

### Quetico Bans the Can/Bottle

As of April 1, 1977, Quetico Provincial Park prohibited the use of non-burnable, disposable food and beverage containers and eating utensils within the interior of the Park.

The regulation specifically prohibits returnable beverage containers even though a deposit may be charged. Aerosol cans of any kind are prohibited. Food and beverage containers and eating utensils specifically designed and intended for repeated use, and containers specifically designed for dehydrated foods as well as containers of fuel, medicines, personal toilet articles, and containers of other items which are not food or beverage may be permitted. Metal foil will be permitted for the present time.

More than 6,000 lbs. of refuse annually have resulted in recent years from Quetico's interior users. A major portion of this refuse has been glass and metal food and beverage containers which disintegrate slowly. These adversely affect the wilderness character of the Park. Funds spent annually for cleanup and hauling out refuse will be diverted to more productive Park management programs.

### Toward Zero Population Growth in BWCA

Visitor use in the BWCA decreased in 1976 as compared to 1975, according to the Superior National Forest Supervisor. Total number of visitors in 1976 was 164,628, down 3.8% from the 1975 total.

The majority of BWCA visitors (56.6%) in 1976 traveled by paddle canoe. Another 8.6% used motor canoes, 25.9% motorboats, 4.9% snowmobiles, 2.1% hikers, and 1.9% other.

As a result of the Visitor Distribution Program which went into effect in 1976, there were significant changes recorded in use patterns from various entry points in the BWCA. Several major entry points had sharp decreases while use was generally up at entry points on the southeast boundaries of the BWCA.

Entry points with the largest decreases in number of groups entering during 1976 compared to 1975 were: Crane Lake, Fall Lake, Lake One, Sea Gull Lake, and Saganaga Lake. Entry points with large increases were: Range River, Snowbank Lake, Sawbill Lake, Magnetic Lake, Duncan Lake, and McFarland Lake.

Forest fires were probably the most important cause of the decline in total

number of visitors. Superior National Forest had its worst forest fire season on record in 1976. Three major fires occurred in the BWCA. Extreme fire danger forced the complete closure of the BWCA during September and October of 1976.

The following table compares the number of groups entering the BWCA through major entry points from 1975 and 1976:

Entry Point	1975	1976	% Change
Trout Lake	2624	2681	+ 2.2
Crane Lake	1401	1096	-21.8
Indian Sioux River	768	767	—
Moose River	885	855	- 3.4
Range River	658	1088	+65.3
Moose Lake	8650	8006	- 7.4
Fall Lake	5070	4066	-19.8
Snowbank Lake	804	902	+12.2
Lake One	2757	2395	-13.1
Sawbill Lake	2431	2803	+15.3
Brule Lake	1071	1089	+ 1.7
Poplar Lake	447	491	+ 9.0
Ham Lake	328	357	+ 8.8
Round Lake	796	758	- 4.8
Sea Gull Lake	1824	1459	-25.0
Saganaga Lake	4111	3080	-25.1
Magnetic Lake	431	575	+33.4
Duncan Lake	515	614	+19.2
Clearwater Lake	742	771	+ 3.9
East Bearskin Lake	545	604	+10.8
McFarland Lake	252	363	+44.0

Statistics on BWCA use are compiled from a 100% tally of wilderness permits issued to visitors.

### The Perpich Position

Governor Rudy Perpich said in late April, during a public call-in program on Minnesota Public Radio, that he supported the Fraser bill rather than the Oberstar bill for management of the BWCA because it provided greater protection to the canoe country. Perpich told a reporter: "I just think that the Fraser bill is a better bill. It affords better protection."

It appears that Perpich's position was modified in late July when he stated that he favored the Fraser bill, but that snowmobiling and boats with small motors should continue to be permitted in the BWCA. A key provision of the Fraser bill, of course, prohibits snowmobiles and motors in the one million acre wilderness. At an interview in July, Perpich stated that snowmobile drivers and those with small motors do not harm the environment. He also said that the use of motors in the BWCA today does not detract from the quality of the wilderness.

An editorial in the Hibbing Daily Tribune in late July took a different view of the Fraser-Oberstar controversy. This editorial suggested that logging should continue to be allowed because of its economic benefit to the area, but that

legislation should: "Forbid any type of motorized recreational vehicle in the BWCA. The BWCA is a canoe area, and it should be strictly a canoe area. There are 9,950 or so other Minnesota lakes on which motors can be freely used, but this area should be set aside." The editorial went on to say: "We on the Iron Range and in other areas of northern Minnesota have seen better than anyone else what man can do to a wilderness area. Perhaps it is time to save and use properly what little we have left."

### Living Wilderness?

The BWCA visitor distribution program began on May 27. The program, which was designed to provide better distribution of use throughout the BWCA during the summer, first went into effect in 1976. Limits are placed in the number of camping groups that may enter from each entry point.

Reservations for BWCA permits may be obtained under two reservation systems:

- (A) Reservations may be requested until 14 days prior to the starting day of the BWCA trip.
- (B) Reservations are available within 48 hours of the departure date.

Application for type A reservations should be sent to:

Forest Supervisor  
PO Box 338  
Duluth, MN 55801

The name of the party leader, the starting date, and the entry point must be given in each application. Alternate entry points and starting dates may be given in the event those desired are filled. Group size is limited to 10 persons or less. Each group must have a separate permit.



Grouse at North Kawishiwi.



## New Man at the Helm

Robert Rehfeld, formerly Assistant Regional Forester in Alaska, in April assumed the duties of Forest Supervisor of the Superior National Forest at Duluth, Minnesota. He replaced James F. Torrence who transferred to Oregon as Deputy Regional Forester.

Rehfeld, a native of Missoula, Montana, received his degree in forestry from the University of Montana in 1950. Following service in the U.S. Army, he began his career with the U.S. Forest Service in 1954. Other assignments have included two other jobs as Forest Supervisor — on the Nez Perce National Forest in Idaho, and the South Tongass National Forest in Alaska.

Some of Rehfeld's early concerns will be legislation affecting the status of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, the status of the timber wolf, herbicides, and preparing for possible high fire danger. "I have no delusions," Rehfeld said, "some of the problems we are facing are not easily solved. In today's age, resource management is extremely complex with many pressures to contend with. The days when all the forester needed was a degree in forestry are long gone; it is a new ball game."



ROBERT REHFELD

## Dulcet Decibels

Restrictions on motor size on 20 designated motorized routes in the BWCA are in effect throughout 1977. The restraints are necessary, according to the Forest Service, "to help maintain the primitive character of the BWCA."

The following routes will have a 25-horsepower limit: Vermilion Lake to Trout Lake; Pipestone Bay route to Basswood Lake by way of Newton Lake and Fall Lake; and One Mile Portage route from Fall Lake to Hoist Bay of Basswood Lake. Saganaga Lake and the

Lac La Croix Lake route, including Little Vermilion Lake, Iron River, Loon Lake and Lac La Croix have no horsepower limits. The remaining motor routes have 10-horsepower limits.

## Tinder Dry

Last year Minnesota experienced the worst forest fire danger recorded in the state's history. Drought conditions throughout the winter and early spring resulted in the renewal of a fire ban in Superior National Forest on May 11. The fire ban order, issued both by the State of Minnesota and the Forest Service, was rescinded on June 4, 1977, after a rainfall, ranging from two to five inches, blanketed the forest during a two-week period.

Deputy Forest Supervisor Donald Eng said that the Forest Service appreciated the fine public cooperation throughout the duration of the fire ban which had been very effective in preventing fires. He also said that the long-term effects of the drought remain and he urged caution in the use of fire in the Superior National Forest and in the BWCA.

Most man-caused fires are the result of abandoned campfires. The fire ban at Superior National Forest was announced just before the opening of fishing season and before the busy Memorial Day weekend. At the time of the fire ban, Robert Rehfeld, Supervisor of Superior National Forest, said that conditions were actually worse than a year ago. He indicated that Superior National Forest was entering its fourth year of drought conditions.

## Herbicides

Aerial spraying of herbicides by the U.S. Forest Service in Superior National Forest has generated more than a little controversy in northern Minnesota. This year the Forest Service planned to spray approximately 2,500 acres of spruce and pine plantations in late June or early July. The areas range in size from 8 acres to 100 acres and are dispersed throughout the Superior National Forest, outside of the BWCA. Only those herbicides approved by EPA as being safe for the environment, human beings, and wildlife are used. The Forest Service believes that when the herbicide 2,4-D is applied properly, it is both environmentally safe, effective, and economical. Aerial application will save over \$100,000 in public funds when compared to achieving the release of pine trees by cutting individual hardwood and brush sprouts.

This year members of the Minnesota DNR and PCA are monitoring aerial herbicide application in the Superior National Forest. Some of the management requirements which have been adapted to protect the environment are: a minimum of a 100-foot buffer strip

between open water or private land; ferrying routes by loaded helicopters will not cross lakes or roads and will avoid major streams where practicable; and spraying will be done only during favorable atmospheric conditions when winds are less than 6 mph, temperatures are between 50°F and 85°F and relative humidity is greater than 50%. Each project will be supervised on the ground by persons having special training in application of herbicides.

2,4-D is a growth hormone which accelerates plant cell growth so rapidly the plant dies within weeks. 2,4-D, however, is "selective" in that it controls most leaf plants but not conifer trees which are more resistant when applied at the proper season and at the recommended dose rate. Other methods considered were biological controls, genetic controls, hand labor, mechanical, several methods of herbicide application, and no treatment. Herbicides have been used on the Superior National Forest for over 25 years.

## "Give Me a Home Where the Caribou Roam"

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources biologists believe that the maturing forest now found in northeastern Minnesota has resulted in favorable food conditions for caribou. At the same time, white-tail deer are finding the browse conditions less and less to their liking.

The woodland caribou was once native to Minnesota, and large numbers of the animals were reported by early explorers. Heavily hunted for their meat and hides, the animals had become scarce by the 1920's. They disappeared completely in the early 1940's.

Since then, there has been only an occasional report of a track or a fleeting glimpse of an animal believed to be a caribou. It is possible that an occasional caribou or small band may wander into the state from Ontario. What a sight in the years ahead to have a caribou with full antler rack peering over your campfire in the BWCA!

## Wilderness News

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

President . . . . . Frederick Winston  
Vice President . . . . . Charles A. Kelly  
Secretary-Treasurer . . . . Robert V. Tarbox  
Asst. Secy.-Treas. . . . . Walter E. Pratt

### DIRECTORS

Worth Bruntjen, Paul Clement, Wallace C. Dayton, John de Laitre, Russell W. Fridley, Edward M. Hall, Charles A. Kelly, Ernest K. Lehmann, Walter E. Pratt, John C. Savage, Newell Searle, Robert V. Tarbox, Donald Winston, Elizabeth Melone Winston, Frederick Winston, Elizabeth W. Wyman.