



QUETICO-SUPERIOR COUNTRY

Wilderness News



FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • WINTER 1972

SUPERIOR FOREST

Too Many People

Minnesota's Superior National Forest last year entertained nearly 800,000 guests who each spent an average of about 42 hours in the woods. That's a lot of people even for the largest U. S. forest east of the Mississippi. What is the Forest Service, which runs the attraction, doing to cope with these hordes? Here's some of the action in 1971:

► **Housekeeping.** Some 100 students and veterans from northeastern counties helped the Forest Service refurbish 42 miles of portages and trails, 37 miles of roads, 82 campsites, 42 acres of campgrounds and 6 canoe landings. They also built 385 new campsites. Much of this activity was the result of a work/study program which is to be continued for at least three more years.

► **No Cans, No Bottles.** Practically no fresh litter appeared in that million-acre part of the Forest known as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA). Secret of this near-miracle was the new rule forbidding the customers to bring in non-burnable food and beverage containers. Now to clean up the accumulation of old tin and glass spawned in the years of the Big Litter.

► **Waterworks.** A laboratory at Ely studied 1200 samples of water during the year to get at the cause and cure of eutrophication — that relentless aging process triggered by both man and nature that eventually kills a lake. Through continuous monitoring the Forest Service is learning how to slow down the process and step up the water quality of the Forest's streams and lakes.

► **The Permanent Residents.** Living conditions for moose, deer, bears, wolves and other Forest tenants are constantly being up-graded. Last year, for example, 359 acres of habitat were improved and 126 acres planted with herbaceous vegetation for wildlife menus. These merciful deeds are performed in cooperation with Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources, the North Central Forest Experiment Station, Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and the U of Minn.

► **To Cut or Not To Cut?** In the past fiscal year 81 million board feet of timber were "harvested" in the Forest, adding \$65 million to the GNP and providing some 4400 man-years of employment. To replace the harvest 14,000 acres were reforested with over 4 million seedlings and 1200 lbs. of seed. A new timber management plan is expected soon to produce more useful inventory data on this important commodity.

► **The Good Earth.** Soil, the source of all forest life, must be carefully protected. This is especially true of the Superior because it has such a thin cover over its rocky skeleton. To determine the impact of "people pressure" on soil the Forest Service made down-to-earth studies at 67 campsites. More to come.

► **Sanitation Dept.** The Service began a project, scheduled for completion this year, to develop a pollution-free disposal system in the woods. Meantime the town of Hoyt Lakes (near Erie's taconite plant) is sharing some of its sanitation facilities with the Forest.

► **Fire Dept.** You can't abolish forest fires;

all you can hope to do is control them. In 1971, for the first time, a marvelous new fire-fighting tool appeared on the scene: the helicopter. It helped douse some of the 73 fires (61 started by man, 12 by lightning) that burned nearly 16,000 acres of the Forest last season. Future plans? More helicopters.

► **Police Dept.** 1971 was the worst year ever for vandalism and thefts in the Superior. There were also 150 cases of less violent violations — cheating on auto permits, camping fees, litter laws. Prosecutions resulted in a solid conviction score of 86%. Plans: training sessions for forest officers in crime prevention and control.

► **Spreading the Word.** Good forest management calls for proper public education. Last summer Ely's visitor center spread the word to 50,000 tourists at the Forest's western gate. And at Isabella (just north of Finland) there was born the new Northeastern Environmental Learning Center where students and teachers from 26 area schools will help enrich the public's appreciation of Superior National Forest.

A YEAR-ROUND RESIDENT



RON WINCH

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EDITOR.....PHILIP F. KOBBE

New Foundation Directors

Three new directors were elected to the board of the Quetico-Superior Foundation at its annual meeting on Feb. 14. They are Worth Bruntjen, Wayzata, John de Laittre, Beaver Bay, and Donald Winston, Los Angeles. Bruntjen is a member of the Minneapolis brokerage firm of duPont Glore Forgan, Inc. de Laittre was formerly president of the Farmers & Mechanics Savings Bank of Minneapolis and a member of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board in Washington. Winston, long active in Quetico-Superior affairs, is chairman of Marshall & Winston, Inc.

New Committee Members

Three new members have been appointed to the President's Quetico-Superior Committee. They are Mrs. R. C. Nelson, Duluth, Loren Sanford, Duluth, and Jay H. Cravens, regional forester, Milwaukee. Charles S. Kelly, Chicago, is chairman of the committee, which has functioned continuously since its establishment by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934.

Now Copter Logging

The N. Y. Times reports that western lumber companies have started using huge Skycrane helicopters (costing \$1½ million each) to retrieve logs "locked up" in the forest. Explained one lumberjack: "You can fly in and get timber that you don't have any other way to reach, and you don't tear up the forest when you're at it. You don't have to build roads, you can cut trees selectively without clear-cutting, and you can get at small isolated patches of timber." Environmentalists have their fingers crossed.

Cutting Remark

The lumber industry's flaks have a lot of euphemisms for clear-cutting. Like sustained yield, and similar niceties. How about a new phrase? Sustained ruin.

Audubon

ENVIRONMENT

BWCA Moratorium?

Last November a group of lawyers and scientists claiming to represent 80,000 Minnesota college students fired off a 25-page letter to the Secretary of Agriculture demanding "environmental impact statements" on timber management practices of the U. S. Forest Service in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. It was signed by Susan Kline, researcher, and Charles K. Dayton, legal advisor, of the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG). Shortly after the first of the year they got back a long answer from Assistant Secretary T. K. Cowden. They didn't like it.

The group, acting in concert with several other organizations like MECCA (Minnesota Environmental Control Citizens Assoc.), objects particularly to timber cutting and road building in the "Sunnydale" tract, near the site of last spring's 15,600-acre fire (WILDERNESS NEWS, Summer 1971). What's more, they want all logging in the BWCA suspended until the Forest Service comes up with a specific report on what the timber industry is doing to the wilderness.

Incompatibility. The Government's response to these demands was No, but MPIRG considers the arguments "weak." Consultant Herbert E. Wright, head of the U's Limnological Research Center, made these points in rebuttal:

- Timber cutting, no matter how carefully done, is incompatible with wilderness preservation.
- BWCA travel has more than doubled since 1965, and continues to increase at the rate of 13% a year.
- Public attitude toward conservation has changed radically in the past few years.
- The Little Sioux fire provided an opportunity for major research on fire as an ecological factor, but the Forest Service has "a strong bias" against using this tool in wilderness management.
- Timber sales in the BWCA are uneconomical to the taxpayer. "It would be cheaper to pay the loggers directly, and to save the virgin forests in the process."

Postscript. In mid-February MPIRG got a more sympathetic response from the Council on Environmental Quality. Russell E. Train, top advisor to the White House on environment, assured the group that the Forest Service would indeed consider the effects of timber-cutting in the BWCA and that logging operations in the disputed Sunnydale district would be suspended this year. He said that by August the Service will issue a revised management plan for the BWCA which will include an environmental impact statement. Dayton's reaction: "MPIRG has no illusions it will be an easy task to open up to public input an agency which is so highly structured and has for so long been relatively insulated."

CUTTINGS

Blatnik Remembers

✓ Thanks for the copy of WILDERNESS NEWS (Summer 1971) with the excellent photo of Forester Bill Bromberg and me at Grand Portage. If my memory serves



BROMBERG & BLATNIK

me this photo was taken during the visit of the "Voyageurs" during the Canadian centennial celebration — a very happy occasion.

JOHN A. BLATNIK
Member of Congress

Washington, D.C.

Rep. Blatnik's memory serves him well — the date was July 23, 1967.

Timber Subsidiary?

✓ The congressman from Michigan, John Dingell, has said, "The Forest Service is a wholly owned subsidiary of the timber industry." That is a startling conclusion by an informed congressman, and certainly some of their operations would seem to make it look that way.

PAUL CLEMENT

Minneapolis

✓ Too often people are led to believe that the U. S. Forest Service is strictly a timber-harvesting outfit. In reality it is very active in the establishment of wilderness areas.

JAMES P. ROLES

Deer River, Minn.

Fan Mail

✓ The recent WILDERNESS NEWS on the national park is certainly a fine contribution to the historical record, and you have done it very well.

ELMER L. ANDERSEN
Former Minn. Governor

St. Paul

✓ Let me commend you on your fine publication. It is informative, yet concise, and the format is attractive. I am enclosing a small contribution to help defray the costs.

JOHN H. SCHULTZ
Associate Professor

University of Wyoming

We assure Dr. Schultz that we do not consider his check for \$10 as "small." Anybody else care to make a small tax-deductible contribution?

THE BWCA IN 1980

A look ahead by Harold E. Andersen,
Supervisor, Superior National Forest



PICTURE yourself eight years from now — 1980 — on a wilderness trip in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. The water beneath your canoe is as clear and as pure as it was when the Voyageurs paddled the same lakes some 200 years ago. The only sound that can be heard is the splashing of a huge bull moose as he pulls up choice water lily roots from the shallows.

As you glide along sunlit shores you marvel at differences in vegetation. The majestic white pine and Norway pine, which were only infants when the Voyageurs passed this way, now stretch over 100 feet toward the sky.



Upon rounding a point, these kings of the forest suddenly give way to a stretch of shoreline that has the appearance of a dying jungle. There is a tangle of gray and brown moss-covered balsam—victims of a spruce budworm outbreak. The burnt area, surrounded by the dead balsam stand, appears to be about five acres, but the burn does not resemble a normal wildfire because there are no charred trees left standing.

From the brochure a forester gave you at the start of your trip, you learn that the dead trees in this area had been cut down during the winter. As soon as the spring sun melted away the winter snow in the clearing, foresters carefully burned the thick accumulation of woody material. There was little danger of the fire spreading beyond the open area because the snow had not yet melted in the surrounding forest. The ground was then cleared and prepared for the development of a new forest, much in the same way that nature, through the use of wildfire, had regenerated the forest of the BWCA before modern man arrived. Upon examining the burned area you notice new trees

and vegetation, thus assuring a healthy forest for future visitors to enjoy.

You also learn that the abundance of wildlife, such as deer, beaver and the rare timber wolf, owe their continued survival to manipulation of the forest cover. In the past their habitat was maintained primarily through the use of nature's tool, wildfire. Today wildfires are a threat to human property and life, and must be suppressed. However, through the study of ecological history and intensive research, man now knows how to duplicate nature's work, thus assuring both safety to humans and a continued abundance of wildlife.



On your way across a portage you are surprised to meet a group of young people backpacking along a hiking trail which crosses the portage. You discover they are members of a backpacking club which treks the many miles of trails within the BWCA. The recreational pursuit of backpacking has grown rapidly within the past few years, and now in 1980 it is one of the most enjoyable uses of the BWCA. The network of hiking trails is also used in the wintertime by cross-country skiers, snowshoers and even dog-sledders.

You reach the other end of the portage and shove off in search of campsite No. 8, located about halfway down the lake according to your map. Upon passing an island you note near a green grassy spot at the edge of the forest a small sign. It explains that this is one of the many campsites which are closed to use on a regularly scheduled basis: they are going through R & R (rest and recuperation). They have been renovated by loosening the soil, applying mulch and reestablishing new vegetation. Through a system of rotating use and rejuvenation on such campsites, the basic resource can be protected for many years to come.

Now it is time to find the campsite assigned to you for the night. Yes, I said *assigned*, because this is 1980 and campsite assignment is part of the complex reservation system now used to protect and maintain the wilderness characteristics of the BWCA. This system, comprising

the latest in computers and heat-sensing satellite equipment, works behind the scenes to assure you of a quality wilderness experience. Lakes will not be overcrowded and you will be able to find a campsite without difficulty every night.

While the system controls the number of people using the BWCA, it also calculates an optimum distribution of travelers throughout the area. When the heat-sensing satellite tells us that certain routes or lakes have reached their optimum carrying capacity, parties are then directed into other areas not yet filled. When the seasonal quota of BWCA reservations becomes filled, applicants are informed of other recreational opportunities adjacent to the wilderness.

You may feel this is fantasy. But I am sure that this or a similar system is just around the corner. I am just as certain that by 1980, and probably before, it will be necessary to place capacity restrictions on certain portions of the BWCA if we are to maintain a quality wilderness. I am reminded of a saying: "God hasn't stopped making people, but He has stopped making acres." I am optimistic that we can implement such a system without impairing the spiritual quality which is so important to those visiting the canoe country. We must do everything possible to minimize the visitor's feeling that he is being regimented and regulated.



Meditating on the day's sights and sounds, your memory strikes a significant void: what you did *not* see today. You did not see any structures which leave man's permanent imprint on the earth. You did not see any mining activity, which for so long was a controversy in the BWCA. You did not see any litter: public concern for quality environment has certainly changed people's attitudes over the past few years. Finally you did not see, or hear, any aircraft today — not even a Forest Service patrol plane, for fires are now detected by satellites.

And so to bed: the loon's cry comes early in the morning to signify a new day in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

Adapted from a talk given by Supervisor Andersen before the Forestry Club, U of Minn., on Jan. 21, 1972.

RESEARCH

Carls & Oles

One of the continuing projects of the unique Q-S Wilderness Research Center on Basswood Lake is to help students from the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) participate in ecology education in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA).

Last summer a dozen undergraduates (both sexes) from Northfield's Carleton and St. Olaf spent 10 weeks here on a special mission to measure the impact of tourists on some 30 sq. miles of wilder-

CARLETON MAGAZINE



STUDENTS LOOK AT A LAKE*

The water is safe to drink — maybe.

ness. After bombarding 1000 campers with questions and analyzing hundreds of soil and water samples, they came up with these preliminary findings:

- Water in BWCA lakes is usually safe to drink — if taken a few feet offshore.
- Whatever water pollution may be present seems to be caused more by nature than by man.
- Vandalism and soil compaction mar many campsites.
- Once campgrounds have been trampled by too many feet the process of regeneration is a long and difficult one.
- There are distinct differences in the expectations and interests of various BWCA trippers.

● The BWCA faces "a crisis of definition": sharp conflicts of interest arise between those who paddle and those who put-put; between the wilderness purist and the motorized tourist.

The ACM project was considered a great success — at least by the students: "Scientific knowledge, living in the woods, the experience of initiating and conducting research — seven Carls and five Oles learned a lot last summer."

*Carolyn Mold of Carleton (left) and Sue Dakin of St. Olaf, both seniors, on location.

COPPER-NICKEL

Miners Vs. Campers

"Minnesota is recognized as probably the largest unexplored potential mineral area in North America, if not the western hemisphere." This resounding statement was made at the Q-S Institute in the fall of '70 by Elwood Rafn, chief mining engineer of the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In line with a policy "to encourage the development of its mineral holdings," Minnesota recently threw open over a million northern acres for commercial exploration and mining.

Shortly before Christmas five firms were presented with 71 leases permitting them to drill for copper and nickel or even gold, silver and platinum. Action on seven other leases was blocked — or at least postponed — by those two wilderness watchdogs, MPIRG and MECCA (ENVIRONMENT, second page). They felt that in some spots near the BWCA the miners were coming too close to the campers. Minnesota's executive council, which has the last word on such matters, agreed that DNR should consult the public more closely about possible environmental effects of mining operations on resort areas.

SHIRLEY RYBERG



ENGINEER RAFN

In no position to talk to everyone.

Replied Rafn, "I don't really know how we could get much more citizen participation: we're in no position to talk to everyone individually." But his chief, commissioner Robert Herbst, promised to look further into the leases, with MPIRG and MECCA presumably looking over his shoulder.

LET'S REVIEW THE BIDDING

Bids for exploration and mining leases are made in terms of royalties pledged to the state — that is, a percentage of the value of the minerals removed. Results of Minnesota's latest offering:

Total bids received	86
High bids considered	78
Bids tabled	7
Leases awarded	71

The 71 awards, which covered about 30,000 of the 1.2 million acres offered, represent the state's most momentous mining move since 1966. Successful bidders included Humble Oil of Texas and International Nickel of New York. Highest bid: a 9.02% royalty (see box).

NATIONAL PARK

Moving Forcefully

In his 1973 budget Pres. Nixon asked Congress for \$12 million to acquire land for Minnesota's new Voyageurs National Park on Kabetogama Peninsula (WILDERNESS NEWS, Summer 1971). This is the largest amount of money the Interior Dept. plans to spend on any new area in the entire nation next year.

Rep. John Blatnik, whose 8th District embraces the peninsula, noted that the size of the request "indicates the federal government is firmly committed and moving forcefully on the development of the park. Minnesota," he added, "is very fortunate." Perhaps not so fortunate is a pending lawsuit that challenges the legality of the state's offer to donate nearly 35,000 acres to the park. The Voyageurs cannot be established until this roadblock is removed.

In the meantime the Park Service has planted an advance man on the spot to proceed with preliminary plans for America's 36th national park. Myrl Brooks, who moved from Roanoke, Va., to International Falls last July, recently revealed this glimpse of the future Voyageurs: 2%, or 2,780 acres, of the total land acreage will be devoted to campsites, nature trails and various man-made facilities. There will be no roads for general use; boats will be encouraged; snowmobiles may be tolerated.

Visitor's Choice. A master plan for the Voyageurs put out by the Park Service several years ago describes some typical visits. "Most families," it says, "would enter the park at one of three land access points. They could then go to the visitor center and plan their stay in consultation with a ranger. Overnight visitors could choose between staying at a campground inside the park, at a private campground outside the park, or at a nearby resort. Many might spend all their time in or near a major development area or a resort. Without venturing onto the water they could still participate in a number of activities. The water would attract most visitors. They could tour the park by boat, either their own or a concession's. The next day or later the family could either return directly or pass through Namakan and Kabetogama lakes, perhaps fishing on the way. Alternatively, the concession boat could leave the family at a primitive campsite on the peninsula or on an island, and pick them up later at a pre-arranged time."