



FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • WINTER 1994

RECENT EVENTS THAT HAVE SHAPED THE BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS

The signing of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act in the fall of 1978 signaled the beginning of a process to change the BWCA from an area producing timber products and multiple recreational opportunities to an area providing primarily wilderness recreation opportunities. A 28-page booklet has been produced jointly by the US Forest Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources which summarizes the actions taken between 1980 and 1990 to implement the 1978 act. The booklet was written by Mike Majeski of the North Central Forest Experiment Station, St. Paul, and Barbara Soderburg of the U.S. Forest Service, Duluth. Excerpts from this informative booklet follow.

The Boundary Waters Wilderness Act of 1978 sought to resolve issues of motorboat use, number of motorboats, motorized portages, the size of motors, the use of snowmobiles, location of resorts, harvesting of timber, mining of minerals and the maintenance of dams. The act had been debated in Congress for three years. It took a compromise agreement between two citizens groups reached during a marathon negotiating session to break the Congressional deadlock over legislation. The Dayton-Walls Compromise was negotiated by Charles Dayton, a representative of environmental groups and Ron Walls, a representative of northern Minnesota user groups. Senator Wendel Anderson incorporated the elements of the compromise into the final BWCA Wilderness Act. President Carter signed the BWCA Wilderness Act on October 21, 1978.

The 1978 act was intended to resolve many of the issues of contention once and for all. The implementation portion

of the act has been completed. Discussions going forward involve the number of visitors and the size of the groups; the use of motorboats and the number of motorboats; the use of snowmobiles for trail grooming; and use of mechanized portages.

BWCAW Resorts

History

- The BWCAW has an 80-year history of recreational use. This area became one of the first parts of Minnesota extensively served by resorts. The 1920s and 1930s ushered in a period of rapid growth in the resort industry as Minnesota enjoyed popularity on the nation-wide resort recreation market.
- The construction of remote resorts serviced by airplanes began in the early years after World War II. By 1948, a total of 41 resorts was built in the interior of the BWCAW. And in early 1949, Ely, Minnesota, became the largest fresh water seaplane base on the continent.
- The Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) saw the extensive resort development changing the wilderness qualities of the BWCAW. It established an endowment to raise funds for the purchase of private tracts that were then sold to the Forest Service. The IWLA land acquisition continued until 1961, working in close cooperation with the Forest Service.
- In 1948, Congress followed the lead of the IWLA and passed the Thye-Blatnik Act that accomplished on a large scale the acquisition efforts begun privately by the IWLA endowment. It accelerated the purchase of resorts and other private property. The Thye-Blatnik Act was amended in 1956, 1961, and 1976

to cover the entire BWCAW, authorize full condemnation authority, and increase funding authorization. The bulk of the acquisitions occurred during the 20-year period of 1948-68. Over 26,000 acres of private lands were purchased on 350 separate tracts, including 45 resorts at a total cost of \$4,100,000.

- In 1949, President Truman established an airspace reservation over the BWCAW by executive order. The airspace reservation prevented the landing of airplanes in the BWCAW by the general public and private landowners, a fact that prompted more landowners to consider the sale of their property.
- The growth of the Minnesota resort industry revived immediately following World War II, but it began to decline by the end of the 1950s because of competition and changing recreation patterns. By the mid-1970s, the Minnesota resort industry found itself in a critical transition. From 1967-1975 an average of 100 resorts per year had closed. The industry had retained much of its 1930s flavor, and although the industry had upgraded the quality of facilities and recreational offerings, it was not fast enough to keep up with the competition.

Actions Taken

- The Forest Service purchased 28 resorts and 677 acres of adjacent land at a total cost of \$9,391,000. In addition to the actual price of the resort, the Forest Service was required to pay for relocation costs, up to \$15,000 for residential relocation and up to \$10,000 for business relocation. The total cost of relocation expenses was \$213,000.

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BOUNDARY WATERS, Continued

- There are no longer any resorts within the wilderness, but there are resorts remaining on some of the 15 boundary lakes listed in the act. The owners either withdrew their offer to sell the property, rejected the amount offered by the Forest Service, did not qualify, or elected not to participate.
- Nearly all the purchased resort buildings have been dismantled or removed. Exceptions to this practice are portions of three resorts held by the Forest Service for administrative use. Two resorts on Fall Lake are now operated as the Disabled Veterans Wilderness Retreat. The University of Minnesota-Duluth operates one as a center for outdoor education activities. The Girl Scouts of America is using one as a base of operation.
- The Forest Service purchased 20 parcels of land from private landowners. A total of 6,340 acres were purchased for \$3,000,000. There are still about six private landowners owning approximately 420 acres within the BWCAW. The Forest Service is in contact with them periodically to determine if they have changed their mind about selling. Their land is not developed.
- Two different types of financial assistance were available to resorts and outfitters through Fiscal Year 1982. Priority I grants of \$2,500 were awarded to qualifying resorts and outfitters. A total of \$123,000 was granted to these businesses for conversion from powerboat to canoe operations, trading down to smaller boats, improving resort facilities, advertising and other similar uses. Priority II grants were grant equity awards to be accompanied by loans for upgrading qualifying resort and outfitter businesses. These grants were limited to 25 percent of the applicant's total project costs up to a maximum of \$50,000. These monies were used for expansion, new equipment and facilities, improved water and sewer systems, or other capital investments. During the course of the grant equity award program, 35 businesses received a total of \$917,000 in grants from the Forest Service. It provided the seed money for an additional \$2,750,000 in non-federal matching loans. The total for Priority I and II grants was \$1,040,000. The entire amount invested in the 51 businesses was \$3,790,000.

Motorboats and Towboats

History

- Motorboats were used in the BWCAW as early as 1922.
- Conflict between motorboat users and canoeists was minimal for many years because visitor use was low. Regulation of motorboat use appeared unnecessary, consequently motorboat use in the BWCAW became well established.
- Motorboat camping grew in the 1940s and accelerated in the 1950s when new, lighter boats and improved motors and equipment allowed people to travel further into the BWCAW.
- The first regulation of motorboat use occurred in 1948, when the Forest Service management plan for the BWCAW called for motorboats to be restricted to areas where their use was well established.
- The first national wilderness bill, introduced by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey in 1956, included the BWCAW. Humphrey received strong criticism of his bill from northeastern Minnesota because of possible curtailment of logging and motorboat use in the area. After hearings in Minnesota, he introduced a new version of the bill, which became law in 1964, with a special BWCAW provision that stated: "nothing in this act shall preclude the continuance within the area of any already established use of motorboats."
- During the mid-1960s through mid-1970s several different plans to manage motorboat use were proposed, debated, and used. Motorboat use was a hotly debated issue in the drafting of the BWCAW Act. The issue was finally resolved by the Dayton-Walls compromise that reduced motorboat use from the pre-act level of 60 percent of the water surface to 33 percent immediately after signing, and to 24 percent after 20 years.

Provisions of the Act

Section 4 of the act repealed section 4(d)(5) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and prohibited motorboats within the wilderness except for the following:

1. There is no limit on horsepower (hp) of motors or the use of mechanical portages on all or portions of three lakes and a portion of one river on the Canadian border.
2. A permanent 25 hp motor use on all or portions of 11 lakes on or near the

boundary of the BWCAW.

3. If they were registered with the Forest Service, the 25 hp motor limit did not apply to towboats until January 1, 1984 on four of the eleven lakes mentioned above.
4. A temporary 25 hp motor use was allowed until January 1, 1984 on Birch Lake and a small portion of Basswood Lake along the international boundary.
5. A permanent 10 hp motor use on all or portions of seven lakes near the boundary on the eastern part of the area.
6. A temporary use of 10 hp motors was permitted until January 1, 1984 on portions of two rivers and three lakes.
7. A temporary 10 hp use until January 1, 1999 on the portion of Sea Gull Lake west of Threemile Island.
8. A temporary 10 hp use on Brule Lake in Cook County until January 1, 1994, or until the termination of operation of any resort adjacent to Brule Lake.
9. Develop entry point quotas for use of motorboats based on the size, configuration, and the amount of use on the lake. The quota for any one year must not exceed the average actual annual motorboat use of calendar years 1976-1978. Each homeowner and his/her guests and each resort owner and his/her guests on a lake shall have access to that lake, and their use shall not be counted as part of that lake's quota.

Actions Taken

- The lakes and rivers designated for temporary 10 and 25 hp motor use until January 1, 1984 were all changed to canoe only lakes on that date.
- The temporary 10 hp motor use on Brule Lake ended in February, 1986 when resort operation ended.
- The 20-year phase out for 10 hp motors on Sea Gull Lake is the longest and last phase out provision of the act to take effect.
- Towboats are still used in the BWCAW. Towboat operators reduced their motor to the maximum of 25 hp or 10 hp on January 1, 1984. The issue of towboats is part of discussion on the new management plan for the BWCAW, should they be allowed and if so how many?
- Development of the motorboat quota was one of the most difficult tasks the Forest Service went through in implementing the act. The major problem

ELIZABETH OLSON

Elizabeth Uhrenholdt Olson, wife of Sigurd F. Olson, died in Hayward, Wisconsin on August 23, 1994. Elizabeth was 96 years old. She had lived much of her life in Ely, Minnesota. Elizabeth Olson was well known as the wife of author Sigurd F. Olson. She was important in Sig's writing and she was a champion of the wilderness ethic in her own right.

Elizabeth Olson had grown up on a farm in Seeley, Wisconsin. She attended college at Beloit College in Wisconsin. Elizabeth and Sig were married in August, 1921. They moved to Ely in 1923. Sig began his teaching career at Ely Junior College. Ely became their life-long home.

Elizabeth and Sig took many summer trips together in the border lakes country. On later trips they brought their sons, Sigurd and Robert. Elizabeth welcomed many visitors in her home as Sig's books became nationally and internationally acclaimed. She was always a charming hostess and was very involved in conservation issues and developments.

Sig Olson died in January, 1982 while



Elizabeth Olson

out snowshoeing. Elizabeth remained at their Ely home, continuing to welcome guests and supporting the legacy of Sig. She remained active with the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College, Ashland, Wisconsin. In 1989 she received an honorary doc-

torate from Northland in recognition of her contribution to Sig Olson's writings and her support of the wilderness ethic. All friends who have known her will remember Elizabeth as a champion of the border lakes canoe wilderness.

Martin Kellogg wrote: "Elizabeth Olson's insights, intuitive wisdom, sound judgment, and patient style of friendly persuasion were ever present in Sigurd Olson's accomplishments.

While there have been many, many individuals and organizations who have placed a helpful hand on these achievements, it is the spirit of Elizabeth and Sigurd Olson which will forever grace the beauty of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, Quetico Provincial Park, Voyageurs National Park, and Grand Portage State Park. Each are a triumph of the Olsons' vision, persistence, and courage spanning over 60 years of commitment to their ideals, their community and their marriage.

Elizabeth Olson would ask of those who remain that they continue in the never finished effort to protect the grace and beauty of our planet by conserving, more than consuming, its bounty."

BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS PERMITS

Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness reservations for the 1995 summer season are now being accepted by mail and will be processed beginning January 15, 1995. Reservations can be made by phone beginning Wednesday, February 1, 1995.

"Even though reservations won't be processed until January 15, we encourage people to send them in now, so that they can be assured the information is complete and accurate," said Barb Soderberg, USDA Forest Service Wilderness Specialist.

This year, several changes will occur in BWCAW rules and regulations. A new management plan for the area is in effect which lowers the maximum group size to nine people, and limits the number of watercraft allowed per group to four.

Permits are required to travel in the BWCAW from May 1-September 30. To make a reservation by mail, you may obtain a reservation form at local Forest

Service offices, or simply include the following, along with a \$9 reservation fee (check money order, Visa, Mastercard or Discover): the group leader's name, address and phone number; no more than two alternate group leaders, whether it's an overnight or day-use permit; mode of transportation (paddle, hiking or motorized watercraft), desired entry point; desired entrance date; estimated group size; and where the group leader or alternate will pick up the permit. If a location is not designated, the permit will be mailed to the Forest Service ranger district office closest to the desired entry point.

In addition, all reservations (both day and overnight reservations) must indicate whether or not the trip will be guided. If it is a guided trip, the guide's name should be included, but the reservation must be made in the client's name. Multiple reservation requests must be listed on separate sheets of paper, however, they may be mailed in a

single envelope.

Please mail your reservations to: BWCAW Reservation Service, P.O. Box 450, Cumberland, MD 21501. Plans should be firm before a reservation is made. Changes will require another \$9 fee.

Phone reservations will be accepted by calling 1-800-745-3399 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. For the hearing impaired, their TTY number is 1-800-967-9376.

Any permits that have not been reserved are available on a walk-in basis (no reservation fee) on the day of or the day before your planned trip from any ranger district office and businesses that are official issuing stations.

Beginning in October 1995, permits will be required year-round for all uses, including non-motorized day uses (canoeing and hiking) and all winter uses (i.e.; cross-country skiing and dogsledding).



In the 1950s and 1960s, snowmobiles provided winter access to the BWCAW.



Logs and boats were transported by rail on motorized portages until truck roads replaced them.

was the calculation of an accurate average actual annual motorboat use during the period of 1976-1978. After a great deal of work, a final day-use and overnight-use quota for each entry point was determined. Towboats are currently considered part of the quota for each entry point.

Snowmobiles

History

- The first snowmobile came to the BWCAW about 1950.
- The use of snowmobiles in the BWCAW was hotly debated throughout the 1960s and 1970s.
- In 1964, the Selke Committee recom-

mended prohibition of snowmobiles to Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman and he agreed.

- In 1965, the Forest Service proposed snowmobile use on all motorboat routes.
- In 1972, President Nixon signed an Executive Order prohibiting off-road vehicles within designated wilderness areas. The Forest Service proposed to ban snowmobiles prior to the 1974-1975 winter season but after strong local objection permitted one more year of use pending appeals to the Secretary of Agriculture.
- On September 8, 1976, Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz imposed the ban

amid angry local reactions, some of which threatened to intentionally set forest fires.

- A lawsuit was filed to obtain an injunction enjoining enforcement of the ban. The U.S. District Court ruled against the lawsuit on January 18, 1977.
- On January 14, 1978, an estimated 300-350 snowmobiles were driven from Lake Vermillion to Trout Lake within the BWCAW as a protest against snowmobile restrictions. Forest Service enforcement officials ticketed 15 snowmobilers for violating snowmobile regulations and all were found guilty in federal district court.

Provisions of the Act

Section 4(e) of the act prohibited the use of snowmobiles except:

1. On a permanent basis on two overland portages for Canadian cabin access.
2. On three other routes until January 1, 1984.
3. On special-use permits for grooming of cross-country ski trails within the wilderness by snowmobiles near existing resorts.

Actions Taken

- The Forest Service terminated the three temporary snowmobile routes on January 1, 1984.
- Presently there are two permits issued for snowmobile grooming of cross-country ski trails near resorts. This is an issue being discussed in the latest BWCAW Management Plan.

Motorized Portages

History

- The first motorized/mechanical portages in the BWCAW began as railroad logging portages. Four Mile Portage was built in 1898-1901, and by 1910, it had transported 300,000,000 board feet of timber from the Basswood Lake area to Fall Lake.
- Prairie Portage was built in 1902 to transport logs by rail, and other railroad portages were built in 1912 and 1920. The latter portages used dollies pulled by cables, not locomotives, to transport boats.
- The first portage using a truck to transport boats was built by a resort owner in 1938.
- Rails from the early logging portages were later removed, and the portages upgraded so trucks could be used to transport boats.

Provisions of the Act

Section 4(d) and (g) of the act identifies the motorized portages that will remain open and those that will close after January 1, 1984 to motor vehicle use.

1. Motorized portages will remain open between lakes and rivers with unlimited motor size. This is Beatty and Loon Falls portages in the western edge of the BWCAW.
2. Four Mile Portage, Prairie Portage, and the portage between Lake Vermilion and Trout Lake are to remain open to motor vehicles until January 1, 1984. Motor vehicles can no longer be used on these portages after that date unless the Secretary of Agriculture determines that there is no feasible non-motorized means to transport boats across them.

Actions Taken

- The Department of Agriculture allowed the use of motorized portages to continue after January 1, 1984 because a test of nonmotorized transport failed.
- Environmental groups took the decision to court, and on July 12, 1993, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling that required the portages to be closed to motor vehicles.
- The three commercial portage operators on Four Mile Portage, Prairie Portage, and Lake Vermilion to Trout Lake Portage were offered a one-year extension of their permit to operate a nonmotorized mechanical portage. Only the operator at Prairie Portage remains open by the use of portage wheels pushed by people.
- The Forest Service is in the process of completing an assessment to determine the need for future commercial operation of portages.

Dams

History

- The first dams in the BWCAW were built during the early logging period to aid in river driving of logs.
- A number of plans surfaced in the 1920s to use the waterways of the area for hydroelectric power development. The most famous hydroelectric dam proposal was by Edward Wellington Backus of the Fort Frances Pulp and Paper Company in 1920. He planned to construct a series of dams along the border lakes for power and storage of waters. Congress passed the Shipstead-

Newton-Nolan Act in 1930 in response to Backus's plan. This legislation prohibited the alteration of natural water levels in the roadless areas of the Superior National Forest, with the exception of small logging dams.

- The Forest Service plans for nearly 50 old and deteriorating logging dams called for letting them disintegrate and not replacing them except where replacement would maintain adequate water levels for canoe travel and was justified by public benefits.
- The Prairie Portage Dam was of special interest. This old logging dam was built in 1902 and repaired several times by additional construction in the 1930s and 1940s. The dam failed in 1968, dropping water levels on the Moose Lake Chain and causing difficulty in floating watercraft through the narrows between Moose Lake and Newfound Lake. In 1974, the Forest Service

issued a plan and environmental impact statement calling for construction of permanent concrete dam. The 120-ft long and 13-foot high dam was constructed in 1975.

Provisions of the Act

Section 13 of the act contains instructions for management of the dams in the BWCAW.

1. Maintain the Prairie Portage Dam.
2. Maintain old logging dams only when such structures are necessary to protect wilderness values or public safety.

Actions Taken

- The Forest Service is maintaining the Prairie Portage and Fall Lake dams in the BWCAW.
- The remaining old logging dams are not maintained and are deteriorating naturally.



Prairie Portage Dam before 1968 failure.

LOGGING AT QUETICO PARK'S RIM

Environmental organizations have expressed concern about the clear cutting in the Dog River and Matawin Forest at the eastern boundary of Quetico Provincial Park. The Federation of Ontario Naturalists and Quetico Foundation have publicized logging activities east of Quetico Park. Video footage shown at a press conference held July 28, 1993, in Thunder Bay gave clear evidence of the extent of the clear cutting. Logging appeared to have been conducted to the edge of Quetico Park. In a satellite photograph of Quetico Park it appeared that the main remaining for-

est around the park existed in the 1.2 million acres of Quetico Park.

The Canadian Ministry of Natural Resources responded in a meeting held in Thunder Bay on August 26-27, 1993, which included the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and Canadian Pacific Forest Products Foresters. Participants seemed to agree that the entire Quetico watershed represents an area of concern which needs special management and planning. Areas adjacent to the park need to be studied for protection of the total ecosystem. Harvest modifications should be considered for adoption.

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President.....Frederick Winston
Vice President.....Charles A. Kelly
Secy.-Treas.Worth Bruntjen
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THREE COUNTIES SUE TO BLOCK BWCA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Our summer, 1994 issue of *Wilderness News* detailed the revised management plan for the BWCA to be administered by the U.S. Forest Service. The final version of the plan was released by the Forest Service in August, 1993, after a three year public involvement process.

Three counties, Cook, Lake, and St. Louis, and several non-profit groups from northeastern Minnesota sued the U.S. Forest Service in December to try to stop implementation of the revised

management plan.

The Forest Service has said that the plan is needed to protect the area from overuse and to improve the wilderness experience which canoeists seek. Most of the restrictions will take effect in May, 1995.

The three counties and a group based in Ely called Conservationists with Commonsense as well as two associations of canoe and camping outfitters said that the restrictions violate federal laws. They contend that if the plan is

imposed, communities around the BWCA in the three counties will lose \$9.6 million a year and 425 jobs. The groups believe that the threatened job loss represents approximately 25% of all jobs associated with the BWCA.

Forest Service officials thus far have declined to comment on the suit. The case has been assigned to U.S. District Judge James Rosenbaum. The BWCA is the most heavily used wilderness in the United States. More than 200,000 people visit the area annually.

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

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