



FROM THE QUETICO-SUPERIOR FOUNDATION • WINTER 1998

VOYAGEURS MEDIATION EPITAPH

Wilderness News Summer, 1997 issue reported that the mediation talks for Voyageurs National Park were nearing an end. The assessment was written by Jennifer Hunt, Executive Director of Voyageurs Region National Park Association. Mediation negotiators disbanded in November after meeting in Duluth for the last of the 22 negotiating sessions refereed by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Failure to agree on the biggest issues of contention means that the status quo will be maintained in the park. Unless there is some unexpected action by Congress, the National Park Service will continue making decisions on the management of Voyageurs National Park.

Among the members who participated in the mediation a number felt that eleven of the thirteen mediators had negotiated in good faith to come to an agreement. Resort owners from outside of International Falls, houseboat operators, property owners and environmentalists on the mediation panel found much common ground. The reality that so many on the panel came together to work for an agreement was clearly positive.

Harsh criticism of the mediation process was leveled by Jan Takaichi, who served on the panel as the representative of the Citizens' Council on Voyageurs National Park, a state funded advisory agency that has long criticized management of Voyageurs National Park.

Takaichi attacked not only "special-interest groups" on the panel but also the Federal Mediation Service employees

PADDLING INTO HEAVY WINDS AND HIGH SEAS IN 1998

The BWCA expanded motorized access legislation of Senator Rod Grams and Congressman James Oberstar (S.783 and H.R.1739) moved forward in the fall of 1997 with passage in Senate and House committees. The legislation seeks to open Four-mile, Prairie and Trout Lake portages to truck and jeep traffic for commercial concessionaires and eliminate the 1999 scheduled phase out of motorboat use on most of Seagull Lake which had been prescribed in the 1978 BWCA Wilderness Act. Trucks were used on the portages until 1992, when a Federal court ruled in favor of environmentalists on the issue of dragging boats over a portage as a feasible alternative to using trucks.

In late October the House Resources Committee approved Oberstar's H.R. 1739 legislation which was fiercely opposed by Representative Bruce Vento (D-MN) and a number of environmental groups. The vote was 22 to 7. The bill now heads to the House floor in early 1998. The parallel legislation of Senator Rod Grams passed the Policy Committee and awaits floor action by the U.S. Senate.

Neither the Wellstone nor the Vento bills have seen action. See Summer issue of Wilderness News for description of these bills. The Wellstone bill never had a hearing scheduled and the Vento bill was rejected by a House subcommittee in September.

Leadership opposing the Oberstar legislation was headed by Congressman Jim Ramstad (R-MN) and Congressman David Minge (D-MN). Both testified against the Oberstar bill at a House

hearing in early September. Oberstar received strong support in his bill from the Chairman of the House Resources Committee, Don Young (R-AK), known for his anti-wilderness views, and Helen Chenoweth (R-ID) who also provided significant assistance in moving the Oberstar bill.

The Oberstar bill was opposed by the Clinton administration which issued a "Statement of Administrative Policy." It said: "The current management plan for the BWCA Wilderness strikes a careful balance between the public access needs and natural resources protection. The Administration is committed to continuing to manage the BWCA in a way that both protects its unique resources and provides for their use and enjoyment within the laws that govern the management of our Nation's natural resources."

There is a strong likelihood of passage of the Oberstar and Grams bills when Congress reconvenes in early 1998. The legislation represents a significant setback for the canoe country and further trouble could be down the road in the years ahead both for the Boundary Waters and a number of other wilderness areas. The view among certain members of the current Congress asserts that wilderness protection should be weakened across the nation.

Congressman Bruce Vento and many environmental groups argue that local interests should not dictate the way a national wilderness is managed. They view the Boundary Waters as a national resource. In a number of public opinion polls, residents statewide have indicated they favor protection of the wilderness

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MINNESOTA NATURE CONSERVANCY LAKE SUPERIOR HIGHLANDS STUDY

A rich, undeveloped gem, Minnesota's North Shore cries out for protection of its unique natural character — northwoods forests, granite outcroppings and clear Lake Superior waters. Wall Street is not the only place which has witnessed a boom in the 1990's. The face of the North Shore has awakened to "modernization" at a startling pace in the last five years.

Long term protection in the Lake Superior Highlands (Minnesota's North Shore) depends on collaboration with a variety of government and private organizations and individuals. The Nature Conservancy is in a good position to provide scientific and land management expertise as communities on the North Shore look to weave a conservation ethic into the possibility of hell-bent development.

The Conservancy understands that long term protection of the North Shore's unique natural endowment will depend on collaboration with public and private agencies. The challenge will be to integrate the North Shore's social, economic and natural aspects into a fabric acceptable to residents, visitors and the whole natural ecosystem which exists there today.

The Nature Conservancy in the fall of 1996 conducted a public opinion poll to understand attitudes about the environment and natural resources in the Lake Superior Highlands, Minnesota's North Shore, where the Nature Conservancy plans to open an office in 1998. The study was funded in part by a grant from Quetico Superior Foundation

in December 1994. It contains the results of a survey of 629 randomly selected residents of the Lake Superior watershed.

Responses were gathered by interviewers between September 19th and October 16th, 1996. The average interview took twenty-six minutes. Ninety percent of the sample was composed of permanent residents while ten percent were seasonal residents. The median longevity at the residence was found to be 6.4 years. The median age of the respondents was 42.7 years old. Fifty percent of the sample reported living no more than 5 miles away from the Lake Superior shoreline; twenty-seven percent lived within one mile of the shoreline. Excerpts of the report's findings follow.



The Nature Conservancy of Minnesota has been working in the Lake Superior Highlands since 1973 when it purchased 55 acres on Susie Island, known as the Francis Lee Jaques Memorial Preserve. The island, located off the tip of northeastern Minnesota in Lake Superior, harbors rare alpine plants and a unique bog/forest system.



In 1978, the Conservancy was instrumental in establishing Tettegouche State Park, the "crown jewel" of the State's park system. In 1992, a complex land exchange among four partner groups coordinated by staff of the Conservancy resulted in a doubling of the park's size and which protected the Pallasade Valley Recreation Unit shown here.

Quality of Life Issues

Ninety-four percent of the sample rated their quality of life as "excellent" or "good," while six percent were more critical. When asked what they liked best, seventy-seven percent pointed to aspects of the natural environment: climate, quiet, rural character, small town ambiance, general environment, recreational opportunities and beauty.

Issues Facing the State of Minnesota

At eighty-three percent, residents felt "protecting Minnesota's environment" was the most important issue facing the State of Minnesota. Just behind, at seventy-eight percent, respondents ranked "the quality and cost of public elementary and high school education" as the second most important issue facing the

State. Five issues followed, ranked as "most important" between sixty-five percent and seventy percent of the sample: "attracting and keeping business," "taxes," "state spending," "the quality and cost of public colleges and universities" and "crime."

Nature Preserves

A key finding of the poll tested residents' support for more nature preserves. A solid eighty-one percent favored the designation of natural preserves in this part of the state to protect plants, animals and the habitats they need to survive; in fact, forty-nine percent "strongly supported" this initiative. Only fifteen percent expressed opposition.

Summary and Conclusions

Residents of the Lake Superior Highlands tended to support a more activist role for all levels of government in the protection of the local environment. Part of this may be attributed to the perceived importance of and high value placed upon tourism in this part of the state, but it also may result from the sizable role the environment plays in the general quality of life of the citizenry.

Residents were predisposed to granting tax exemptions to certain types of land, and lent the most support for the exemption of public parks and land set aside for the conservation of natural resources. They solidly supported their County, dedicating a portion of tax forfeited land for educational and/or scientific purposes. Residents overwhelmingly supported tax increases for water quality improvements and the protection of fish and wildlife habitats.

In viewing the success of various levels of government in protecting the environment, State ratings were moderately positive. While general ratings of their County in protecting the overall quality of the environment were favorable, evaluations of specific actions, such as planning for future growth, developing land use regulations, and enforcement of land use regulations proved far more mixed. Not surprisingly, residents expressed no consensus on the level of government which should be responsible for land use planning in their local area; however, a preference for State leadership for taxing and spending on the preservation of natural areas, land restoration, and land management was also noted.

In looking at trustworthy sources for making proposals or taking initiatives on the protection of the environment, "government" proved to be key. This orientation seemed unique in Minnesota and strongly suggested that government has a particularly key role to play — either as sole initiator or partner — in protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment in the Highlands.



In 1996, The Nature Conservancy acquired 3,280 acres of habitat along the Swamp River near Hovland, Minnesota. Here canoeists enjoy the river. Tracts were protected for recreation, natural area preservation and sustainable forestry initiatives. The area has been transferred to the state for long-term management.

FIRST-EVER GUIDE TO BOUNDARY WATERS' KEKEKABIC TRAIL

Finally there's a detailed guide to help backpackers navigate one of the most remote hiking trails in North America, the 38-mile Kekekabic Trail.

Made possible by volunteers plus grants from Eastern Mountain Sports and Recreational Equipment, Inc., the guide is printed on waterproof, tear-proof paper by noted map-maker

McKenzie Products. It has 12 color maps that show critical orienteering details such as beaver dams, stream crossings and other natural features. It describes campsites and how to find them, seemingly a simple task, but not so, as many hikers disarmingly find.

The 35-page guide was written by volunteers Martin Kubik, founder of the

Kekekabic Trail Club, and Angela Anderson of Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources. The Kek Trail Club has been active since 1990 in preserving historic trails. It also maintains two-thirds of BWCA's backpacking trails.

The \$9.95 guide (\$6.00 for Kek Trail members) can be ordered from McKenzie Products, 800-749-2113.



The hiker's
BWCA
Wilderness
Companion:

**Kekekabic
Trail Guide**



USER FEES FOR BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS

The Forest Service has announced that users of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) will be charged \$10 per person per trip for overnight use from May 1 to September 30 beginning in 1998. The cost for children under age 18 and Golden Age/Golden Access Passholders will be \$5 per person per trip. Frequent users of the BWCAW will have the option of paying a seasonal fee of \$40 for adults or \$20 for children under 18 and Golden Age/Golden Access Passholders. This seasonal fee will cover all user fees for that year from May 1 to September 30. There will be no charge for day use.

According to Jim Sanders, Forest Supervisor of the Superior National Forest, the decision on this fee format and amount was based on extensive public input through letters, informational flyers given to users picking up permits, informal interviews with users, outfitters and interest groups, and a study of campers and interest group representatives conducted by the University of Minnesota. Through this input, several criteria including cost, equity proportionate to use, user understandability, ease to administer/enforce, and the ability to

provide discounts for individual users emerged as important factors to consider in our decision.

Under the new program, all overnight users will be asked to pay a deposit of \$20 when they make a reservation, and the balance will be collected when a permit is issued. At least 80% of the fees collected will be kept by the Superior National Forest to help pay for the costs of managing the BWCAW. These additional funds will be used to increase campsite and portage maintenance, provide more education on minimum impact use of the wilderness, and improve customer service.

EPITAPH, CONTINUED

who were conducting the mediation. She said, "The pressure that the (service) placed on some panel members to change their positions was shameful and deceitful. The (service) purports itself to be an independent facilitation agent, when in actuality it became a party to the bargaining process."

April, 1998 will mark the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of Voyageurs National Park. The 218,000-acre lake and northwoods jewel is the only national park in Minnesota. The park was envisioned as a compromise to the national park system where motor-boaters and snowmobilers could coexist with hikers and campers seeking quiet and solitude.

Voyageurs unfortunately has witnessed a series of lawsuits since its early days. Snowmobilers have sued, duck hunters have sued and environmentalists have sued to change the National Park Service's management of Voyageurs. The mediation process was looked upon as an opportunity to end the conflict. At the outset the Voyageurs National Park mediation seemed to hold more promise for resolving conflict than the BWCA mediation plan appeared to offer. In the case of Voyageurs, a number of participants in the 13-member committee were able to find common ground. The Citizens' Council for Voyageurs National Park became a significant thorn, and the arduous mediation effort came to an unsuccessful conclusion.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

CANADA CUSTOMS TO CLOSE STATIONS AT QUETICO'S PRAIRIE PORTAGE, SAGANAGA

Canada Customs has announced that it will close its customs stations at Prairie Portage on Basswood Lake near Ely and on Saganaga Lake north of the end of the Gunflint Trail beginning with the 1998 season, making entry to Quetico Provincial Park by U.S. citizens at those two entry points more difficult. The Quetico Ranger Stations at Prairie Portage and Saganaga's Cache Bay that are operated by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, however, will remain open and in Canada Customs is an agency of the Canadian national government. U.S. paddlers who wish to cross into Canada at these two Quetico Park locations can still do so, but must apply ahead of time for a Remote Area Border Crossing Permit to meet the requirements of Canada Customs. The permit costs \$30 (Canadian funds) per family (or per adult group leader), must list all people crossing the border on the application

HIGH SEAS, CONTINUED

character of Minnesota's border lakes canoe country. Persons interested in this issue are urged to write their legislators and the editor of their local newspaper to offer their views on motorized portages and motor use on Seagull Lake.

form and must be filed at least one month in advance. The Remote Area Border Crossing Permit is valid for one year. Quetico Park visitors must also still acquire a Quetico permit from the Ontario Ministry of National Resources as before. To request an application for a Remote Area Border Crossing Permit, contact one of the following numbers: Fort Frances International Bridge, (807) 274-9780; Fort Frances Immigration Centre, (807) 274-3815; Pigeon River Bridge, (807) 964-2095; or Thunder Bay Immigration Centre, (807) 346-2150.

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