

FRIENDS of the BOUNDARY WATERS WILDERNESS



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The Friends' mission is to protect, preserve and restore the wilderness character of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the Quetico-Superior Ecosystem. The organization was founded in 1976.

Latrines and Black Bears A stint in the Superior

By Greg Seitz

The Twins had taken an early lead against the Mariners, putting five runs up in the first inning against Seattle's call-up pitcher, who was making a 2008 season debut which must have been disappointing for Mariners' fans. Thompson Blodgett was waist-deep in a hole, digging through dense canoe country clay, listening to the game crackle softly over a small radio wedged in a skinny birch next to him.

Aside from the ball game, all was quiet. It was mid-afternoon in the scrubby forest of Ensign Lake. We were digging a new latrine at a Boundary Waters campsite, this quiet clearing in the woods our "office" for the afternoon.

Thompson was a volunteer with the Superior Wilderness Volunteer Connection, the Friends' and the Forest Service's collaborative project funded by the Friends and the National Forest Foundation.

All summer, Thompson set off into the Boundary Waters in the bow of a canoe with a wilderness ranger in the stern, for trips of seven or eight days. The pair spent those days paddling and portaging, cleaning campsites and clearing portages, dropping dangerous trees, checking visitor permits and educating visitors on and enforcing Leave No Trace principles. And digging a lot of latrines.

The Volunteer Connection program essentially lets the Forest Service put twice as many canoes into the wilderness, with a ranger and a volunteer in each one, rather than two rangers per canoe. They cover twice as much ground and do twice as much work as would be possible if the Forest Service could only depend on paid rangers.

On this trip, Thompson was paired with ranger Curt McEwen on a trip to Ensign Lake. The lake, with its good fishing, numerous campsites and easy access, is one of the most heavily-used in the Boundary Waters. On this August trip, late in the season, there were reports that

several new latrines were needed, setting the stage for a routine that would become familiar over the days of the trip.

Mornings we woke early for coffee and oatmeal. At about 7:30, Curt's radio would come alive as rangers scattered over the Kawishiwi District checked in with the base in Ely, giving their location and plans for the day, and getting updates, the weather forecast, and perhaps the results of the previous day's Olympic competitions. Shortly after that, we got in the canoes and headed to work.

Paddling around Ensign, we stopped at campsites as we passed them. Curt would go ashore first, trying to avoid surprising the occupants and using a low tone of voice so as to not shatter the visitor's solitude and quiet. He would introduce himself ("Hi, my name's Curt, I'm with the Forest Service") and explain that we were checking campsites and permits. After that, he would ask if it was okay if we checked their latrine. Then he would dispatch Thompson to survey it and he would ask the visitor for their permit.

Curt would look at the permit and perhaps ask them if they had seen any bears. He would also glance around the site, checking for garbage in the fire pit, soap by the water or other violations of the Leave No Trace regulations intended to keep the Boundary Waters as pristine as possible.

Such infractions were not entirely uncommon, unfortunately. If he saw something, Curt just asked if the visitor was familiar with the regulations. Only in cases of egregious violation would he write a ticket, instead using most violations as an opportunity to educate visitors about Leave No Trace and why it is important.

Once we had our latrine report, we departed the site promptly, giving the visitors their solitude back and paddling on to the next site. When we had visited most of the sites on the lake, we had a good

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they removed from a hole made me
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somewhere, which I was ready to point
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wilderness regulations.

Volunteer Connection *continued on page 4.*

Letter from the Board Chair

On my first trip to the Boundary Waters, we carried our food and gear in cardboard boxes, shopping bags and a wooden canoe. It rained. Thirty years later, in a closet, are blackened pots, frayed head nets, and patched tents. I still use the wooden canoe.

Shortly after my box and bag trip I joined the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness Board of Directors, thinking it would be a short-term commitment. “It’s a wilderness,” I thought, “what more needs to be done?”

Plenty, it turns out. Over the past thirty years we have been involved in wolf management, caribou reintroduction and protection of the lynx. We have worked on acid rain, mercury deposition and regional haze issues. Sometimes we sue the Forest Service, sometimes we work with it as partners on projects like our volunteer program (see this newsletter’s cover story). Today we face the threats of invasive species, sulfide mining, and off-road vehicles. Will it ever end?

This spring while waiting in line at the grocery checkout with a cart full of cheese, sausage and six pounds of M&Ms, a couple next to me asked, “Headed to the Boundary Waters?” They then proceeded to tell me their favorite lakes, their secret fishing spots, and where they had scattered Grandpa’s ashes.

On a long flight from the West coast, my seatmate and I had exchanged pleasantries and I then opened my tattered copy of Sigurd Olson’s “The Lonely Land.” For the next three hours we traded stories of portages, campfires the size of a funeral pyre, and loons swimming under canoes. We even speculated on what lake the paddlers depicted on Minnesota’s license plate were on. (They said Saganaga, I say Seagull. Take a close look at the license plate the next time you wait at a stoplight and tell me what you think.)

Last spring I met six old fishermen on Crab Lake as they did what they have done since the 1950s. Sit at any canoe landing and wait and you will see father-daughter trips, honeymooners, or church groups. Some will decide bugs, smoky fires and 70 pound packs aren’t for them, but some will return time and time again for the sunsets, the misty mornings, and the sight of the blue at the end of a long portage. Their closet will accumulate Duluth packs, tents, maps and, most importantly, snapshots of friends they shared a canoe and campfire with.

I don’t know any other place that has such a hold on people. It is the bonds between paddlers and between paddlers and the land that I hear about from everyone who loves the Boundary Waters that gives me reason to be optimistic for the future of the wilderness.

Even though every year seems to bring new threats to this prized land of lakes, rivers and forests, every year I also meet more people who believe that all the efforts required to protect it are worth it, and who are willing to chip in and help. ●

Jeff Evans has been active with the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness since 1985 and was elected Chair of the Board of Directors in September. In addition to serving as Chair, he is also managing daily operations while the Friends searches for a new executive director.



Jeff Evans (second from right) is flanked by Paul Aslanian, (second from left) and two paddling partners after a BWCAW trip in the mid-1980s.

A BWCAW immersion for inner city students

By Paul Danicic, Executive Director, YMCA Camp Menogyn

It doesn’t sound like such an inspiring name so we all just call it EMID. But what it means is stirring. EMID is a group of mostly inner city, financially struggling students from all backgrounds working together to learn more about race, culture, differences, commonalities and simply getting along.

The students meet throughout the school year and, from 45 or more, 14 are selected for a weeklong trip in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness with the Minneapolis YMCA’s Camp Menogyn.

For over 85 years, Menogyn has been providing transformational experiences in the wilderness to teenagers. This collaboration, sponsored by the Thomas Flint Fund and the Friends, puts students on trail with a Menogyn counselor and one EMID staff. With caring guidance, they plan their route, choose the food to take and go over their gear.

Overcoming trepidations and withdrawal from instant communication with family and friends—as well as bathrooms with running water—in their small single-gender groups they travel through the rough and rugged lakes and trails of the BWCAW, experiencing things they have never seen before, working harder than they ever have and pushing themselves farther than they thought they could go.

In the evening, sitting around the campfire after a meal they all worked to make, it becomes easier to open up about the harder things in life they have experienced.

Back home, the EMID staff are able to bring out these shared perspectives of the same challenge over and over again, creating the best opportunity for translating learning to their everyday life. Some students come back for longer and more remote Menogyn trips, starting a lifelong appreciation for the Boundary Waters and all the new skills that are their own, on so many levels. ●

Ensuring sulfide mines are clean at closure

A new chapter in efforts to protect northern Minnesota's lake country from unsafe sulfide mining is beginning. The Friends is leading an initiative to pass legislation in Minnesota to protect the Boundary Waters and to prevent Minnesota's taxpayers from getting left to pay the bills for expensive mine clean-ups.

This fall, the Minnesota Environmental Partnership—the largest environmental coalition in the state, made up of more than 80 environmental and conservation groups—selected a Friends' proposal to make sulfide mining legislation one of its priorities for 2009.

As a priority for MEP, this issue will benefit from support from the organization's high-caliber staff and member groups. MEP is largely responsible for the passage of the Clean Water Legacy Amendment and has proven itself as an incredibly effective organization.

Sulfide mining has never been done before in Minnesota, but has a long history of environmental and financial catastrophes elsewhere in the country and the world. It is very different from taconite mining, which is a proud tradition in the state.

Sulfide mine proposals in northern Minnesota would extract metals from sulfur-bearing ores. When the sulfurs in the ore are exposed to air and water, sulfuric acid is created, which corrodes the rock and leaches out heavy metals, creating acid mine drainage. Acid mine drainage pollutes groundwater and surface water, killing fish and other life and making the water unsafe to drink.

Faced with the immense costs required to close and clean up mines, companies have far too often filed for bankruptcy, leaving taxpayers to foot the bill.

The legislation we are working on seeks to prevent these types of disasters in Minnesota. We will focus on mandating certain levels of financial assurance for sulfide mining, as well as making sure mines are cleaned up and reclaimed after operation, without leaving behind contaminated waste water to be treated for decades after closure. It will not be a ban on sulfide mining, but will ensure that any mines that are constructed, operated and closed in Minnesota will not harm the

environment, nor leave a mess for the next generation to clean up.

Those who have been through such disasters elsewhere have learned from the mistakes that were made and have done just what we are proposing in Minnesota. We are intent on preventing those mistakes from being repeated at the edge of the Boundary Waters. (For more about sulfide mining in northern Minnesota, see the cover story of our summer 2008 newsletter, *Sulfide mining brings new threats to the Boundary Waters' doorstep.*)

Recognizing that this issue can not wait any longer, but temporarily without a Policy Director, the Friends has contracted with Gary Botzek, an experienced environmental advocate, to help advance this important issue during the legislative session.

Gary has had a long career in all levels of government, including



Acid mine drainage pollutes groundwater and surface water, killing fish and other life and making the water unsafe to drink.



working for Governor Alan Quie and Congressman John Zwach. He has also served as chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board and, more recently, he has lobbied for Audubon Minnesota and serves as the executive director of the Minnesota Conservation Federation.

Gary has been essential to our effort to make our proposal an MEP priority, and is leading our work at the Capitol during the session.

We are also glad to be working closely on this campaign with the Friends of the Cloquet Valley State Forest, the Izaak Walton League, the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, Save Lake Superior Association, the Sierra Club North Star Chapter, and countless other concerned citizens and organizations.

This campaign is one of the most significant efforts the Friends has undertaken in its history. We will need all the support you can muster. Consider calling your elected officials to tell them this issue is important and contact us today to ask how else you can get involved.

Be sure to keep an eye on our website (www.friends-bwca.org) for updates on this campaign and please sign up for our e-mail action alerts so we can keep you updated on the latest developments and ways to make your voice heard. ●



idea of what latrines would be the highest priority for replacement and spent a couple days digging them. It was mid-August and the days were as hot as they had been all summer.

With three people digging, the work wasn't bad. Back in the woods, we were sometimes in the shade. If we were not, we strung up a tarp



By the Shovelful:

In the summer of 2008, volunteers
with the Wilderness Volunteer Connection
worked 856 hours.



over the work site and took turns digging. While one person dug, the others snipped the path to the latrine, or gathered the sticks, leaves and other forest floor detritus that we would use to naturalize the setting once the latrine had been moved, and drank a lot of water.

Twenty minutes of digging in that heat was usually enough. Handing the shovel off, I was inevitably drenched in sweat. Thompson and Curt's experience with the task was evident from the start. The sheer amount of dirt they removed from a hole in one shift made me wonder if they were hiding a backhoe somewhere, which I was ready to point out was a blatant violation of wilderness regulations.

At the end of the day, Curt engaged in a new practice for the Boundary Waters rangers in 2008: solitude monitoring. In order to meet and measure the Forest Service's Wilderness Stewardship Challenge goals, the Forest Service has undertaken formal monitoring of the amount of solitude that can be found in the Wilderness. This usually entailed a

half-hour a day where a ranger sat at a vantage point (perhaps a choice rock outcropping at a campsite) and noted how many parties passed by in that half hour and how many people were in those parties.

(For more information about the Stewardship Challenge, visit www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/superior/bwcaw/documents/10yearwildernesschallenge.pdf.)

While Curt monitored the solitude, Thompson and I monitored the cool lake water with a good, long swim. You don't have to dig latrines all day in the hot August sun to appreciate a swim in a cold, clear lake. Many have known this reward after long days of paddling and portaging and I believe it is an unmatched pleasure.

After swimming, we took advantage of the effects of the sun and wind, which, during that stretch of days, was much like sitting in front of a hair dryer. In the evenings we might fish a little and then we made and ate our dinner as the sun dipped toward the western horizon. Afterward, we sat around the fire, which was stoked to keep the mosquitoes at bay more than for any warmth.

Campfire talk was as good as any I've known. Curt and Thompson had a quiver of stories from their summer in the wilderness, though conversation also drifted toward Leave No Trace and wilderness management practices. Those who spend whole seasons in the Wilderness think deeply about their interaction with the land, having the time to consider it from many angles, and having the opportunity to witness many human behaviors and their consequences.

Thompson recounted that they had once been camped in a bay on another lake. When they went down to the water, it was sudsy. Campers across the bay had illegally been using soap to wash their dishes in the lake.

Although traveling on a lake like Ensign at the height of summer might stretch the definition of Wilderness—the lake is often overrun with large groups not looking for the traditional elements of solitude, and canoes full of coolers challenge the idea of “primitive recreation”

—it was good to be reminded that there are still young men and women who pass through the land quietly, more intent on the landscape than their own voices.

Back at the latrine-digging site that afternoon on Ensign, the baseball game ended up more exciting than the five-run first inning might have indicated it would. While Seattle's starter had stumbled, Twins closer Joe Nathan inherited a dwindling lead, which he almost let slip away in the ninth.

A little ways from the shore of Ensign, we finally hit bedrock, four feet down. We carved out the sides of the hole as much as we could and then put the latrine on top. We wedged rocks in around the edges, spread soil, and then scattered debris over the dirt. After a few weeks of foot travel and weather, our work would be unnoticeable. ●



Thompson Blodgett puts the finishing touches on a new latrine hole on Ensign Lake.

A trio of bears, and one howling wolf



I had never encountered a bear in the Boundary Waters before my trip with the Superior Wilderness Volunteer Connection last summer. Certainly I had laid in the perfect quiet of the tent before sleep and interpreted every twig snapped by a red squirrel scouring our site for crumbs as a bruin, but I've never actually seen or heard one, or dealt with its effects on a food pack.

When we arrived on Ensign and started visiting campsites, checking permits and latrines, we started hearing about bears. One group had arrived at their site to find a note on the fire grate from the previous occupants about a problem bear. Another group had seen a mom and a cub 50 yards down the shore that afternoon.

The last campsite we stopped at before heading in for the day was next to the one we had claimed. After offering us some fresh corn bread, the occupants mentioned that they had been camped there the night before and had heard the folks at our site banging pots and pans and yelling every two hours, all night long.

We politely declined the corn bread and paddled over to our site, where Curt mentioned off-handedly that he'd only had bear problems once in all his seasons as a ranger, and it had actually been when he was camped on this very lake, at this very site.

When a bear finally came crashing through the brush a short while later, we obliged by yelling and throwing rocks. I never actually saw the animal, it circled our camp for 20 minutes, obscured by the thick bushes, occasionally pausing and grunting and blowing and growling. It came back a couple more times, including once as we were crawling into our tents, but it either left for good after that round of noise-making or we slept through its nocturnal visits.

The next day we found another, much better, site across the lake and moved our camp before heading off to dig a latrine. As we were looking across the lake to the site where we planned to work, we saw a small black dot run along the shoreline, right where we would land the canoe.

The last night of the trip, we had just finished hanging the food pack high in a white pine. It was almost dark and someone calmly said, "There's a bear." I look up toward the fire grate and saw a big black shadow recede into the night. It didn't go far away and we again were left to hoot and holler and throw rocks into the bushes. After a few minutes, we no longer heard it and we relaxed. Twenty minutes later, we heard yelling and pots and pans banging from the next campsite over.

That first night, no bears woke me up as I slumbered, but, in the first light of dawn, I woke up at the tail end of a long wolf howl from across the lake. It rang in my memory from the space between sleep and waking. The howl was followed by the yips and barks of the rest of the pack but it was not repeated. —GS ●

Success on the Echo Trail Project

A judge found in the Friends' favor this fall regarding a lawsuit filed to protect the Boundary Waters from the negative effects of a major logging project that would have essentially surrounded the Trout Lake Unit of the BWCAW.

The Echo Trail Area Forest Management Project proposal includes logging on over 12,000 acres of Forest Service land and construction of 74 miles of temporary roads.

The Friends and other environmental organizations concluded that the Forest Service's proposal, as reflected in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), failed to meet the requirements of various federal statutes, including among others the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Wilderness Act. Consequently, the Friends and the other organizations filed a lawsuit.

The Friends and our allies alleged that the Forest Service had failed to consider the impact of the Project on water quality and watersheds in the BWCAW. The lawsuit also alleged that the Forest Service had failed to adequately consider:

- the impact of the Project on Canada lynx habitat,
- the cumulative effects on the BWCAW of the Project and other timber-harvesting projects occurring on the periphery of the BWCAW, and
- the Project's possible contribution to the spread of invasive species.



In the lawsuit, the Friends and its allies
alleged that the Forest Service failed to consider
the impact on the BWCAW.



Finally, the lawsuit challenged the decision of the Forest Service to monitor only four management indicator species as a means of judging the health of the forest; asserting that the number was inadequate and that the species selected were not bellwethers of the health of other populations in the ecosystem.

U.S. District Judge Ann Montgomery agreed that the Forest Service had not met its obligation under NEPA with respect to water quality and watersheds. On September 15, Judge Montgomery issued an order enjoining the Forest Service from implementing the Project until it has assessed the possible negative effects of the Project on water quality and watershed health in the BWCAW.

Judge Montgomery found in favor of the Forest Service on the other issues, except that her dismissal of claims relating to violations of the Wilderness Act left open the possibility of further action by the Friends and the other organizations if the Forest Service fails to adequately address the water quality and watershed issues.

The Forest Service released the mandated draft supplement to the EIS on Nov. 14. The Friends cooperated with our partners to submit comments on that document regarding concerns that the requirements of NEPA and the Wilderness Act have still not been met. ●

Public must be involved in sulfide mining decisions

In August, a commentary piece by Carolyn J. Sampson, then Board Chair, about legislation introduced by Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Rep. James Oberstar to sell Superior National Forest land to PolyMet Mining Corp., was published in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. Here it is, in case you missed it.

That Klobuchar, Coleman and Oberstar want to boost the economy of northeastern Minnesota by supporting a new mining industry is understandable, but their proposal to bypass existing safeguards in order to sell public land is an irresponsible use of the power voters have given them. To do so before there has been a full public discussion and debate about the merits and dangers of sulfide mining in Minnesota is real breach of public trust.

This proposed legislation would set a dangerous precedent for the administration of our public lands. We expect public lands to be properly managed, not sold off to special interests in deals conducted behind closed doors. We deserve a full public discussion of sulfide mining and all its risks before our land is forever changed by it.

Our beautiful, unique lake country is beloved by people all over the U.S. and throughout the world. It deserves better treatment than what Senators Klobuchar and Coleman and Representative Oberstar propose. ●

Carolyn J. Sampson, Ph.D., is the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness.



All Minnesotans, especially those who love the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and surrounding Superior National Forest, should be very disturbed by a recent proposal from three of Minnesota's elected officials. This proposal would provide special treatment to a Canadian-owned mining company so it can operate a strip mine in northeastern Minnesota.

Senators Amy Klobuchar and Norm Coleman and Representative James Oberstar have introduced bills (S. 3411 and H.R. 4292, respectively) that would authorize the U.S. Forest Service to sell 6,700 acres of Superior National Forest to PolyMet Mining Corp. Existing law requires a thorough assessment of the land's value and an exchange for an equivalent parcel – a time-tested process that safeguards the public interest and protects the environment. The proposed bills grant an exception to this process, bypass existing safeguards, and enable the outright sale of federal forest land to PolyMet to the benefit of PolyMet and detriment of the public interest.

What is even more disturbing is that Klobuchar, Coleman and Oberstar's proposed special treatment would expedite the creation of a sulfide mine, the first mine of this kind in Minnesota.

Sulfide mining is nothing like the mining familiar to us all on the Iron Range. No sulfide mine has ever been shown to operate without causing acid mine drainage, the toxic combination of sulfuric acid and heavy metals. Acid mine drainage elsewhere has resulted in severe and permanent environmental damage to land surrounding the mine and to lakes, rivers, and wetlands downstream.

Proponents of this strip mine say it will be "safe," nothing like any sulfide mine ever before, but we have no proof outside of small-scale tests. This strip mine is essentially a large-scale, high-risk experiment conducted right in the midst of our precious public lands.

Update:

Thank you to everyone who contacted Sen. Klobuchar and other elected officials about this legislation. The bill did not move forward in 2008, but could be re-introduced when Congress reconvenes in January. Sign up for action alerts at www.friends-bwca.org to keep informed about this and other issues and learn how you can make your voice heard. ●

Travel Management Plan Released

The Superior National Forest released its Travel Management Plan in December. This plan designates roads and trails in the Forest which are open to off-highway vehicles (OHVs).

The Friends, working with the Izaak Walton League, Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, and other partner organizations, submitted extensive comments on the plan's Environmental Assessment (EA) last summer. Our on-the-ground research found numerous roads proposed for OHV travel that crossed streams and wetlands, came within a very short distance of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, or otherwise would imperil this prized region through noise pollution, erosion, the spread of non-native invasive species, and the destruction of wildlife habitat.

The Forest Service's final plan adopted the EA's Alternative 2. We are currently examining our options for protecting the BWCAW and its ecosystem from the many perils posed by extensive OHV use in the Forest ●

Friends Out and About

The Friends has been very busy these past couple of months. Here is look at some of what we have been up to:

Jack Johnson Concert

In June we were invited to Jack Johnson's concert at River's Edge Park in Somerset, Wis. Volunteers for the Friends spent six hours talking to the public about the Friends and the issue of sulfide mining. Jack Johnson's "All At Once" foundation also matched many of this summer's donations and we received a grant for \$2,500. Thank you to Jack Johnson, "All At Once," and everybody who participated in this event.



Concert-goers visit the Friends' booth at Jack Johnson's concert to learn about the organization's work and how they can get involved.

White Pine talk and Quetico Slideshow; Macalester College St. Paul, MN

Dr. Lee Frelich, a member of the Friends' advisory board, and photographer and Friends member Bernie Friel, gave two great presentations to our members at Macalester College on November 18. Dr. Frelich asked the question, "Should we be planting white pines in the BWCAW", while Bernie gave a great slideshow on past trips through the Quetico. Approximately 50 people attended, including past and current board members, members and people interested in learning more about the Friends. Before and after the presentations there was time to socialize and talk about other issues facing the BWCAW and favorite canoe trips and destinations. Watch your mailboxes and our website for our next member event that will be held in January focused on sulfide mining.

Columbia Sportswear Grand Opening

Columbia Sports opened a new store in the Mall of America in November and honored the Friends with the Medal of Merit (M.O.M.). Columbia works closely with Conservation Alliance and through them Columbia choose us to receive the award because of all the work we do to protect the most popular wilderness in America. Along with the medal, Friends will receive 2.5 percent of the first week's sales to help us further our work.

Midwest Mountaineering Winter Expo

Friends returned to the Midwest Mountaineering Winter Adventure Expo the weekend of November 21-23. We had a booth all three days that showcased the work that Friends is doing and displayed a lot of information on sulfide mining. We had many people stop by including current members, potential new members and past representatives. Friends will be at the Spring Expo the weekend of April 24-26, so if you would like to volunteer please contact Sacha at sacha@friends-bwca.org or 612-332-9630.

Upcoming Events

February: Presentation on Sulfide Mining, TBA

April: Annual Dinner, TBA

April 24-26: Midwest Mountaineering Spring Adventure Expo

New Website



The Friends have just launched a brand new website! The new site not only offers an updated look, but many cool new features, including:

- A regularly-updated blog
- Streaming video
- Interactive maps
- Reference materials
- Much more!

Stop by www.friends-bwca.org to see all the new features and be sure to contact us with your feedback.

And don't forget to become a fan of the Friends on Facebook. You can find a link on the new homepage.

Sign up for our e-mail action alerts and e-newsletter

If you haven't been receiving our occasional e-mail updates and action alerts, visit our homepage at www.friends-bwca.org to sign up and stay informed!

New face at the Forest Service



The Friends welcomes Sandy Skrien back to the Superior National Forest. Skrien has essentially been appointed to oversee the management of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, as well as other responsibilities. She is a native of Grand Marais and worked many years ago in the Gunflint District as a wilderness ranger.

Skrien has worked for the past 20 years in various locations and positions on Alaska's Tongass National Forest in the recreation, wilderness, lands, and minerals programs as well as an acting District Ranger assignment.

Skrien's responsibilities included managing the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center in Juneau and the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center in Ketchikan. At Wrangell, she managed a well known bear viewing site: Anan Creek Wildlife Observatory. This involved implementing the fee program, capacity limits and a prospectus allowing commercial guided use at the site.

Her previous work included management of two wilderness areas: LeConte Glacier, which is the most southernmost tidewater glacier in North America and Stikine River, the longest free-flowing navigable river in North America. ●

Long Island protected

The largest undeveloped island on Burntside Lake is now owned by all of us as part of the Superior National Forest.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the U.S. Forest Service announced in October that 43-acre Long Island had been permanently protected for public enjoyment and recreational use. The island, just eight miles northwest of Ely, is easily accessible for people in boats or canoes starting trips into the Boundary Waters and is within view of Sigurd Olson's famous "Listening Point" retreat.

Two individuals previously owned the land, and development of the southern portion of the island appeared to be imminent. However, the landowners wanted to explore whether they could leave a natural legacy for future generations, and contacted the Superior National Forest in hopes of conserving the island. The Forest Service proposed acquiring the island and listed it as a high national priority for LWCF funding because Long Island is both close to the Boundary Waters and connected to the 11-mile Burntside-Dead River-Twin Lakes-Everett Canoe Trail. To help the Forest Service protect the island, before the landowners had to sell, TPL acted quickly to purchase the land with its Northwoods Land Protection Fund, while a public-private partnership sought federal funds.

The U.S. Forest Service purchased Long Island using appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The Minnesota congressional delegation provided critical support in securing the funding. Many Friends members were essential to the effort, contacting their elected officials to urge action on the acquisition. ●

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If your company does not have MEF as a giving option, please contact Friends at 612-332-9630.

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