



Community Newsletter, June 2023

Superintendent's Office

Here you will find information from our various teams for the month of May. We are working on making improvements to the monthly check-in and website in the coming year and will be continuing to use the monthly check-in to keep our communities in the loop on all things Voyageurs. For updates go to:

<https://www.nps.gov/voya/learn/management/stateofthepark.htm>

June was very dry with severe fire conditions, the park called in a wildland fire engine crew to assist our onsite wildland fire staff with patrolling for fire starts. In coordination with the US Forest Service and the MN Department of Natural Resources, the park implemented a burn restriction that went from 6/13 through 6/30. Thankfully, no wildland fire starts occurred within the park, and some rain has fallen to move us away from severity.

Summer is moving into full swing with the last of our summer seasonals arriving in early June and the park staff working on getting motorboat operation courses completed for new staff, and those that require refreshers.

Park staff have been working on contracting for repairs to the Kabetogama boat launch area. Work may begin sometime in mid-August, or September. Recognizing challenges with this work to the local resorts and community, we will do all we can to start the work later in September if possible. The specific start dates will be announced once finalized with the contractor.

The park started the process for two long term projects, the eventual replacement of the electrical line to Kettle Falls, and the review of the Rainy Lake Developed Area near the visitor center east of International Falls. A major issue to be considered in the Rainy Lake Developed Area is the need for parking at the park's boat launch site.

The public comment period for the civic engagement on the Frozen Lake Access Plan closed on June 3rd. We appreciate the participation we received. Currently we are reviewing comments and preparing a comment report that will eventually be posted to the project website at - <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=84972>.

Employee Spotlight

Each month the park will spotlight a different employee. June's spotlight is Beth Lowthian, Lead for Business Services.

Beth began her career with the National Park Service (NPS) as a seasonal interpretive park ranger at Boston National Historical Park in 1988. For the next twenty-four years, she and her family enjoyed living and working at multiple NPS sites which included Cape Cod National Seashore, Crater Lake National Park, Kenai Fjords National Park, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, and Chicasaw National Recreation Area.

In 2012 she relocated to Voyageurs National Park as the park's Business Manager. For eight years, she led the park's Business Services Team by assisting staff with financial management, human resources, acquisition, and other administrative processes.

In 2020, Voyageurs National Park and Apostle Islands National Lakeshore merged administrative staff. This new model included decreasing to one Business Manager for both locations. Beth transferred to Apostle Islands and now resides in Bayfield, Wisconsin where she continues to lead the Voyageurs' team from a remote location.

She enjoys her quarterly trips back to the International Falls area and appreciates the similarity in resources found within both parks. During her free time, Beth and her family like to snowshoe, ski, and kayak.

Administration and Business Services Team

Full consolidation of human resource and acquisition services to the Washington DC office is scheduled to be implemented on October 8, 2023. While the park does not expect a change in staffing locally, there will be significant changes in administrative processes for all recruitment, staffing, and contracting.

The fourth quarter of the federal fiscal year will start on July 1. Administrative staff are preparing to complete the many steps required to close out the park's fiscal records.

The Admin Services team worked to onboard the last of the seasonal employees arriving in early June. Jenna Weiber, Admin Support Assistant, will be on a remote detail to another park for a 120-day period. Scott Koss, Budget Tech, has accepted another position to another agency.



Beth Lowthian (R)
with her daughter Caillie (L)

Natural and Cultural Resources

Water sampling in cooperation with the MN DNR on both large lakes, and interior lakes, throughout the park has commenced for the season.

The team is working with archeologists from the Midwest Archeological Center to conduct inventories along the route of the Kettle Falls electrical line. The park is working on implementing a project to replace the line within the next few years.

Zebra mussel detection sampling has started for the season and staff are surveying park marinas.

Wildlife and wetlands crews will be finishing up the last round of secretive marsh bird surveys on Rainy and Kab and will be start forest breeding bird surveys at Black Bay Ski Trail and Echo Bay Trail. They will also deploy acoustic bat detectors for compliance surveying.

Aquatic Invasive Species decontamination staff are now on their regular schedule, staffing the station at Kettle Falls seven days a week.

A variety of workdays have been scheduled at Ellsworth Rock Garden to plant flowers and other work to get the site ready for the season.

Interpretation, Education, and Recreational Overnight Permits Team

Park boat tours started in mid-June. There is a change in tour boat scheduled that was originally prepared for the summer. There are no Rainy Lake boat tours on Fridays and no Namakan boat tours on Mondays. The schedule continues to allow for a minimum of one daily boat tour opportunity either on Rainy Lake or the Namakan Basin in the park. We recommend all visitors make a reservation for tours at www.recreation.gov.

North Canoe Voyage tours are in full swing, and staff are having a great time with visitors. We recommend all reservatins for the North Canoes go through www.recreation.gov. These tours are given on Wednesdays at Rainy Lake and Saturdays at Ash River.

Reservations made as of July 1 for the following seasons:			
	2021	2022	2023
Camping Reservations	4525	4040	3715
Camping Visitors	22000	19796	17851
Houseboat Reservations	1271	869	885
Houseboat Visitors	7383	5299	5116

The Voyageurs Conservancy was awarded a Junior Angler grant from the National Park Service and has partnered with the park to offer 4 programs at Woodenfrog State Forest beach. They are June 22, July 13, July 27, and August 24 from 4 – 6 pm. Please send visitors to the programs.

Thank you to all the park staff that participated in the International Falls 4th of July parade. The rain did not stop the fun.

Visitor and Resource Protection Team

All the Protection Rangers assisted with Motorboat Certification Course (MOCC) for incoming seasonal staff this month.

The team conducted joint patrols with the U.S.C.G. They also provided opportunities for vessel inspections at boat launches, and with the Rainy Lake Guide Association, in cooperation with the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Rangers assisted in locating a lost visitor on the Kab-Ash Trail and assisted in helping visitors in a disabled vessel.

Staff attended wildland fire fighter refresher training and assisted the Coast Guard Lamp Lighters with installing a new marker in the Ash River area.

Met with the MN DNR, US Forest Service, St. Louis, Lake, and Cook Counties in relation to search and rescue procedures in NE MN.

Facilities Team

The water systems at Mukooda, Kabetogama Ranger Station and King Williams Narrows were activated.

Work is activity being conducted on the park headquarters building by the city of International Falls. Projects include cement work, and gutter and drain tile installation. General visitor access to the building will be disrupted during this time.

Work continues at the Rainy Lake Group Campsite repairs that occurred after the flood of 2022.

A variety of dock, campsite, and day use site work going on throughout the park as we continue to make repairs from impacts of last year's flood.

Rainy Lake Visitor Center and the Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center will be painted in August.