



Community Newsletter, October 2023

Superintendent's Office

Here you will find information from our various teams for the month of October. 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>

This month, the superintendent attended several general meetings related to Crane Lake Visitor Center leasing, a future project to repave several park roads, the Rainy Lake Developed Area plan, and Frozen Lake Plan alternatives. The park also distributed a [press release about posting the public comment analysis report on the Frozen Lake Plan](#).

The park completed walkthrough of the rehabilitation project at the historic Kabetogama boat house project. The superintendent also had meeting with the Kettle Falls operators about a temporary contract for operation over the next three years.

Employee Spotlight

Each month the park will spotlight a different employee. October's spotlight is Cat Berrick, Voyageurs' new permanent Wildlife Technician, as of May 2022.

Cat previously worked as a seasonal technician in Voyageurs during the summer of 2020. Originally from Nebraska, for the past 7 years Cat had worked as a seasonal fisheries and wildlife technician in her home state as well as in Utah, Idaho, and Washington.

She is excited to be back in Minnesota with all the foraging, fishing, and hunting opportunities the Northwoods has to offer. In her free time, she enjoys looking for new wild edibles, reading, and training her cocker spaniel puppy, Timberdoodle, AKA "Doodie."



NPS Photo

Administration and Business Services Team

After recent turnover in the Business Services team, staff are preparing to select a new GS-7 Administrative Support Assistant while a vacancy announcement for a GS-7 Budget Technician was posted to USA jobs earlier this month.

With the closing of the 2023 fiscal year budget behind them, the administrative team is helping all divisions set up program budgets and accounting information for the new fiscal year. They are also processing performance-based awards for employees and finalizing this year's annual plan that prioritizes projects funded by recreation fee dollars.

Natural and Cultural Resources Team

In October, wildlife biology staff conducted studies of beaver health and population through trapping and aerial surveys. Understanding the health of the beaver population helps us assess the health of the Voyageurs ecosystem.

Park staff wrapped up fall clean-up work at Ellsworth Rock Gardens and put the flower beds to sleep for the winter.

Natural resources staff are inspecting docks, chains, and buoys pulled in for the season from Rainy Lake and Namakan Reservoir for the presence of zebra mussels.

Cultural resources staff monitored the installation of new vault privies at park trailheads along the Meadwood Road (entrance road to the Ash River Visitor Center) and reviewed rehabilitation work being completed at I.W. Stevens Island and the Kabetogama boat house historic structures.

Interpretation, Education, and Recreational Permits Team

In our fiscal year-end report submitted in October, Voyageurs continued to show exciting growth in our Interpretation, Education, & Visitor Services efforts throughout the year. Over 70K visitors interacted and connected with the park's resources at our visitor centers and contact stations, where over 1500 kids were also sworn in as Junior Rangers. Nearly 7K visitors enjoyed our extremely popular boat tour formal interpretive programs, while 328 visitors participated in Voyageurs' North Canoe Voyages, a well-loved living history demonstration and performing arts program that provides visitors with the opportunity to paddle a replica

Recreation Visitation – Summer 2023	
Camping Reservations	3685
Camping Visitors	16217
Houseboat Reservations	1530
Houseboat Visitors	8651
Boat Tour Attendees	7128
North Canoe Experience Attendees	359
Rainy Lake Visitor Center Visitation	17917
Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center Visitation	15430
Ash River Visitor Center Visitation	17797

26 ft. Voyageurs fur trade era canoe. Voyageurs' Rangers also had the opportunity to interact with over 2000 visitors while roving the park's trails.

We were excited to have over 10K students in grades K-12 participate in Voyageurs' Environmental Education programs in partnership with Voyageurs Conservancy (the park's official non-profit partner). This included over 1K kids and teachers in the park and over 9K participating in live virtual learning opportunities. Relatedly, there were over 29K students and teachers nationwide that viewed and participated in Expeditions in Education's virtual Night Sky Challenge.

Voyageurs also enjoyed some of the highest volunteer participation in years. 25 position volunteers contributed 9879.5 hours of volunteer service, working wonderfully together to fulfill our Interpretation, Education, & Visitor Services mission. We also utilized a mix of local volunteers to help support Voyageurs' Boreal Star Gazing weeklong event and Star Party weekend, in addition to gateway community events such as the International Falls 4th of July parade and Ranier Days Summer Festival.

In October the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative in partnership with Voyageurs Conservancy brought Voyageurs National Park to audiences in greater Minnesota and around the country! Our Virtual Dark Sky Classroom was in classrooms from Hawaii to Massachusetts sharing Voyageurs night skies with 477 students. The new Mobile Classroom van also visited elementary schools in Duluth, reaching 251 students.

In addition, Voyageurs Conservancy staff shared the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative programs at the International Conference of the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums, and the Minnesota Association of Environmental Education Conference. Voyageurs Conservancy also joined the National Parks Friends Alliance Meeting, building capacity as an effective philanthropic partner to Voyageurs National Park.

Visitor and Resource Protection Team

Law enforcement rangers continue to instruct and assist at the law enforcement academy of Vermilion Community College in Ely, MN, and are also working on EMS training hours. They also assisted fire crews in completing prescribed burn at IW Stevens to create defensible space around structures at this highly visited destination site.

Rangers worked with maintenance staff to complete the pulling of hazard markers on the Rainy and Namakan Lake basins, after which staff transitioned to patrolling the park boundary in the days leading up to the start of the Minnesota deer opener.

Rangers have begun prepping boats for winter storage and organizing SAR (search and rescue) and EMS (emergency medical services) gear for the upcoming thin ice and winter season.

Facilities Team

The Kabetogama Lake boat launch project near the visitor center has wrapped up for the time being, with concrete having been poured in mid-October. The ramp has been curing since, and the coffer dam will be pulled by the contractor in the coming months.

The park's information technology specialist is installing new printers and computers throughout the park while also developing a plan to upgrade internet speed and improve connectivity.

Crews working on the Kabetogama Lake visitor center repainting project and rehabilitation on the nearby historic boat house are getting close to being wrapped up for the season.

The Kabetogama Lake group campsite received a face lift as crews worked to replace rotten timbers throughout the site.

Water systems have been winterized at the Whispering Pines employee housing and at Kettle Falls. One structure, the ranger cabin near the Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center, will remain functional throughout the winter months to provide housing for winter volunteers from January through March or April.

Contractors got all four new vault toilet comfort stations set in place at three trailheads along the Meadwood Road and one near the Ash River boat ramp. They are now transitioning to adding fill, leveling the area, and completing other finishing detail work.

Namakan district maintenance crews built new bulkheads for the King Williams campground docks on Crane Lake, pulled floater docks at campsites throughout Kabetogama, Namakan, and Sand Point lakes, and most recently transitioned to clearing snowmobile trail portages and prepping snowmobile stakes for winter trails.

Rainy district maintenance crews disconnected and stowed all docks for the winter and crews are now working on clearing the Black Bay Ski Trail in preparation for winter trails maintenance.

The Rainy Lake boat ramp comfort station has been winterized and is now closed for the season.

The cycle of the seasons carries on as the park's mechanics put boats away to make room for getting snowmobiles serviced and set to go for winter operations.

