



Community Newsletter, March 2024

Superintendent's Office

Here you will find information from our various teams for the month of March. 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 the Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum and scheduled some much-needed annual leave. He has been busy reviewing applicants to fill the Lead of Interpretation position and developing communication related to the upcoming scoping of the Frozen Lake Plan which will be held in June. He also did a site visit to the new Crane Lake facility, and virtually attended the Jefferson National Park Association (JNPA) board meeting. JNPA is the organization that operates the bookstores in the park visitor centers.

Employee Spotlight

Each month the park will spotlight a different employee. The March spotlight is on Emma Misner, our new Budget Analyst at Voyageurs National Park.

Emma began her NPS career in February 2024 as a Budget Analyst supporting the Voyageurs and Apostle Islands maintenance programs. She also serves as the tenant manager for the Voyageurs housing program.

She grew up in International Falls, Minnesota spending time camping and fishing on Rainy Lake and enjoying time at her family's shack in Loman. Emma attended Bemidji State University, where she completed a degree in Accounting with a minor in Business Administration. She has experience working in tax and payroll. Outside of work, Emma enjoys working on house projects, camping, fishing, playing with her cat Hazel, and spending time at the lake or shack.



Administration and Business Services Team

Administrative Program led Beth Lothian met with the Park superintendent to plan for the transition of her position when she retires in June. She has been a key figure at both Voyageurs National Park and Apostle Islands National Lakeshore for many years, and planning for her departure will be key to the continual smooth operations of the park.

The administrative staff has been busy planning the logistics of onboarding the summer seasonal staff, beginning in April.

Natural and Cultural Resources Team

Steve Windels, Jerry Warmbold, and Josh Carpenter coauthored a presentation entitled "Invasive cattail removal in boreal lake systems as a means of improving wildlife habitat", and Ryan Maki and James Smith coauthored a presentation entitled "Possible influence of water level management on nutrient flux in near-shore sediments (Lake Kabetogama, MN, USA)", both of which were presented at the Rainy-Lake of the Woods watershed forum this month.

Brian Harmon and Ryan Maki attended the NPS Aquatic Invasive Species workshop and presented the park's zebra mussel containment and prevention work.

Interpretation, Education, and Recreational Permits Team

Mark Miller attended the annual Public Lands Alliance convention in San Francisco, meeting with public land managers and industry partners to explore ways to encourage public enjoyment of our lands. Topics of discussion included health and healing on public lands, inclusive storytelling, community-led stewardship and adapting and thriving in uncertain climates.

Volunteer Jim Fedders presented a well-attended ice science program at Rainy Lake Visitor Center, focusing on how ice is formed under different conditions, its physical properties, and how Voyageurs National Park measures ice for our ice roads and snowmobile trails.

Staff completed CPR/first aid training and also completed hiring seasonal staff and uploaded tour ticket availability to recreation.gov.



NPS Photo

Voyageurs Conservancy staff offered educational snowshoe programs to local schools and their winter field fellow led an event in which participants learned about measuring the park's dark skies. They held a board meeting on March 18th and

are now focuses on preparing for their upcoming Spring Thaw annual fundraising event, which will take place on April 25th in Minneapolis.

Both camping and houseboat permit numbers saw considerable increases during the COVID-19 pandemic followed by decreases due to the 2022 flood. They are now returning to normal and overall trends continue to increase.

This table shows the number of permits made as of April 10 for each summer season from 2019 to 2024. For the coming 2024 summer season, permit numbers are at or above normal and will likely continue to increase. Primitive campsites along the park’s Kab-Ash trail have seen a significant increase in the short two years they have been available.

Reservations made as of April 10 for the following seasons:						
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Camping Reservations	1623	1782	3049	2773	2622	2743
Camping Visitors	7836	9431	16348	14752	13850	14333
Houseboat Reservations	59	151	380	332	261	257
Houseboat Visitors	330	1108	2274	2039	1552	1465

Visitor and Resource Protection Team

Law Enforcement staff assisted in the recovery of a UTV that fell though some thin ice on Kabetogama Lake, with no injuries. The staff held EMS training and re-certification and hired a new Commercial Services Specialist.

Facilities Team

Staff attended training at the Midwest Regional headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska.

In the Namakan district of the park, crews worked on clearing brush piles at Kettle Falls, and completed a new dock at Spunge Island campsite. They also repaired a bridge on the Echo Bay trail.

The Rainy Lake district staff continued the renovation work on park housing units and addressed monthly water samples and septic inspections. They were also busy servicing park boats and heavy equipment. Beau Readman worked on crafting a proper mortar for use on the historic Rainy Lake Saloon to match its original character.

Upcoming

Date	Event
4/15	Tickets for boat tours and special interpretive programs go on sale.
4/25	Voyageurs Conservancy annual Spring Thaw fund raiser
4/29 and 4/30	Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) meetings – online (4/29, 9 – 10:30) and in person (4/30 11 – 12:30). These meetings are for those who currently hold a CUA. Anyone interested in acquiring a CUA to do business in the park should reach out to our Chief Ranger at – 218-283-6658 to discuss the business idea.
5/10	Kettle Falls opening
5/24	Visitor Centers open for summer. The park may have some visitor centers open for the weekends of May 11 and May 18, if staffing allows.
May / June	Frozen Lake Access Plan - tentatively scheduled 30-day comment period for public scoping late May to late June. This will be the second opportunity of 3 for public comment.
June	Messaging related to changes to CUA fee structure to be distributed.
6/16	Park boat tours begin