

Community Check-in for March 2023

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 community in the loop on all things Voyageurs. For updates go to:

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

The public comment period for the preliminary frozen lake access proposal is open through May 3rd. you can find more information at - <https://www.nps.gov/voya/learn/news/voyageurs-national-park-hosts-open-house-and-opens-comment-period-on-frozen-lake-access-preliminary-proposal.htm>. You can find a newsletter with information on the preliminary proposal at - <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsOpenForReview.cfm?projectID=84972&parkID=169>

Employee Spotlight: Each month the park will spotlight a different employee. March's spotlight is Chad Nevalainen the Namakan District Supervisor of Maintenance Facilities.



Chad and family

Chad joined the National Park Service as a seasonal employee at Voyageurs National Park in 2003. He worked seven summers at the park while attending Thief River Falls Technical Community College where he received a diploma as an Aviation Mechanic. After that, he attended Itasca Community College, where he received his Associates Degree (A.A.S) in Natural Resource Management and Wildland Firefighting. Chad also attended the University of Minnesota Crookston and received his bachelor's degree (B.S.) in Natural Resource and Park Management.

Chad was selected as a permanent employee in 2015 and worked as Lead on a trail crew for the first five years, then Work Leader for the Namakan District for two years, and recently accepted the position of Maintenance Supervisor for the Namakan District in 2022.

Some of his new tasks include supervising the Roads and Trails crew, budget planning, developing project proposals for funding purposes, and other roles to assure the team has what they need to get the job done in the field. This coming year, the crew Chad leads will spend time rehabbing campsites, developing new campsites, hauling canoes into the backcountry lakes, and prepping ground for new Camper Cabins that will be developed at Kettle Falls.

Chad was raised in Kabetogama, MN where he and his family have enjoyed the park. Camping, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, tubing, and water skiing are some of his favorite activities. When asked what his goals at the park are, he said, "I am dedicated to making Voyageurs a better place for visitors to enjoy so they have a positive experience and can share memories of this place with their friends and family." Chad and his team are devoted to do their best to make the park facilities the best they can be. On a side note - he still has his red card for wildland firefighting and gets to travel out-of-state to fight wildfires.

Chad resides in Kabetogama with his wife and two kids. His family loves having Voyageurs in their backyard where they enjoy doing all the same things he did while growing up.

Administrative Team

The team organized an Intergenerational Sensitivity and Bystander Intervention training for all park employees which reinforced a positive work environment for all staff.

Visitor Protection Team

We know many of you have followed the news about last year's law enforcement incident at the park. We have received requests for records relating to this interaction, which are being processed by the National Park Service Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) office in accordance with applicable law and policies. We don't have a timeline on when that will be completed.

Rangers assisted St. Louis County in a medical this past month, which was located outside of the park, and staff are working on Emergency Medical Services (EMS) education training requirements. Follow-up on a major medical within the park from February continued, as did ongoing maintenance for snow ambulances.

Staff saw increased speeding violations on snowmobile trails as a result of improved trail conditions. Fishing pressure increased towards the end of the month, but few violations were observed during license and creel checks.

Interpretation, Education, and Recreational Overnight Permits Team

Winter Education snowshoe programs wrapped up with more than 300 students coming to the park to learn about tracking and the history of Ojibwe snowshoes. Our final winter full moon hike for 2023 brought 29 participants with a beautiful, near full moon evening.

Phase one of the Crane Lake exhibit planning is fully underway with Native Skywatchers and Voyageurs Conservancy. The first formal presentation was given to partners who are involved with the project. To see the progress you can visit [Crane Lake Visitor Center Project - Voyageurs National Park \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/crane-lake-visitor-center-project-voyageurs-national-park).

Camping and Houseboat Reservations are well underway for the summer season.

Reservations made as of April 1 for the following seasons:			
	2021	2022	2023
Camping Reservations	2264	1369	2432
Camping Visitors	12550	7355	12990
Houseboat Reservations	313	273	222
Houseboat Visitors	1904	1686	1330

Natural and Cultural Resources Team

Many of the staff attended the Rainy Lake Watershed Forum which is an annual event to promote cross-border research management collaboration of joint waters. Some staff gave a talk on *Effect of Prescribed Fire and Flooding on Hybrid Cattail in Voyageurs National Park*. For more information you can go to [Watershed Forum \(lowwsf.com\)](https://www.lowwsf.com).

Multiple staff attended the Great Lakes Science for Parks Symposium which is a place to discuss and learn about protecting, restoring, and reconnecting the next generation on emerging issues in the Great Lakes National Parks. Park staff also gave a presentation on *The Voyageurs Wetland Restoration Project: Lessons from the First Six Years* and an overview of Voyageurs resource management work in 2022.

Maintenance Team

Congratulations to the Maintenance Team for being selected as the National Park Service (NPS) Midwest Region Maintenance Facility Team of the Year Award for 2022. The award was given, in part, for their responsiveness to the historic flood of 2022. A press release will follow soon.

The Kab-Ash and Rainy Lake Ice Roads have seen significant slush due to warming temperatures and have been closed for the season. All snowmobile trail grooming and ice road plowing has ceased for the winter. Trail stakes are being removed this week with trail closures due to the warming temperatures.