



Community Newsletter, July 2023

Superintendent's Office

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

July has brought more rain that has helped us move out of fire severity, allowing us to lift campfire restrictions late in the month.

This July was the 10th anniversary of the National Parks and Conservation Association, Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club, and Voyageurs collaborating on a Rat Root River restoration project. Through the years the collaboration has improved riffles and planted trees along the river to improve spawning habitat for fish that eventually make their way to Black Bay and other parts of Rainy Lake.

Work has begun in Crane Lake on the new visitor center facility and municipal campground the community has worked so hard to design and implement. The park is working on finalizing the lease for the visitor facility, with plans to take occupancy in spring/summer 2024.

Employee Spotlight

Each month the park will spotlight a different employee. July's spotlight is Candy Braton, Recreation Fee Specialist.

Candy joined the National Park Service (NPS) as a seasonal maintenance worker in 2001. She worked every season at Voyageurs, except for one memorable summer at Rocky Mountain National Park, while she completed undergraduate and graduate work in Environmental Studies and raised two busy boys.

Over her years as a maintenance seasonal, Candy built and rehabbed campsites, helped clear trails and maintain grounds at the Ellsworth Rock Gardens, and was the campsite cleaner on Kabetogama and Namakan Lakes. In 2018, she moved into the permanent position of Recreation Fee Specialist with the Interpretation team of the park.



Her current role combines her extensive field experience and knowledge of campsites with visitor services. She enjoys helping visitors plan their camping and backpacking trips in the park, and manages the recreation fee program, which involves overseeing the online fee platforms for camping and houseboat permits, boat tour and special interpretive program tickets, and winter equipment rentals of snowshoes and cross-country skis on recreation.gov.

Having grown up just on the outskirts of Voyageurs National Park in Ranier, MN, and having been a long-time lover of the outdoors, working at Voyageurs National Park is a perfect fit. Loving where she works is evident by the amount of time she spends camping, boating, and fishing in the park in her off time, with her husband and (now) three busy boys.

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 began on July 1. Administrative staff are continuing to complete the many steps required to close out the park's fiscal records.

Natural and Cultural Resources Team

Steve Windels, Voyageurs Wildlife Biologist, was honored with the 2023 Distinguished Moose Biologist Award at the 55th North American Moose Conference in July. The award honors the outstanding contribution of an individual to the understanding and management of moose in North America and Eurasia.

Aquatic ecology staff are deploying cyanotoxin samplers for long-term harmful algal bloom research in Kabetogama Lake.

In mid-August, a regional and park scuba team will dive in Black Bay Narrows to search for zebra mussels. Through the end of July, park and Kettle Falls staff have decontaminated 352 boats at the Kettle Falls Portage.

The park and the Koochiching County Historical Society operated a history booth at Rainer Days.

Interpretation, Education, and Recreational Overnight Permits Team

Park boat tours are in full swing. There is an opportunity for visitors to get on a tour somewhere in the park, either Rainy or Namakan, seven days a week this summer. Tours quickly sell out, so we recommend all visitors make a reservation at www.recreation.gov.

North Canoe Voyages are also in full swing. Staff continue to have a great time with visitors even when the weather doesn't always cooperate. We recommend all reservations for the North Canoes go through www.recreation.gov. These tours are given on Wednesdays at Rainy Lake and Saturdays at Ash River Visitor Centers.

Reservations made as of Aug 1 for the following seasons:			
	2021	2022	2023
Camping Reservations	5150	4573	4218
Camping Visitors	24061	21694	19578
Houseboat Reservations	1701	1260	1242
Houseboat Visitors	9977	7642	7210

Evening Starwatch programs begin soon. Friday night Starwatch Cruise (10 - 11:30 pm) on Rainy Lake, August 4 through September 22 (with the exception of Aug. 11). Once again, we recommend visitors make a reservation well in advance at www.recreation.gov. We expect these tours to sell out quickly.

Weekly Voyageurs Conservancy led Dark Sky programs on Friday nights (10 - 11 pm) began on July 7 (at the Voyageurs Forest Overlook near Ash River Visitor Center) and will continue there through September 8. Coming up in August, we are also adding free Ranger led Thursday Night Sky programs (10 - 11:30 pm) every week at Rainy Lake Visitor Center.

With the Voyageurs Conservancy Junior Angler grant award by the National Park Foundation, we were able to partner to offer ongoing programs at Woodenfrog State Forest beach in July. There is another upcoming opportunity on August 24 from 4 – 6 pm. Please send visiting families to the program.

Despite the rain, our Rangers had a great time dressing in their 17th and 18th century period costumes as French-Canadian Voyageurs, while participating in the International Falls 4th of July parade.

In July, Voyageurs Conservancy offered several community programs for visitors and local community members, supporting local tourism and expanding the ways you can 'Love Your Park.' Programs included weekly Dark Sky offerings, a Hike with a Scientist, and Junior Ranger: Let's Go Fishing programs. The Conservancy is increasingly expanding these program offerings. In addition to these events, Voyageurs Conservancy funded six Field Fellows who were very active in the field throughout the month collecting data on wolves, marsh birds, bats, muskrats, mussels; studying and cataloging the park's historic collections; and more.

If you are a regional parent or teacher getting ready for back to school, please note we are taking sign-ups for our fall field trip and floating classroom experiences. Register for the following programs by clicking the links below or email education@voyageurs.org for more information: [Fall Field Experiences](#) [Floating Classroom \(4th grade only\)](#)

Visitor and Resource Protection Team

Rangers assisted and participated in the International Falls 4th of July events, including marching with community members in the Independence Day parade.

Rangers attended the Kabetogama Volunteer Fire Department open house, celebrating our key partner's efforts that help keep the Namakan District and Kabetogama area safe.

As summer boat traffic has increased, Rangers continue to assist helping visitors with disabled vessels.

The team successfully dealt with a single tree lightning strike, near Kettle Falls.

Facilities Team

Work was completed at the Rainy Lake Group Campsite including dock rehab, repairing what was damaged after the flood of 2022.

The team is transitioned to the Kettle Falls trail project, including work conducted at the Villa walkways.

The team wrapped the Kettle Falls chimney with wire for safety reasons, to prevent bricks from coming down.

With the assistance of the fire crew, maintenance dropped two hazardous trees at Kettle Falls.

Contractors started work to complete the cabin restoration project at IW Stevens Island. They plan to finish in August.

Work activity continues at 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 remains disrupted during this time. Visitors are asked to call ahead when needing to enter the building.