SUCCESS STORIES

REPORTING EXAMPLES OF OUR PROGRESS IN CARING FOR THE LAND AND SERVING PEOPLE

'Sister Sites' Arrangement Reaches Across the Border

March 2012- Lisa Radosevich-Craig

Hands reached across the international border between Ontario, Canada and Minnesota, USA to sign a 'Sister Sites' arrangement on September 20, 2011 to further mutually beneficial cooperation for the purpose of conservation, preservation, recreation, and public education. Managers from Ontario Parks Branch's Quetico and LaVerendrye Provincial Parks, USDA Forest Service's Superior National Forest; and USDI National Park Service's Grand Portage National Monument and Voyageurs National Park were signatories to this historic agreement.

Signatories to Sister Sites Arrangement at recent Canada-US collaborative meeting. Left to right: Tim Cochrane, Superintendent-Grand Portage National Monument; Robin Reilly, Superintendent-Quetico Provincial Park; Lynda Horman, Superintendent-LaVerendrye Provincial Park; Jim Sanders, Supervisor-Superior National Forest; Mike Ward, Superintendent-Voyageur National Park.

These areas share a common landscape of forests and water with a common cultural history despite political segmentation by an international border. The 'Sister Sites' arrangement builds upon this shared landscape and a long history of beneficial cooperation between the agencies which manage approximately 5.5 million acres of public lands stretching more than 300 miles along the Minnesota – Ontario border.

The 'Sister Sites' arrangement furthers the intent of the *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation of Wilderness Conservation* between Canada, United Mexican States, and the United States of America that was signed on November 7, 2009. Two million contiguous acres of wilderness spanning the international border are included within the 'Sister Sites' lands.

The 'Sister Sites' will prepare an annual plan for collaborative actions that advance efforts to:

- provide visitor opportunities to experience these public lands and waters;
- provide holistic interpretation of the significance of and links between the sites;
- support sustainable social and economic development in gateway communities;
- preserve public lands and waters and their flora and fauna;
- maintain the wilderness character in managed wilderness areas;
- implement research, inventory, and monitoring programs necessary to achieve success in preservation, restoration, ecological integrity and resilience;
- encourage scholarship and programs which protect heritage resources;
- develop, enhance, and share volunteer programs to encourage involvement with all participants; and
- share and/or exchange staff and/or resources among the participants.