



Community Newsletter, November 2023

Superintendent's Office

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

Happy Holiday Season to everyone. The park continues shoulder season operations through the month of November with staff working on putting boats away and getting snowmobiles, groomers, and other winter trail equipment ready for the upcoming winter season. It tends to be a quiet time of year in the park with many taking leave for Thanksgiving and the hunting season.

This month, the superintendent attended several general meetings related to the Crane Lake Visitor Center, a symposium on wild rice, Kettle Falls concession contract updates, and the National parks and Conservation Association annual meeting in the Twin Cities.

Employee Spotlight

Each month the park will spotlight a different employee. November's spotlight is James Smith, Voyageurs' new permanent biological science Technician.

James began a permanent position as a biological science technician at Voyageurs in June of 2022. His position is shared between the park, where he works on long term water quality monitoring in the waters in and surrounding Voyageurs, and the National Park Service's Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network out of Ashland, WI where he assists in region wide aquatic ecosystem monitoring. James is originally from Anchorage, Alaska where he grew up paddling, camping, and snowboarding. He started his career at Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska and has since worked three seasonal positions at Voyageurs National Park, as well as temporary positions in south Texas, New Mexico, and Oregon. James is thrilled to be back at Voyageurs after many years away and is most excited to enjoy evenings paddling calm waterways and collecting popular hot dish recipes to make his own.



Administration and Business Services Team

The Business Services Team has hired three new employees!

- Joelyn Bonofiglio accepted a Budget Technician, and will be duty stationed at Apostle Islands. Joelyn will start on 12/17/2023.
- Katherine Loera accepted the Administrative Support Assistant position, duty stationed at Voyageurs. Katherine will start on 1/14/2024.
- Juniper Silvola accepted the Administrative Support Assistant position and will be duty stationed at Apostle Island beginning on 12/17/23.

Recruitment is ongoing for a couple of other positions at Voyageurs, including the Interpretation, Education and Partnerships lead and a Marine Mechanic position. Be looking for permanent and seasonal employment opportunities at www.usajobs.gov

Natural and Cultural Resources Team

Some very positive news this month from the Resource management team came after closely inspecting docks, chains and buoys pulled from the Rainy Lake and Namakan Reservoir this fall in that we did not find any evidence of zebra mussels. Checking substrate samples collected in 2023 also did not indicate the presence of zebra mussels, and a SCUBA team investigating Black Bay Narrows likewise did not find any zebra mussels. More samples are being investigated for any signs of the aquatic invasive species. This data is very promising and shows that efforts such as our vessel decontamination station at Kettle Falls work to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. We will continue that important work this summer to keep invasives such as zebra mussels out of uninfected waters upstream of Rainy Lake.

The Resources team have been working on developing funding proposals for future work, including a Cruiser Lake cold water fish habitat research study.

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,

A prescribed burn was conducted at the IW Stevens site to remove brush, avoiding potential fire danger at the site. These activities play a critical role in reducing wildfire risk to the park by removing fuel that could lead to a wildfire, and protects historic structures.

Rangers spent time this month preparing vehicles and equipment for winter operations in the park.

Our staff have been processing CUA annual reports and applications as well as updating current CUA holders on programmatic changes set to occur in 2025 and beyond.

Interpretation, Education, and Recreational Permits Team

Voyageurs opened camping reservations for this coming year, and the trend shows lots of interest in camping. Fun fact: Go-live day reservations have increased every year. In 2019, there were only 13 reservations made in the first minute and 297 by the end of the first day, whereas in 2023, there were 244 reservations made in the first minute and 1009 by the end of the day.

| Go-Live Day Camping Reservations (Nov 15) | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|
| For Summer Season | First Minute Reservations | % Increase | First Day Reservations | % Increase |
| 2019 | 13 | | 297 | |
| 2020 | 63 | 385% | 436 | 47% |
| 2021 | 116 | 84% | 681 | 56% |
| 2022 | 143 | 23% | 956 | 40% |
| 2023 | 203 | 42% | 960 | 0.4% |
| 2024 | 244 | 20% | 1009 | 5% |

Lots of planning is going into winter events, such as the Boreal Stargazing event, and the Heart of the Continent Partnership conference taking place the week of February 11th.

Staff for this summer are being hired and volunteers are being recruited to ensure summer boat tours and north canoe programs are successful. In addition, a winter field fellow was recently hired. This position will work on furthering our dark sky programming this winter.

Looking ahead into December, changes to winter visitor center operations have been announced. More information can be found at - <https://www.nps.gov/voya/learn/news/voyageurs-national-park-announces-new-winter-visitor-center-hours-of-operation-and-winter-equipment-rentals.htm>

Facilities Team

There are many projects that the facilities team are completing while the weather has been mild. The Kabetogama visitor center is being painted, work is continuing at some of the seasonal park housing units and work the Kabetogama boat launch has been completed. Contractor will return to remove the coffer damn soon.

The team is ready for winter operations, carefully reviewing safety and operations plans for working on the frozen lake surfaces, plowing the ice roads and grooming snowmobile trails throughout the park. Winter equipment such as snowmobiles, groomers, and plow trucks are being serviced in preparation for use.

Rangers and maintenance crews recently finished their annual Thin Ice Rescue Training in November.



Rangers practice thin ice rescue procedures on Kabetogama Lake as a part of their annual winter operations training.



Thank you to park staff that developed the float and walked in the Holiday Parade in International Falls the day after Thanksgiving.