



Community Newsletter, August 2023

Superintendent's Office

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

During August the superintendent worked on messaging and modifications related to the Kabetogama boat launch project. The closure was moved from September 11 to the 18th. There were park visits by Senator Smith's staff, and the NPS's regional lead for facilities. Additionally, the Voyageurs Conservancy held a membership event in International Falls at the home of a board member.

Thanks to the staff that repaired the Hoyer accessibility lift at Casareto Cabin on Crane Lake, and made modifications to the vault toilet at Mukooda Lake, assuring these facilities remain in operational condition.

The park continues to work towards projects related to the replacement of the electrical line out to Kettle Falls, this project is anticipated to start in 2025; resurfacing of the park roadways at Rainy Lake and Ash River, these projects will likely take place in 2027; placement of camper cabins at Kettle Falls will begin in 2024; we continue to move forward with developing concepts to address parking issues in the Rainy Lake launch area; the comment report related to the Frozen Lake Access civic engagement that occurred in the spring of 2022 should be posted by the end of September.

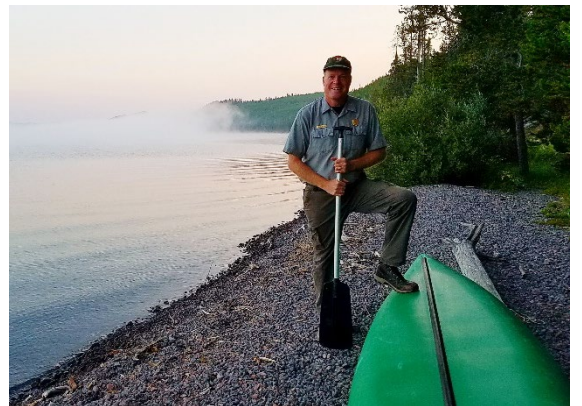
Employee Spotlight

Mark Miller moved into the position of Interpretive Park Ranger at Voyageurs National Park in 2022. He is the lead for the Kabetogama and Ash River Visitor Centers and programs in the summer and works from the Rainy Lake Visitor Center in the winter.

Originally from Minnesota, Voyageurs has been a very special place to Mark since his first wilderness canoe trip at the age of 8. Having spent many summers leading canoe trips throughout the Boundary Waters region, sharing the wonders of its natural and cultural resources has been a life-long passion of his.

Mark started working for the NPS in 2015 as a Wilderness Ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park. Since then, his career has included work as a Lead Interpretive Ranger at Mount Rainier, Yellowstone, and most recently Sequoia National Park.

He is excited to return to his Minnesota roots. The day after graduating from the University of Minnesota, Mark married his high school sweetheart and prom date Tammie. Together they've raised 4 children to embrace a shared love for the outdoors and can't think of a better place to continue enriching lives through meaningful learning experiences and enjoyable recreation than Voyageurs! Mark firmly believes that broad collaboration and shared stewardship are the hallmarks of inspiring others for generations to come.



Administration and Business Services Team

With the end of the Federal Government fiscal year coming at the end of September, the Admin budget staff have been busy with close-out responsibilities.

Three staff members from the region and two other parks began assisting with administrative duties in preparation for the departure of one of the park's Budget Analysts.

Admin staff are preparing property items to excess and remove from inventory via GSA Auction in the near future.

Natural and Cultural Resources Team

Cultural resource staff are visiting historic buildings and districts with the regional historic landscape architect and historic architect. They are assessing the condition of the park's historic landscapes.

Some of our team will be collecting dragonflies from Ryan, Peary, Brown, and Shoepack lakes for mercury analysis. They will also sample water quality on Rainy Lake and Namakan Reservoir and will deploy cyanotoxin samplers at three long-term cyanotoxin research sites on Kabetogama. They will continue to sample lakes for the water quality - based zebra mussel risk assessment and for a study of the vulnerability of zooplankton communities of park lakes to spiny water flea and zebra mussels.

The NPS Great Lakes - Big Rivers Dive Team completed scuba dives in the Black Bay Narrows area of Rainy Lake in and found no sign of zebra mussels.

The wetland crew is doing vegetation surveys near the Rainy Lake Visitor Center to assess how wetlands have changed after treating them for hybrid cattail invasion through our Voyageurs wetland restoration project.

Staff are working with Bemidji State University on an IJC-funded study of Walleye and Lake Whitefish in Rainy Lake and Namakan Reservoir.

Interpretation, Education, and Recreational Overnight Permits Team

The park's visitor centers have experienced some record-breaking visitation numbers over the summer, while both camping, and houseboat reservations appear to be trending back toward pre-COVID levels.

Even as park boat tours and North Canoe programs continued to run at nearly 100% capacity all month, the interpretive team revved up operations to increase program offerings in August, and participated in both the Rainer Days and International Falls Bass Championship festivities

In addition to the weekly Dark Sky programs provided by the Voyageurs Conservancy in the Ash River area, a dark sky event was held in the Crane Lake area, Friday night Starwatch Cruises were added on Rainy Lake, and free, land-based Night Sky programs began at the Rainy Lake Visitor Center.

Reservations made as of Sept 1 for the following seasons:			
	2021	2022	2023
Camping Reservations	5790	4945	4549
Camping Visitors	26421	22811	20560
Houseboat Reservations	2085	1562	1502
Houseboat Visitors	12024	9368	8562

The Voyageurs Conservancy Junior Angler program held another youth fishing event on August 24 and the last event of the year will be held on September 9 at the Rainy Lake Visitor Center.

Despite challenging weather, the park and the Voyageurs Conservancy partnered to host their second annual Star Party, which drew in over 200 participants to the various programs offered, from night sky telescope sessions to a Canoemobile event with Wilderness Inquiry. They also worked together to host STEAM in the Park; an immersive experience that brings educators from across the country to national parks with the goal of connecting and collaborating while creating new and engaging curriculum.

If you are or know a regional parent or teacher, please note that there are still a few open slots for fall field trips and floating classroom experiences. Register for the following programs by clicking the links below or send an email to education@voyageurs.org For more information: [Fall Field Experiences](#) [Floating Classroom \(4th grade only\)](#)

Visitor and Resource Protection Team

Rangers provided assistance with multiple disabled vessel calls and several medical calls.

Staff continue to visit businesses and resorts in the gateway communities.

LE rangers participated at National Night Out in the Falls and assisted with the park's Star Party events.

Wildland fire returned to the park and responded to a single-tree lightning strike.

Staff are arranging a site visit for staff from Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio. Their staff assist Voyageurs with dispatch communications.

Facilities Team

Dates have been set for the replacement of the Kabetogama visitor center boat ramp. Contractor staging will begin on September 5, with the full ramp area closure occurring on September 18.

Dock work is complete at Granite Cliff South, Happy Landing, and McManus campsites following damage from the 2022 flood, and an extension was added to the I.W. Steven visitor destination site dock. A total redesign of the Ash River harbor docks is also complete. Staff have now transitioned to repairing the Locator dock.

A light pole was knocked over at the Rainy Lake Visitor Center area, which maintenance staff has now replaced.

A complete rehabilitation of the Rainy Lake Group site has been completed.

Met with HPTC to determine a timeline for summer, fall, and FY24 projects.

Jamie Callais was hired as the new Namakan District Work Leader and Aaron Mortenson has been hired on as a permanent maintenance worker. Congratulations, Jamie and Aaron!

Both the Namakan and Rainy districts will be extending three seasonal employees for two pay periods to assist with winter preparations and continue construction on a new group campsite on Namakan.

Despite a few power outages and ongoing maintenance work in the Kettle Falls area, all services are up and running. Currently, the steps and walkway at the Leaning Pines Villas are being replaced.

Work continues at the park headquarters building by the city of International Falls. Cement work and drain tile installation in front of the building should wrap up soon, with work then transitioning to the east side of the building.

General visitor access to the building remains disrupted during this time. Visitors are asked to call ahead at 218-283-6600 when needing to enter the building.