



Community Newsletter, June 2024

Superintendent's Office

Here you will find information from our various teams for the month of June. We are working on making improvements to the newsletter and website throughout the year and will be continuing to use these monthly summaries of operations to keep our communities in the loop on all things Voyageurs National Park.

For past community newsletters, please visit: <https://www.nps.gov/voya/learn/management/stateofthepark.htm>

In June, Voyageurs held an all-employee meeting where we were able to introduce the summer staff, conduct important safety and resource training, and kick off the summer on a positive note.

The superintendent initiated public scoping related to the Frozen Lake Use Plan, hosting three meeting opportunities and the public comment period open from May 28 through June 28. He also assisted with eagle banding in the park in late June.

Employee Spotlight

Beth Lowthian, Administrative Officer for Voyageurs National Park and Apostle Islands National Lakeshore was recently selected as the 5th annual NPS Midwest Region's Administrator of the Year Award.

Beth, who retired on June 28, was recognized for her exceptional organizational development skills. She implemented and maintained the shared business services model for our parks, which resulted in collective savings of \$100,000 per year. Under Beth's leadership, her team built an exceptional model for shared business services with a well-developed SharePoint site and an extensive job aid library covering virtually all administrative workflows used at the two parks.

Thank you, Beth, for all that you've done throughout your career, and for pointing us in the right direction for years to come!



The Voyageurs and Apostle Islands "Northern Waters Shared Services" Team on a recent outing at Ash River Visitor Center.

Administration and Business Services

The park welcomed Abby Derix as the new Administrative Officer for both Voyageurs National Park and Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. Beth, Abby, and the Admin Team facilitated Voyageurs' all-employee meeting to introduce new staff and set the foundation for safe summer operations.

Admin staff continues to onboard additional seasonal staff and is working on several recruitment packages with hiring officials.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Natural Resources staff have been sampling water quality on the interior lakes, Rainy Lake, and on the Namakan Reservoir. They also assisted the USGS with taking sediment samples from Lake Kabetogama.

A decades-long bald eagle study continued in June this year throughout the park. In 1976 there were only six breeding pairs of eagles in the park, and they produced only a single fledgling. Today there are usually around 40 breeding pairs in the park producing around 40 fledglings. This year there are notably fewer eagles, possibly due to avian influenza. Long-term studies like this help us understand how eagle populations responded to changing conditions.



An eagle chick being worked on during nesting assessments.

Natural Resources staff began a survey to identify all the fish species in the park's interior lakes. We know the species that are popular for anglers, but knowing the full range of all the species will help us to better understand and take care of the interior lakes.

Watershed management planning documents are being reviewed with the International Joint Commission staff and plans for FY 25 are being created.

Cultural Resources staff completed an archeological survey at the Ewald site.

Interpretation, Education, and Recreational Permits

June saw some impressive visitation numbers at our three visitor centers, jumping to 12,024 for the month. Despite rising waters near the end of June in the Namakan district of the park, nearly 4,000 tent campers and 1,600 houseboaters made their way into Voyageurs for overnight camping.

Boat tours are approximately 80% booked for the 2024 summer season, with over 6,000 tickets being reserved thus far. You can reserve your ranger-guided adventure at:

[Voyageurs National Park Tours, Voyageurs National Park - Recreation.gov](https://www.nps.gov/voyageurs/recreation)

North Canoe training for seasonal staff and volunteers was conducted in preparation for this summer's Voyageur canoe programs. Canoe safety, living history skills, and historical accuracy were included in the training.

For a full description and details of our Interpretation and Education programs this summer, visit:

[2024 Summer Programs and Events](#)

Interpretation staff worked on correcting webpage issues. This work included ensuring the official website followed accessibility compliance standards (Section 508) and that old hyperlinks were removed or fixed. This was a chance to update information found across the Voyageurs webpages.

We also completed hiring of the Environmental Education Ranger position, who will be on board mid-July.



A North Canoe Trip on the waters of the park.

Visitor and Resource Protection

VRP rangers assisted several visitors with issues such as disabled and drifting vessels, rescuing canoes that were tipped in high winds, and stranded boaters.

Among many activities, rangers also conducted a 4-day Motorboat Operators Certification Course (MOCC) for employees, as well as boating safety inspections with U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary personnel.



The MOCC class on the dock at the Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center.

Facilities

Maintenance staff activated parkwide water systems, including replacing the well pump at Kettle Falls Hotel to restore the water for the hotel and the villas.

In the Namakan district of the park, floating dock extensions were installed at Hoist Bay and I.W. Stevens Island visitor destinations. Rising water levels caused dock infrastructure challenges throughout the Namakan basin.

Floating docks are being constructed for campsites and day use areas throughout the park. The recent installation of a dock extension at the Little Cedar Day Use Area means that spot can now accommodate "The Voyageur" tour boat for the evening Stars Over Rainy Lake cruises. The GPS system on "The Voyageur tour" was also upgraded.

Historic preservation work has started at the Rainy Lake saloon. Trail crews have been working on clearing the Anderson Bay loop trail and the Cruiser Lake trail. Two local Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) employees are also working with park staff on various maintenance projects.

As of June, the Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center now has public WiFi available in addition to the Ash River Visitor Center.



A Maintenance boat departing the Ash River Administrative Dock.