



The Voyageur Messenger

Lands Legacy for the Future

When Voyageurs National Park (VNP) was established in 1975, the National Park Service (NPS) was legislatively mandated to acquire all private properties within its authorized boundary to fully protect its natural and recreational resources.

Today, 52 parcels of private land remain inside the park's boundaries, totaling 941 acres. The National Park Service has a strong interest in seeing properties from willing sellers become part of VNP public lands, in order to fulfill its responsibility to protect all lands within park boundaries. Lands held in private ownership are not protected to the same level as public lands and are regulated only by county zoning laws thus allowing activities that are incompatible with the purposes for which the park was established.

Funding for land acquisition by the National Park Service has been limited for many years. The lack of appropriated funds for acquisition prevents the park from purchasing private land parcels as they appear for sale on the open market.

Voyageurs National Park Association (VNPA), a nonprofit organization established in 1965 "to protect and promote the natural, recreational and historical resources of Voyageurs National Park," has partnered with VNP and started a new program called the Land Preservation Initiative. The purpose of the Initiative is to help VNP acquire private lands inside the park from willing sellers. VNPA has committed to helping the park open



the dialogue with interested landowners. VNPA has also launched a fundraising campaign to raise funds that can be used to help make transfers happen in a way that is win-win for everyone. Any lands VNPA helps to purchase will be held in trust until they can be sold to the Federal government and added to the park's public lands.

This initiative began in 2007 with VNPA's facilitation of an acquisition through a partnership with the **Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota**. A developed 3.4-acre private tract of land along the Rainy Lake shoreline within the Park was unexpectedly placed on the market for sale (see photo above). The parcel, located on the primary water route for most summer and winter visitors was identified as a top acquisition priority for the Park. Through this acquisition, the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota now holds the deed in trust until

Federal funds can be secured by the NPS with the help of VNPA. The tract is safeguarded from future private development or other uses incompatible with the park's purpose.

VNPA established the *Wallace C. Dayton Voyageurs National Park Legacy Fund* with a significant donation from the WM Foundation. Donations to the fund will support future acquisitions from willing sellers. Private lands within the park hold potential to become visitor day use sites and overnight campsites, or they may be returned to a more natural state by the National Park Service to benefit wildlife habitat and the scenic landscape.

Information about this program or other activities of Voyageurs National Park Association may be found at <http://www.voyageurs.org>.

Hoist Bay Resort

In the fall of 1938, Ted and Fern Monson from Ohio, purchased property on Namakan Lake known as Hoist Bay. The following year they started building a seasonal housekeeping resort for tourists.



Prior to the construction of the resort, Hoist Bay was Camp 75 of the Virginia & Rainy Lake logging company. The logging camp was in operation from 1913 until 1929. During that time over thirteen and a half million board feet of timber was transported through the camp. A railroad spur line extended through the camp into the bay where logs from surrounding lumber camps were hoisted onto waiting railroad cars destined for the sawmill in Virginia, Minnesota.

The Monson's operated the resort from 1939-1972 when regrettably age and ill-health forced them to sell. Between 1939 and 1941 they built four guest cabins, a winterized cabin for themselves, a kitchen/storeroom and a large icehouse. Other buildings were built as time permitted.

Mrs. Monson, speaking of resort life in the early years said, "When living in the wilderness you learn to make do with what you have or [you] do without. We kept food fresh by digging a hole in the sand, putting a lard can in the hole and used that for an ice box. In cooking I learn[ed] to substitute things on hand for things that I needed such as using mashed potatoes for an egg in baking cakes, using bear oil for shortening, making use of eatables in the woods such as mushrooms, berries, grouse and venison."

Monson's Hoist Bay Resort is one of 15 visitor destinations that the park plans to develop. The buildings will undergo major rehabilitation and the park will construct day use facilities including a dock, picnic areas, and a vault toilet. Eventually the park will install interpretive media to convey the history and significance of the Hoist Bay site.

Park Continues Lake Sturgeon Research in the Namakan Reservoir

The lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) has inhabited most of northern North America, including the area that is now Voyageurs National Park, since the last glaciers melted 8,000- 10,000 years ago. This species has been called a "living fossil" because it has remained relatively unchanged for the last 100 million years. However, the qualities that have allowed lake sturgeon to persist for so long - it is a slow-growing, long-lived, and large fish - have also made it sensitive to rapid changes caused by the advancement of human societies. Throughout their range lake sturgeon were decimated in the 1900s by commercial fishing, pollution of spawning grounds, and dams. As a result, lake sturgeon are considered a Species of Special Concern in Minnesota and Ontario. They are also being considered for protection under the Species-at-Risk Act in Canada, the equivalent to the United States' Endangered Species Act. Many sturgeon populations are now recovering, but overfishing, hydroelectric dams, and other water control structures still pose a threat to some populations, including those that

inhabit the portion of the Namakan Reservoir in Voyageurs National Park. In 2007, a 4-year research project was initiated by the National Park Service in collaboration with scientists and managers from South Dakota State University, United States Geological Survey, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the United States Forest Service. State-of-the-art technology, including acoustic telemetry and blood steroid assays, are being used to gather three pieces of information critical to sturgeon management in the Namakan Reservoir: 1) determine population characteristics, including relative abundance, growth rates, and size and age ranges of fish; 2) identify spawning and overwintering habitats; and 3) document movements of individual sturgeon throughout the system and estimate the impacts of a proposed hydro-development project in the Namakan River (the source of 80% of the water entering the Namakan Reservoir) on sturgeon spawning and migration.



Cameron Trembath, park biological technician, with Lake Sturgeon ready to be released

Kids in Parks Program

Each spring parks across the nation celebrate National Park Week to raise awareness of the nation's national parks.

Voyageurs National Park celebrates with an annual Youth Art Contest, Kids in Parks Program and by hosting a National Park Week Open House the third weekend in April.

Children from the park's surrounding gateway communities, pre-school through sixth grade, are eligible to enter the annual Youth Art Contest. Each spring park staff determines a theme for the art contest and the artwork is judged by local community members based on skill, creativity and theme. Prizes are then awarded during the National Park Week Open House Awards Ceremony.

In 2008 Voyageurs introduced the Kids in Parks Program as a grand prize to the Youth Art Contest. This prize goes to the first place winner in the 5th - 6th grade category of the



2009 winning family with park rangers

Youth Art Contest. The purpose for the Kids in Parks Program is to introduce a family to Voyageurs National Park. The winning child and his/her family win a FREE weekend stay in the park, FREE boat trip aboard the *Otter* tour boat, and a FREE North Canoe Voyage. During their stay the child spends time with a park naturalist and a park law enforcement ranger, and conducts one volunteer service project for the park. The winning child

co-presents a program about his/her experience in the park and showcase his/her artwork at the park's last summer Special Speaker Series program.

In 2008, the White House recognized the Kids in Parks Program with a Proclamation of Achievement for Voyageurs National Park. In 2009, the Youth Art Contest drew over 220 young artists. To learn more about this program go to www.nps.gov/voya/ForKids.

This program, in its entirety, is made possible by the generous support of the Friends of Voyageurs National Park.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Voyageurs National Park was authorized by an Act of Congress on January 8, 1971 (84 Stat. 1971) "to preserve, for the inspiration and enjoyment of present and future generations, the outstanding scenery, geological conditions and waterway system which constituted a part of the historic route of the Voyageurs who contributed significantly to the opening of the Northwestern United States." The park was established in 1975.

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Newsletter Title: During the fur trade, the Hudson's Bay Company transported mail in packet boxes from London by ship and then overland to fur trade posts. **Messengers** – often a voyageur – distributed the packets from fur trade posts to their destination.

Vegetation Projects in Voyageurs

Two vegetation projects continued in the park this past summer. Park staff have been treating exotic invasive plants in developed areas of Voyageurs for the past several years. Efforts in the past have focused on removing Canada thistle and other exotic plant species along the entrance roads to the Ash River and Rainy Lake Visitor Centers, as well as removing purple loosestrife around Kabetogama Lake. Last year these efforts were expanded to include reed canary grass, birdsfoot trefoil, wild parsnip, and more. Visitors to the Rainy Lake Visitor Center will see some experimental plots where biologists are testing treatment methods for reed canary grass, which is common around the visitor center.

The second project focuses on restoring the native vegetation at previously developed sites in the park. These sites are primarily at locations where vacated cabins have been removed, usually leaving a grassy opening in the forest. Although many of these sites have and will become campsite locations, many more are destined to return to a natural condition. Most of these locations need some "help" in returning to this natural condition, though. These sites may have thick grass "lawns" that impede germination of native plants and/or garden plants that, while quite beautiful, are out of place in the boreal forest and may, on occasion, become invasive.

Natural resource staff from Voyageurs will be visiting these sites to perform an initial assessment of impacts and restoration needs as well as to determine the proper species to plant at each site. They will then return to the sites and perform any needed treatments such as removal of exotic species. Once the site is ready, staff and volunteers will plant the appropriate native tree species and sow native seeds that were collected elsewhere in the park. In many cases, wire cages will be erected around the seedlings to prevent deer browsing of the newly planted trees. These cages may seem unsightly at first but they are necessary to maximize seedling survival, particularly of white pines. The cages will be removed once the trees grow tall enough to survive browsing.



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Trails
 Voyageurs 35th Anniversary

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Did You Know....?

In 1893 gold was discovered on Rainy Lake. Word spread quickly about the discovery and by 1894 a boom town – Rainy Lake City - was built for the mass of people who prospected the area.

During the height of the gold rush, there were 500 people living at Rainy Lake City, which included a dry goods store, furniture store, bank, school, newspaper printing office, post office and 17 saloons.

There were many colorful characters who inhabited Rainy Lake City. One such person was “Gold Bug Jimmy.” Jimmy wanted to get rich quickly so he purchased property he could resell to make a fine profit. In order for the land to sell quicker and for a higher price, he would load his shotgun with gold flakes and shoot the gun in the air so

the flakes would spread over the land. Once he did this, he would bring potential buyers out to the property where they could see gold everywhere and think the land was full of wealth. This scheme lasted only a short time, as people eventually caught on, and Gold Bug Jimmy left the area.

Rainy Lake City is one of the park’s 15 Visitor Destinations. The park plans to begin development of the site in 2011.



Rainy Lake City, circa 1895