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Newsletter April 2006

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A newsletter to inform the members of ongoing activities within the Isle Royale Boater's Association, promote discussion among its members on various IRBA issues and share members' experiences related to boating, sport fishing, hiking, canoeing, and kayaking.

PARK SERVICE UPDATE FOR ISLE ROYALE 2006 - BETSY ROSSINI (NPS)

Staffing: We have hired Liz Valencia to serve as the park's Chief of Interpretation. Liz's new job incorporates supervises both the cultural and interpretive functions of the park. As many of you know Hal Hoenig (campground supervisor) retired last year as did Jerry Sterk (Ranger III crew). We have also recently hired Greg Drum to serve as a Park Ranger based out of Windigo.

Projects: As always there are lots of projects going on in the park. In recent years, we have addressed rehab and rebuilds of many of our visitor docks and this year there are no major visitor docks being worked on. However, we will be rehabbing the Ralph House Dock as we will be stationing one of our law enforcement rangers there this year since the house has been rehabbed as well as doing some long overdue rehab work on the Small Boat Harbor docks. There will be some work done on the Windigo concession dock.

As you are well aware, the Windigo pavilion project is expected to happen this June. We are looking forward to getting together with IRBA members for some hard work, fun and conversation. The pavilion will be a great addition to Windigo and we are grateful for the efforts of your membership to make this a reality.

Other miscellaneous maintenance projects are that we will be replacing a water tank at Rock Harbor. We hope to whitewash the Rock Harbor lighthouse. We will be painting some of the buildings at Crystal Cove. We will be replacing doors on the Rock Harbor auditorium. Two quarters on Mott will be rehabilitated and several window replacements will be done on different quarters. Old uninhabitable quarters will be demolished and removed from the island. New aluminum steps will be fabricated for the Voyage at Windigo. There will be trail and campground rehab by AmeriCorps, MCC, Sierra Club and SCA groups all summer.

On the mainland we are preparing temporary office structures for employees to move into

from the old headquarters building, the pay office and the UPPCO building in Houghton. It is our hope to get all of our employees at one location. Later in the summer the old headquarters building will be demolished.



New Crystal Cove Dock completed in fall of 2005. Presently, NPS is discouraging day use as the building structures are hazardous.

Fuel: In regards to our guesstimation about gas pricing for this year - last year prices were \$4.35 at Rock Harbor and \$3.68 at Windigo. Rock Harbor pricing will remain till at least mid-season when they will have to get more gas hauled. Windigo needs fuel right away so expect pricing to go up there.

Other: On a budgetary note, we are continuing to struggle with inflationary effects against a flat budget. There will be fewer seasonal park employees on the island this summer.

A Great Lakes computer artist, John Belliveau has recently completed two digital art pieces of the RANGER III. These art pieces took approximately 3 months to finish and were done for the NHA. These detailed art pieces will be going to a printer soon and will be available for sale through the Isle Royale Natural History Association soon. Proceeds from sales will help fund NHA projects and initiatives and support

the Park. The RANGER will be 50 years young in 2008 and these prints will certainly help celebrate the "reliable" work this piece of taxpayer's equipment has performed over 50 years.

Many boaters are interested in the status of Wright Island. The site is open for day use provided there are no eagle nest issues. This is not a change from previous years. The dock and cabin will not be open for overnight use until the planning and NEPA compliance is completed for the site. We will also be doing some limited stabilization work on a couple of the cabins at Crystal Cove. This site will continue to be open only for day use until the NEPA compliance and planning is completed.

Boaters will continue to be able to register at the Grand Marais USFS office, but hopefully by early to mid summer we will have more on-line options set up. If the on-line forms work out, we hope to discontinue the service at Grand Marais in 2007.

Resource management has a number of projects some ongoing and some new:

- Complete the Wilderness Backcountry Management Plan
- Island-wide soils survey- Yr 2 of a multi-year cooperative project with NRCS
- Working with IRNHA on spiny water flea visitor education
- Exotic plant control work (annual), and developing overall park prevention and treatment strategy
- In-house monitoring projects: loons, frogs, breeding bird survey, eagle and osprey monitoring
- Marten and weasel survey
- Passage Island soil remediation project coordination
- Splash pool survey

- Coaster brook trout surveys
- Coaster brook trout stocking

Annual work continues:

- Oversight of and support for independent research projects
- Compliance work for park projects
- Exotic species monitoring and control
- Outreach to school and teacher groups visiting the park
- Oversight of volunteer activities

WHY A PROPOSED RESERVATION SYSTEM FOR ISLE ROYALE? by DON HANNULA

In July of 2005 I received the eight page executive summary of the Wilderness and Backcountry Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. I read it from cover to cover several times. It left me with many questions? In this document it says...the proposed changes that would be most obvious to the public are those that address crowding and visitor distribution, visitor information services, and resource conditions. Several issues are presented with multiple alternatives for goals and managements actions, which were developed with extensive public input. These issues are; 1) managing overnight camping and boating in Isle Royale's wilderness and backcountry, including permitting and information services, 2) managing day use in the park's wilderness and backcountry, 3) managing campfires, 4) maintaining or removing the fire towers in the park's wilderness, and 5) maintaining or removing picnic tables from wilderness campgrounds.

Lets take #1. They propose the establishment of a mainland-based office to coordinate information services and permitting. And guess what? There will be additional fees for the visitor to fund this office. This is an age old campground crowding problem created totally by

park management. How? You ask. The park's policy herds all the hikers into campgrounds every night. Have you ever heard the park tell or advertise anywhere that hikers or visitors are welcome to camp away from designated campgrounds. I bet not!! They have systematically herded the visiting public into using less than one tenth of one per cent of the land mass of Isle Royale National Park. Therefore, they have created this overcrowding problem. By the way there is only overcrowding at some campgrounds during July and August. So why would the park want to cap visitation in spring and fall to 20%?? Why? To protect the resources. That's right! Too many people on the muddy trails cause excess erosion. I kid you not!! Yep, that's another part of this reservation system. They want to cap the spring and fall at 20% of park capacity. Unknown how they figure the park capacity? "Protect seasonal sensitivities of park resources" (page 3). What sensitivities? Seems to me that the island has been there for a millennium without any damage yet!

2) Managing day use. They want to cut down the size of groups for day use of the park. I don't think this will be an issue once they increase the cost of going there with the new fees of registration. Groups will not afford to go there. "Allow for an increase in day visitors to the park." Get real! Because of the parks remote location visitors do not come for just the day. Most come and stay for several days therefore needing the campgrounds. They need to stop herding the hikers into campgrounds and let the elite backpacker camp in the pristine zones. Perhaps let the paddlers camp along the shore instead of herding them into the campgrounds.

3) Managing campfires. In days of old there was a campfire-ring at every camp site. What happened? NPS came along. In my opinion a

campfire adds much to my wilderness experience. Campfires and wilderness go hand in hand. Common sense should return and so should the campfires. Where else do you cook a Vollwerth's hot dog? The campsites that I have been at there is plenty of underbrush and fuel to burn. Boaters could be encouraged to bring hardwood from the mainland. Some of us do already.

5) Picnic tables. It sounds that picnic tables will remain at all campgrounds. The tables should also remain at all docks for the use of any handicapped or elderly visitors via boat.

In this article I have tried to bring to your attention what I think is the most dangerous part of the Wilderness and Backcountry Management Plan. And that is this proposed reservation system. In my opinion it is not needed. It adds more expense to the visiting public. Isle Royale is one of the smallest national parks with the least visitation (which has been dropping year after year) and yet they propose a reservation system to go there. Ridiculous!! I believe we as an association should fight this proposed system. It won't be too many more years with more costs more rules and regulations and we will be holding our annual July Boaters meeting on the mainland!

IRBA WEST END NEWS **by DWANE "BEAR" FALCONER**

As predicted we are having quite an eventful and busy season, which began in February with the IRBA and NPS sponsored booth at the annual boat show in Duluth at the DEC Center. NPS staff was not in attendance due to budget constraints. Nevertheless, we felt this year's booth was a success. Not only were new contacts made but we were also able to answer questions and inform the public about Isle Royale.

Coming up quickly is our annual fundraiser and banquet. We hope to see all of you on Thursday, June 15, 2006 at the Lakeview Castle. It is a great chance to support our organization while socializing with good friends. For the early birds, cocktails begin at 5 PM, with dinner followed at 7 PM. All are welcome to attend! Tickets are on sale now and will be available at the Annual IRBA meeting in Houghton on May 20, 2006. We are now actively soliciting prizes and items for the auction. Any and all donations would be much appreciated. Please contact Joe Golden, David (Benna) Johnson, or myself, Dwane Falconer. Tickets for this event can also be purchased by contacting the main office in Houghton, MI or Mark Rude and Dwane Falconer in Duluth, MN.

The Windigo pavilion project is in the final stages and is beginning scheduling and specifics for construction in late June of this year. A fire place has been added to the plans of the building and we will hopefully be constructing this at a later date. If you are interested in helping with the construction efforts please contact Mark Rude, Dave Miller or Dwane Falconer.

IRBA SCHEDULED EVENTS

IRBA Meeting - Tuesday, April 25, 2006, 7 PM
Range Snowmobile Club, South Range, MI

IRBA Annual Dinner Meeting, May 20, 2006
onboard the Keweenaw Star docked in Downtown Houghton. Cocktails at the dock from 4 to 5 PM, Dinner cruise starts at 5 PM and returns to the dock at 7:30 PM. Menu will consist of white fish, teriyaki chicken and roast beef for \$ 35.00 per person. For reservations please contact Dave Hand at (906) 487 - 2777 or dwhand@mtu.edu.

West Fund raiser Thursday, June 15, 2006
Cocktail hour begins at 5 PM and Dinner at 7 PM.
Tickets for this event can also be purchased by
contacting the main office (Karen - 906 482 -
0001 ext 102) in Houghton, MI or Mark Rude and
Dwane Falconer in Duluth, MN.

IRBA Annual Island Meeting - Saturday, July
22, 2006, 3 PM Rock Harbor Lodge, Isle Royale,
MI.

IRBA Fourth Annual Fishing Tourney - Saturday,
July 22, 2006, from sunrise to 2:00 PM should
have some good rivalry again this year. (more
detail in coming newsletter).

IRBA MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL AND ADDRESS CHANGE

It is time again for some of us to renew our
membership. A renewal membership form is
enclosed for your convenience. In addition,
there may be some members that have recently
moved and IRBA does not have their forwarding
address. If you know of a member that has
moved and may know their new address, we
would appreciate an address update and the
form can be used for this purpose. Just write
on the form that it is for an address update.

**Articles for Newsletter consideration are
welcome. ----**

*Please support your IRBA
P.O. Box 97
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