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Newsletter March 2007

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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.

NPS Update for 2007 Season

By Betsi Rossini - NPS

Staffing: Sadly to report this year the loss of a much valued member of the Ranger III crew, Jerry Sterk who passed away in January. Annalie Wright who served our staff as the Rock Harbor Ranger left us this year to become a full time mother and pursue other interests. We just hired her replacement, Pete Sweger who has served as a seasonal park ranger for several years. We also hired a new water treatment plant operator, Robert McGee-Ballinger who came to us from Everglades National Park. Sara Rambo our human resources specialist will be retiring this April and we will lapse the position for a while.

Boating Information: We recently learned that the revised 36 CFR part 3, Boating and Water Use Activities should be out by the start of this season. We have not seen what the final regulations are, compared to the draft that the public had the opportunity to comment on back in 2003. In other words we cannot say how it'll impact boater's use and our operations until we

see the final. (It's currently in OMB, with expected release in the next month.)

Several people have asked recently what the boater statistics looked like for the 2006 season. It appears that there was a small increase of 1.6% for private boater arrivals from 2005 to 2006, 2667 and 2710 respectively.

Gas prices should remain the same for at least the first half of the summer with diesel prices at \$3.926 and gasoline at \$5.03.

Finally - the park has the on-line boating permitting up and running. Boaters requesting a camping permit will be able to log on to <https://www.pasty.com/isro/nps.php> and submit their request with a credit card payment (make sure to use the https). In order to use this on-line service, you will have to submit payment by credit card or have a Season Boat Rider Pass or an Individual Season Pass for everyone on their boat. Once the final submit button is pressed the request goes to a secure area serviced by Pasty.net. Pasty.net will automatically send a message to ISRO_ParkInfo@nps.gov telling us a

camping permit needs to be processed. The permit is then downloaded and processed - we ask the boating community to give us at least four business days to process their camping request. The permit along with a digitized boating brochure and Greenstone Newspaper will be emailed to the boater. The only thing the boater will need to do is to print and sign their permit and head out to the island.

The park is presently working to create a module in our permitting system that will give us the ability to email the actual permit to the boater. Hopefully within the next month this software package will be created and working - if not we will need to purchase a document scanner to create a digital permit.

The boater on-line permitting system is still in the testing phase at this point. The bugs should be worked out before the season begins.

Park 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 we are doing some emergency rehab on the McCargo Cove dock which is currently in very poor condition.

Other miscellaneous maintenance projects that will be completed include replacement of a failing water tank at Windigo and some work on the Rock Harbor Waste Water Treatment Plant facilities. There will be trail and campground rehab by AmeriCorps, MCC, Sierra Club and SCA groups all summer. The park will begin construction on a new dorm at Windigo to replace some old CCC era quarters. This project is being done in cooperation with the Parks of Lake Superior Foundation and a large volunteer contingent.

Mainland: We have finished our move to the Houghton headquarters site. The entire park

staff is now relocated at the headquarters site for the first time in any one here's recollection. We are looking forward to the benefits and efficiencies that will come from being in close proximity. We also hope to engender some savings since we will no longer be leasing space in the UPPCO and the Quincy Mine Office. The park has moved several modular office buildings onto the property after the demolition of the mold infested headquarters building this past summer.

The park will be changing its recreation fee structure for the 2008 season. The law changed a couple of years ago and we need to adapt our fees to meet the new regulations. We will no longer have a daily user fee starting in 2008 and are considering several other options as a substitute which could include an overnight fee, an entrance fee or a camping/docking fee. We look forward to your participation in the civic engagement process. The daily user fee remains the same for 2007.

The anticipated release of the park's Wilderness and Backcountry Management Plan is early summer.

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

- Complete the Wilderness Backcountry Management Plan
- Island-wide soils survey- Yr 3 of a multi-year cooperative project with NRCS
- 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

Of special interest: You can now look at the current moose/wolf information at this web site and get the latest daily field notes from winter study at this link:

http://www.isleroyalewolf.org/pack_travel/pck_trvl_index.html

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

After several very tight budget years, the National Park Service is anticipating some modest budget increases for 2008 as part of the Centennial Challenge. Isle Royale is expecting a budget increase that will be primarily targeted toward seasonal employees. This badly needed increase will help the park maintain services and even get at some of the backlog maintenance work.

IRBA Scheduled Events

IRBA Meeting - Tuesday, April 17, 2007, 7 PM
Range Snowmobile Club, South Range, MI

IRBA Annual Dinner Meeting - Saturday, May 12, 2007, 5 PM Keweenaw Star Cruise Ship,
Houghton, MI

IRBA West End Fund Raiser - Tuesday, June 12, 2007, 5 PM Lakeview Castle, Houghton, MI

IRBA Annual Island Meeting - Saturday, July 14, 2007, 3 PM Windigo Pavilion, Isle Royale, MI

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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