



VOYAGEURS  
NATIONAL PARK  
ASSOCIATION

Voyageurs National Park Association

# Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2017

Voyageurs National Park Association connects people to Voyageurs National Park, enhances the visitor experience, and protects the park for present and future generations.

[Voyageurs.org](http://Voyageurs.org)

## Letter from Bob DeGross Voyageurs' New Superintendent

More Than Just Parks

George W. Sears, a writer for *Forest and Stream* magazine in the 1880s once said, "We do not go to the green woods and crystal waters to rough it, we go to smooth it. We get it rough enough at home, in towns and cities."

It's amazing to think that life could be that hectic so long ago, but it seems things haven't changed in that regard. Thankfully, through the foresight of the active members of the Voyageurs National Park Association, we are assured that the "green woods and crystal waters" of Voyageurs National Park are here to provide those soothing surroundings as an escape from our daily routine.

I've had the opportunity to escape to the winter beauty of Voyageurs, and am anxious to continue my explorations during the open water season. Spring is here and park staff are preparing boats, setting navigational markers, working to open Kettle Falls and getting ready the upcoming fishing opener weekend. The stream of visitors will continue through the summer and fall, coming to the area to enjoy the woods and waters of the park, and to generate business in the local communities.

Recently the National Park Service released its 2016 economic benefits study. The report showed that in 2016 the 241,911 visitors to Voyageurs spent \$19,780,200 in communities near the park and that spending supported

310 jobs in the local area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$24,601,600.

In the future, we hope to increase people's understanding and appreciation of the importance of Voyageurs National Park and the benefits derived from its on-going protection. Finding ways to increase sustainable visitation and to ensure the continuity of visitor services are just a few of the main priorities that I've been considering as I get my feet on the ground in my new position.

I have heard more ideas on potential priorities from park team members, local residents and other interested individuals. In an attempt to capture those ideas, the park, in cooperation with VNPA, is seeking your input. Your insights and ideas will assist us in developing a strategic plan that outlines the parks priorities over the next five years. More information on how to be involved in that process can be found at [voyageurs.org/vision2017](http://voyageurs.org/vision2017). Thank you. We value your participation in this effort.

### [Voyageurs.org/vision2017](http://Voyageurs.org/vision2017)

Share your thoughts via this online survey. Your insights and ideas will help inform an effort by the National Park Service and Voyageurs National Park Association to develop a shared park vision and priorities for the next five years.

*(Continued from cover)*

An exciting priority we will be starting soon, and that will continue for at least five years, is the removal of invasive hybrid cattails in many of the bays in the park. The project will open areas previously choked by the hybrid cattails, allowing native vegetation to regenerate and improve habitat for a wealth of species, including fish, wild rice and waterfowl. If you visit the park this spring/summer it's likely you may encounter this resource management effort in Black Bay and other areas of Rainy Lake. This project was made possible through the cooperative support of VNPA, the Minnesota Initiative Foundations and other partners. This is just a sampling of things going on at Voyageurs National Park, there's a wealth of other projects taking place as well.

I've worked with the National Park Service since 1989, coming to Voyageurs National Park after working 23 years in south Florida. Originally from west central Wisconsin, it has always been a goal of mine to work at a park like Voyageurs. Through my career with the NPS, I have come to realize that I work for a great agency with an important mission. I've had the privilege to work in special places across the country, and my ultimate goal is to make a positive impact no matter where I'm working.

I realize that the NPS can't accomplish our mission without the shared efforts of dedicated partners and supporters like you. In the future, I'm looking forward to working with all of you on our shared goals, to continue protecting the woods and waters of Voyageurs National Park so that everyone can find an escape from their daily lives at this special place.

Bob DeGross  
Superintendent  
Voyageurs National Park

## Thank you!

The best part of my job is connecting with members and visitors who are passionate about Voyageurs National Park. Recently, a VNPA member said to me: "It is such a joy to me to see the fulfillment of so many projects and dreams at Voyageurs."

It is a dream to be thinking big about Voyageurs and working with a dedicated Park Service team who value partner and community involvement. We look forward to sharing the new dreams VNPA will be supporting in the years ahead after the May public brainstorming period and leadership retreat. Remember to provide your thoughts through the online survey. Thank you for your help and support!

- Christina Hausman, Executive Director



## VNPA Partners with More Than Just Parks Brothers on New Short Film

VNPA partnered with area businesses to sponsor brothers Jim and Will Pattiz with 'More Than Just Parks' who spent several weeks filming in peak fall color at Voyageurs. The film has helped build awareness by introducing Voyageurs National Park to over 400,000 viewers online. The film received national attention and was officially selected for National Geographic's Short Film Showcase. View the visual short film at: [morethanjustparks.com/voyageurs](http://morethanjustparks.com/voyageurs)



### 2017 Board of Directors

Jeffrey D. Brown, Chair  
Jack Fistler, Vice Chair  
Corey Jansen, Treasurer  
Spencer Smith, Secretary  
Lindsey Remakel,  
Past Chair  
Burgess Eberhardt  
F. Dallas Fogg  
Doug Franchot  
Tom Lehman  
Sharon Oswald  
Roberta Sandgren

### Honorary Directors

Lee Barthel  
Martin Kellogg  
John Roth  
Harry Sweatt

### Staff

Christina Hausman  
Executive Director  
Ella Rausch  
Youth & Outreach  
Lisa Ferguson  
Bookkeeper

*Thank you to outgoing board members Ken Kadash and Eric Johnson for their service!*

What would we do with you?

## Your Gifts in Use



Voyageurs National Park Association relies on the generosity of individuals, businesses, and foundations. **Thank you for supporting these projects and programs.**

**Advocating for Voyageurs:** VNPA's executive director traveled to Washington, DC, in February, along with other park partners from across the U.S., to meet with members of Congress about current issues and opportunities facing our National Parks. VNPA works with local and national partners to advocate for National Park Service funding, environmental protections, and the reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

**Sulfide Mining:** VNPA serves as a partner of the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters and works to encourage public participation in a current Forest Service comment period to protect our watershed. Learn more on page 5.

**Wetland Restoration:** In 2016, VNPA member support partially funded the investigation of 71 wetlands in preparation for a multi-year effort to remove invasive cattails and restore native species. VNPA will recruit volunteers to help collect native seed in Black Bay this year.

**Introducing Kids to the Park:** This summer, thirty Minnesota high school students, who would otherwise be unable to experience a National Park, will travel to Voyageurs for five days of paddling, hiking, discussions about conservation-related careers, and service projects through the National Park Teen Ambassador program. Hundreds of additional youth will be provided field trip grant support to visit the park. VNPA has recently introduced the park to over 1,000 teens in the Twin Cities metro area through classroom talks.

**Community Engagement & Outreach:** VNPA sponsored a series of park programs this winter, giving more than 200 people the chance to explore, play and learn. Highlights included canoe paddle carving and snowshoe-making. VNPA also sponsored events to provide opportunities to meet the park's new superintendent. Through additional educational presentations and events in the Twin Cities, VNPA educates and engages new park stewards and visitors.

**Visitor Experience:** In 2016, VNPA provided matching funds to rehabilitate the park's stunning Cruiser Lake Trail. This year, we are working in partnership with NPS to create a paddling guide, new paddle launch at the Rainy Lake Visitor Center, and visitor camping video. VNPA also helps print visitor resources like the *Rendezvous* newspaper.

**2017 Park Vision Workshop:** Because of you, VNPA is sponsoring a week-long event with National Park Service staff, community members and partners in May. Through facilitated discussion and community brainstorming events, VNPA and the Park Service will identify priority projects that will be enhanced with volunteer and private philanthropic support for stewardship, conservation, recreation, and education.



## VNPA Receives NPS Partnership Awards

This January, at a Ranier Community Hall reception to welcome Superintendent Bob DeGross, Chief of Interpretation Tawnya Schoewe presented Voyageurs National Park Association with three awards recognizing their commitment to partnerships: the NPS Director's Partnership Award and two Midwest Region Champion Awards. The NPS created the Partnership Award five years ago to recognize successful communities and organizations that are integral to communicating the NPS mission both within and beyond park boundaries.

From the National Park Service: "Their commitment to youth and visitor outreach and their passion for preservation has been a catalyst for exciting initiatives at Voyageurs National Park." Through their National Park Teen Ambassador program, VNPA has engaged teens in transformational outdoor experiences. They have also enabled critically important wetland restoration, the Cruiser Lake Trail project, and increased visitor engagement opportunities.



From left to right: Superintendent Bob DeGross, Eric Johnson, board members Jeff Brown, Lindsey Remakel, Burgess Eberhardt, Doug Franchot, and Executive Director Christina Hausman

"You exemplify the best in partnerships and your dedicated work has had a positive impact on the park and its surrounding communities."

- Cameron Sholly, Regional Director  
National Park Service, Midwest Region

---

## Next Generation

**VNPA's Youth & Outreach Coordinator has recently introduced more than 1,500 Minnesota students to Voyageurs National Park through classroom presentations, field trip grants, and the National Park Teen Ambassador program.**

Today's generation is lacking in vitamin "N" (nature) for many reasons, amongst them a lack of access and increased screen time. By bringing our greatest outdoor classrooms to them, we are engaging a young and more diverse audience in discussions about public lands, conservation, and the future of our earth. Students have the opportunity to complete their Junior Ranger badge, identify wildlife, and even talk about their future in the Park Service. We specifically reach out to schools and youth who are on track to be first generation college students, are children of immigrants, participate in Title I school programming, and are students of color as we and the National Park Service work to expand and diversify our visitor base.

We firmly believe that today's students are tomorrow's stewards and will continue to support youth programming in and around Voyageurs National Park.



"That was the best field trip I ever had!"  
- 3rd Grader, Northwoods Elementary School

"Being able to come outside and not be surrounded by technology definitely opened and cleared my mind. It made me see everyone is missing out on and how nature is really important and beautiful."  
- Panhia, Teen Ambassador

"The experience made me no longer fear the outdoors." - A.J., Teen Ambassador

## Protect the Watershed of Voyageurs and the Boundary Waters from Sulfide-Ore Copper Mining

In January, the U.S. Forest Service announced a two-year pause on mining activities in approximately 234,000 acres of the Superior National Forest, a vital portion of the Rainy River Watershed, which flows into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park. Even small amounts of acid mine contamination leaking into the Rainy River Basin would impact Voyageurs' ecosystems for decades and threaten its waters and wildlife, world-class fishing, and the family-owned small businesses that serve park visitors.

Federal agencies are conducting environmental review of the Rainy River watershed - a review meant to identify what makes our watershed so unique, so clean, and so sensitive to pollution. An overwhelming majority of Minnesotans support this two-year study and pause on mining activities on 230,000 acres in our watershed. This process is the best way to determine whether the watershed of the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs National Park is the wrong place for sulfide-ore copper mining.

### You Can Take Action to Protect the Watershed

Please submit your comment to the Forest Service during this critical watershed environmental review. The deadline has been extended to **August 17, 2017**. Find a template for your comments and more information at [voyageurs.org/cleanwater](http://voyageurs.org/cleanwater).

### Other Ways to Be a Voice for Your National Park

VNPA created a hub on our website to keep you informed on various issues facing our park. Please spend time in your park and write or call your elected officials to share your perspective as a visitor, gateway business owner, fishing enthusiast, or National Park fan. Voyageurs and National Parks everywhere belong to all of us and broad public participation is the best way to ensure they will be protected and provided the resources they need.

### [Voyageurs.org/TakeAction](http://Voyageurs.org/TakeAction)

## VNPA Member Spotlight



Jim Bizal

*"My brother, cousin, and I used to camp at Lake Jeanette on the Echo trail every year with my grandpa growing up and about 20 years ago we were looking for something more remote. So we dropped our boats in at Crane lake and headed north. Ever since that first trip in, we have been back for at least 1 trip a year. My 14, 12, and 10 year old kids along with my brothers and cousins kids have been going every year since they were 4 and can't wait to get back the next year. We have introduced many other family and friends to the beauty and remoteness of the park. They all come away with great memories.*

*VNPA is a way for me to help make sure the legacy of Voyageurs lives on and my kids can have the same experiences with their kids and my grandchildren in the park."*

**- Jim Bizal  
Prior Lake, Minnesota**



Thomas Gable

# Restoring Native Plants in Voyageurs

*By Claire Kissane, National Park Service*

This summer, Voyageurs National Park will begin removing exotic cattails and restoring natural wetlands. The invasive cattails seen throughout the park are actually hybrids of non-native narrow-leaved cattail and native broad-leaved cattail, which has out-competed both parent species, resulting in the vast majority of cattails found in the park being hybridized. These have in turn begun to dominate the landscape because they are more aggressive and can occupy a wider range of water depths than their parent species. Over the past 20+ years, more and more Voyageurs wetlands have been affected by the growing hybrid cattail population. The invasion has reduced native plant and animal diversity, impaired cultural resources like wild rice, reduced fish and wildlife habitat, and limited the use of waterways for recreation and navigation. Stands of invasive hybrid cattails are also replacing native vegetation such as sedges, wild rice, rushes, pondweeds, and native cattails, causing an overall decline in plant diversity within the park. As boaters are well-aware, these cattails can also form dense floating mats expanding outward from the land. At Voyageurs, most of these dense stands and mats are located on Kabetogama shorelines, with smaller stands on Namakan and Rainy Lakes.



Doug Berlin

There are an estimated 500 acres of hybrid invasive cattails in Voyageurs National Park. The goal of this project is to control at least half of them in the next 2-3 years, with a long-term plan of controlling the rest of the invasive cattails within the next 5-10 years. This will allow native species to repopulate the bays, restoring natural diversity and habitat to the park area. The project is supported by multiple partners including VNPA and is funded by a variety of sources including the National Park Service and matching donors, VNPA, settlement funds, and the Minnesota Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment administered through the Initiative Foundation.

Several methods will be used to eradicate the cattails.

- 1) They will be removed mostly using harvesting barges and smaller equipment.
- 2) Any cattails not accessible by heavier equipment will be removed by hand.
- 3) Burning may also be used as a tool to thin cattail areas before harvesting.
- 4) Additionally, native muskrats will be reintroduced to help control the cattails. Muskrats have the ability to reduce the density of wetland vegetation by eating the plants and making channels through the water, and may be the best long-term method to naturally limit cattail populations before they expand. Since native muskrat populations have decreased in recent years however, animals from outside the park will be introduced to the

densest cattail areas within Voyageurs. With an improved habitat, a healthy population of muskrats may help to keep the cattails in check once they are removed.

After the thick mats of hybrid cattails are eliminated, wild rice and other native aquatic plants can take hold without any further effort. Many native seeds can remain in the soil under cattails for years and natural vegetation will return when given the chance. To help the process along, staff will collect and distribute seeds from healthy wetlands in the park, and will go even further by purchasing seed mixtures from local nurseries. The VNPA Volunteer Rendezvous weekend in September will be an important part of the native seed collection, with a goal of collecting 300 pounds of wild rice seed and up to 50 pounds of sedge and rush seed during the volunteer weekend, all from within the park. Within a few days of collection, the seed will be distributed at sites recently cleared of cattails.

Wildlife and plant species living around the cattail mats will be monitored before, during, and after the cattail removal, restoration, and muskrat reintroduction. This will help determine the effectiveness of the restoration methods, and it will help identify any impacts the project might have on wetland ecosystems. Through the efforts of this project, the wetland habitats throughout Voyageurs will once again be healthy and thriving.

Park officials will be primarily working in Black Bay on Rainy Lake outside of the main boating channel this summer. Visitors should inform park staff if they come across a floating mat blocking a campsite or in or near a boating channel.

## Wild Rice Country

Wild rice is one of many native species the National Park Service will target during this multi-year restoration effort. “Manoomin” is incredibly important to the biodiversity of lakes and rivers, its dense stalks providing roosting and brood cover for waterfowl, and nesting habitat for other birds.

Its ability to bind loose soils, tie up nutrients, and act as a buffer by slowing winds across shallow wetlands benefits water quality, which then reduces algal blooms and increases water clarity.

Beyond ecological benefits, wild rice has a strong cultural tradition in the Midwest as the centerpiece of nutrition for the Anishinaabe people.

*Adapted from Native Wild Rice Coalition*

## 2017 Volunteer Rendezvous

**September 15-16, 2017**

Volunteer Rendezvous @  
Voyageurs National Park's Rainy  
Lake Visitor Center

**Register online at**

**[Voyageurs.org/volunteer](http://Voyageurs.org/volunteer)**

This year, volunteers will help collect native plant seed for part of a multi-year effort aimed at removing invasive cattails and restoring wetland biodiversity.



10-year wetland restoration goals include:

- Restore diverse wetland communities
- Create fish and wildlife habitat
- Improve recreational and cultural opportunities

Non-native cattails have invaded wetlands forming dense stands causing:

- Displaced native vegetation
- Reduced biodiversity
- Disrupted nutrient cycles
- Degraded fish and wildlife habitat
- Impaired recreation
- Degraded traditional resources (e.g. wild rice)

Voyageurs National Park Association helped secure National Park designation for Voyageurs in 1975 and today serves as its nonprofit partner. VNPA represents a community of people who care about the future of Voyageurs National Park. Together, we:

- Advocate and educate to keep Voyageurs pristine and wild
- Provide financial and volunteer support for conservation, restoration, recreation & education
- Support public outreach and community engagement
- Partner with the Park Service to build the next generation of park stewards

VNPA depends on the generosity of individuals like you. Make a contribution or renew your membership today at

**[Voyageurs.org/donate](http://Voyageurs.org/donate)**

VNPA is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund.



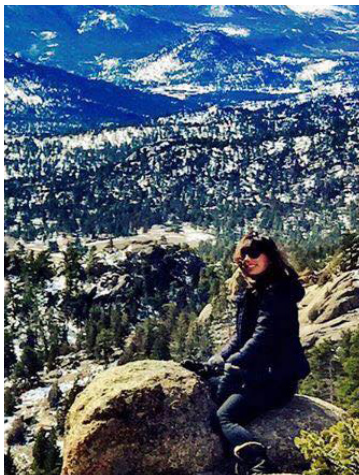
## Events

**Get Involved!** Learn more about upcoming events like the annual photo contest, Volunteer Rendezvous and fall member breakfast at **[Voyageurs.org/events](http://Voyageurs.org/events)**

## Welcome, Sharon

Please join us in welcoming our newest board member, Sharon Oswald, who began her service in January. Sharon is a program manager with the Delta Dental Foundation of Minnesota. She is currently serving on the membership and development committee.

*"Voyageurs National Park Association has the mission, values, vision, and team of people that I would like to contribute my time and efforts towards. I have always been in awe of our national park system and an advocate for their use, health and sustainability. I'm excited to be a part of VNPA and to help amplify membership growth and engagement."*



- Sharon Oswald



## Leave a Legacy for Your National Park

A gift to Voyageurs National Park Association through your will or estate is the easiest gift you can make today.

Please let us know if you have already included Voyageurs National Park Association in your estate plan or if you are considering doing so. We would love to hear from you: 612-333-5424, [vnpa@voyageurs.org](mailto:vnpa@voyageurs.org).

**[Voyageurs.org/legacy](http://Voyageurs.org/legacy)**