



Community Check-In, July 2024

From the Desk of the Superintendent

Here you will find information from our various teams for the month of July. These efforts are crucial in keeping our parks and facilities safe, accessible, and enjoyable for all visitors. I appreciate the hard work and dedication of everyone involved, from the National Park staff, our partners in the Voyageurs Conservancy, volunteers, and many others in the community. To find past issues of our *Community Check-in* please visit our management page: [State of the Park](#)

The [Public Scoping Comment Report](#) related to May and June's public review of the park's Frozen Lake Planning process is now available online at the National Park Service's Planning, Environment & Public Comment website. The full text of public comments that were received on the "Frozen Lake Surface Access and Use Plan" are included in the document. Public comments were sought in relation to the regulation of motorized vehicle access on the park's frozen lakes. By the end of this year a preferred alternative and draft of environmental assessment will be released to the public. A final decision document is scheduled to be signed prior to June of 2025.

Team Member Spotlight: Dan and Emma Dendler

Dan and Emma Dendler began working at Voyageurs in May of 2024. Dan joined as a seasonal park ranger to provide interpretive programs to the public and support community outreach efforts. Emma has helped the park as a volunteer in important operational roles, such as decontaminating watercraft at Kettle Falls to prevent invasive species from spreading into the Namakan Basin.



What did you do before you came to Voyageurs?

Emma: Before coming to Voyageurs NP, I was in the Air Force. My last six months of service I did the Skillbridge program which allowed me to complete an internship to learn skills. I completed this with Washington State Parks and that was my first taste of public lands. Now being at Voyageurs is my first National Park volunteer experience!

Dan: Prior to coming to Voyageurs, I got my Bachelors in Environmental Science. Additionally, I volunteered with different conservation agencies who work on various public lands in the western United States. I also attended the National Association for Interpretation Certified Interpretive Guide Course which really rounded out my knowledge as an interpreter. Finally, I served for seven years in the Air Force as an Aircraft Structural Mechanic where I worked primarily on the F-15 and MQ-9 Reaper in Okinawa, Japan, and Las Vegas respectively.

Why did you decide to come and work at Voyageurs?

Emma: To be fully honest, I followed my husband, Dan, here! This is his first stint as a NPS ranger and I was looking to build my resume, learn new skills, and give back to our public lands this summer by volunteering and am having a lot of fun doing so!

Dan: I applied to many parks at the end of my Air Force career and really was just aiming for which ever one would take me as I know how competitive getting into the NPS can be. I had a few parks interested in me, but Voyageurs is the only one that offered me an Interp position so since that is what I really wanted to do I jumped on the opportunity.

Tell us about the type of work you do at the park.

Emma: I may have a bit of a different experience from most volunteers and that has kept it very fun for me! One day a week I help Dan give a North Canoe tour where we dress up as voyageurs and take visitors out in our replica North Canoe. On Wednesdays you can catch me at Kettle Falls with our decontamination team! I have loved getting to learn about NPS resources work and helping fight against invasive zebra mussels.

Dan: I am an interpreter ranger. So that can take a lot of different forms from staffing the visitor centers, leading tours on the tour boats, swearing in junior rangers, or really whatever I can do to help someone connect and come to love this place more.

What is your favorite fact about Voyageurs National Park?

Emma: I learned recently at the International Wolf Center that the Greater Voyageurs Ecosystem (GVE) was the last hold out for Gray Wolves in the lower 48 in the mid 1900s. Wolves were otherwise exterminated from the rest of the country. They have since had their comeback, but wolves having never left the GVE means that these are some of the oldest studied wolf packs in the lower 48!

Dan: I love that if you collected all the water held up in beaver dams across all of the Greater Voyageurs Ecosystem and combined them into one body of water you'd have the 10th largest lake in the state of Minnesota.

Resources

We are proud to announce that Ryan Maki, the park's aquatic ecologist, has been selected as the 2024 NPS Midwest Region's recipient of the Professional Excellence in Natural Resource Management award. Since 2004, Ryan has led Voyageurs to be nationally and internationally recognized for outstanding aquatic research and effectiveness in protecting water resources. This recognition is a testament to Ryan's longstanding dedication and lasting contributions.



Current and previous project leads for Voyageurs Wetland Restoration Project: Steve Windels, Bryce Olson, Reid Plumb, Jerry Warmbold, and Haley Smith

Steve Windels hosted the first Voyageurs Wetland Restoration Project (invasive cattail removal project) workshop in July. The workshop focused on reviewing the project's progress to date and brainstorming future directions for this critical initiative. The new wetland restoration machine, the Truxor, has officially begun its work in impacted areas. Our resource staff played a key role in securing the cattail mat in Black Bay, in an effort to assure safe navigation.

as acting superintendent will last through the end of October. During this period, Ryan Maki will serve as the acting lead for Natural and Cultural Resource Management.

Congratulations to Brian Harmon on his selection as the acting Superintendent at Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial in Springfield, IL. Brian began his detail (temporary appointment) at the end of July and his time

Interpretation, Education, and Outreach



NPS Staff and volunteers at the International Falls July 4th Parade

The park welcomed a new program manager, Kate Severson, who will oversee interpretation, education, outreach, public affairs, and partnerships. Before Voyageurs Kate worked as the Ranger Supervisor on Pikes Peak in Colorado.

One of the highlights of the month was a program offered to the Women of the Water organization as part of their Women in Science series. Led by Ranger Jackie and Moss Kupper, an educational specialist with the Voyageurs Conservancy, the participants were taught about foraging in the woods of Voyageurs National Park. After learning about sustainable collection practices, traditional indigenous

plant uses, and ways to identify both native and invasive plants, the women were sworn in and earned their junior ranger badges. Participants made tea with yarrow and white pine and found chanterelle mushrooms, easily identified by their "false gills" and fruity smell. You can forage for up to one gallon of mushrooms and berries per person per day for personal use in Voyageurs National Park.



A new group of Garden Explorer Junior Rangers are sworn in. Visitors of any age are encouraged to get their

Visitor and Resource Protection

In July, our law enforcement team was active doing vessel safety equipment checks. Rangers issued warnings for violations including out-of-bound camping, expired fire extinguishers, and lack of serviceable personal flotation devices (PFDs). Minnesota law requires one U.S. Coast Guard approved, properly sized, and easily accessible life jacket for each person on the boat. All children under ten are required to wear an approved life jacket when the boat is underway.

A ranger was dispatched for two separate mutual aid responses: one involving a fatality at Crane Lake and another to provide backup for a probation officer. Additionally, officers responded to a domestic disturbance on a vessel. The parties involved were separated without any further issues.

Rangers provided crucial assistance to visitors, including helping those with incapacitated water vessels and two search-and-rescue situations where hikers were reported lost or missing. In each case the hikers were found unharmed.

Additionally, law enforcement on Rainy Lake responded to reports of jet skis, which are prohibited in the national park. The jet skis were not located.

The park held two meetings inviting all the businesses that have Commercial Use Authorizations (CUAs) in Voyageurs National Park. Among those present were professional fishing guides, water taxis, and private tour boat captains. We gave updates about upcoming changes to applications, fees, and terms that the park has been compelled to make by our national office in Washington, DC. For more information about CUAs and the upcoming program changes please review the CUA page on our website.

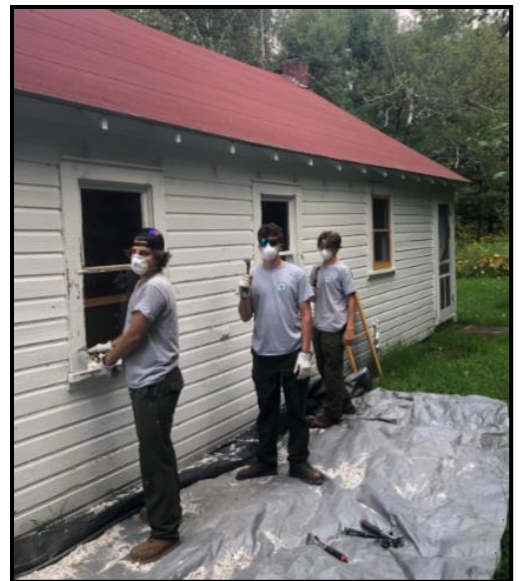
Maintenance

Historic Building Projects

Chris Heibel and the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) have been hard at work on the Hoist Bay project, focusing on painting buildings to give the area a fresh look. Meanwhile, Beau Readman has been conducting historic building assessments, which involve cleaning off roofs and opening ventilation points to ensure these structures are preserved and maintained effectively.

Trail Maintenance

The maintenance team has made significant progress in clearing brush from the pathways around Kettle Falls. To improve safety, bulletins have been set up at the Kab-Ash Trailheads to inform on overgrowth and wayfinding issues. Additionally, the team has cleared several downed trees of the trails. Crews spent time around the Chain of Lakes area, clearing portages, brushing, and cleaning campsites.



Three members of the YCC - Carter Line, Nick Schultz, Landin Budris - working at Hoist Bay.



The newly completed Saginaw Bay West ADA campsite

Campsite Improvements

Accessible campsite work has been a priority for Voyageurs National Park, with the Saginaw Bay West ADA campsite now completed. Campsite cleaners have been busy placing temporary fire rings at sites where the original rings were submerged due to high water levels. As the water recedes and docks become usable again, they are also scrubbing slippery algae off the docks. The crew has made considerable headway at the Ewald site, building five tent pads, and setting up the comfort station shell.

Mowing and Landscaping

The team has also focused on regular recurring summer tasks: mowing and landscaping. The lawn at Ellsworth Rock Garden has been mowed, and flowers have been planted. Jason Christenson has taken on the task of mowing the ditches and helipad down by Ash River now that conditions have improved, and mowing can resume.