

Re: Forest Plan Amendment of Management Direction for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness #65777

To: U. S. Forest Service

My husband and I moved to Minnesota in 1989, to spend as much time as possible in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. We lived up the Gunflint Trail for years to enjoy access to the BWCAW. For the past 35 years we have spent many of our summers in the BWCAW. We have spent over one thousand days on canoe trips in the BWCAW. Thus we have traversed Monument portage hundreds of times. Our longest canoe trip without restocking is 100 days in 2011, May 19 through August 27th.

We do not burn campfires, we rarely-to-never fish, we do not use chemicals such as Deet or sunscreen, and use only minimal natural fragrance-free personal products. We enjoy the flora and fauna of the wilderness through observation and photography.

When other campers need help, we do our best to help them; our first aid kit has been used to help many other campers. We paddled out of the BWCAW at night in wind and an electrical storm to seek medical help for the Walz rescue, where our Governor's brother was killed by a falling tree on Father's Day and his son was critically injured.

The most important aspect of management of the Boundary Waters is that the wilderness is protected; and that there is every effort to maintain clean water and clean air. How do we get the average person to care about clean air and clean water when that is not something they experience in their day-to-day lives?

Expanding protected wilderness should be a priority.

We would like to share our observations of campers and problems that we have experienced in the BWCAW. Here is a numbered list of our recommendations and examples of problems that follow. We would like to see regulation, education, and consequences for violations.

1. Burn bans are welcomed to protect the wilderness.
2. Campers not allowed to use axes and hatchets [Campers can use camp saws]
3. Campers should not be allowed to feed wildlife in the BWCAW
4. Do not change the annual permitting system; Raise permit fees; [no daily fees, no time limits]
There are other problems and issues that need attention more than changing the annual permitting system.
5. No alcohol
6. Protect bears and wildlife
7. Reduction of group size & monitoring along with consequences for problematic teen group behavior

BURN BANS: Burn bans would be welcomed more frequently to protect the wilderness. The quietest times we have spent in the BWCAW with the least number of problems or issues camping is when there is a burn ban. Suddenly the loud parties and bad behavior disappear. Protect the wilderness from wildfires.

CAMPSITE DAMAGE: There has been more camp damage in the BWCAW since COVID and unethical campers. What damages camps is often associated with campfires. Most campers use wood from camp

for their campfires. Unknowing campers tramp over Moccasin Flowers when dragging wood for campfires out of the brush. Logs from fallen trees are dragged to the fire ring and hacked to bits. Axes and hatchets are too often stored in living trees thus damaging camp trees and creating other dangers. If campers had to use a camp saw for firewood maybe they would also conserve the size, number, and duration of their campfires. We would support a regulation that would not allow campers to use hatchets or axes in the BWCAW.

One example that we have witnessed is how removal of wood from campsites to burn also disturbs wildlife. Year after year, when a male spruce grouse is doing his mating ritual the female observes the male from sitting atop fallen logs, then suddenly the log she has used for years is gone and destroyed, used for campfires. Dead standing trees can be home to wildlife: birds, bats, squirrels, many mammals live in snags. Fallen snags provide homes for insects that become food for mammals.

DO NOT FEED WILDLIFE: Many campers do not realize that when they feed chipmunks or birds when they are camping that they are also sending signals to bears that food is available 'here'. Campers should not be allowed to feed wildlife in the wilderness.

PROTECT BEARS & WILDLIFE: We most often hear campers clanking pots and pans to deter a bear at supper time. Bears seem to look for food at supper time and come into camp while people are cooking and food is out and available, such as oils and margarines which seem to be a bear's first choice. Teen groups often leave food all over camp and then they all go for a swim making it the perfect time for a bear to enjoy all the Gorp and potato chips she can consume. Thus, teaching bears that they can come to camps for food. Bears coming into camp for food risks bear lives

The ole time barrel campers used industrial steel drums with steel lids to keep bears and other critters away from their food. Even bear caches are vulnerable. We have watched a bear climb the cache tree and attempt to sit on and break the cache rope. We awoke on Knife Lake one morning in the face of a serious storm with 60 mph winds. Surveying camp from our tent I said to Steve why is only that one tree in the red pine stand swaying back and forth? There was only the slightest animated sound of metal squeaking as Steve levitated off his sleeping pad yelling, "He's working the pully!" and sprang from the tent. What Steve found was a bear entangled in our bear cache rope. The bear's struggle was pulling the cache closer to the tree trunk where it would have been easily accessible.

PERMITTING & EXPANSION OF PROTECTED WILDERNESS: We do not believe the annual permit system should be changed or made more complex with multiple permitting dates. People that cannot get their desired permit can simply change their entry point. I doubt that every permit in the BWCAW has ever been taken at the same time. We would support higher permit fees, but not daily charges, or time limits. The demand for more permits and campsites should be met with an expansion of the BWCAW. There are much needed improvements to protect the wilderness but new permitting system is not needed.

NO ALCOHOL: Alcohol should not be allowed in the BWCAW and certainly no kegs. Alcohol influences behavior and use by some can endanger other campers, even the wilderness and wildlife.

TEEN GROUPS & NEED FOR EXTRA MONITORING WITH CONSEQUENCES & REDUCTION OF GROUP SIZE:

Before I address problems, I would like to state that we have NOT had any problems with Outward Bound groups. The number one complaint we have heard from groups is that campsites are too small to accommodate them. Reduction of group size would be an important change. We would like a regulation

that stated a minimum adult age for teen group leaders. The following is a list of actual problems we have experienced with teen groups led by teens:

- A. A teen group leader left an entire teen group at our camp without our permission and gave us no information about where they were or what they were doing, and the teen leader left the group with us for some time to go look for another group.
- B. Teen groups have come into our occupied camp late at night when looking for a camp.
- C. Teen Groups and noise such as boomboxes playing music on the lake. Uncommon noise especially for morning wake up calls, even using a gunshot to wake campers.
- D. Teen groups tormenting wildlife. One example-A teen group when seeing a beaver start beating the water with their paddles.
- E. Teen groups on portages and the whole group 'throwing' aluminum canoes to the ground that they have portaged to the ground when they reach the other side of a portage; dangerous behavior; horrible noise.
- F. We have had a teen group spy on our latrine.
- G. Teen groups have entered our camp when they know we are out paddling.
- H. Teen group who is lost and does not know where camps are because they do not have a map [and probably do not have a permit].
- I. Teen group needing first aid for a serious laceration and do not have a first aid kit of any kind [they were jumping off a cliff into the lake].
- J. Teen groups eating lunch and then having a swim at a portage causing it to be blocked.
- K. Teens showering and washing hair with soap in the Stairway portage waterfall.

Climate change and the management of species migration: Minimal management, the forest isn't only trees. We are also concerned about the understory and the medicinal plants. Will Pipsissewa grow in an "Oak" forest?

Fires: We believe that in light of current issues, all forest fires, including naturally ignited fires should be actively extinguished. Fire progression should only be allowed under controlled conditions.

Mining We absolutely oppose mining that in any way threatens the BWCAW.

Thank-you for all you do to protect the wilderness.