

As a resident of Cook County and as a business owner who has been outfitting trips into the BWCAW for the last 30 years we have seen first hand the travel trends and changes of visitors to the wilderness. We have seen our BWCAW campers average trip length go from 6 days to 4 days. This trend has altered what routes are available and ultimately traveled. Guests are not traveling as deep into the wilderness as they once did and instead are camping closer to the entry point accesses than they have in the past. We would like to see changes to the management plan to address these changes without reducing permit quotas. There are several possible ways this can be addressed:

- 1) **Education**- we saw a much greater impact on the wilderness during COVID. We know the use of the online video and allowing users to enter the wilderness without being briefed in person at the USFS permit pickup station or outfitter had a negative impact on the wilderness. This contact is important not only for understanding the rules but also integral for helping travelers plan their route. This can help disperse people to the lesser used areas of their chosen entry point. Outfitters help educate guests on rules, leave no trace techniques, bears, routes and campsite selection. It is in the outfitters best interest to make sure guests expectations are exceeded with regards to wilderness experience and wilderness character.
- 2) **Traveler Dispersement** – There are several things that could help disperse travelers in the BWCAW. Tow boats help move people from the entry points and get them to locations into areas where there isn't congestion. Different tow boat drop off points disperse travelers so they can get farther into the wilderness faster. A different entry point for those who know they will be using the services of a towboat would also help disperse and regulate the direction and flow of towboats. There could be additional interior entry points offered for those who are willing to paddle and portage farther into the wilderness so the entry point lakes would not be "overcrowded." Having a specific entry point quota for "base camp" travels on entry point lakes and a two night maximum for non "base camp" entries would be another way to promote guests to interior travel.
- 3) **New Campsite Construction** – Construction of some new sites on lakes and bays that have no sites would help take pressure off existing sites. New travel trend data should be used to identify target areas.
- 4) **Ranger Encounters** – Having more wilderness rangers in the BWCAW checking travelers would help to mitigate users that are not following the rules and would help educate them to best BWCAW travel practices.
- 5) **Reservation System** – A higher initial reservation fee and a more severe cancellation policy would help insure that guests are not reserving more permits than they intend to use. This will help keep more entry options open longer to more visitors which will help ensure good route selection "fits". Ideally guests would get the entry point that would best fit the goals of their wilderness trip.

There are many options to address the wilderness impact in the BWCAW without reducing permits. Tow boats help move people to areas that are camped on less frequently. On big lakes when it is windy paddlers are forced to camp close to the entry point whereas towboat users can get to less used campsites. Additional campsites can easily be added or camping could be allowed anywhere as it is in

the Quetico Park. There are a number of unused sites that could be enhanced to make them more attractive to campers. Fire ring locations, canoe landings, access to firewood and latrine locations all affect a camper's choice of where to camp.