



May 17, 2024

Thomas Hall
Forest Supervisor
Superior National Forest
8901 Grand Avenue Place
Duluth, Minnesota 55808

Re: Hospitality Minnesota Comments on Superior Forest – Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Forest Management Plan

Dear Mr. Hall,

Hospitality Minnesota represents hospitality businesses in Minnesota, including restaurants, hotels, resorts, campgrounds, outfitters and more. Across the state, we represent nearly 275,000 employees and generate over \$18 billion in gross sales. We advocate for policies that promote and support the hospitality and tourism industry.

Many of our resorts, lodges, campgrounds, outfitters and restaurants are an important resource for visitors coming in and out of The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). As the US Forest Service works to update the management plan for Superior National Forest – Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, we encourage you to reflect on the following:

Access: Many Minnesotans and visitors travel to the BWCAW each year to relax and enjoy our most beautiful and one-of-a-kind wilderness. **It is critical that any updated BWCAW management plans include maintaining or increasing access through the number of permits, entry points, or campsites.** There should not be any limitations or decrease to access through a reduction in annual permits, entry points or campsites. It is important we give the opportunity to all who are looking to explore the vast wilderness of BWCAW.

Campsite Maintenance: While there are more than 2,000 campsites, many campsites are listed in poor repair condition. It is imperative the USFS develops a plan to dedicate resources to maintain campsites on a regular schedule to ensure they are usable by visitors.

Education: To help protect the wilderness and resources, we do believe ensuring that all visitors are properly educated is critically important. The updated BWCAW plan should include comprehensive education opportunities through various technologies to ensure visitors, whether it is first trip or twentieth trip, to follow best practices to maintain and preserve the wilderness.

Motorized Watercraft Use: It is imperative that the current limited access to motorized watercraft, including towboats, is preserved. Maintaining this access is important for several reasons:

- *Accessibility:* the use of tow boats helps make the BWCAW more accessible to people with disabilities. It can be extremely difficult to canoe across large lakes, paddle deep into the wilderness and portage great distances to campsites. The use of tow boats is critical to ensuring all can experience the BWCAW.
- *Day Use:* day use motorized permits help individuals experience the outdoors on a shortened timeframe for whatever reason. They may have barriers to back packing and camping trips, so a day use fishing trip may be the best opportunity for them to experience the beautiful BWCAW.



- *Disbursement:* Tow boats also provide an opportunity to disperse visitors. This helps to ensure visitors are safe distances from each other and able to access various campsites.
- *Search and Rescue:* in situations where search and rescue operations are needed, motorized watercraft can more quickly get rescuers to find individuals in distress, especially given the vastness of BWCAW.

We recognize this is the beginning of discussions, but we encourage you to reflect on the economic impact this could have on our outdoor recreation and tourism communities in Minnesota. The businesses along the BWCAW thrive on the tourism ecosystem the wilderness generates and the ability to continue to operate with guide and tow-boat permits. The less strain we can put on multi-generational businesses, but better experience we will create for visitors and the BWCAW itself. This also includes consideration for ease of transferring guide permits or tow boat permits upon sale of business. We understand these permits have been limited for good reason, but don't want to see a reduction because a business sold or closed.

We welcome the opportunity to engage in further dialogue with our resorts, lodges, campgrounds, outfitters and restaurants surrounding the BWCAW. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our Director of Government Relations, Jill Sims, at jill@hospitalitymn.org.

Sincerely,

Angie Whitcomb
President & CEO
Hospitality Minnesota