AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

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PREFACE

This report is a result of a proposal based on a request by the Citizen's Council on Voyageurs National Park to conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the administration of the Voyageurs National Park since it was authorized by Congress in 1971.

The Citizen's Council on Voyageurs National Park was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1975 to conduct meetings and research into all matters related to the establishment and operation of Voyageurs National Park and to make recommendations to the United States National Park Service and other federal and state agencies regarding operation of the park. The Council is comprised of thirteen members appointed by the Governor and four members appointed by the Legislature.

This report examines the administration of Voyageurs National Park in the context of appropriate laws, plans, programs, policies, and regulations. In addition, the report provides a brief historical perspective of Voyageurs and analyzes several characteristics that deserve special consideration in the administration of the park.

Chapter 1 includes a brief description of the park and surrounding area, and provides a chronology of events leading up to the establishment of the park. An analysis of management policies and regulations of the National Park Service is included in Chapter 2 along with a description of various plans that apply specifically to Voyageurs National Park. Chapter 3 discusses five interrelated characteristics of Voyageurs that are worthy of special consideration in the administration of the park. A brief review of park administration during the past 15 years is presented in Chapter 4. Much of the report is devoted to current and ongoing issues which are discussed in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 analyzes several current federal and state initiatives that could have a significant bearing on the future administration of Voyageurs. Finally, Chapter 7 attempts to provide brief but meaningful conclusions based on the previous chapters.

Although a number of recommendations appear throughout Chapters 5 and 7, a list of specific recommendations is included in the report summary.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the Voyageurs National Park staff and members and staff of the Citizen's Council on Voyageurs National Park for providing much of the information and materials for this report.

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SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Introduction

Initiatives to create a national park in northern Minnesota date back to 1891. Voyageurs National Park was authorized by Congress in 1971 and officially established in 1975 "to preserve, for the inspiration and enjoyment of present and future generations, the outstanding scenery, geological conditions, and waterway system which constituted a part of the historic route of the Voyageurs who contributed significantly to the opening of the northwestern United States."

Voyageurs is slightly smaller than average compared with the other national parks in the Continental U.S., but larger than all Minnesota state parks combined.

Voyageurs is one of the most complicated units of the national park system and one of the most difficult areas to administer.

Chapter 2: National Park Service Management Policies

The National Park Service is guided by the 1916 Act which provided the Service with a dual mission of conservation and use of nationally significant areas. Under the Service's land classification system, 99% of Voyageurs is zoned "natural" where perpetuation of a total natural ecosystem is encouraged.

Several plans or studies are required by law for Voyageurs, and several are discretionary or required as a matter of policy. Cooperative planning is encouraged when a park is adjoined by other federal lands, state lands, or lands subject to state, regional, or local planning or regulation to "integrate" the park into its regional environment.

Public meetings or hearings are conducted from time to time, and legislative established advisory organizations are to be consulted frequently during the development of significant plans.

Chapter 3: Special Management Considerations

There are five interrelated characteristics that deserve special consideration in the administration and development of Voyageurs National Park: 1) the legislative history of the park, 2) proximity of the park to a larger and more restrictive federal area, 3) proximity of the park to a large number of commercial facilities, 4) the water based nature of the park, and 5) the international character of the park.

Voyageurs was established, in part, to diversify the economy of northern Minnesota and was intended to complement, not duplicate, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. Legislative intent and the enabling act itself reflect a wide variety of recreational use.

Only one commercial facility remains in the park, therefore, the bulk of the accomodations and services for park visitors is provided by 60 businesses located on the "waters edge". A special relationship between the Park Service and the private sector is required.

More than 80,000 acres, or 37% of the total park area is water surface. Only a small portion of "park waters" is potentially subject to independent actions of the Park Service. Two-thirds of the park's water surface is classified as U.S. - Canadian Boundary Waters and 96% is subject to international considerations and a variety of federal, state, and provincial policies.

Three international agreements are applicable to major park area lakes: 1) The Webster-Ashburton Treaty, 2) The Boundary Waters Treaty, and 3) The Rainy Lake Convention. The Secretary of Interior has acknowledged the general appropriateness of the Boundary Waters Treaty and supported the concept of an overall management strategy.

Chapter 4: Review of Park Administration, 1971-1986

A small staff began preparing preliminary plans for the park in the early '70's. Transfer of 35,000 acres of state lands allowed official establishment of the park in 1975.

Land acquisition policies and disputes over use and park boundaries resulting from plans that were substantially different than originally anticipated caused an atmosphere of mistrust and confrontation. In response to the growing controversy, the Minnesota legislature established the Citizens' Committee on Voyageurs National Park.

In 1978, agreement was reached on boundary and motorized use issues. Legislation to amend the enabling act was introduced in 1979, but opposition delayed passage of

the bill until 1982. P.L. 97-405 was signed by President Reagan in 1983. The legislation, among other things, allowed park development to occur. Because of aggressive efforts and Congressional support, Voyageurs has fared exceptionally well in obtaining development funds, despite a declining construction budget.

The Voyageurs National Park staff has grown from a handful to 50 full-time positions. The annual park operating budget has increased from $124,000.00 in 1973 to almost $1.5 million.

Chapter 5: Current Issues

Biosphere Reserve Designation, under a United Nations program, is being recommended for the Voyageurs National Park and surrounding region, including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario. The effect of this designation for the park region is unclear. Current Park Service policy with respect to the effect on management conflicts with other plans, documents, and proposed legislation relative to the program.

The 350 mile international boundary from Lake of the Woods to Lake Superior, including portions of Voyageurs National Park, has been recommended for designation as a National Historic Trail under provisions of the National Trails System Act. The proposal has the support of several national organizations, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the Minnesota Historical Society. The effect of designation on park management would not be determined until completion of a planning process.

Implementation of the Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan is inappropriate and premature in light of a legal requirement to conduct a comprehensive Visitor Use and Facilities Plan. There is no demonstrated need for restrictive camping regulations. Statements by park management relative to camping pressure and a high occupancy rate are not supported by official visitor use statistics. Inconsistencies exist between the Site Management Plan and the Master Plan regarding primitive developed areas.

The Trail Development Plan for Voyageurs is short-sighted in terms of providing for anticipated visitor needs. There is potential for further delay in implementation of a trail plan because of controversy over snowmobile use. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks should oversee the planning process to ensure that it is completed as expeditiously as possible.

Water levels of park area lakes are controlled by the Boise Cascade Corporation under upper and lower limits

established by the International Joint Commission. The IJC only has authority to act when emergency conditions exist in the basin due to high or low water.

Fisheries management at Voyageurs is complex because of multiple jurisdictions and the fact that the majority of "park waters" are influenced by international considerations. Park Service policy favors returning to or approximating natural conditions, which may or may not have a positive impact on the fishery. The fishery appears to be significantly influenced by water level regulation, but there is no concensus on what action is needed. The IJC does not appear to have the authority to act on recommendations based on fish and wildlife considerations. Such authority may require a new international agreement.

The National Park Service supports the reintroduction of native wildlife, to include caribou and elk, to the park area. There is no technical basis for determining the feasibility or desirability of such reintroductions. There has been little follow-up to an agreement between the Park Service and Department of Natural Resources to establish an interagency task force, and regularly scheduled meetings between the two agencies have been discontinued.

Only 3,000 acres, or 2% of the total park land area, remains in private ownership. Two-thirds of the remaining tracts are undeveloped and potentially affected by a recent court ruling. There is a wide disparity in land prices being paid inside and outside park boundaries.

Voyageurs is accessible from four major resort areas which are served by Forest Highway 29, CH 129, CH 122/123, and T.H. 11. In addition, there are two new access roads needed to serve visitor facilities at Rainy Lake and near Ash River. Federal funds are available for some improvements but state and local funds are also needed. Regularly scheduled air and bus service is available to and from International Falls. Transportation within the park is principally by boat.

Over $9 million has been appropriated for construction of park facilities during the past four years, and an additional $4 has been approved for access roads. Additional funds have been requested to complete the Rainy Lake Visitor Center and Kettle Falls Hotel projects. Total park construction could exceed $25 million.

Almost 100,000 acres, or 45% of the total park area, qualifies for wilderness designation under provisions of the 1964 Wilderness Act. Formal designation would greatly reduce management flexibility and prevent development of even primitive facilities. Implementation of recommendations of a president's commission could influence wilderness plans for parks such as Voyageurs.

A coordinated promotion and marketing effort can best be achieved through provisions of P.L. 97-405. Such an effort is timely in view of the development of major park facilities.

Only one commercial operation (Kettle Falls) remains within park boundaries. Questions remain over the authority of the Park Service to control commerce on "park waters" and the degree to which the service intends to control the activities of 60 businesses on the edge of the park.

The Park Service proposes to allow lightning-caused fires to burn under certain conditions, and also proposes that designated areas be intentionally burned to allow fire to achieve its natural role.

Internal and external threats to national parks have been reported in the past and are currently being updated by the Park Service. The number of reported threats to Voyageurs has increased from 9 to 44.

Chapter 6: Influence of Current National and State Policy Initiatives of the Voyageurs Area

The President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (PCAO) was created to assess the nation's recreation needs through the year 2000. The Commission's report contains recommendations that could have far-reaching implications for the Voyageurs National Park area. Recommendations include establishment of "greenways", shoreline protection, scenic byways, growth shaping, programs, protection of scenic countrysides, establishment of recreational enterprise zones and zones of influence, reaffirmation of the wilderness system, wild and scenic rivers system and the national trails system, and creation of a national outdoors institution. The Commission recommends a variety of sources to fund the programs.

The Commission on Minnesotans Outdoors was formed in 1985 in conjunction with the Presidents' Commission on Americans Outdoors. The Minnesota Commission supported many of the PCAO recommendations and prepared similar recommendations to be implemented on a state-wide basis.

A State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) will be published in 1987. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has overall responsibility for producing the SCORP report while the National Park Service has review and approval authority. The report contains several recommendations pertaining to the Voyageurs National Park area, including the concept which in part served as the basis for DNR's support of the Voyageurs National Historic Trail. The purpose and objectives of Voyageur National Park presented in the report are contrary to the enabling act and to the concepts contained in the Master Plan for the park.

Management policies of the National Park Service, which haven't been substantially changed since 1978, are being reviewed. Proposed revisions should be available for public comment in 1987.

Chapter 7: Findings and Conclusions

The National Park Service should reevaluate the manner in which Voyageurs National Park is being administered. A more cooperative approach to management is needed where resources are shared with other jurisdictions.

Ecosystems management under rigid guidelines for natural areas is not viable in view of the water-based nature and international character of the park. Portions of the park should be reclassified as "special use" zones. This reclassification would be consistent with existing Interior Department and Park Service policy.

Priorities and objectives defined by international agreement should be reevaluated. The role of the International Joint Commission needs to be clearly defined and understood.

Inconsistencies appear in various planning documents regarding park purposes and management objectives. All plans should be consistent with the Master Plan and the enabling legislation.

Plans or studies required by law should take precedence over plans that are discretionary or required by policy. Implementation of the Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan is inappropriate and premature.

Official visitor use statistics do not support statements by park management regarding campsite use.

Biosphere Reserve and National Trail designation for the Voyageurs area are inappropriate and unnecessary.

The Trail Development Plan for Voyageurs needs special attention if it is to be implemented within a reasonable period of time.

Primary access roads to the park are well along in development, but some improvements are still needed and state and local funds must be allocated. Final obstacles need to be removed to permit construction of the Rainy Lake Visitor Center, and additional boat access is needed for Rainy Lake. Where possible, recreation trails should link local communities to park facilities.

Special cooperative arrangements are needed between the Park Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to deal with fish and wildlife matters. An interagency task force should be established and regularly scheduled meetings should be resumed.

The disparity in prices for lakeshore property inside and outside the park should be investigated by the General Accounting Office. The Land Protection Plan needs to be reviewed in light of a recent court ruling relative to undeveloped property.

Aggressive efforts to obtain funds for park facilities should continue, and a coordinated promotion and marketing effort needs to be developed under provisions of P.L. 97-405.

Intentions of the Park Service with respect to the regulation of commerce needs to be clarified, and should be addressed in the Visitor Use and Facilities Plan.

The Natural Resources Assessment and Action Plan for Voyageurs should be reviewed, and reported threats to the park should be analyzed.

Implementation of the recommendations of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, the Commission on Minnesotans Outdoors, and the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) should be monitored. The SCORP report should be modified in order that the purposes and objectives of Voyageurs National Park are in conformance with the enabling legislation and the Master Plan. Formal comment on proposed revisions to Park Service management policies should be provided where and when appropriate.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The four major park area lakes should be reclassified from "natural" to "special use" zone. Lake Kabetogama should be given a separate subzone classification.

2. Priorities and objectives defined by international agreement should be reevaluated and recreation should be included among the priorities.

3. The authority of the International Joint Commission with respect to the regulation of water levels on park area lakes should be clarified.

4. Inconsistencies in planning documents should be corrected to conform with the Master Plan and enabling legislation.

5. A comprehensive Visitor Use and Facilities Plan should be developed and implemented in lieu of the Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan.

6. Official Visitor Use Reports should be reviewed and should serve as the basis for policy decisions and implementation of regulations.

7. The National Park Service should eliminate Voyageurs National Park from further consideration for designation as a Biosphere Reserve.

8. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota Historical Society should reevaluate their position with respect to the designation of the Voyageurs National Historic Trail.

9. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks should oversee the planning and implementation of the Trail Development Plan for Voyageurs National Park.

10. Supplementary funds for the Ash River Trail should be allocated in order that road construction be completed by 1990.

11. Substandard portions of F.H. 29 (Crane Lake Road) and T.H. 11 should be improved.

12. Remaining private lands should be acquired to allow immediate construction of the Rainy Lake Visitor Center Access Road.

13. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources should develop additional boat access and parking on Rainy Lake to supplement Voyageurs National Park facilities.

14. Where possible, recreation trails should be developed to link local communities and park facilities.

15. An interagency task force should be established to determine the feasibility and desirability of introducing native wildlife to the Voyageurs area.

16. Regularly scheduled meetings between the National Park Service and the Department of Natural Resources should be resumed.

17. An interagency meeting should be scheduled to discuss the proposed Fire Management Plan for Voyageurs National Park.

18. The General Accounting Office should investigate the disparity in lakeshore property prices being paid in the Voyageurs area.

19. The Land Protection Plan for Voyageurs should be reviewed in light of the court ruling regarding undeveloped property in the park.

20. Aggressive lobbying efforts for appropriated funds should continue until completion of major park development projects.

21. A coordinated promotion and marketing project should be developed under provisions of P.L. 97-405.

22. Intentions of the National Park Service with respect to the regulation of commercial activities of businesses located just outside park boundaries should be clarified.

23. The Natural Resources Assessment and Action Plan for Voyageurs National Park should be reviewed and analyzed.

24. The increase in reported threats to Voyageurs National Park should be analyzed.

25. Implementation of the recommendations of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors and the Commission on Minnesotans Outdoors should be monitored for their potential impact on the Voyageurs National Park area.

26. The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan should be modified with respect to the stated purposes and objectives of Voyageurs National Park. Implementation of the Plan's recommendations with respect to the Voyageurs area should be monitored.

27. Formal comment on proposed revisions to National Park Service management policies should be provided where and when appropriate.

28. Park Protection Legislation should be reviewed for potential impact on the Voyageurs National Park area.

29. Cooperative agreements between the National Park Service and other appropriate agencies with jurisdiction in the Voyageurs area should be pursued.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Initiatives to create a national park in northern Minnesota date back to 1891 (see Chronology of Events, Figure 2). Finally, in 1971, Voyageurs National Park was authorized by Congress and in 1975 was officially established as the nation's 36th national park. The purpose of Voyageurs, according to its enabling legislation is "to preserve, for the inspiration and enjoyment of present and future generations, the outstanding scenery, geological conditions, and waterway system which constituted a part of the historic route of the Voyageurs who contributed significantly to the opening of the northwestern United States."

Today, Voyageurs is one of 337 units of the national park system and one of 40 national parks in the Continental United States. With 219,000 acres of land and water within park boundaries, Voyageurs is slightly smaller than the average national park in the Continental U.S., but is larger than all 64 Minnesota state parks combined.

Since 1975, the land area of Voyageurs has been acquired by the National Park Service from a variety of ownerships. Of the 135,000 acres acquired, 35,000 acres were originally state lands, 25,000 acres were other federal lands, and 75,000 were privately owned (over 50% of these private lands were owned by the Boise Cascade Corporation). Today, only about 3000 acres, or 2% of the lands, are in private ownership.

Over two-thirds of the exterior boundary of Voyageurs is a water boundary, and over half of that water boundary is an international boundary. Over 80,000 acres, or 37% of the total park area is water surface. Four large lakes comprise about 96% of this water surface, while 26 smaller, interior lakes make up the remaining 4%. Three of the four large "park lakes" are classified as U.S. - Canadian Boundary Waters by international agreement. The vast majority of waters within the park boundary are directly affected by international boundary considerations.

The characteristics of Voyageurs clearly make it one of the most complicated units of the national park system, and certainly one of the most difficult and challenging to administer.

Figure 1

Voyageurs National Park Region

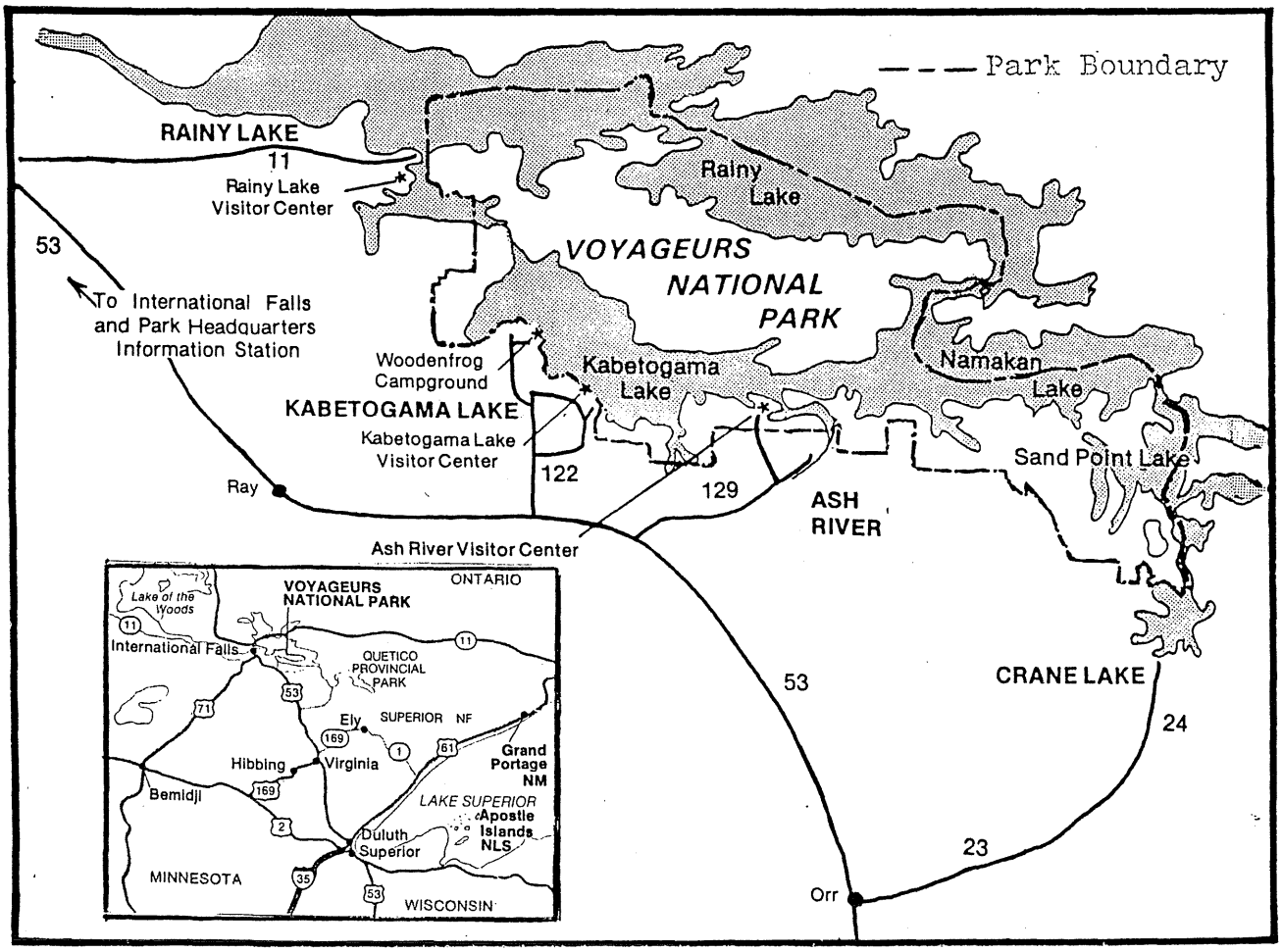


Figure 2

Chronology of Events
History of Voyageurs National Park

1891	Legislature petitions Congress to establish national park in northern Minnesota
1930's	Park Service conducts studies, identifies park potential of present Voyageurs area
1940's	M. & O. Paper Company considers offering landholdings of Kabetogama Peninsula in exchange for other lands
1960	Park Service extends study, identifies Rainy-Kabetogama area as possible location for a national park
1962	Governor Elmer Anderson and federal and state officials tour area; field studies recommended
1964	Preliminary Park Service report recommends establishment of Voyageurs National Park
1965	Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission recommends creation of Voyageurs as an important part of the future development of recreation in Minnesota; Voyageurs National Park Association formed
1966	National Parks Advisory Board recommends establishment of Voyageurs National Park
1967	Governor Harold LeVander's administration recommends creation of Voyageurs National Park to include the "Crane Lake Addition"
1969	Legislation introduced in Congress to establish Voyageurs National Park
1970	Congressional hearings held; bill passed by House; Senate and House accept Conference Committee report
1971	Public Law 91-661 signed by President Nixon
1973	Concurring legislation passed by Minnesota Legislature
1975	Voyageurs National Park officially established

CHAPTER 2

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The 1916 Organic Act which created the National Park Service serves as the basis for the agency's management policies. The 1916 Act basically provided the National Park Service with a dual mission of conservation and use of nationally significant areas. The Act specifically directs the service "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Since 1916, policies have been reviewed and changed periodically, and are currently in the process of being reviewed again. The following discussion reflects policies from 1978, the last year in which a major revision occurred.

Natural Resource Management

Management of natural resources in the Park System is primarily a function of zoning. All park lands fall into one of four zoning categories: natural, historic, park development, and special use. Each zone may have various subzone classifications. At Voyageurs, almost 99% of the park is classified as natural, with the remainder divided between the historic and park development classification. One of the most significant statements concerning management of the natural lands in the national park system is:

> "Management of park lands possessing significant natural features and values is concerned with ecological processes and impact of people upon these processes and resources. The concept of perpetuation of a total natural environment or ecosystem, as compared with the protection of individual features or species, is a distinguishing aspect of the Service's management of natural lands."

Figure 3 describes the management guidelines for each of the four zoning categories.

Figure 3

Zone	Management Objective
Natural	Natural resources and processes should remain largely unaltered by human activity. Developments will either be absent or limited to dispersed recreational and management facilities essential for management, use, and appreciation of natural resources.
Historic	Preservation of cultural resources or commemoration of historical subjects.
Park Development	To support nonhistoric park development and intensive public use which substantially alter the natural environment.
Special Use	Lands and waters to be used by other agencies or interests for purposes not permitted in the other zones.

Specific policies applicable to natural zones, which constitute about 99% of Voyageurs National Park include:

Fishing - No artificial stocking of exotic fish species; stocking only to establish native species; no stocking of waters naturally barren of fish with either native or exotic species.

Wildlife - Perpetuation of native animal life that occur, or occurred due to natural processes; reintroduction is encouraged if adequate habitat exists in the park and on adjacent public lands and waters, if the species disappeared because of human-induced change to the ecosystem.

Shoreline - Processes will be allowed to take place naturally, except where control measures are necessary to protect life and property in neighboring areas; where shoreline areas are part of larger systems, the Service shall seek to obtain the assistance of appropriate federal, state and local agencies in carrying out the management objectives of NPS shoreline areas.

Resource Utilization - The Park Service does not allow consumptive utilization of renewable or non-renewable resources as a general policy.

Fires - Prescribed natural fires are preferred; prescribed burning may be used as a substitute for prescribed natural fire; the objective for prescribed burning is to simulate, to the greatest extent possible, the influence of natural fire on the ecosystem.

Backcountry Use - Primitive, undeveloped portions of parks, that may require management plans to control and direct use.

Park Regulations

The Code of Federal Regulations, revised at least once every calendar year, is a codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Gevernment. Title 36 of the Code (36 CFR) covers regulations of the National Park Service. These regulations provide more specific guidance than do the management policy guidelines described thus far. Figure 4 describes briefly existing regulations that are applicable and relevant to Voyageurs National Park, as of July 1, 1986.

CFR 36 also provides park managers with the authority to impose closures and public use limits "upon a determination that such action is necessary for the maintenance of public health and safety, protection of environmental or scenic values, protection of natural or cultural resources, aid to scientific research, implementation of management responsibilities, equitable allocation and use of facilities, or the avoidance of conflict among visitor use activities...." However, except in emergency conditions, before a park manager can impose a restriction, condition, public use limit or closure, he must prepare a "written determination justifying the action," which shall " set forth the reason(s) the retriction, condition, public use limit or closure" has been established and shall include an "explanation of why less restrictive measures will not suffice. "

Figure 4

Selected NPS Regulations

Fishing	In accordance with state laws, except in designated areas; commercial fishing generally prohibited; possessing or using live or dead bait is prohibited except in designated waters.
Wildlife	Hunting and trapping prohibited, except where specifically authorized by law.
Camping	Superintendent may require permits, designate sites, and establish conditions for camping; camping within 100 feet of a body of water is prohibited except as designated.
Picnicking	Allowed except in designated areas.
Fires	Prohibited, except in designated areas or receptacles.
Snowmobiling	Prohibited, except on designated routes and water surfaces that are used by motor vehicles or motorboats during other seasons.
Boating	Superintendent may require a permit for use of vessels within park areas; motorboats are prohibited on waters not directly accessible by road.
Aircraft Use	Prohibited on lands or waters other than at locations designated pursuant to special regulations.
Natural/Cultural Resources	Possessing, destroying, injuring, defacing, removing, digging, or disturbing any of the following from its natural state is prohibited: Living or dead wildlife or fish or parts or products thereof, plants or the parts or products thereof, and nonfossilized and fossilized paleontological specimens, cultural or archeological resources or the parts thereof.

Park Planning

The National Park Service prepares a number of plans in order to achieve its management objectives for a particular park area. Some plans are required by law, some are required by park policy, and some are discretionary.

At Voyageurs National Park only three plans (or studies) are required by law--a Wilderness Study, a Park Access Road Study, and a Comprehensive Visitor Use and Facilities Plan. The Wilderness Study was required by the original 1971 enabling act for the park and was a normal requirement for national parks created after passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964. The Access Road Study and the Visitor Use and Facilities Plan are required by P.L. 97-405 (January 3, 1983), which amended the original 1971 Enabling Act for Voyageurs. Figure 5 briefly describes the nature of the legally required plans or studies for Voyageurs National Park.

Figure 5

Plans or Studies Required By
Law for Voyageurs National Park

Plan/Study	Description
Wilderness Study	Review of park area and report recommendations as to the suitability or nonsuitability of any area for preservation as wilderness under provisions of the 1964 Wilderness Act.
Access Road Study	Study of existing road access to the park and recommend to the Congress improvement necessary to insure adequate access.
Visitor Use and Facilities Plan	In cooperation with other agencies and private entities, set forth methods of achieving an appropriate level and type of visitation.

Other plans for a park area are required as a matter of policy, to include a General Management Plan (formerly Master Plan), Land Protection Plan (formerly Land Acquisition Plan), and a Natural Resources Management Plan. Other plans may be prepared depending upon the complexity and need in a particular park area. These plans must be consistent with the General Management Plan, and are often included as part of the Natural Resources Management Plan. Such plans may relate to development, backcountry management, fire management, or cultural resources. Figure 6 is an illustration of the current status of plans for Voyageurs National Park that are not required by law.

Components of the General Management Plan are periodically reviewed and modified to reflect changes in environmental, social, or economic conditions.

Figure 6

Status of Plans for Voyageurs
Not Required By Law

General Management Plan	Approved in 1980
Natural Resources Management Plan	Approved in 1981, currently being revised
Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan	Currently under review
Fire Management Plan	Currently under review

Cooperative Planning

Cooperative planning with other agencies is encouraged when a park is adjoined by other federal lands, state lands, or lands subject to state, regional or local planning or regulation. The purpose of cooperative planning is to "integrate" the park into its regional environment and to ensure that potential conflicts between interdependent actions are minimized or eliminated.

In addition, public participation, in the form of formal or informal public meetings or hearings is required from time to time. Legislatively established advisory organizations are to be consulted frequently during the development of significant plans.

CHAPTER 3

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Each unit of the national park system is unique and possesses special characteristics that need to be considered in the administration of that unit. There appear to be five interrelated charactaristics of Voyageurs that are of special significance in the administration and management of the park:

1) The legislative history of the park.

2) Proximity to a larger and more restrictive federal area.

3) Proximity of the park to a large number of commercial facilities.

4) The water-based nature of the park.

5) The international character of the park.

This chapter will examine these characteristics in the context of park administration to determine if, and to what extent, a change in management strategy may be warranted.

Legislative History

One of the principal arguments for park establishment was the need to diversify the economy of northern Minnesota, which was, since the turn of the century, based on mineral development and timber harvesting. Projections of more that a million visitors annually by 1985 and a corresponding increase in economic activity as a result of that visitation helped gain the public support necessary for establishment of the park. Voyageurs was conceived as a year-round national park, providing for a wide variety of recreational activities. Along this same line, it was the intent to create a federal area that would be complementary to the adjacent Boundary Waters Canoe Area, which has been set aside principally for a single use. In testifying before the U.S. House Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation in July of 1970, Elmer L. Anderson, President of the Voyageurs National Park Association, cited a 1967 report of the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission, which stated:

> "a national park in the area to the westward on the larger waters of Rainy and Kabetogama lakes, oriented to the types of recreation involving larger boats and providing many of the facilities and amenities not permitted in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, would substantially increase public outdoor recreation opportunities and complement but not duplicate the Canoe Area."

At the same congressional hearing, Eighth District Congressman John Blatnik stated:

> "(this park) will be of significant economic benefit to the immediate area, as well as to all of the Northeastern Minnesota, the rest of the State, and will certainly be in the national interest."

On the subject of recreational opportunities, Mr. Blatnik went on to say:

> "the park will provide full, year-round recreational facilities. Water sports and camping will be at their peak in the summer months, with full facilities for swimming, motor boating, canoeing, camping and hiking. Modern technology and man's need for nature have put an end to 'seasonal' recreation. The recent boom in snowmobiling in Northeastern Minnesota--there are more than 100,000 in the state now--as well as the growing popularity of snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, assure that winter in Voyageurs will be as busy as the warmer months of the year.
>
> "The area will be fully accessible by car, boat, or seaplane, and will provide full recreational facilities for every variety of nature lover from car-driving tenderfoot to experienced back-packer and rought-it woodsman, with no danger of conflicts over land use."

In concurring with the purpose and concept of a national park in northern Minnesota, the state legislature, in passing legislation for the park also found that "The Voyageurs National Park will be the largest park area within the State and will be of special and immediate benefit to the citizens of the State, due to is accessibility to them, and to the affect it may reasonably be expected to have on the development of tourism and related economic activities."

Based on much of the testimony at the hearings with respect to the issue of recreational use, the following language appeared in the final version of the Voyageurs National Park Act:

> Section 302. The Secretary shall permit recreational fishing on lands and waters under his jurisdiction within the boundaries of the park.....
>
> Section 303. The Secretary may, when planning for development of the park, include appropriate provisions for (1) winter sports, including the use of snowmobiles, (2) use by seaplanes, and (3) recreational use by all types of watercraft, including houseboats, runabouts, canoes, sailboats, fishing boats, and cabin cruisers.

Although Secion 303 contains the discretionary word "may" there is little argument that a wide range of motorized and non-motorized recreational activities were not only permissable, but to be encouraged.

It is significant to note that Voyageurs is the only national park where a full range of recreational activities are specifically authorized by law. A review of the authorizing legislation for a variety of national park units other than parks (to include national seashores, lakeshores, rivers, scenic riverways and recreational areas) created in the 1960's and 70's reveals that even these areas, which are generally less restrictive than national parks don't specifically authorize many of the uses authorized for Voyageurs.

Proximity of Voyageurs to a Larger and More Restrictive Federal Area

Voyageurs National Park has the distinction of being immediately adjacent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, a one-million acre congressionally designated area administered by the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture. As was discussed in the previous section, Voyageurs National Park was established, in part, to complement, not duplicate, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. The park, as we've seen, was to appeal to a wider variety of recreational uses than the BWCA and the Quetico Provincial Park, an area of equal size immediately to the north in Ontario, Canada. This situation has created somewhat of an

anomally, since U.S. Forest Service policy is generally more liberal and multiple-use oriented, while the Park Service is generally more restrictive in its policies and can be said to be more "preservation" oriented. This "role reversal" in northeastern Minnesota has created an interesting relationship between the two agencies. Although there has not been a great deal of cooperative ongoing management programs between the agencies, there does seem to be, on the part of the Park Service, a strong philosophical linkage to the BWCA, and this linkage has no doubt influenced to some degree the manner in which the park is administered. Planning documents describe the Voyageurs-Boundary Waters-Quetico area as a "contiguous unit of relatively undisturbed wilderness in the center of the North American continent..." The Biosphere Reserve Program, proposed recently by park management, proposes to link the park with the BWCA and Quetico Provincial Park. Under this proposal, Voyageurs, in large part, would become a core zone where use would be low intensity, primarily of an interpretive or educational nature, and portions of the Superior National Forest would become a manipulative zone. (See chapter 5 for further discussion on this subject). Aside from the difference in legislative history and management objectives of the two federal areas, there are significant physical differences as well. The BWCA is about five times as large as Voyageurs and consists of approximately 1000 lakes, most of which are connected by portages, creating a network of lakes and portages with almost an endless array of options for canoeists. Voyageurs, on the other hand, is dominated by several large bodies of water and about two dozen smaller lakes widely dispersed throughout the park. Canoeing opportunities comparable to those in the BWCA simply do not exist at Voyageurs.

Proximity of the Park to a Large Number of Commercial Facilities

There are approximately 60 commercial facilities on the edge of the park boundary that provide food, lodging, transportation (or a combination of all of these) for "park visitors". About half of these commercial facilities are located along the south shore of Lake Kabetogama. The remainder of the commercial facilities are divided among the three other commercial resort areas of Crane Lake, Ash River, and Island View.

There were a dozen or so commercial operations within exterior park boundaries when Voyageurs was established, and the Park Service by law, was authorized "to negotiate and enter into concession contracts with former owners of commercial, recreational, resort, or similar properties located within the park boundaries for the provision of such

services at their former location as (the Secretary of Interior) may deem necessary for the accomodation of visitors." Of these facilities, only one (the Kettle Falls Hotel) remains in operation. Thus, the 60 businesses located on the water just outside park boundaries will be expected to provide the vast majority of accomodations and services for visitors to the park. This situation requires special arrangements and a special understanding between the National Park Service and the private sector.

Water-Based Nature of the Park

About 37% of the surface area of Voyageurs is water. Perhaps more importantly, from an administrative standpoint, is the fact that only about 35% of the total water surface is comprised of bodies of water that are completely within exterior park boundaries. Even this figure is misleading, since Lake Kabetogama, which is 25,000 acres in size is part of the Namakan chain of lakes and subject to management influences outside park boundaries, to include international actions and considerations. So from a management perspective, only the 26 interior lakes, comprising a total of 3109 acres, or 4% of the total water surface area of the park, are potentially subject to independent decisions by the Park Service.

Most National Park areas have an exterior boundary that is essentially a land boundary. However, approximately two-thirds of the 150-mile exterior boundary of Voyageurs National Park is a water boundary, and over half of this water boundary is an international boundary separating Minnesota and Ontario, Canada. The park, therefore, has virtually an unlimited number of access points from outside its boundaries, and is subject to a variety of policies applying to access and use of the vast majority of its waters.

International Character of the Park

The northern boundary of Voyageurs National Park is the international boundary separating a portion of Minnesota and Ontario, Canada. This 60-mile border is all water and runs generally northwest to southeast through the center of Rainy, Namakan, and Sand Point Lakes and comprises over one-third of the total exterior boundary of the park. Three of the four large "park lakes" are U.S.-Canadian boundary waters, and are officially recognized as such by several international agreements. The fourth large lake, Kabetogama, although not technically a boundary water, is part of the Namakan chain of lakes and directly influenced by international considerations.

There are three international agreements that are applicable to Voyageurs National Park: The Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, The Root-Bryce (Boundary Waters) Treaty of 1909, and the Rainy Lake Convention of 1938. Figure 7 briefly describes the relevance of these three agreements to the Voyageurs National Park area.

Figure 7

International Agreements Applicable to the Voyageurs National Park Area

Agreement	Description
Webster-Ashburton Treaty	Guaranteed that all water communications and all the usual portages from Lake Superior to Lake of the Woods be free and open to the use of citizens of the United States and Canada.
Root-Bryce (Boundary Waters) Treaty	Established for the purpose of preventing disputes regarding use of U.S.-Canadian boundary waters; guaranteed that navigation of boundary waters continue to be free and open for the purpose of commerce; provided that any regulations or laws be non-discriminatory; established the International Joint Commission.
Rainy Lake Convention	Provided the International Joint Commission with authority to exercise control measures under emergency conditions by reason of high or low water.

The Boundary Waters Treaty, among other things, established the International Joint Commission (IJC). Under that agreement, the IJC was given the authority to approve any works involving the obstruction or diversion of boundary waters affecting their natural level or flow. In addition, the Commission was given authorization to examine and report on other questions or matters of difference regarding boundary waters when requested by either government.

The Rainy Lake Convention of 1938 expanded the authority of the IJC slightly by authorizing control measures under emergency conditions.

It is apparent that the International Joint Commission has very limited authority on matters of current interest and concern along the Voyageurs National Park boundary, expecially in view of the fact that neither government has felt it is appropriate to refer some of the recent disputes (including fishing) to the Commission for investigation. In addition, the Commission's authority on matters relating to water levels exists only under emergency conditions.

In 1985 the Secretary of the Interior in a letter to the Secretary of State, acknowledged the general applicability and appropriateness of the Boundary Waters Treaty along the Minnesota-Ontario border, while recognizing the Treaty's lack of specific guidance on various matters, including recreation. The policy of the Department of Interior as articulated in the Secretary's letter is to establish an overall management strategy in the boundary waters area. This policy is based, in part, not only on the limited authority of the IJC on boundary waters separating Minnesota and Ontario, but on conflicting management goals and objectives of a variety of other federal, state, and provincial agencies involved on these waters.

CHAPTER 4

REVIEW OF PARK ADMINISTRATION, 1971-1986

After Voyageurs was authorized by Congress in 1971, a small staff began preparing preliminary plans for the park. A requirement for the donation of 25,000 acres of state land was included in the park enabling act, so state legislation had to be passed before the park could be officially established. This was accomplished in 1973, and in 1975, Voyageurs was officially established as America's 36th national park.

It also became apparent in 1975 that plans for the park were substantially different than originally anticipated. The initial version of the Master Plan proposed the elimination of motorized use from the park's large land areas. In addition, a boundary dispute involving 1000 acres of prime waterfowl hunting area on the west end of the park surfaced. These disputes combined with the difficult task of acquiring private land, caused an atmosphere of mistrust and confrontation. The state legislature, in response to the growing controversy, established the Citizen's Committee ("committee" was later changed to "council") on Voyageurs National Park to "conduct meetings and research into all matters related to the establishment and operation of Voyaguers National Park,"..." and to make such recommendations to the United States National Park Service and other federal and state agencies concerned, regarding operation of the park as the committee deems advisable." It is significant to note that, in contrast to other national park areas where advisory committees were established by federal mandate and federally appointed, this was an independent state-sanctioned organization with members appointed by the Governor and the Legislature.

The primary focus in the late 1970's was on resolving various disputes and finalizing park plans. In 1978, an agreement was reached with the National Park Service to resolve the boundary disputes and motorized use controversies resulting from the initial Master Plan. Though final resolution of motorized use issues was to be the product of a legally-required wilderness study for the park, many of the remaining problems were resolved by federal legislation that amended the 1971 Enabling Act. Though such legislation was initially introduced in 1979, opposition to the bill prevented passage for several years. Finally, in 1982, bills passed both the House and Senate, and in January of 1983, P.L. 97-405 was signed by President Reagan. The following provisions were included:

* Deletion of 1000 acres of Black Bay of Rainy Lake from the park

* Deletion of the "Gold Shores" community from the park

* Addition of 180 acres at Black Bay Narrows to the park

* Addition of 120 acres north of the Ash River Trail to the park

* Increase of $12 million in the authorized land acquisition ceiling

* Extension of the wilderness study from 1979 to 1983

* Requirement for a Visitor Use and Facilities plan; $250,000.00 authorization to implement plan

* Requirement for an Access Road study

Aside from resolving several disputes, the passage of this legislation marked a new phase in the history of the park. Boundary changes in the Rainy Lake, Kabetogama, and Ash River areas permitted park development to begin in earnest--development that was anticipated to begin much sooner than 1983.

Beginning later in 1983, efforts to obtain park development funds began--funds that were becoming scarce due to increasing budget constraints on federal domestic programs. Actually, in spite of the declining budget for park construction nationwide, Voyageurs has fared exceptionally well since 1983, due primarily to the aggressive efforts of the Citizens' Council and the support of the Minnesota Congressional Delegation. Over $9 million has been appropriated for major construction projects and $4 million has been allocated for access road construction and improvement. During the past four fiscal years, almost half of the construction funds appropriated for the 21 large (greater than 30,000 acres) "newly-authorized" natural areas in the park system have gone to Voyageurs.

Since the early 1970's the park staff has grown from a handful to 50 full-time positions, and during that time the annual park operating budget has increased from $124,000.00 to almost $1.5 million. The total federal investment in Voyageurs (to include acquisition, operations, and construction) since it was authorized is more than $60 million.

CHAPTER 5

CURRENT ISSUES

Although a number of park issues have been resolved either legislatively or administratively, there are a number of current issues for which there exist public policy alternatives. Some of these issues are ongoing and are not likely to be completely resolved in the near future, while others are of more immediate concern.

The four priority issues identified by the Citizens' Council on Voyageurs National Park are addressed first in this chapter. The other issues are not in any particular order of priority.

Biosphere Reserve Designation

Under the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program established by the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) in 1970, Voyageurs National Park was recommended by park management for designation as a Biosphere Reserve. A 1986 draft report on areas within the Lake Forest Biogeographical Province (which includes northern and northeastern states in the United States) recommended that Voyageurs National Park, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, and Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario be added to the Biosphere Reserve system and designated as the Boundary Waters Biosphere Reserve. Isle Royle National Park, an existing biosphere reserve would also be included in this regional designation. A final report will be sent to appropriate agency directors this year for consideration and approval. Official designation of areas is made by the International Coordinating Council (ICC) for the Programme on Man and the Biosphere subsequent to concurrence of the appropriate administering agencies.

Much uncertainty remains over the potential effect of this designation on the management and use of Voyageurs National Park. The policy of the National Park Service, as articulated by the Director in an April 29, 1987 meeting with Citizens' Council members and Congressman James Oberstar, is that the designation will be honorary only and is intended to have no effect on park management. This policy statement clarifies the current intentions of the Park Service with respect to their role in this international program. It does not, however, provide any long-term guarantee that in the future national park areas won't be influenced by biosphere reserve designation.

Nor does it represent the intentions of other agencies, the international community, or the U.S. Congress. Although the MAB program existed for over ten years without any noticeable effect on the management of designated areas (there are 43 in the United States), reports published and actions taken over the past several years suggest something other than a benign program. A selection criteria document, published in 1983, states that recreation use of large portions of biosphere reserve areas (called core zones) should be "limited to very low intensity activities, primarily of an interpretive or educational nature, which are managed so as not to impair the research value of the area." A report published in 1984 by the U.S. MAB coordinator, concludes that "there remains much uncertainty as to how the biosphere reserve designation should affect management." An Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves, published by UNESCO in 1984 on the basis of the results of the First International Biosphere Reserve Congress convened in Minsk, U.S.S.R., established the following as a minimum set of activities which should be implemented in each biosphere reserve:

* Baseline inventories of flora and fauna and their uses
* Monitoring
* Preparation of a history of research
* Establishment of research facilities and programs
* Establishment of training and education programs
* Preparation of a management plan which addresses biosphere reserve functions

The action plan also goes beyond the suggestion of limiting recreational use in designated core zones, and states that an objective in the land surrounding the core area is to encourage uses and activities which do not adversely affect the conservation and research functions of the biosphere reserve. The plan states that "Protection in these areas may involve laws or regulations to promote land uses which are compatible with the biosphere reserve." The plan also recommended review of legal instruments to assure the long-term security of biosphere reserves. In 1986, a bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate (S. 2092) which would give biosphere reserves preservation priority in the United States. The bill included the following language:

> "Those units of the National Park System that are, following nomination by the United States, accorded the designation of 'Biosphere Reserve' under the International Man and the Biosphere Program or 'World Heritage Site' by the World Heritage Committee shall receive priority attention and consideration for prompt, heightened resource data collection, monitoring, and resource protection efforts."

The bill also included a provision which would require the Secretary of Interior to review the boundaries of Biosphere Reserves under his authority to determine if those boundaries are sufficient for full U.S. participation in the MAB program. Section 110 (b) states:

> "The Secretary shall review the boundaries of those Biosphere Reserves that are managed under authority of the Department of the Interior to determine if such boundaries are sufficient for full United States participation in the Man and the Biosphere Program. The Secretary shall submit to the Congress within 12 months after the date of enactment of this Act a report which includes--
>
> (1) a description of those Biosphere Reserves covered under this section,
> (2) recommendations for any needed adjustments to Biosphere Reserve boundaries to include federally managed lands contiguous to the protected core areas of National park System units, and
> (3) recommendations for administrative or legislative actions to ensure that multiple uses of such contiguous lands will be protective of such core areas."

This legislative action is consistent with the objectives, priorities and timetable proposed in the Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves. No legislation has been introduced in either the House or Senate so far this year that contains provisions similar to those contained in S. 2092. Any such provisions would likely be contained in park protection legislation which has been introduced in various forms since 1983. In conclusion, despite the current policy of the National Park Service with respect to the Biosphere Reserve program, uncertainty over the future implications of the program for the use of areas such as Voyageurs National Park persists. Any potential advantages that biosphere reserve designation may have for Voyageurs are minor compared to

this uncertainty. It would therefore be prudent for Voyageurs National Park to be removed from any further consideration as a Biosphere Reserve. This would be consistent with the U.S. Forest Service position with respect to the adjacent Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Voyageurs National Historic Trail

The Voyageurs National Historic Trail was included in the Department of Interior's Draft Nationwide Trails Assessment, dated June, 1981. The trail, as proposed, would follow the 350+ mile international water boundary from Lake of the Woods on the west to Lake Superior on the east. The trail would include a major portion of the Voyageurs National Park, and would be subject to the provisions of the National Trails System Act of 1968, as amended in 1980. Major provisions of the Act include:

* Designation of several national trails and selection of others for further study

* Classification of trails, to include the following:

  Recreation trails - to provide a variety of outdoor recreation uses in or reasonably accessible to urban areas

  Scenic trails - to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass

  Historic trails - to follow as closely as possible the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance

* Requirement for a comprehensive management plan for designated historic trails and scenic trails

* Provisions for the acquisition of lands along trail rights-of-way

The final National Trails Assessment, completed in late 1986, recommends no new trails for designation under the National Trails System Act. Initiatives for designation of the Voyageurs Trail will, therefore, likely come from the Congress and/or the state of Minnesota. The state, through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Minnesota Historical Society, support the designation of the international water boundary as a National Historic Trail, and the concept is endorsed in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) being finalized by DNR. The Voyageurs Trail has also received national support from the National Trails Council, U.S. Canoe Association, and the America The Beautiful Fund. A revival of the national trails program is also included in the report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (see chapter 6) which could help give the Voyageurs Trail additional support and momentum.

Aside from the obviously significant feature of the Voyageurs National Trail proposal to extend the federal influence west of Voyageurs National Park through Rainy Lake, Rainy River, and Lake of the Woods, it is unclear what effect the trail would have on the management and use of the Voyageurs National Park itself. In fact, the effect would not be determined until after completion of the management planning process subsequent to designation by the Congress. Under administrative provisions of the Act, motorized use is prohibited in scenic trails but may be allowed in historic trails. Although proposals to date have recommended the Voyageurs Trail for historic rather than scenic designation, it is apparent that the route would qualify under the Act for either designation. Again, as in the case of the Biosphere Reserve Program, the uncertainty created by this potential designation far outweighs any possible advantage that may be perceived by proponents of the proposal. Moreover, designation of an international water boundary pursuant to domestic law would represent another significant step away from the purposes and principles of existing international agreements, and particularly the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, which was intended to guide actions of both governments of Canada and the United States with respect to the waters included in the Voyageurs National Historic Trail proposal. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota Historical Society should, therefore, reevaluate their position with respect to this proposal.

Campsite Development and Management

In July of 1986, the Voyageurs National Park staff published a plan for overnight camping, houseboat use, and day-use for the park. The Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan includes the following major provisions:

* Designation of 351 developed sites in Voyageurs National Park for overnight camping (168 sites), houseboat mooring (159 sites), and day use (24 sites)

* Prohibition of overnight camping in the park except at designated camping sites

* Designation of 24 day-use sites where camping would be prohibited

* Prohibition of day-use at designated camping sites after 2 p.m.

* Prohibition of wood fires except in metal fire-grills at developed sites

* Permit requirements for each overnight trip into the park; permits would be available on a first-come, first-served basis and by advanced reservation; a fee could be required for each permit or reservation made

* Limitation of total onshore overnight use of Voyageurs to 90% of the park's campsite capacity

The plan cites the following reasons for implementing the above regulations:

* To minimize ecological impacts of recreational use

* To protect cultural artifacts in the park

* To carry out the mandate of the approved Master Plan for the park relative to minor and primitive development areas

* To provide visitors with a satisfying recreational experience

* To inform visitors on matters of safety and a variety of other topics

* To reduce conflicts among various user groups

The park superintendent has discretionary authority to impose the type of regulations proposed in the Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan. Under 36 CFR 1.5, the superintendent may "Designate areas for a specific use or activity, or impose conditions or restrictions on a use or activity." Under 36 CFR 2.10 (a), "The superintendent may require permits, designate sites or areas, and establish conditions for camping."

However, a legal requirement exists under P.L. 97-405 (January 3, 1983) to develop and implement a visitor use and facilities plan for Voyageurs National Park. Section 401 (b) of the Act states:

> "The Secretary shall, in cooperation with other Federal, State, and local governmental entities and private entities experienced in the fields of outdoor recreation and visitor services, develop and implement a comprehensive plan for visitor use and overnight visitor facilities for park. The plan shall set forth methods of achieving an appropriate level and type of visitation in order that the resources of the park and its environs may be interpreted for, and used and enjoyed by, the public in a manner consistent with the purposes for which the park was established. Such plan may include appropriate informational and educational messages and materials.
>
> In the development and implementation of such a plan the Secretary may expend funds donated or appropriated for the purposes of this subsection. Effective October 1, 1983, there is authorized to be appropriated for the purposes of this subsection not to exceed $250,000.00, to remain available until expended."

In light of this legal requirement, regulatory proposals for overnight camping, houseboat use, and day-use contained in the Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan appear to be inappropriate and premature. Although the park superintendent has discretionary authority to establish regulations, restrictions, or conditions relative to visitor use and overnight visitor facilities, any such regulatory proposals should appropriately and necessarily be derived from the comprehensive visitor use and facilities plan required by law. It should be emphasized that development of the plan requires the cooperation of other "Federal, State, and local governmental entities and private entities experienced in the fields of outdoor recreation and visitor services."

There seems to be some disagreement regarding the intent of this provision of P.L. 97-405. However, there is little room for disagreement as to what is required under the law, which specifically states "the Secretary shall ..... develop and implement a comprehensive visitor use and facilities plan for the park....." There may be (and should be) discussion as to what ought to be included in such a plan, since the law is not specific in detail on this point. It would, however, certainly seem reasonable to argue that camping, houseboating, and day-use and facilities associated with each of these fall into the category of "visitor use and facilities."

At any rate, regardless of the provisions of P.L. 97-405, a cooperative planning effort involving appropriate agencies and organizations would seem to be a worthwhile endeavor, especially given the implications and controversial nature of some of the regulations proposed in the Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan. The cooperative planning effort for the wilderness study for Voyageurs could serve as a model for the visitor use and facilities plan. This type of a deliberative planning process is particularly appropriate given the fact that there is no immediate or demonstrated need to impose restrictive regulations for Voyageurs. In fact, official visitor use statistics for Voyageurs do not support statements by park management that indicate increasing pressure on campsites and a campsite occupancy rate of 80%. According to Park Service reports, since 1977, when the current statistical method of determining visitor use was instituted at Voyageurs, overnight campsite use has actually declined significantly since the peak year of 1979, and has remained relatively constant over the past five years. The campsite occupancy rate in each of the last five years, based on a 100-day summer season, appears to be 10% or less.

There are also several specific points contained in the Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan that need clarification or correction. First of all, contrary to the statement in the plan that "the park staff has identified all sites in Voyageurs National Park that would be suitable for use as houseboat mooring sites, tent sites, and day-use sites", only those sites that are currently in existence were considered and evaluated for potential use. Therefore, over 95% of the shoreline of the park was automatically eliminated from the evaluation process. It would be logical to conclude that some of these shoreline areas could justifiably be selected on environmental grounds alone. It is unlikely that there was much consideration of the environment and potential site impact given when existing sites were selected for campsites and cabins. These sites were more likely selected based on convenience, ease of access, availability of private land, scenic beauty, and proximity to main routes of travel.

The Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan cites the Master Plan as a basis for proposed actions for the Site Management Plan. However, there are inconsistencies between the two plans. The Site Management Plan, in referencing the Master Plan with respect to Primitive Development Areas, states the "Primitive development areas are single unit camping sites located in the backcountry, on islands in the main lakes, or along the shores of the park's main lakes." The actual language in the Master Plan is "These (Primitive Development) areas will be single unit camping sites generally located in the backcountry, on islands in the main lakes, or along interior lake shores." The Site Management Plan therefore, represents a significant departure from the Master Plan. Also, the Master Plan, under the same section states that "Islands of less than two acres will not be considered suitable for these sites." The Site Management Plan states that "islands that are less then five acres in size are not suitable as sites...." Therefore, approximately 150 islands in the park have been eliminated from consideration as potential sites as a result of this arbitrary change.

Trail Development

The National Park Service is proposing, through a trail development planning process, a system of trails throughout the park, to include hiking trails, cross-country ski trails, and snowmobile trails. Voyageurs' Trail Plan Alternatives was published in 1986 after public workshops were held in three locations in Minnesota. The stated objectives of the trail plan are:

* To promote visitor enjoyment of the park
* To plan trails that blend with the topography and environment and minimize adverse effects on significant cultural and natural resources, including threatened species
* To minimize user conflicts
* To design trails that are cost-effective
* To ensure that trails complement and connect with trails outside the park

The Plan acknowledges the effect of the location and extent of trail development on the economic viability of local communities.

An environmental assessment for the trail plan is currently being prepared by the Park Service and will serve as the basis for a decision on the need for an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. A final trail proposal could be ready for public review by the summer of 1987.

The Park Service "Preferred Alternative" for both summer and winter trails appears to be short-sighted in terms of anticipating the needs of visitors in the future. Any final plan should therefore be flexible enough to allow for modification based on future needs as well as environmental considerations. The selection of a single alternative, whether a Park Service preferred alternative or one of the others, seems too inflexible, and therefore reasonable contingencies should be built into a final proposal. In addition, international trails, such as the ice road from Crane Lake to Lac La Croix, Ontario, should be given special attention.

Aside from the substantive nature of the Trail Plan itself, timing is critical. Given the controversial nature of some of the Plan's provisions, there is potential for further unnecessary delay in the implementation of any trail proposal for Voyageurs. The issue of on-land snowmobile trails in the park has lingered for more than ten years with no immediate resolution in sight. An environmental assessment on snowmobiling in the park was done in 1977 and an Environmental Impact Statement for the Master Plan, which addresses snowmobile use, was done in 1979. An Environmental Impact Statement for the Wilderness Recommendation, which once again addressed the issue of snowmobile use, was done in 1981. And, as indicated, an environmental assessment for the trail plan, which once more addressess the issue of snowmobile use, is currently being prepared and will lead to a decision as to whether another Environmental Impact Statement is needed.

Finally, because of the real potential for litigation in this matter, possibly on the basis of the Endangered Species Act (administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), it would be prudent to recommend close and continuous monitoring of the process by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks which has oversight responsibility for both the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The intent of this over-sight would be to ensure that the integrity of the process is maintained and that a final decision on a plan is made as expeditiously as possible.

Water Levels

The National Park Service has, over the past several years, allocated $1 million to research the effects of water levels on fish and wildlife in the park area. The waters of all but the 26 interior lakes (or 96% of the total surface water within exterior park boundaries) are affected by lake levels. The purpose of the water level study is to analyze the effects of fluctuating waters levels and to use the results of that study as the basis for recommending that the International Joint Commission change the operating limits on the Rainy and Namakan chains of lakes--limits which were established by the Commission in 1969.

There has been, and still is, a great deal of misunderstanding as to the role of the International Joint Commission in "regulating" lake levels in the park region. The park Master Plan states that "The International Joint Commission of Canada and the United States will continue to control water levels of the major lakes within Voyageurs National Park." This is an inaccurate statement. Insofar as control is possible, it is the current prerogative of the Boise Cascade Corporation who owns the dams at International Falls and Kettle Falls. The only authority granted to the International Joint Commission exists under emergency conditions. This authority was granted under the Rainy Lake Convention of 1938, which states:

> "The International Joint Commission, established pursuant to the provisions of the treaty signed at Washington on the 11th day of January, 1909 relating to questions arising between Canada and the United States of America, is hereby clothed with the power to determine when emergency conditions exist in the Rainy Lake watershed, whether by reason of high or low water, and the Commission is hereby empowered to adopt such measures of control as to it may seem proper with respect to existing dams at Kettle Falls, and International Falls, as well as with respect to any existing or future dams or works in boundary waters of the Rainy Lake watershed, in the event the Commission shall determine that such emergency conditions exist."

Based on this Convention, the IJC only has the authority to apply mitigating measures when emergency conditions exist in the basin. Moreover, the Convention did not alter the priorities established by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, which are 1) domestic, 2) navigation, and 3) power production.

It does not appear, therefore, that the IJC has sufficient authority to act upon any recommendation of the Park Service or other resource management agencies based on the effects of water levels on fish and wildlife. Such authority, if deemed advisable and necessary, would appear to require a new international agreement.

There is evidence from agencies on both sides of the border that suggests a strong influence of fluctuating water levels on fish populations in area lakes. There hasn't yet, however, been a clear concensus on what appropriate action to take to resolve the matter.

It would seem logical that the first order of business might be to recognize, by some form of international agreement, the value of recreation in the Rainy Lake Basin. This will appropriately require a re-evaluation of the priorities and objectives of water use in the basin. Until that is done, research performed by the National Park Service and other resource management agencies will be of questionable value.

Fisheries Management

Fisheries management at Voyageurs is complex to say the least, given the multiple jurisdictions involved in the majority of "park waters", and especially given the international influence. All but 4% of the waters within exterior park waters are subject to international considerations as well as to independent management actions of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Although a great deal of expense and effort has gone into researching the effects of water levels on fish populations with the objective of making a recommendation to the International Joint Commission for a change in the operating rule bands, as was mentioned in the discussion on water levels, the Commission does not appear to have the authority to act on recommendations based on the fishery, or on recreation in general. Such authority, it appears, could only be granted by a new international agreement.

Furthermore, it should not be expected that the Park Service recommendation will be based on changes that will necessarily improve the fishery. Park Service policy, as has been discussed, is based on returning to "natural" conditions rather than on any social or economic benefit. A preliminary recommendation for water levels from park staff suggested "approximating" the natural water levels that would occur without the presence of the dams at Kettle Falls and International Falls. This is apparently thought by some to be the best alternative to returning completely to natural conditions which would, among other things, destroy the tourism industry of the region. The main point here is

that policy based on natural conditions (or the approximation thereof) may or may not have a positive effect on the fishery.

The Department of Natural Resources is also suggesting that a rule curve change may be necessary to benefit the fishery. There has been evidence since the late 60's that the fishery on Rainy Lake is influenced by water level regulation, but the Department has not made any formal recommendations on what changes are needed. The Department has, in the last two years, through a "technical committee" with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, been involved in a variety of fisheries issues on border waters. Such a working relationship has existed, on a more informal basis for some time. It is unclear whether the DNR recognizes the relevance of existing international agreements applicable to this matter.

Wildlife Management

The National Park Service has, in recent years, considered and supported the introduction or reintroduction of "native" wildlife, to include caribou, elk, and moose. Such efforts have met with considerable resistance, particularly from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

In 1985, the DNR and the NPS agreed to an interagency technical working group that would investigate the feasibility and desirability of introducing caribou in northern Minnesota. The working group was also to include the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. However, there has been no follow-up on this concept, no substantive meetings have been held, and neither agency appears to be interested in pursuing the matter. In addition, regularly scheduled meetings that were held annually between the two agencies to discuss matters of mutual interest have been discontinued.

More recently, interest in moving an elk herd to the Voyageurs area from northwestern Minnesota has been expressed by several public officials. However, there is no technical basis to determine whether this would be desirable or feasible. Until such basis exists, attempts to introduce or reintroduce wildlife to the area will be fruitless. The National Park Service and Department of Natural Resources should, therefore, pursue their agreement of establishing a joint technical working group to determine the feasibility and desirability of introducing or reintroducing wildlife to the park region. The Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources should be invited to participate in the working group.

The Park Service and DNR should also resume meeting on a regularly sheduled basis (at least annually) to discuss a variety of issues of mutual concern and interest.

Land Acquisition/Land Protection

There are approximately 100 tracts of private land and 80 private landowners remaining in Voyageurs National Park. These tracts total about 3000 acres and, with few exceptions, include shoreline property. Because of the disparity that has existed in land prices over the past 12 years, and especially in recent years, it is difficult to project the cost of acquiring the remaining land in the park. Recent park land sales for relatively comparable shoreline property have ranged from $7/front foot of lakeshore to approximately $250/front foot. There are approximately 150,000 feet of shoreline left in the park, so projections based on the lowest versus the highest prices could range from $1 million to $37.5 million. The cost of purchasing about 74,000 acres of private land to date is $35 million not including administrative costs. The land acquisition ceiling for Voyageurs is $38 million, increased by law in 1983 from the original ceiling of $26 million. Park management has indicated that not all the expenditures to date "count" against the authorization ceiling, since some funds were allocated on the basis of an amendment to the Land and Water Conservation Fund which allows spending up to 10% of the authorized acquisition ceiling annually.

A 1985 district court ruling on land cases in Voyageurs concluded that owners of undeveloped property had in effect suffered a taking by the government and directed the Park Service to negotiate settlement with the owners involved in the suit. About two-thirds of the remaining tracts of private land in the park are undeveloped and therefore potentially affected by the court ruling. Given the implications of acquiring fee title to the remaining lands in the park in terms of cost and park administration, and considering the implications of the recent district court ruling, it is recommended that a thorough review of the Land Protection Plan for Voyageurs be conducted independently of the internal review currently underway.

A comparison of lakeshore sales of island property within and just outside the park on Rainy Lake raises other questions that should be examined in detail. Sale prices over the past 6 years outside the park fall into a narrower range than do prices within the park. Of 17 selected lake properties for which sale price information was available, the average price was just over $40/front foot of shoreline. The lowest price paid was $11/front foot and the highest was $87/front foot, with most prices within a range of $20 to $50/front foot. It is reasonable to assume that this variance reflects the quality of lakeshore sold. It is questionable, however, that quality of lakeshore varies to the degree reflected in prices paid by the National Park Service. A follow-up investigation on this disparity by the General Accounting Office, therefore, seems warranted.

Access and Transportation

Voyageurs National Park is accessible from the four principal resort areas of Crane Lake, Ash River, Kabetogama, and Island View. The principal access roads serving these areas are Forest Highway 29, CH 129 (Ash River Trail), CH 122/123, and TH 11, respectively. These four access roads are directly served by TH 53, a 165-mile major truck highway linking Duluth and International Falls.

In addition, there are two new access roads needed to serve major visitor facilities on Rainy Lake and near Ash River. Boundary changes have recently been made (one legislatively and one administratively) to include these access roads within the park boundary in order that federal funds can be made available to improve these roads.

Final phases of construction are being completed for T.H. 53 and this major park access is expected to be completed by 1989. F.H. 29 serving Crane Lake is about two-thirds completed, C.H. 23/24 serving Kabetogama was upgraded in the last few years, and T.H. 11 serving Island View has been upgraded to 9-ton standard except for a short segment west of the proposed visitor center access road and a 6 mile segment east of International Falls. Funds to upgrade the Ash River Trail have recently been made available on a matching basis under the Federal Highway Bill. Subject to the availability of local, state, and other federal matching funds, the Trail could be completed by 1990. Funds for the Rainy Lake Visitor Center Access Road have just recently been allocated under a park roads provision of the Highway Bill and construction is expected to begin later this summer.

Air service to the park area is provided by Northwest Airlink which operates four to five daily flights to and from Internatonal Falls, and although there is currently no rail transportation, daily bus service is available.

Since there are no roads within the main body of Voyageurs, the principal means of transportation include watercraft, snowmobiles, and float planes. Regularly scheduled boat tours are available through park concession operations, and during winter months, automobile access is possible on ice roads.

Facilities Construction

Major development areas where park facilities are to be constructed (or reconstructed) are located at Black Bay of Rainy Lake, Kettle Falls, West Kabetogama, and near Ash River (formerly referred to us as Kabetogama Narrows). The main park administrative headquarters is located along T.H. 53 in South International Falls, and is operated under a lease agreement with the General Services Administration. A smaller administrative facility operated under a similar arrangement is located at Crane Lake.

An amendment to the park enabling act, signed into law (P.L. 97-405) in 1983, authorized several boundary changes which permitted development and construction of major visitor facilities at Black Bay Narrows and West Kabetogama. An agreement on the purchase of 48 acres of land at Kettle Falls, previously owned by the Boise Cascade Corporation, removed a major obstacle for the rehabilitation of the Kettle Falls Hotel and construction of new lodging facilities.

Since 1983, aggressive lobbying efforts in Washington have resulted in substantial appropriations of construction funds in spite of severe budget constraints. Approximately $5 million has been appropriated for the Rainy Lake Visitor Center Project and $4 million for the Kettle Falls Hotel Project. In addition, about $4 million in federal appropriated funds has been allocated for the improvement of two park access roads. Additional funds from the Park Service and Department of Natural Resources have been spent to start the West Kabetogama Development Project.

An additional $4 million has been requested to complete the Rainy Lake Visitor Center and Kettle Falls Hotel Projects. Funds will also be needed for development near the Ash River community and possibly to implement a Trail Development Plan. Total construction costs for the park could exceed $25 million.

Wilderness

Pursuant to the Park's enabling act and the 1964 Wilderness Act, Voyageurs was required to undergo a study of areas determined to be suitable for designation as Wilderness by the Congress. Such language was routinely written into the legislation for most larger part areas established in the 1960's and '70's.

The Wilderness Study for Voyageurs was completed in 1981, with a determination that almost 100,000 acres (almost half of the park area and two-thirds of the land area) were suitable for designation as Wilderness. No formal action has been taken as a result of that study.

The Citizens' Council, in its deliberations on the issue, opposed the designation on the grounds that the Park Service already had the administrative ability to protect the resources of the park, thereby making designation by Congress unnecessary and inappropriate.

It is worthy of mention that Voyageurs is often thought of as a wilderness park (small 'w'). However, a formal wilderness designation would remove the management flexibility necessary to respond to future needs, and would even preclude the possibility of primitive facilities such as shelters located along ski trails in the park.

It is unclear at this point what effect the report of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (see Chapter 6) will have on wilderness plans for national parks such as Voyageurs.

Promotion and Marketing

Efforts to promote the Voyageurs National Park to date have been piecemeal at best, due primarily to the lack of a coordinated and regional effort involving both the public and the private sector. Since, until recently, there have not been major park facilities in place, aggressive promotion efforts have been viewed by some as premature. With that situation rapidly changing, promotion of the park area is not only necessary but timely. In addition, effective marketing is essential to change an image problem that has plagued the area and maligned it with the adjacent Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

With only limited funds available on a matching basis through the state office of tourism, the best and most appropriate vehicle for promotion funds is the planning money available under a provision of P.L. 97-405, which authorizes $250,000.00 to develop and implement a visitor use and facilities plan for the park. These funds could provide the organization, incentive, and cooperation needed for an effective park promotion program.

Concessions Management

The Voyageurs National Park Enabling Act authorizes the Secretary of Interior to "negotiate and enter into concession contracts with former owners of commercial, recreational, resort, or similar properties located within the park boundaries for the provision of such services at their former location as he may deem necessary for the accomodation of visitors." Of the twelve facilities falling into this category, only one (Kettle Falls) is currently operating under a concessions agreement. The remaining concessions have been acquired by the Service or are no longer operating as businesses.

In addition to concessions contract at Kettle Falls, two concessions permits are required to operate scheduled boat tours on Rainy Lake and the Namakan chain of lakes, respectively. In effect, the Park Service has created a monopoly for this service in order to ensure that the two commercial operators have a reasonable opportunity to have a profitable business.

Other commercial activities, primarily related to boating and the transportation of passengers, are regulated through a third type of concession authorization--the commercial use license. Over 40 such licenses are currently in effect, and include many of the 60 businesses on the edge of the park.

The authority for regulating commercial activity is contained in 36 CFR 5.3 which states the following:

> "Engaging in or soliciting any business in park areas, except in accordance with the provisions of a permit, contract or other written agreement with the United States, except as such may be specifically authorized under special regulations applicable to a park area, is prohibited."

Questions remain over the authority of the Park Service to regulate commerce on "park waters", especially relating to those waters covered under existing international agreements. Questions also remain over the degree to which the Service will attempt to control the commercial activities of the 60 businesses on the "waters edge". Changes in administrative interpretation of commercial activity could influence this question significantly.

Fire Management

The Voyageurs National Park staff, through the draft Wildland Fire Management Plan, proposes to allow lightning-caused fires to burn within designated areas when they can be contained within park boundaries, and further proposes that designated areas be intentionally burned where such burns can be contained within park boundaries. The objectives of the plan are: 1) to allow fire to achieve its natural role, 2) to use fire to accomplish resource management objectives, 3) to protect life, property, and resources from unwanted fire, and 4) to avoid unacceptable effects of fire and fire suppression.

Briefly the plan proposes using fire to help restore or maintain native plant and animal life without having an adverse effect on property, people, and resources within or outside of park boundaries.

A number of agency representatives have responded to the draft plan, and the responses have generally been favorable. Because a number of technical questions were raised in the responses, it would, therefore, appear advisable to hold an interagency meeting on the subject as soon as possible as suggested by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Threats to the Park

A 1980 State of the Parks report to Congress described various threats to units of the national park system both from within and outside park unit boundaries. These threats included air and water pollution, aesthetic degradation, physical removal of resources, exotic encroachment, visitor impacts, and park operations. The report served as the basis for park protection legislation which was introduced initially in 1983 in the form of the "National Park System Protection and Resources Management Act," which included the following provisions:

* Required reports identifying threats both inside and outside boundaries of national park system units, and ongoing and planned management actions to address such threats

* Required reports of legal authorities available for addressing damage and threats emanating from outside park boundaries

* Priority protection for parks designated as "Biosphere Reserves" or "World Heritage Sites"

* Increased authority for the Secretary of Interior on activities within and adjacent to units of the national park system

Similar legislation has been introduced in various forms since 1983, but has never been passed by the U.S. Senate. In addition, there have been attempts to accomplish similar purposes by administrative executive order.

Voyageurs National Park was described in the 1980 State of the Parks report as having 9 threats compared to an average of 24.5 threats for park areas greater than 30,000 acres. In a recent updated report, the number of threats to Voyageurs has been increased from 9 to 44. Only one of these is described as strictly and "internal" threat. The other 43 threats are described as either external or both external and internal.

CHAPTER 6

INFLUENCE OF CURRENT NATIONAL AND STATE POLICY INITIATIVES ON THE VOYAGEURS AREA

A number of initiatives are currently underway at the federal and state level--initiatives that could have significant implications for the future administration of the Voyageurs National Park area. This chapter will briefly examine the recommendations of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, the Commission on Minnesotans Outdoors, the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and the review of the management policies of the National Park Service.

President's Commission on Americans Outdoors

The President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (PCAO) was created by presidential executive order in 1985 to assess the nation's recreation needs through the year 2000. The forerunner to PCAO was the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) which was established in the early 1960's and produced the landmark report Outdoor Recreation for America. This report led to a number of initiatives, including new wilderness systems, national trails and rivers, the creation of a fund (Land and Water Conservation Fund) that has helped purchase millions of acres of local, state and federal recreation lands, and the establishment of a recreation agency (The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service) which existed until it was abolished in 1981. Since that time, the agency's responsibilities have been assumed by the National Park Service.

The PCAO report was intended to be completed by the end of 1986. However, a lawsuit delayed publication of the final report until June of 1987. According to the Draft Final Report of December 8, 1986, the recommendations of the Commission include the following:

* Establishment of Greenways--natural areas where recreation and conservation are the primary uses and values; described as a "giant circulatory system" linking parks, forests, rivers, trails, utility corridors, farms, ranches, deserts, alpine areas, and wetlands across the American landscape

* Inventory of the Nation's remaining relatively undeveloped shoreline; Department of Interior should publish recommendations for action designed to preserve remaining open space and provide access

* Protection of 2000 rivers by the year 2000; the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program should be "reinvigorated"

* Protection and enhancement of recreation on federal lands--expedite land acquisition; stronger partnerships with other federal, state and local agencies; priority protection of natural, cultural and historic resources; establishment of user fees by 1995 to help cover the costs of increased protection efforts

* Reaffirmation by Congress, through the budget process of the roles of federal agencies in managing congressionally designated areas, including the Wilderness Preservation System, Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and the National Trails System

* Protection of Scenic By-ways and Thoroughfares--establishment of a national scenic highway system in cooperation with state and local governments; Congress should establish incentive programs of matching grants; Reaffirmation, better enforcement of the 1965 Highway Beautification Act

* Establishment of growthshaping programs to influence and control growth in order to protect outdoor resources; programs should include acquisition, zoning, and trusts, preferential taxation, impact fees, transfers of development rights, and "greenlining" (combination of all of the above)

* Protection of Scenic Countrysides--establishment of countryside preserves or greenline areas for protection from unplanned growth and development

* Creation of "recreational enterprise zones" near public recreation resources to encourage the development of desirable and supportive private recreation services

* Investments in "zones of influence"-- new authorities to ensure compatible development; creation or perfection of local, state, and national authorities and processes to encourage compatible and necessary investments near or within public recreation resources

* Encouragement of more land trusts--non-profit organizations to work with local communities, states, and regional areas to protect lands having open space, recreational, or ecological importance

* Increased public recreation on private lands--Departments of Interior and Agriculture should establish a task force to make detailed recommendations; state private/public councils should be created; National Code of Ethics should be established in 1987

* Increased outdoor recreation staff--more professionals; more and better research; President should convene a national recreation resources futures workshop; better information systems

* Congressional authorization of a private, non-profit outdoors institution and encouragement of states to do the same; President should appoint a Board of Directors; Board should establish advisory councils; purpose of the institution would be twofold--to award grants and to share information

To fund the above programs and initiatives, the Commission recommends a number of options, to include:

* Establishment of a $1 billion annual trust to replace the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquistion of land and development and rehabilitation of facilities

* Encouragement of similar state trusts

* Consideration of a variety of federal and state funding sources, such as: Outer Continental Shelf Revenues, severence taxes, sale of surplus property, excise taxes, recreation enhancement taxes, summer gas tax, Highway Trust Fund appropriations, National Revenue bonds, higher permit and user fees, general appropriations, recreation fees, registration fees, lotteries, cigarette and liquor taxes, and voluntary contributions.

Commission on Minnesotans Outdoors

The Commission on Minnesotans Outdoors was formed in late 1985 in conjunction with the President's Commission on American's Outdoors. A report on Minnesota's future outdoor recreation needs entitled Recommit to Recreation was

published in 1986 and includes findings and recommendations of the Commission based on hearings around the state and the testimony of 1800 people.

Although the report of the Commission on Minnesotan's Outdoors is not as specific and encompassing, it supports many of the major recommendations of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. The "centerpiece" of the Commission's report is the protection of natural resources and the availability of stable funding for recreation programs. Recommendations include:

* Continuation of the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program

* Continuation of the federal Conservation Reserve Program with more stringent requirements for soil and water conservation

* Establishment of a national emissions control program for acid rain

* Continued enforcement of water pollution control standards

* Acquisition of additional shorelands, conservation of privately owned shorelands, and enforcement of state standards

* Support of PCAO's recommendation for a $1 billion annual trust fund to replace the Land and Water Conservation Fund

* Creation of an additional recreation trust financed by new revenue sources, to provide a consistent, adequate source of funding in the future

* Increased dedicated revenues for recreation

* Acquisition of new recreational lands in key areas

* Funding for a comprehensive recreational marketing effort by the Department of Natural Resources

* Establishment of a statewide Outdoor Recreation Coordinating Council--a small group appointed by the Governor and consisting of private sector representatives and heads of federal, state, regional, and local agencies involved in outdoor recreation

State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which will be completed and published this year, is more specific in its recommendations for future recreation in Minnesota. The Department of Natural Resources has overall responsibility for producing the SCORP report. The report, published approximately every five years is a prerequisite for receiving funds from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) used for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation facilities. A biennial action plan based on the SCORP report shapes the majority of Minnesota's recreation acquisition and development program. Since 1981, the National Park Service has been responsible for the administration of LAWCON funds, and has review authority over the SCORP report.

The most recent draft (1985) of the SCORP report describes the objectives for Voyageurs National Park. The report states that Voyageurs enabling legislation establishes the park's objectives as "preserving the outstanding scenery, flora, fauna, geological conditions, and waterway system which constituted part of the historic route of the Voyageurs who contributed significantly to the opening of the northwestern United States." This statement of overall purpose represents a significant departure from the enabling legislation, which actually states as its purpose "to preserve, for the inspiration and enjoyment of present and future generations, the outstanding scenery, geological conditions, and waterway system which constituted a part of the historic route of the Voyageurs who contributed significantly to the opening of the northwestern United States." The statement of purpose in the SCORP report has deleted the language "inspiration and enjoyment of present and future generation", and has added "flora and fauna" which do not appear in the language of the legislation.

In addition to the above discrepancy, the management objectives and concepts described in the SCORP report depart significantly from the concepts discussed in the approved Master Plan for the park. According to the SCORP report, under national policies management objectives for Voyageurs National Park are: 1) to establish and maintain historic and environmental conditions existing during the time of the Voyageurs, 2) to encourage natural processes to function, and 3) to preserve and manage park lands qualifying as wilderness. The Master Plan for the park identifies four management concepts: 1) consideration of the park in relation to its peripheral zone of influence--its region and its locality, 2) management of natural resources to portray examples of the ecosystems that occurred at the time of the Voyageurs, 3) development of appropriate levels of year-round visitor use, and 4) limitation of automobiles to

peripheral areas, with regularly scheduled boat service between destination points on the main lakes, and internal transportation provided also by boat, snowmobile, skiing and hiking.

Volume II of the SCORP report discusses in detail a number of issues, and provides various alternatives and suggestions for consideration. A number of references to the Voyageurs National Park area are included in this section of the report, to include:

* Establishment and preservation of the historic Voyageurs fur-trading theme, involving the Voyageurs National Park, Superior National Forest, and Grand Portage National Monument (Reference to this specific suggestion is made in the DNR's support of the Voyageurs National Historic Trail, discussed in chapter 5)

* Promotion of Voyageurs National Park in order to reduce pressure on the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness

* Reaching agreements with the federal government to ensure that federal tourism promotions address the Voyageurs National Park and Grand Portage National Monument

* Determination of federal and state responsibility for water access development in the Arrowhead Region

* Development of special plans for the acquisition, development, management, and promotion in far Northern Minnesota, including the BWCA, Voyageurs National Park, Grand Portage National Monument, and the state and federal forest lands to the south

* Increased emphasis by the National Park Service on the preservation and interpretation of history

* Acceleration of development efforts in Voyageurs National Park

Review of National Park Service Management Policies

Chapter II discussed management policies that were established in 1978--policies that have not changed substantially since then. These policies are currently undergoing a comprehensive review, and revisions are expected to be available for public review and comment in 1987.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on special considerations regarding physical characteristics, location of park boundaries, and legislative history, the National Park Service should reevaluate the manner in which Voyageurs National Park is being administered. A more cooperative approach to resource management is necessary and appropriate where resources are shared with other jurisdictions. The comprehensive Visitor Use and Facilities Plan required under provisions of P.L. 97-405 is one vehicle for instituting such a cooperative effort.

The National Park Service is currently attempting to apply an ecosystems approach to management of Voyageurs under fairly rigid guidelines for natural areas. This approach is neither appropriate nor viable, particularly in view of the water-based nature and international character of the park. The majority of "park waters" extend outside park boundaries into Canada, and almost all of the waters are influenced by international considerations. Three international agreements apply to U.S. - Canadian Boundary Waters, which comprise two-thirds of the park's water surface, and all but the small interior lakes, or 4% of the water surface, are subject to international actions or independent decisions by a variety of federal, state, and provincial agencies. The existing "natural zone" classification for all but 1% of the park area, does not recognize the international character of the park and the legitimate interests of other jurisdictions involved. The four major "park lakes" should, therefore be reclassified under the "special use" category. Rainy, Namakan, and Sand Point Lakes should have a separate subzone classification from Lake Kabetogama, which does not meet the technical definition for U.S. - Canadian Boundary Waters. This reclassification would be consistent with the management concepts defined in the Park Master Plan, with management policies of the National Park Service, and with Interior Department policy established in 1985.

Although the Secretary of Interior has recognized the general applicability and appropriateness of the Boundary Waters Treaty, he has acknowledged the Treaty's lack of specific guidance on various matters, including recreation. Therefore, priorities and objectives defined by international agreement should be reevaluated, and recreation should be included among the priorities.

The limit of authority of the International Joint Commission needs to be clearly defined and understood with respect to international boundary matters.

Management objectives for Voyageurs are not clear and not consistent in various planning documents, and in the case of the SCORP report, contrary to the enabling legislation. Management goals and objectives should be clearly defined in the General Management Plan and reflected in other plans.

It is the clear intent of the law to provide "for the inspiration and enjoyment of present and future generations" and totally inappropriate for substitute language to be used in describing the purpose of the park. In addition, inconsistencies between the Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Mangement Plan and the Master Plan should be examined relative to primitive development areas.

Plans or studies that are required by law should take precedence over those that are discretionary or required as a matter of policy. Aside from the question of necessity, implementation of the Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan is inappropriate and premature in light of the requirement for a comprehensive Visitor Use and Facilities Plan.

Discrepancies exist between statements by park management and official Park Service statistics regarding campsite use in Voyageurs. Official Visitor Use statistics should serve as the basis for policy decisions and implementation of appropriate regulations.

Designations of the park area under the Man in the Biosphere Program, and the National Trails Systems Act would create unnecessary uncertainty and confusion regarding administration of the park. In addition, these designations are not necessary to protect park resources, and existing international agreements should serve as the basis for "linkage" and discussions with Canada.

The Trail Development Plan for Voyageurs needs special attention if it is to be implemented within a reasonable period of time. Because of the potential role of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in this matter, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks should oversee the planning process.

Primary access roads to the park are well along in development. Several remaining segments need improvement, including the Crane Lake Road, Ash River Trail, and T.H. 11 east of International Falls. In addition, final obstacles need to be removed to allow construction of the new access road to the Rainy Lake Visitor Center. Additional boat access is needed on Rainy Lake to complement access provided at the Visitor Center site. Where possible and appropriate, trails for snowmobiling, skiing, biking, and hiking should provide access from surrounding communities to park facilities.

Special cooperative arrangements between the Park Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources need to be made to deal with fish and wildlife management issues. An interagency wildlife task force should be established and regularly scheduled meetings between the two agencies should be resumed. An initial meeting could be held to discuss the proposed Fire Management Plan.

The disparity in prices being paid for lakeshore property inside and just outside the park appear to be greater than what might reasonably reflect differences in the quality of the lakeshore. The General Accounting Office should investigate this disparity. In addition, the Land Protection Plan for the park should be reevaluated in view of a recent court decision regarding undeveloped property in Voyageurs.

Aggressive efforts to obtain funds for park facilities have been successful and should continue until development is completed. About half the necessary funds to complete development have been appropriated during the past four years.

A coordinated promotion and marketing effort for the park is still needed. The most appropriate vehicle for this effort appears to be the comprehensive Visitor Use and Facilities Plan required by P.L 97-405.

Intentions of the Park Service with respect to regulation of commercial activity need to be clarified and explained. This matter can also be addressed through the Visitor Use and Facilities Plan.

The recent National Resources Assessment and Action Plan for Voyageurs should be reviewed. The increase in the number of reported threats to Voyageurs from 9 to 44 needs to be addressed and explained in detail.

Implementation of the recommendations of the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors and the Commission on Minnesotans Outdoors should be monitored for their impact on the Voyageurs National Park area. Implementation of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan should also be monitored, and the Plan should be modified in order that the purpose and objectives of Voyageurs National Park are in conformance with the enabling law and the Master Plan.

The review of National Park Service management policies should be monitored closely, and formal comment should be provided where and when it is appropriate.

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