

## Changed Conditions

A windstorm swept through the BWCAW on July 4, 1999 causing trees to blow down in over 350,000 acres of the one million acre wilderness. In total, approximately 477,000 acres on the Superior National Forest were impacted by straight-line winds in excess of 90 miles per hour during the extreme storm event.

On the Forest, the majority of the uprooted and broken-off trees are in a 4 to 12-mile wide and 30-mile long swath within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). The amount of fuel in blowdown areas increased from 5 to 10 times pre-storm amounts. As a result, wildfires in blowdown areas have the potential to start more easily, grow more quickly under a wider range of weather conditions and become difficult to control more quickly than wildfire outside of the blowdown. The probability has been greatly increased for a wildfire to exit the BWCAW, threatening public safety, and damaging structures.

The storm changed the wilderness for years to come and has created the opportunity for new experiences as well as new risks for visitors. Due to the potential fire danger associated with the blowdown, fire restrictions may be in effect. Check on current fire restrictions just prior to your trip, as you may be required to use a camp stove. In addition, there are areas in the BWCAW where it is impossible to hang your food pack due to the lack of standing trees. It is strongly recommended that you pack food items in specially designed bear-resistant food storage containers.

## What You Can Do To Help

### ✓ HELP TO REDUCE THE RISKS OF FIRE IN THE BWCAW

Choose a camp stove instead of a campfire. If a campfire is allowed and there is little or no wind, build it in the fire grate and keep it small. Keep flammable materials and firewood far away. Drown the fire with water until all embers, rocks and sticks are wet. Stir the remains and add more water until the fire is extinguished and cool to the touch. Do not bury coals as they can smolder and break into flames much later. Be sure the campfire is completely extinguished before you leave, even if for a short time!

### ✓ WATCH FOR HAZARDS

There may be hazards due to downed and weakened trees and trees may continue to fall. Stay alert and heads up, fallen or leaning trees may snap back unexpectedly when cut. Avoid camping and walking under damaged and leaning trees. Root wads above the ground may also be unstable and dangerous.

### ✓ KNOW ABOUT FIRE RESTRICTIONS

There may be fire restrictions in all or part of the BWCAW. These are for your safety and to reduce the threat of large, dangerous wild-

fires. Before entering the wilderness, please check on fire restrictions. Contact any Superior National Forest District Office or forest headquarters, (218) 626-4300, or check the web site at [www.fs.fed.us/r9/superior](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/superior). Protect and enjoy your National Forest.

### ✓ STAY ALERT FOR FIRES

There is a significant increase in the likelihood of fires in the blowdown area as a result of the storm. Wilderness visitors can expect:

- Wildfires that start and spread, even in wet conditions
- Wildfires that burn more intensely and may spread rapidly
- Wildfires that easily jump barriers such as small lakes and streams
- Increased risk of being trapped by a wildfire with difficult escape routes

## If You See or Smell Smoke, Don't Panic

If you encounter a wildfire as you travel in the BWCAW follow these steps:

### 1. WATCH THE WEATHER

**WIND** Most fires travel east and north. Make sure you have a safe route to follow in case wind direction changes. Embers can blow more than a mile, possibly starting new fires.

**EVENING HUMIDITY** As humidity increases in the early morning and late evening, fire activity may decrease. Travel may be safer at these times.

**TALL SMOKE PLUMES** indicate a very hot fire. If you see a tall smoke plume upwind of you, seek a point of refuge, such as a lake.

### 2. MAKE A NEW PLAN

Look at maps, alternative routes and your proximity to a large body of water.

Stay close to water. If there is a safe way around the fire, with broad expanses of water, consider traveling from the area.

If you must travel through burned areas, watch for burning stump holes and hot embers. Burned trees can fall easily.

### 3. FIND A SAFE PLACE

If you feel threatened, get on a large lake.

Stay upwind, but be aware that large fires can burn unpredictably in any direction.

If the fire is upon you, take your canoe into the water. Put on your life jacket, paddle to the middle of a lake, tip over your canoe and go under it. You can breathe the cool, trapped air under the canoe until the fire passes.

## PRESCRIBED BURNING: Fuel Reduction in the BWCAW

To respond to the increased fire danger in blowdown areas of the wilderness, the Forest Service is conducting a fuels reduction program of prescribed burning. Prescribed burning of 75,000 acres in blowdown within the BWCAW began in fall of 2001 and will continue for 5 to 7 years at a rate of 5,000 to 20,000 acres per year. The primary goal of the project is to reduce the risk of wildland fire exiting the BWCAW and harming life and property. Our objective is to accomplish this goal while being sensitive to ecological and wilderness values.

Prescribed burning will continue to be a valuable tool to meet other management objectives on the Superior National Forest even after we address the fire risk created by the July 4th, 1999 storm. Fire is a key part of the ecology of the region. As we complete fuel treatment in the blowdown we will be able to use managed wildfire in the BWCAW without risk to people outside of the Wilderness.

There are a limited number of days each year with the right conditions for prescribed burning. By taking advantage of these opportunities to use prescribed burning to reduce fuel loads in the blowdown, we can reduce the risk of uncontrolled wildfires and possible property loss in the future.

## What is prescribed burning?

Prescribed burns are fires lit by qualified personnel under specific conditions to achieve specific management objectives.

- They are used to achieve a number of objectives, such as reducing the risk of wildfires by reducing fuel concentrations, improving wildlife habitat, and preparing seedbeds for growing new trees.
- Site-specific burn plans are developed for each prescribed burn.
- Planning begins months in advance with multiple reviews and input from several types of resource specialists.
- The final burn plan includes measures to protect sensitive resources as well as a step-by-step plan to light the fire, hold the control line, conduct mop-up, and evaluate the results.

## Why prescribe burn in blowdown?

- The blowdown created an extreme risk for people who live, work, and recreate on the Forest. We are taking steps to reduce the risk for a catastrophic wildfire.
- The purpose of fuel treatment in the blowdown is to reduce the continuity of fuel that allows a wildfire to spread rapidly.
- Within the BWCAW, prescribed burn units will be strategically located in the blowdown area in order to slow the rate of spread of potential wildfires and to reduce the risk of a wildfire exiting the Wilderness.

## What happens during prescribed burns?

- Part of the preparation for a prescribed burn may include clearing control lines, establishing helispots (temporary landing places for helicopters) if required, and scheduling back-up crews and equipment. Water and foam may be sprayed along control lines to “pre-treat” these areas so they do not burn as easily. In the BWCAW, most of this work will be conducted through non-mechanized means.
- Public notification and coordination with other agencies is also part of preparation.
- Prescribed burns are usually ignited either by hand crews on the ground with drip torches or explosives, or by air with a helicopter or airplane, or a by a combination of these methods.
- Following ignition, fire crews monitor the progress of the burn, patrol to observe behavior of the fire and take actions, when needed, to make sure that the fire stays within the predetermined unit boundaries.
- After the unit has burned, fire crews mop-up (put out hot spots) and patrol the area to make sure the fire is out.

## How could prescribed burning affect my BWCAW experience?

Prescribed burns are being scheduled to avoid higher use areas during peak usage in order to minimize the impact the prescribed burns may have on visitors to the BWCAW. However, if you are in the BWCAW during a prescribed burn you may be affected in the following ways:

- Some areas will be closed during prescribed burns. Closures will generally last only five to six days. Some may be shorter or longer depending on weather conditions. The areas will remain closed until the fire staff indicates that hazards have been reduced to acceptable levels.
- If a BWCAW entry point is closed and an alternative entry point is not available, reservation and use fees will be refunded.
- You may notice sights that you are not used to, such as vegetation that has been cleared from control lines, heavy aircraft traffic, and smoke. In the BWCAW, some use of motorized and mechanized tools will be used to ignite the fire, secure control lines, and to mop up. An evaluation of the minimum tool needed to meet fuel reduction objectives is part of planning for every prescribed burn in the BWCAW.
- The prescribed burns will impact some campsites, portages, and trails. These will be rehabilitated after prescribed burns.
- Wherever possible, natural fuel breaks will be used, but you may see some constructed control lines.
- You might hear sounds that you are not expecting, especially in the Wilderness, such as aircraft overhead and motorized water pumps.
- There may also be more Forest Service personnel in the Wilderness than you are used to encountering.
- Travel routes could be changed during prescribed burns. National Forest personnel may escort you through an adjacent area while burning is in progress.

## Emergency Numbers

In case of emergency, or if search and rescue assistance is needed, contact the nearest county sheriff's office, or call 911.

**Lake County Sheriff —Ely/Isabella area**  
800-450-8832 or 218-834-8385

**Cook County Sheriff —Grand Marais/Tofte area**  
218-387-3030

**St. Louis County Sheriff —Ely/Cook area**  
218-365-3344

Cell phone and radio coverage is limited in the Wilderness.

## Reminders for Permit Pick-up

- Bring your confirmation letter
- Bring Golden Access, Golden Age or Seasonal Fee Cards, if applicable
- Bring identification
- Permits may ONLY be picked up by trip leader or alternate trip leader. Person that picks up the permit must be with the group for the duration of the trip.
- Permit must be picked up at the location listed on the confirmation letter or at a Forest Service issuing station.
- Although permit issuing hours are from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, check with your permit pick-up location to confirm their specific hours of operation. Allow enough time for your group to view a short video at the issuing station.
- Permits can only be picked up the day before or the day of entry and no earlier.

## If you have questions about your reservation contact:

BWCAW Reservation Center  
P.O. Box 462 • Ballston Spa, NY 12020

(877) 550-6777 (toll free)  
TDD: (877) TDD-NRRS (toll free)  
FAX: (518) 884-9951  
WEB SITE: [www.bwcaw.org](http://www.bwcaw.org)

For additional questions about travel in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness please contact the Superior National Forest at (218) 626-4300.

## For information on Quetico Provincial Park in Canada please contact:

District Manager, Ministry of Natural Resources  
Atikokan, Ontario POT 1 CO  
(807) 597-2735

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# Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness



*What To Know Before You Go*



USDA—FOREST SERVICE  
Superior National Forest

# We are Visitors

*A paddle dipping into the water...*

*The splash of a beaver tail...*

*The echoing call of a loon...*

*A northern sun setting on a glassy lake...*

*Tall pines whispering in the wind...*

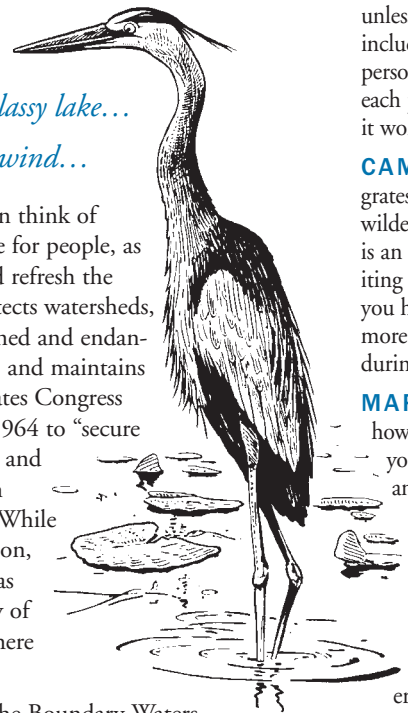
**Ah,** Wilderness. We often think of wilderness as a place for people, as areas to renew and refresh the soul. However, wilderness also protects watersheds, serves as critical habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife, improves air quality, and maintains biological diversity. The United States Congress established the Wilderness Act in 1964 to “secure for the American People of present and future generations the benefit of an enduring resource of Wilderness.” While we may each have our own definition, Congress defines Wilderness as areas where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by people; where people visit, but do not remain.

Over one million acres in size, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) contains hundreds of lakes and rivers, has 1200 miles of canoe routes and is home to abundant plants and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. With over 200,000 people visiting per year, it is one of the most heavily used wilderness areas in the country.

There is a delicate balance here. As you plan your trip to the BWCAW, remember that the steps you take today to preserve this area will benefit not only you, but also future generations. Please enjoy and take good care of this precious resource.

*“For me and for thousands with similar inclinations, the most important passion of life is the overpowering desire to escape periodically from the clutches of a mechanistic civilization. To us, the enjoyment of solitude, complete independence, and the beauty of undeveloped panoramas is absolutely essential to happiness.”*

—Bob Marshall



## Be Prepared

Be sure to pack the following items to ensure a safe trip through the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness:

**LIFE JACKETS** Always wear your life jacket—it won't work unless you wear it. Minnesota State law requires all watercraft, including canoes, to have one wearable U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) on board and readily accessible for each person in the watercraft. If you capsize, stay with your canoe—it won't sink!

**CAMP STOVE** Campfires are allowed only within the steel fire grates at developed campsites or as specifically approved on your wilderness permit. However, as a result of the 1999 windstorm there is an increased potential danger for wildfires and fire restrictions limiting open campfires may be put into effect. You'll want to be sure you have a camp stove with you. Additionally, camp stoves heat up more quickly, have less impact than a campfire, and come in handy during rainy weather.

**MAP AND COMPASS** Bring a map and compass and know how to use them. Current detailed maps are essential to finding your way through the BWCAW. Keep your map in front of you and refer to it often.

**FIRST AID KIT** Bring along some basic first aid supplies. It is also a good idea to have some basic knowledge of first aid procedures. **Do not rely on a cell phone to bring help to you in an emergency.** Having a cell phone cannot substitute for knowing how to handle an emergency in a wilderness setting. Additionally, many areas of the BWCAW lack cell phone coverage and you may not be able to place a call at all.

**WATER PURIFICATION** Although northern lakes may look clean and pure, there is a problem with *Giardia lamblia*, a water parasite that can cause life-threatening intestinal illness. All drinking water should be treated by using a purifier with a filter specifically designed to remove *Giardia lamblia*, a chemical treatment specifically designed to kill *Giardia lamblia*, or by first boiling the water—bring to a full boil for at least 3–5 minutes, then let stand until cool enough to drink.

## Before You Leave Home

Leave a trip itinerary with someone at home including:

- Trip leader's name
- Entry point and date
- Exit point and date
- Make of car(s) driven and license number(s)
- Number of people in the group
- Number of canoes or boats
- Name of outfitter (if applicable)

The Forest Service does not automatically initiate searches if a group doesn't exit as planned. If someone is concerned because you are late returning from your trip, they should contact the County Sheriff's office.

## Wilderness Hazards

Wilderness travel offers great personal freedom, but it also imposes a requirement for self-reliance and good judgement. There are risks associated with wilderness travel. You will be on your own; help will not be close at hand. By using common sense and thinking about potential hazards before you begin, you can greatly increase your chances for a safe wilderness trip. The following are just a few of the hazards to be aware of while traveling in the BWCAW:

**WEATHER** Weather can change suddenly. If you canoe close to shore it will lessen the chance that you will be caught by these sudden changes on the open water. Get off the water if a storm threatens—lightning, wind and rain may occur.

**RAPIDS** Portages are there for a reason—use them! Generally, rapids in the BWCAW are not safe to “run.” Running water has a great deal of power and can be very deceptive. Areas above and below waterfalls may look safer than they actually are. Powerful currents can pull swimmers under the water and trap them there, or sweep them close to or over dangerous waterfalls. Fast moving water can also push swimmers and boats into obstacles that can cause harm such as rocks and logs. Even with lifejackets on, rapids are dangerous. Please swim only in calm water far from rapids and falls. **Although some risk is inherent in wilderness travel, risky behaviors can, and have, cost lives in the BWCAW.**

**HYPOTHERMIA** Prevent hypothermia by dressing in layers that can be added as it gets cooler, including a waterproof outer layer so you can stay dry. Watch for warning signs of hypothermia, including uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, lack of coordination and poor concentration. If hypothermia occurs, get the victim into a shelter out of the wind and remove wet clothes. Give fluids and food for a conscious victim and have them rest until thoroughly warmed.

## Wilderness Rules and Regulations

**WILDERNESS PERMITS** You must enter the BWCAW at the entry point and on the entry date shown on your permit. You may not re-enter on a different date using the same permit. Permit stubs become invalid when the trip leader exits the wilderness. Only the designated trip leader or alternates may pick up the permit. The person that picks up the permit must be with the group for the duration of the trip.

**GROUP SIZE** Nine (9) people and four (4) watercraft are the maximum allowed in your party. You may not exceed this limit at any time or anywhere (including on water, portages, and campsites) in the BWCAW. Smaller groups increase your wilderness experience and decrease the impact.

**CONTAINERS** Cans and glass bottles are not allowed. Containers of fuel, insect repellent, medicines, personal toilet articles, and other items that are not food or beverage are the only cans and bottles you

may bring with you. Food may be stored in plastic containers, but they must be packed out with you.

**CAMPSITES** Camp only at Forest Service-designated campsites that have steel fire grates and wilderness latrines, or within designated Primitive Management Areas as specifically approved on your wilderness permit. Make camp early in the day to ensure finding an available campsite. You may camp up to fourteen (14) consecutive days on a specific site. Keep dogs under control. The use of metal detectors is prohibited—archaeological sites are protected by law.

**CAMPFIRES** Campfires are only allowed within the steel fire grates at developed campsites or as specifically approved on your wilderness permit. If you build a fire, burn only dead and down wood found lying on the ground. Collect firewood away from campsites by paddling down shore and walking into the woods where it is more abundant. You eliminate the need for an axe if you only gather small pieces of dead and down wood that can be easily broken by hand or cut with a small folding saw. It is illegal to cut live vegetation for any reason. Drown all fires with water anytime you are away from your camp; stir the ashes until they are cold to the touch with a bare hand. Do not burn trash – it releases harmful chemicals into the environment. Please pack out everything you bring with you.

**TOILET FACILITIES AND WATER QUALITY** Use toilet facilities at existing campsites. If hiking, dig a small hole six to eight inches deep, at least 150 feet or more from the water's edge, in which to bury human waste. Bathe and wash dishes at least 150 feet from lakes or streams. Soaps pollute—even biodegradable soaps. Dispose of fish remains well away from shorelines, campsites, trails, and portages.

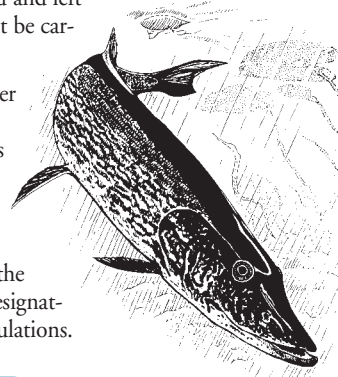
**STORING WATERCRAFT** Only watercraft and equipment used in connection with the current visit may be stored and left unattended. All equipment and personal property must be carried out with you at the end of each trip.

**PORTAGES** Portage wheels are permitted only over the following: International Boundary, Four Mile Portage, Fall-Newton-Pipestone and Back Bay Portages into Basswood Lake, Prairie Portage, and Vermillion Lake Portage.

**MOTORS** Your wilderness permit must specifically authorize motorized use if you plan to use a motor in the BWCAW. Motorized watercraft are allowed only on designated lakes. Check with the Forest Service for specific regulations.

## Minnesota DNR Fishing, Hunting and Watercraft Regulations

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources welcomes you to the BWCA Wilderness. As a partner with the USDA Forest Service, the State of Minnesota is actively involved in the management of the BWCAW. Minnesota Conservation Officers



enforce the regulations concerning boating, water, hunting, fishing. The following regulations are provided to assist you in planning your trip.

**CANOE AND BOAT REGISTRATIONS** Minnesota requires all watercraft to be registered and honors all state watercraft registrations. If your state does not require a canoe to be registered, you must either register your canoe in your state as a motorized craft or license the canoe in Minnesota. Canoes can be registered at the DNR License Center, 500 Lafayette Road, Box 26, St. Paul, MN 55155-4026. Phone 651-296-2316. (Minnesota toll-free) 800-285-2000. Plan ahead; local license bureaus may not be open on weekends.

**FISHING** There are several different seasons, limits, and regulations depending upon the lakes you are fishing in the BWCAW. The Minnesota Fishing Regulations booklet, available from the Minnesota DNR and license agents throughout the state, detail the differences.

**FISHING LICENSES AND TROUT STAMPS** Fishing licenses are required to fish the BWCA Wilderness. Trout stamps are required, in addition to your fishing license, when fishing in any trout lake or stream. Your License must be in your possession when fishing.

**EQUIPMENT** Only one line is allowed (in open water) per licensed angler and only a single lure may be attached. Unattended or set lines are not allowed.

**DON'T TAKE OR KEEP FISH THAT MAY SPOIL** Keeping fish in warm conditions is difficult. Wanton waste is a serious violation. Returning some of your catch to the water unharmed assures tomorrow's trophy fishing.

### LIMITS AND POSSESSION OF FISH

Daily and possession limits are the same in Minnesota, except for yellow perch which has a daily limit of 20 and a possession limit of 40. Take note that fish eaten for a shore lunch count toward your daily limit.

### TRANSPORTATION OF FISH

Conservation Officers must be able to count and identify your catch. Fish must be transported in different ways depending on the species. Please refer to the Minnesota Fishing Regulations for more information.

### HUNTING

Hunting is allowed in the BWCAW under Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Hunting Regulations.

**WATERCRAFT LIGHTS** Motorized watercraft must have the standard combination of red and green bow lights and a 32 pt. white stern light. Non-motorized watercraft must have a lantern or flashlight that shall be exhibited. Lights must be displayed from sunset to sunrise.

**ALCOHOL OR NARCOTICS** Operation of a motorized watercraft under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal.

## Camping with Bears

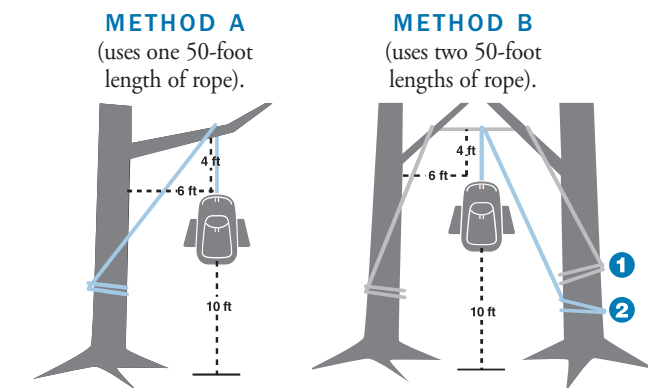
Keep a clean campsite. Never eat or store food in your tent. Reduce the chance of a bear visiting your site by hanging your food pack, as well as garbage and anything that has a strong or sweet odor (soap, toothpaste, etc.). This includes island sites since bears are good swimmers.

Some bears overcome their fear of humans and approach campsites looking for food. Most bears will be scared off by campers making noise (shouting, banging pots, or throwing fist-sized rocks at the bear, etc.).

A very persistent bear may be discouraged by spraying Capsaicin (pepper spray) into its eyes.

In the rare instance that a bear refuses to leave or becomes aggressive, you may want to move to another site.

Use one of these methods to keep your food bear-safe:



### METHOD C (bear-resistant food storage containers).

There are areas in the BWCAW where it is impossible to hang your food pack due to the lack of standing trees. It is strongly recommended that you pack food items in specially designed bear-resistant food storage containers.

