

Fall/Winter 1999 Newsletter

CWCS

Conservationists With Common Sense

Preserving access to and multiple-use of public lands & waters

Why CWCS continues to fight: *“(We will) embark on a 10 year campaign to get every single motor out of the Boundary Waters”* – Brian O’Neill, quoted in May 20, 1998 Mpls. Star Tribune

Snowmobile Ban In All National Parks:

CWCS wrote a letter to Senator Trent Lott asking him to stop any legislation that would move forward any snowmobile ban in the national parks. CWCS requested a common sense approach to this important issue.

Noting that this proposed ban had no environmental impact study conducted on any national park or any public input, CWCS urged Senator Lott to consider language that would include: 1) The National Park Service will prepare management plans for appropriate education and enforcement of existing regulations. 2) The National Park Service will conduct studies on the impact of snowmobile use in parks to be used in the future to guide management decisions.

CWCS requested assurance of continued snowmobile use in the 42 units of the National Park System throughout the country under the same rules that were in place on 1-1-00 prior to the ban. CWCS also noted that Minnesota is home to two domestic snowmobile manufacturers, Polaris and Arctic Cat. These two companies employ thousands of people. They have been working with the Environmental Protection Agency to develop more environmentally friendly snowmobiles and have demonstrated a willingness to continue working with the federal government in the future on new missions regulations.

Chain of Lakes Permit Issue:

CWCS has been in contact with the Forest Service in regard to the Chain of Lakes permit quotas. From a past copy of a letter to the Forest Service, from then Sen.Grams:

"While I appreciate the demands the July 4 storm has placed on both your budget and your time, I find it difficult to believe this would in any way justify neglecting the need to resolve the "chain of lakes" problem. Your office pledged to me and to many property owners that it would review and act on this matter **prior to the 2000 operating season**. Your assurances led many in the region to accept a difficult 1999 season anticipating a resolution prior to 2000."

It is ridiculous for this process to have taken so long, especially when it is a problem that even the USFS admits needs attention. The current USFS timeline will allow two permit seasons to pass before the problem can be addressed.

The EIS process takes so long, and the USFS has moved so slowly, that nothing will be changed this year according to them. In spite of the fact that the USFS can adjust permit numbers at any time, they have been unwilling to come up with a temporary plan that would address the current situation and that could be fine tuned later.

It isn't too late to act **NOW** for the 2001 season. CWCS asks all of its supporters to contact James Sanders, Superior National Forest Supervisor regarding this matter. The address is: Superior National Forest, 8901 Grand Ave. Place, Duluth, MN 55808-1102.

— — —

The BWCA Blowdown Dilemma: by Bill Hamm

I intentionally use the word dilemma to describe the political aftereffects of the July 4th 1999 storm that leveled over a half million acres of land in Northern Minnesota. Enviro-extremists have used our court system to stop the Forest Service from taking reasonable actions to reduce the future fire load all across the affected area. A "Green" group and a Judge from outside our area have turned what should have been a local discretionary decision into a life threatening fire hazard for locals and tourists alike.

The largest percent of damage occurred in the Superior National forest and the Boundary Waters. Within a week of the storm, the Forest Service correctly used its discretionary authority to begin massive cleanup efforts in areas outside the wilderness area north of Grand Marais, MN. Had the same declaration of need been made in the other three districts of the Superior National Forest, and turned control over to district leadership, our attempt to salvage and clean up this mess would be completed before arsons or Mother Nature does that for us. Forest service employees who should have immediately been involved in cleaning operations, (a standard highest priority issue in all profitable forests), seem to have had no idea why the foot dragging by their leadership was occurring.

From years of experience as a contracting forester, it is standard procedure in all other forest management operations to immediately begin assessment of the damage. Plans for cleanup and salvage when such a freak of nature occurs are also implemented. This planning did not occur the way it should have anywhere but in certain parts of the Grand Marais district. This issue should have been immediately turned over to local district leadership for efficiency and common sense accountability.

The process now in place requires an E.A. (Environmental Assessment) from each district, possibly from every potential salvage site. In January, public input on this issue was held. The Forest Service employee has suggested that the end of May 2000 as the most optimistic point at which salvage could begin in remaining districts. Setting up salvage of this wood will be very difficult for the loggers. First, fallen wood has a shelf life of sorts. Water damage due to staining and wood-boring insects will reduce salvage value of this timber on a daily basis. Second, local contractors are going to find it near impossible to finance or plan for something that may or may not happen, coupled with a time frame that dictates profitability.

This whole fiasco could easily be viewed as an attack on common sense and is clearly designed to undermine the economic profitability factors that would make cleanup and salvage possible. Forest management's dragging of their feet puts all of us in potential danger of fire and the forest at high insect devastation risk.

More on the July 4th Blowdown: by Jim Hofsommer

Over the past six months, much ado has been made over the havoc wreaked in the BWCAW from the July 4, 1999 storm. While the statistics are unbelievable of the destruction visited upon this area, perhaps there is something good that can come out of all this devastation. When the dust settles, maybe it will be clearer who the real conservationists in the state are.

Numerous editorials, petitions and hundreds of citizens have called for a speedy salvage of the 25 million downed trees that so far are benefiting no one. But all these voices seem to be falling on deaf ears.

You see, this is 'wilderness.' No motors, no machinery, no chainsaws, and don't even think of bringing a skidder into this pristine wilderness. The only problem is - it isn't very pristine anymore. It's more like a flattened bamboo patch where King Kong flew into a funk on a very bad day. And if (or when) this jungle of drying and rotting wood torches off, it'll look more like a moonscape than anything resembling pristine. Even now, it's such a mess that should a fire break out, the Forest Service has said they wouldn't even consider sending ground troops in to fight it.

Why is this \$300 million pile of wood just lying there and not a wheel is turning to harvest it? Note: This is wilderness! The deep ecology camp looks at this area like a sacred Indian burial ground, and to allow machinery in there for any reason is blatant sacrilege. Logic, science and economics be damned - anything with a spark plug shalt not enter therein.

Even following the July storm, a bitter debate broke out whether to use chainsaws or tomahawks - just to search for survivors. Can you believe it? This

whole dark side of the equation was something they forgot to tell you when they designated this area as 'wilderness.' And just think, Clinton is tying up millions of acres more with his roadless initiative!

Gunflint Inspection:

In November, CWCS board member Nancy McReady and her husband Doug to Grand Marais. Kawishiwi District Soils Specialist Bob Kari and Wildlife Specialist Melissa Grover chauffeured us down the fifty miles of the Gunflint Trail. Forest Service soils, timber, fire and habitat specialists, including Gunflint District Ranger Jo Barnier. The extensive damage caused by the July storm was evident along stretches of the Gunflint. Trees lying flat on the ground and some broke off, leaving a thirty-foot stump. We visited several of the timber salvage areas. Where timber salvage had been completed, neat piles of eight-foot logs waited to be hauled to the mills. Remaining slash was pushed into piles, ready for burning.

At a couple of sites the slash piles were burning. A burning ember had been carried to the broken off top of a thirty-foot stump fifty yards away from one burn pile. The ember ignited the stump like a torch. Fire jumper Timo Rova, along with us, spotted his crew and had them go to the site to cut the burning snag down. The danger of future prescribed burns, both in and out of the Boundary Waters, was evident. Even in the most ideal situation, with damp ground and calm winds, the updraft of a fire can carry burning embers away from the area. A controlled fire could very easily become an inferno.

Seeing the devastation of one summer storm definitely brought home the eminent danger of fires to come. Hardly one tenth of the area has been cleared of the trees that will fuel summer fires. Thankfully, the Forest Service has decided to extend the salvage period. This is necessary to help in profitable timber salvage and protect the lives and property of those who have chosen to make the doorstep of this wilderness their home and livelihood, not just their playground.

BWCAW Permit

Check with local resorts and outfitters as to whether there is a fire ban in effect for the area you plan on visiting before you begin your trip. Fire danger will be extremely high in the Boundary Waters for the next several years. There may be a need to bring a camp stove for cooking and additional clothing to stay warm. Reservations are still being made, and this year, applications are being accepted over the Internet. For more information about BWCAW reservations, check <http://www.bwcaw.org>. For general BWCAW information, including storm damage reports and photos, visit the Superior National Forest website at: <http://www.snf.toofarnorth.org>

Minnesota State Land Swap in Works:

The MN State DNR is pushing to trade state lands within Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness for federal land in Superior National Forest. Local officials opposed a Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) buy out of the 120,000 acre inholdings and instead want a land exchange based on one that recently took place in Utah.

Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt announced a major deal in which Utah will swap isolated parcels of state land for blocks of BLM land. The deal will generate hundreds of millions for Utah schools and will be added to a wilderness bill that UT Rep. Jim Hansen is pushing in Congress. They are looking to Congress or the President to push a swap based on equal value, whereby 3-4 acres of developable land outside the wilderness would be traded for 1 inside. Most of the state lands in the BWCA are lakeshore and have a higher value.

New Wolf Plan Proposed:

Minnesota Department of Natural Resource has come up with a new wolf management proposal. The plan was designed to satisfy ranchers and farmers by allowing them greater leeway in dealing with wolves harassing their livestock and pets.

Wolf advocates were preparing a full attack without knowing the details. Activists would like to see the wolf stay under federal protection. Environmentalists say the plan is vague and gives too much discretion to landowners, feeling some would shoot wolves for sport.

The proposal divides the state into two management areas: an agriculture zone and a wolf zone. Within the agricultural zone, landowners could kill wolves at any time to protect property. Outside agriculture areas, including much of the northern part of the state, ranchers could kill wolves if they were caught pursuing, attacking or killing livestock.

According to a DNR, the legislation is needed this year because until the state has a plan in place, the wolf won't be removed from the federal endangered species list. In Minnesota, wolves have been down-listed from endangered to threatened, so conservation officers can trap or shoot a wolf that has put livestock or pets at risk. It's unclear how far the plan will progress in the Legislature.

Parting Words From Senator Grams:

"Too often, federal policies are carried out with little or no regard for their impact on the people the ultimately affect. Yet, continuing controversies over forest health management activities on Minnesota's National Forests, coupled with new proposals to place even more land off-limits to proper management, present increasingly difficult challenges for workers and families reliant on the timber and paper industries in Minnesota," Grams wrote.

Clinton/Gore's 40-60 Million Acre Land Grab:

Where did the idea for Clinton's 60,000,000-acre land initiative come from? Check out the following from The Audubon Society's board September 17-18, 1999 meeting regarding their Heritage Forest Campaign.

"There are 60 million acres of 1000 acre-plus plots in our National Forests that are still roadless. There is no hope of congressional action to preserve them as wilderness. Administrative protection is possible. We have raised the issue's visibility in the White House, but it's not enough. So we did a poll, using the president's pollster. He sent results to White House chief of staff. The poll shows that Americans, strongly, care about wilderness to the extent of favoring it over jobs. Even Republican men in intermountain states support it at the 50% level. The administration has said they will take some kind of action. We hope for an announcement from the president of some kind of administrative protection. We probably won't get all 60 million acres, but if we did it would represent the biggest chunk of land protection since the Alaska Lands Act."

The special interest groups got their way. After President Clinton's October 13 announcement, the United States Forest Service issued a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement that would lead to the end of logging and mining, and possibly all multiple use on approximately 40 million acres of National Forests around the country. The Forest Service had originally issued a 60-day comment period on this land grab. The comment period was extended to Feb. 3rd, 2000. For more information, go to:

[http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/santamonicabay/brew.htm#Heritage Forest Campaign](http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/santamonicabay/brew.htm#Heritage%20Forest%20Campaign)

--- Comments from The Wilderness Society's Wilderness Alerts - "We're encouraged by President Clinton's efforts to "provide strong and lasting protection" for National Forest roadless areas, using his own words. But we're also concerned that the process to develop regulations to do so would, in fact, undermine that very commitment." ('the process' The Wilderness Society is concerned about is the Forest Service's public comment period!)

From GREENLines - Defenders of Wildlife - "MAJOR FOREST PROTECTION INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED: AP reports 10/13 on an Administration announcement that two-thirds of national forest roadless areas will be "off-limits

to logging, mining and other development." The initiative could protect as much as 40 million acres nationwide and covers roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more mostly in the Western states. The executive order protecting the lands relies on a regulatory approach "crafted in a way to make it difficult for a future president to reverse."

And, this....."GREATEST ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES OF 21st CENTURY: "One expert" on a panel of leading environmental authorities predicted that the US environmental movement will have a harder job than ever getting policy makers to take action to solve pressing problems, says ENS 12/8. The panel's predictions on the "greatest environmental challenges of the 21st century" included a concern that "not enough is being done to curb major environmental threats," among which were population growth, finite resources, particularly water, "ecosystem dysfunction," and global warming."

In other words, despite the general public's opposition to the environmental agenda of these extreme groups, as demonstrated by the lack of support in Congress, they will use every trick in the book to circumvent the duty of Congress to make their agenda public policy.

Congress Investigates Roadless Initiative:

The ethics of a former Clinton administration official have been called into question for possible "undue influence" in the controversial "Roadless Initiative" of the Heritage Forest Campaign, which resulted in the elimination of public access to almost 60 million acres.

Questioning before the House Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Forests and Forests Health focused on Dan Beard, formerly head of the federal Bureau of Reclamation under Clinton, but now public policy director for the National Audubon Society. In question is whether Beard used his influence with Clinton to facilitate an "end run" around Congress by a powerful environmental foundation and the issuance of a presidential mandate to effectively eliminate public access to huge expanses of public lands. They are asking for a congressional investigation.

Clinton/Gore's Land Grab, or the Enviros'?:

On August 21, 1998, CWCS board members attended Superior National Forest a mapping workshop in Duluth. Large maps of the 1986 Forest Plan Management Areas (MAs) were supplied to each of seven theme groups. These maps were to provide a starting point for developing the new forest management plan.

The mapping process proved to be far more complex than anticipated. At report-out time, each theme group concluded that mapping the forest for their theme, with desired future conditions, had to be determined by land type. Pre-settlement conditions was also a consideration in determining which vegetation community was best suited for the soil type, terrain, climate, etc. of the forest. The majority of the theme groups felt the mapping of the forest should be left to the professional foresters and employees of the Forest Service.

The one theme group that took exception to this conclusion was the Rare and Representative Natural Areas. Members of this group included several environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, Audubon Society and Superior Wilderness Action Network, to name a few. Betsy Daub with the Audubon Society and Ginny Yingling with the Sierra Club, presented alternative maps developed by a coalition of environmental groups. It was determined by vote that this alternative map would be the starting point for developing their desired forest management plan.

Many of these very same suggestions for the Superior National Forest from these environmental groups have been included in President Clinton's land initiative for Minnesota.

If these environmental groups go through the motions of attending forest workshops, why don't they bring their recommendations to Congress for legislation? Could it be that the majority of the country does not agree with their agenda and legislation would not be passed?

Keep writing your letters to your representatives and senators. Let them know how you feel about President Clinton's sidestepping Congress' job, and special interest groups dictating public policy.

Contradicting Polls:

Last fall, the Paragon Foundation, a public education, constitutional rights organization conducted a poll on the issue of protecting land from commercial use. 2,229 people responded, with 68% saying protecting jobs, communities and industries that depend on public lands were more important than protecting land from commercial use. 68% thought that building roads on public lands should be allowed, and 67% thought the United States had enough protected wilderness. Another question asked was "Would you favor a proposal that permanently protects all roadless areas of 1,000 acres or greater on public lands. 69% said no, and only 29% said yes.

The Paragon poll contradicts a June 1999 poll conducted by the Mellman Group, paid for by the Pew Charitable Trust and commissioned by the Heritage Forests Campaign,

The Wilderness Society and the National Audubon Society. The Mellman poll stated that 63% of the respondents thought not enough of the nation's forests were protected, and 74% would support a plan that would not exempt any national forest from a roadless protection policy. The Wilderness Society noted that the Mellman poll was an important factor in persuading Clinton to announce the roadless area initiative.

ENN Roadless Poll Disappears:

In a weekly poll on the Environmental News Network (ENN) web-site for February 6, 2000, the polling question has disappeared. All other past polls remain posted on the web-site at:[http:// www.enn.com/poll/](http://www.enn.com/poll/)

What was the February 6, 2000 poll question?

'Do you support the roadless area initiative?' Yes - 14%; No - 86%; Total votes - 2216