

SUPPORTING THE PROTECTION OF QUETICO SUPERIOR CANOE COUNTRY



Fall 2016

Wilderness News



QUETICO SUPERIOR FOUNDATION



The Quetico Superior Foundation, established in 1946, encourages and supports the protection of the wilderness, cultural and historical resources of the Quetico Superior canoe country and region.

Wilderness News

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LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

You hold in your hands the final issue of our publication *Wilderness News*. Thank you for subscribing over the past years, and for being part of the Quetico Superior Foundation community. We've been publishing *Wilderness News* since 1946, informing and inspiring those who care about the Quetico-Superior Region.

And, we certainly won't stop sharing these stories from the Quetico-Superior canoe country; we're moving *Wilderness News* online to reach a wider audience, and to transition more of our resources to our granting efforts. The Quetico Superior Foundation has supported a broad range of projects, from land preservation and wilderness youth programs to historical preservation and forest management.

We hope you'll stay connected to our efforts by continuing to receive our *Wilderness News* blog and stories *online*—send your name and email to editor@queticosuperior.org.

In this issue, you'll find the last in a series on climate change, learning how some individuals and organizations are responding. We also learn about a partnership between Camp Ogiche Daa Kwe and the nonprofit Urban Boatbuilders empowering girls from ages 8 to 18 as well as the camp's staff to build a canoe. And we get a look at the work of Dave and Amy Freeman, who lived in the Boundary Waters for a year with the goal of drawing attention to the threat of mining. And this issue would not be complete without an update on the mining efforts proposed and underway.

We hope you'll agree that these are important and meaningful stories, worth reading and worth sharing. Our Quetico-Superior canoe country reporting will continue in 2017 and well into the future online. **Sign up today to continue receiving our updates by email for free, and share with your friends by sending them to queticosuperior.org.**

Sincerely,

Jim Wyman
President, Quetico Superior Foundation

Cover: Dave and Amy Freeman spent a year portaging, paddling, and living in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness to raise awareness about the threats of sulfide mining and the special character of the wilderness. Photo courtesy Dave and Amy Freeman.

Part III: What People Are Doing

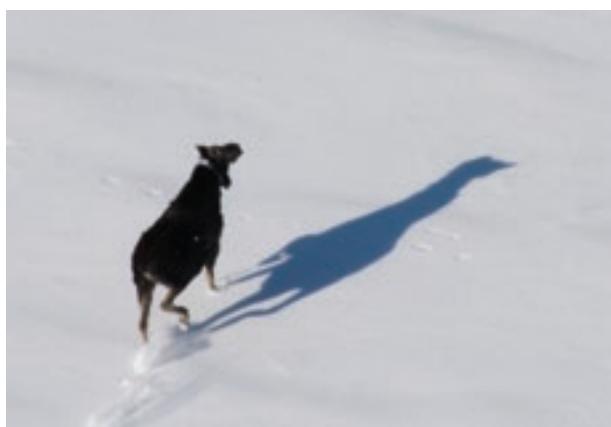
By Alissa Johnson

In the last two issues of *Wilderness News*, we've taken a look at climate change in the northwoods. In this final installment, we look at some of the things people are doing to cope with and address climate change.

In the Quetico-Superior Region, climate change is not something looming on the horizon. Change is underway in the form of warmer winter temperatures and signs of maple and oak species taking root in the forest's understory, among many other trends. According to some scientists, the region is an "epicenter of warming." As daunting as that can be, something else becomes evident with climate research: responses are underway. From land management agencies to academic institutions to impassioned individuals, people are working to understand, prepare for and find solutions for climate change in the Quetico-Superior Region. Here we look at three examples to see what individuals can learn about taking action:

Quetico Provincial Park: Gathering Information to Make Sound Decisions

According to Brian Jackson, Park Biologist at Quetico Provincial Park, several studies related to climate change are underway. The Park is monitoring select lakes to understand how temperature gradients in the water might be affected by changing air temperatures, and is also part of an ongoing study led by University of Minnesota Duluth Assistant Professor and Natural Resources Research Institute Senior Research Associate Ron Moen, to understand how moose behavior is affected by temperature. The Park has partnered with Voyageurs National Park and the University of Minnesota to gather information on plant species in order to predict how



A collared moose in Quetico. Photo by Lisa Solomon.

Amy Adair, Quetico Foundation Intern Biologist, measures crayfish as part of a study to assess the impact and risk of invasive crayfish on the aquatic ecosystem in Quetico Provincial Park. Photo by Brian Jackson.





Jessica Atatise, Assistant Biologist from Lac La Croix First Nation, downloads data from a songbird meter to monitor long term trends in bird populations in Quetico Provincial Park. Photo by Brian Jackson.

"Our research is trying to understand the impacts and predict the impacts... We're trying to help understand what's going on." – Brian Jackson



Dakota Lands, Lac La Croix First Nation Fisheries Technician, and Brian Jackson, Quetico Provincial Park Biologist, sample fish populations on Minn Lake in Quetico to assess trends in fish populations. Photo by Conrad Jourdain.

their ranges might shift with changes in climate, and is also monitoring songbirds, fish, amphibians, and aquatic ecosystems, including invasive species.

"Our research is trying to understand the impacts and predict the impacts... We're trying to help understand what's going on," Jackson explained. Each study has an objective that relates to potential management decisions—not just in Quetico, where there is less hands-on management than other parts of the region, but across the broader area. Jackson pointed out that Quetico provides a unique environment to study climate change because it is subjected to fewer stressors than surrounding areas. There are no timber harvests or other forms of resource exploitation, so biologists can form a clearer picture of what climate change means for the ecosystem.

"From our point of view, this is one important reason the parks exist," Jackson said. If, for example,

scientists determine that moose need specific types of habitat to cope with warmer temperatures, that can be integrated into land management decisions so those types of habitat are protected. "We're trying to understand [climate change] better and assist in adapting."

With one park biologist for Quetico and finite funding, the advantages of undertaking these studies with other organizations are clear. The Park can engage in a wider range of studies, and researchers gather better data. Rather than studying five moose in Quetico, Jackson said as an example, they can study 50 across a wider region, yielding better results. He added that those partnerships have been enhanced by coalitions like the Heart of the Continent Partnership, a group of Canadian and American land managers that have been developing cross-border relationships. "When you don't have that community, you find out



Cynthia Messer, Director of the University of Minnesota Extension Tourism Center, facilitates community conversation and goal setting based on the North Shore Community Climate Readiness project's findings. Photo by Allie McCreary.



Dr. Mae Davenport, Associate Professor in the University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources, presents findings from the North Shore Community Climate Readiness project. Photo by Karen Katz.

you're both working on the same project independently when it's too late to work together."

North Shore Community Climate Readiness: Helping the Public Adapt

While land managers can certainly make use of climate information, the researchers behind North Shore Community Climate Readiness saw a need for communities to have that information too. Funded by the Minnesota Sea Grant, nine scientists and 13 graduate and undergraduate students from the University of Minnesota, Carleton College and NC State University set out to understand what climate change means for North Shore tourism and share it with the people whose livelihoods depend on it.

"One of the ultimate aims is to try to reduce the uncertainty around climate change and the impacts to

recreational tourism through research, and in reducing that uncertainty, build readiness to help local business owners, residents, and decision makers think through and anticipate those changes and develop adaptation plans," Mae Davenport, Associate Professor in the University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources, said.

The 2015 project assessed historical visitation patterns to understand how visitor levels changed with factors like temperature or precipitation. They then used those findings to predict how visitation might shift as climate changes. The team also surveyed over 2,000 North Shore visitors about their climate change beliefs and travel patterns, and yet another aspect of the project assessed the capacity of communities to adapt to climate change by meeting with business owners, recreation and tourism professionals, and government officials in key communities.



North Shore Community Climate Readiness surveyed visitors to the North Shore about their travel patterns and climate change beliefs. Photos by Allie McCreary and Karen Katz.



According to Davenport, the project found that under current adaptation scenarios, regional visitation and visitation by people who are emotionally attached to the region—in other words, people who aren't just there to do a singular activity like ski or snowmobile, but love the North Shore—might go up. But without intervention, it won't be enough to offset those who are not emotionally attached and will go elsewhere. Tourism is projected to decline 7% by 2050 assuming that existing recreation and tourism services do not change. Davenport emphasized, however, that there are opportunities for business owners and communities to prepare for climate change and impact that projection. "What we're telling local leaders and business owners is the more you can do to anticipate the changes in temperature and develop experiences that are not weather dependent, or that respond to different conditions or shift to the shoulder seasons... that will change the formula," Davenport said.

The project found another silver lining too: 78% of survey respondents said they were very sure or extremely sure that climate change is happening, and 37% said they would be willing to contribute \$30 or more to climate adaptation efforts. The tourists these communities want to keep could be a resource in preparing for climate change.

Steger Wilderness Center: A Space for Problem-Solving

Even as the public looks for ways to act on climate change, there remains a need for larger, big-picture discussions to take place. Polar explorer Will Steger has long understood the transformative power of the wilderness experience as well as the role of small groups in promoting collaboration. Preconceived ideas and roles fall away, and individuals step up to the demands at hand. As a result, Steger has long dreamed of using that small group, wilderness setting to reach the world's leaders. During the 1980s, when he traveled to the North Pole and traversed Antarctica by dog sled, he imagined building a center that would provide a space for decision-makers to examine the day's biggest challenges in new ways, even beginning to design the facility from his tent during his 1989-90 International Trans-Antarctica Expedition. Now, as the Center nears completion, Steger sees the need for it more than ever—for climate change and many other challenges of the day.

"This is a difficult time, a time of great opportunity and a time of incredible challenges as our whole infrastructure and the way we do everything changes, and in so many ways climate is a central focus of that," Steger said.

Located near Ely on the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, the center and associ-

"This is a difficult time, a time of great opportunity and a time of incredible challenges as our whole infrastructure and the way we do everything changes, and in so many ways climate is a central focus of that."

– Will Steger



Polar explorer Will Steger being interviewed and photographed by media in front of the newly installed solar array at the Steger Wilderness Center. This is the first micro-grid up and running in Minnesota. Photo by John Ratzloff.



The Steger Wilderness Center. Photo by John Ratzloff.

ated buildings, including Steger's home, sit on land that he purchased at the age of 19. He moved there during his 20s to live off the grid, not even a road to his homestead, which doubled as home base for his winter dogsled school during the 1970s. When Steger began his polar expeditions, it was with the clear understanding that the more he made a name for himself as an explorer, the more influence he would have. "Each expedition was a means to an end to build that Center because each expedition gave me more access and more opportunities," Steger said.

When completed, Steger envisions the Center as a sort of "Camp David" where people with different views can close the doors, have no interface with the outside world, and dream up solutions to the day's biggest questions, whether that's developing new technologies or working on climate policy. He has already piloted small group programs and plans to host two more in the coming year. It's a dream brought to life by many hands, including volunteers, interns, and college classes. And along the way, the Center has partnered with the University of St. Thomas, Cummins Power Generation and Sundial Solar to become the first renewable energy micro-grid, or small-scale independent energy grid, in Minnesota—a demonstration project of sorts to show what's possible with renewable energy. As a result, the Center's role is two-fold: creating a space for problem-solving and setting an inspirational example for others.

Throughout this climate change series, it has been evident that there is something about the size and scale of climate change that makes it hard to discuss—sometimes even harder to bring up. Yet it is also evident that there is a hunger for the conversation. As Davenport said about the climate readiness project, "I want to emphasize how supportive and committed the local community members have been for this project. There really is a hunger for this knowledge."

It's looking at the North Shore Community Climate Readiness project alongside Steger's vision for the Steger Wilderness Center—and even the way that Quetico partners with other land management agencies—that the antidote becomes clear. Everywhere that people are active in climate change, they are active together. It is in groups and through groups that they get educated, look for solutions, and tackle challenges together. Perhaps if there is one place to start it is with just that: look for groups in your community where the conversation has already started.

Here are three resources where the Quetico Superior climate discussion is ongoing:
www.northshoreclimate.com
www.stegerwildernesscenter.org
www.climategen.org



Morning Light

A Canoe Built by Campers at Ogiche Daa Kwe

By Alissa Johnson

There is something delicate about the look of a skin-on frame canoe.

In the sunlight, the wooden frame shows through its skin, as do the shadows of paddlers.

Looking down into the boat, the line where water meets air is visible. Yet it is a seaworthy craft, light enough for the youngest and oldest of paddlers to carry, and, at girls' wilderness camp Ogiche Daa Kwe, a perfect metaphor for community. Last summer, campers and staff at the

Rainy Lake camp built a 17.5-foot wilderness traveler skin-on frame canoe.

Every generation, from eight-year-old girls to the camp's 73-year-old weaving instructor, played a hand in building the boat.

"When the boat was finished, everybody that participated in the process wanted to have people know they worked on this boat," camp director Kathy Dix said. The entire camp voted on names submitted for the canoe, ultimately selecting "*Morning Light*." And at an early morning ceremony, the same girls and women who helped build the boat launched it onto the water.

The idea to build a canoe grew out of chance connections, when Hugh Haller, Board President of the Camping & Education Foundation that benefits Ogiche Daa Kwe, ran into Collette King of Urban Boatbuilders (UBB) at a conference in May of 2016. As Partnership Program Manager, King was looking to expand the UBB program's reach and excited about the possibility of partnering with a Northern Minnesota camp. She saw a great fit at Ogiche Daa Kwe, where campers

spend part of their session on wilderness canoe trips. "It was such a great way to close the loop. They already have an intimate connection with canoeing," King said.

Dix was also immediately on board. In the past, campers had worked with an area craftsman to make things like benches for the dining hall. But this provided an opportunity to build something onsite that combined craftsmanship and art with the functionality of a canoe. And, the project could be completed during a three-week camper's session.

The project took place in the arts and crafts triplex, where campers also learn things like weaving and traditional Native American crafts. With a gallery and outside deck, King and the girls could move the project inside and out as needed. And, girls of all ages could see the canoe's transformation whether they participated

in building it or not. Dix knew that like other camp activities, some campers would run with the project and others would be less interested. But in such a public location, everyone could benefit from the experience. “I like that those so removed from where things come from see the process, whether they really love it or not,” she said.

Once the project began, King had a rotating crew of builders, with up to four one-and one-half hour sessions a day, with as many as eight girls in a session, sometimes as young as eight, other times middle school or high school age. Some kids were new to the process on a given day, and others came back to work on the canoe again and again. When the campers left for their wilderness trips, the camp “elders” took over and kept the project going in order to finish the canoe by the end of the three weeks. King oversaw everyone’s work, making sure that each participant had a job and the project progressed as planned.

“It is an art for sure. It’s a lot of planning ahead of time and making sure there are enough jobs to keep everybody busy,” she said. She drew on her background in construction volunteer management for Habitat for

Humanity, where she oversaw everything from supply acquisition to the volunteer experience, as well as helping Urban Boatbuilders expand into a new space. Dix credits King with making the project such a success for Ogiche Daa Kwe.

“Collette does such a good job finding individual jobs for the ability of the person she’s working with, and she’s able to handle multiple talent levels at one time. I think boat building could have been something altogether different with somebody else, but she’s very patient, and I think it was great a woman was teaching,” Dix said. When a small, slight woman can spearhead the construction of a canoe, it sets an example for campers and what they can do. And that’s one thing that King definitely saw as she helped campers build *Morning Light*.

“People in their day-to-day life rarely make the things they are using, and giving these girls the opportunity to work with tools and build this incredible structure they got to then use—this ‘thing’ they have a relationship with—is amazing. They all have these moments, little moments, where you see them recalibrate what they’re capable of because this is so outside the

Urban Boatbuilders Partnership Program Manager Collette King spent three weeks at Camp Ogiche Daa Kwe, helping campers and staff build a skin-on frame canoe, which they named *Morning Light*. All photos by Liz Hattemer.





Collette King and Lindsay Wiebold paddle *Morning Light* on launch day.

realm of what they usually do,” King said. In particular, eighteen-year-old twins from Montana took to the process so much that they hope to build a canoe at home. But even the young girls were capable of so much more than most adults would give them credit for. One day in particular, King instructed an eight-year-old to set up the wallpaper steamer, which would be used to bend wood. Not only did she do it exactly right, but she also asked for more to do.

When launch day arrived, one of the camp’s elders—a 73-year-old weaving instructor—carried the boat to the lake. The twins who had been so involved in the building process launched *Morning Light* onto the water, and the campers assembled watched as a beautiful, functional watercraft that many of them helped create moved across the water. The idea of community isn’t new to campers at Ogiche Daa Kwe—they already pitch in with things like dishes and projects around camp to keep things functioning smoothly. Yet here was something real and functional that they or their fellow campers built together.

The project was such a success that King is returning to Ogiche Daa Kwe next summer to help the campers build another canoe and a kayak. And Ogiche Daa Kwe’s nearby brother camp, Camp Kooch-i-Ching, also plans to build a canoe next summer under the leadership of Urban Boatbuilder’s lead instructor, Phil Winger.

Morning Light, now a ceremonial canoe for the camp, will hang in a place of prominence, in front of a two-story picture window in the lodge—a visible reminder of what the campers and staff of Ogiche Daa Kwe can accomplish together.

Urban Boatbuilders is a nonprofit youth development program (based in St. Paul, Minnesota) that empowers youth to build the skills they need to succeed in school, work, and life through the building and use of boats. Urban Boatbuilders has guided more than 5,000 youth in building more than 300 boats through their Apprenticeship Program and Partnership Programs in schools, community organizations, and juvenile corrections facilities.

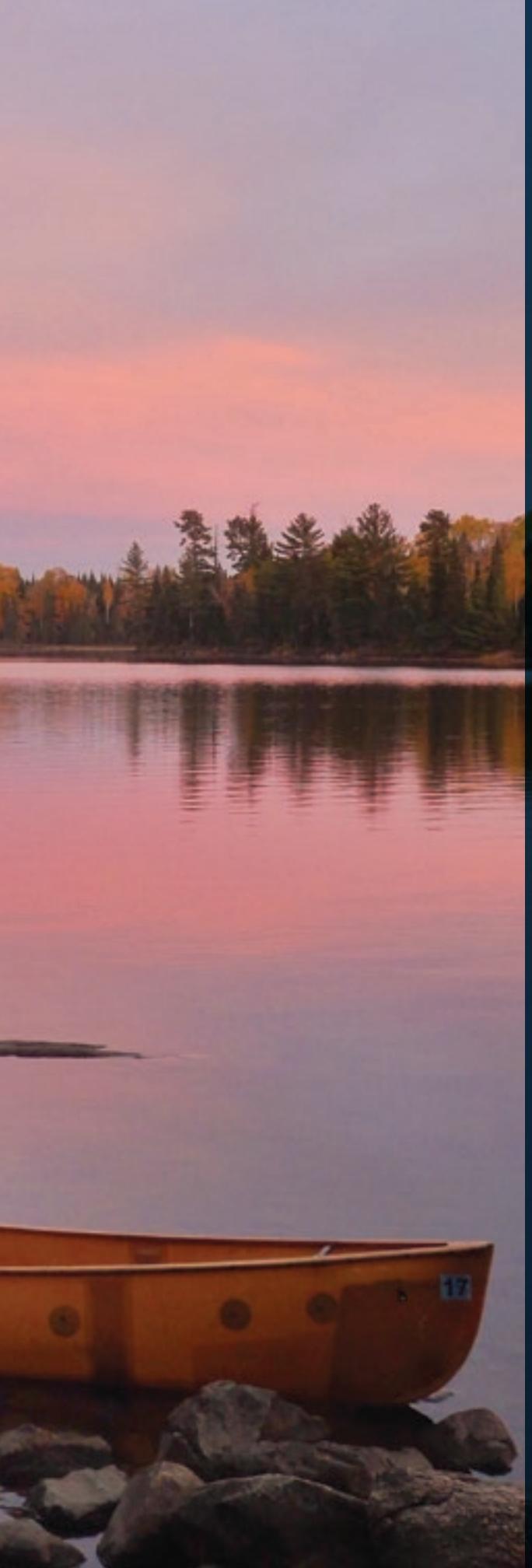
Morning Light will hang in a place of prominence—a visible reminder of what the campers and staff of Ogieche Daa Kwe can accomplish together.



Campers and staff at Ogieche Daa Kwe completed every step of building a skin-on frame canoe. They launched the canoe at an early morning ceremony.



Dave and Amy Freeman began and ended their year in the wilderness on the autumnal equinox, eventually spending 366 days in the Boundary Waters. All photos courtesy Dave and Amy Freeman.



Plugged In

Dave and Amy Freeman spent a year in the Boundary Waters, using social media to inspire others to protect the wilderness.

By Kate Seitz

One of the greatest gifts that the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness bestows on its visitors is a sense of solitude. When people set out from one of the hundreds of entry points into the BWC AW, they leave behind many modern comforts of daily life in order to gain a solitary wilderness experience unlike any other on earth. “Unplugging” is one of the biggest appeals for visitors to this nearly 1.1-million-acre wilderness.

Yet when Ely- and Grand Marais-based wilderness guides Dave and Amy Freeman embarked on a one-year excursion into the BWC AW on September 23, 2015, many people wondered how they would fare, being so disconnected for such a long time.

In fact, the Freemans were readily equipped to stay in touch while they were away; technology was an essential part of their journey, dubbed *A Year in the Wilderness*, wherein they would bear witness to the Boundary Waters, share it with others and raise awareness about the risks facing this canoe country.

The Freemans took on the idea as part of the Save the Boundary Waters campaign, whose goal is to protect, in perpetuity, the Boundary Waters from proposed sulfide-ore copper mining on the wilderness edge. (See “Northwoods Mining Update” on page 19.)

Dave and Amy brought with them cell phones, a satellite phone, a laptop and an ebook reader, a digital camera system, and four 20-watt portable solar panels to keep everything running. Armed with these tools and their renowned sense of adventure, they bid farewell to modernity (well, most of it) and began their quest.

Into the Wild

Many visitors to the Boundary Waters talk about their first visit with a kind of reverence used when describing a spiritual experience or pilgrimage. The solitude, closeness to nature and sense of awe of being in the BWCW create a lasting impression and a desire to return, again and again.

Amy Freeman was in her early teens the first time she visited the BWCW. Her family was overloaded with gear and traveled a portage-intense route, a method which she now knows is less than ideal. Still, she fell in love with the area. “I was jumping at any opportunity after that to get into the Boundary Waters,” she says.



The Freemans used one to two solar panels during the summer months and up to four during winter, allowing them to stay connected to the outside world with photos, articles, and calls to action.

The Boundary Waters was also Dave’s first real wilderness experience. “It was my introduction to wilderness and wild places, and sent me down a path that I probably wouldn’t have taken if I hadn’t been to the Boundary Waters. It is where I work, as a canoe-trip guide in the summers and dog-sledding guide in the winters. I live on the edge of it; it’s a central part of my life,” he says.

The Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters gave the Freemans a unique opportunity to contribute to the effort as well as to engage a much broader—and younger—audience in getting to know the wilderness. Using almost daily social media postings, they helped new audiences fall in love with this one-of-a-kind place and act to protect it, even if they hadn’t yet visited it themselves.

Instant Gratification

While they traveled through the seasons in the Boundary Waters, Dave and Amy were presented with an un-

familiar luxury: a self-directed pace with time to watch nature unfold. “It felt like on this trip this was our chance to slow down and get in tune with the land and the water, to get to know it even more intimately than we had before,” Amy says.

Dave elaborated. “If we found a beautiful place and we wanted to sit and observe, say, a dragonfly nymph crawling out of the water to latch onto a rock and hatch, we could do that and capture that and share it.”

They were also more alone than they had been on previous trips. As the 2015 winter approached, the Freemans camped in the Knife Lake region and didn’t see anyone else for a month. They did, however, have wild visitors: a pack of wolves traveled just on the outskirts of their camp. “We could hear them barking and yipping, not howling, just communicating like they do when they are close together,” Dave says. “That was really neat to have them be so close.”

Winter brought ice-in, and the Freemans had to learn how to safely navigate the newly frozen waterways, breaking through the thin first layers near shore or, as the season progressed, towing their canoe across the brittle ice. During the winter months, they traded in their canoe for a toboggan and skis, and traversed with the help of three sled dogs. One of the dogs, Tank, remained with them through the summer and fall.

While these remarkable experiences were cherished by Dave and Amy, they were also almost immediately shared with the online followers of the Campaign. On a near-daily basis, Dave or Amy posted a photo and a message to their social media channels: Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, as well as a blog. They shared that day’s highlight, then directed followers to take action by signing petitions and maintaining pressure on key agencies and legislators to prevent sulfide mining from being permitted so close to the BWCW.

“We gave people constant reminders that the Boundary Waters is still here and the issue [of protection from copper-nickel mining] is really important. We felt that if we could keep it in people’s consciousness, they would continue to take action,” Dave says.

They also remained focused on survival and fulfilling their mission of bearing witness, visiting more than 500 lakes and rivers, staying at more than 120 campsites, and traveling more than 2,000 miles over the course of their 12 months.

The fruits of their labors began to pay off, first attracting the attention of those who knew about the Boundary Waters, then engaging concerned citizens across the world who learned about the BWCW and



The couple visited more than 500 lakes and rivers, stayed at more than 120 campsites, and traveled more than 2,000 miles during the expedition.



Over the four seasons, the Freemans traveled by ski, toboggan, and canoe, and shared with visitors and their social media followers. This was a special Boundary Waters trip for the Freemans, giving them the time to bear witness to the wilderness and spread the word about its beauty, solitude, and nature—and the risks posed to its waters by mining proposals.



its importance. Last summer alone, when the U.S. Forest Service was considering the renewal of two Twin Metals' sulfide-ore copper leases near the Boundary Waters, the Campaign and its partners received more than 74,000 signatures in support of protecting the watershed.

The media started paying attention, too. Doug Niemela, national campaign manager for Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters, says "The Freemans had a huge following on social media and across their blogs for the campaign, *National Geographic* and *Canoe & Kayak* magazine. They even captured the attention of NBC's TODAY Show as well as television and print media in Minnesota and across the country."

Additionally, when the Freemans departed the BWCAW on September 23, 2016, after 366 days, they were greeted by a flotilla of 60-70 boats that journeyed up Birch Lake to join them on their final paddle out of the wilderness. At a welcome home party in Ely, MN, more than 300 people celebrated their return; at a similar party in Minneapolis, more than 400 attended.

Personal Connections

Perhaps most inspiring are the stories of the youngest campers who learned about the Freemans via social media and volunteered to visit them, bringing in needed supplies and bringing out items they no longer needed.

Rebecca Gaida, a 20-year-old from Victoria, MN, first experienced the BWCAW when she was 14 years old, with the Northern Lakes Girl Scout Canoe Base (NLCB). The trip sparked a love of wilderness, she says. "It's where I learned skills like paddling and portaging,

and it is those skills that taught me I am stronger than I think I am and I can do anything."

Last summer, Rebecca, who is now a guide for NLCB, and Trina, another guide, led a group of Scouts on a five-day resupply to the Freemans, on Knife Lake. "We were all so excited to meet the Freemans," she says. "They taught us a lot about protecting the wilderness and the uniqueness of this wild place."

Rebecca also is personally invested in protecting the wilderness. "After my first trip, I knew the BWCAW was someplace special," she says. "I know that protecting the wilderness is not about me; it is about the girls that have yet to see it. It is for them that I want to protect it, that they might see the wilderness someday and love it like I do."

Helen Clanaugh is a ninth grader from Duluth who went on a resupply trip with her father, David, and family friend, Don Watson. It was her first foray into the Boundary Waters and it was challenging, with spring snow and long portages, but she persevered and came out stronger for it.

Helen posted her experiences on social media, shared them with her family and friends, and then looked for additional ways to support the Campaign, including a school research project.

"I want to share my experience so that others can be motivated to protect this precious place," Helen says. "I want kids in future generations to be able to experience the Boundary Waters as I did. When kids are given the opportunity to get immersed into the wilderness, they are more able to be open to new and different ways of learning. Through the challenge of it all, we learn how strong we really can be. Through the beauty of it all, we realize how breathtaking the world is."

Continuing the Journey

“The use of social media was a critical component to the success of the Campaign”, Dave says, “especially the way it captured younger people’s attention. Social media gave them something they could share with their friends and it’s the medium they are using more than some traditional media, so it’s been a good way to reach them and educate them about the threats that the proposed mines pose and help engage them in the issue.”

Though their Year in the Wilderness has ended, the Freemans are still working to protect the BWC AW. They continue to blog and post on social media, and are writing a book, to be published by Milkweed Editions next year. They also are touring with and promoting the documentary “Bear Witness,” which was filmed throughout their year in the Boundary Waters.

“I hope that we were able to encourage new people to come and visit the wilderness,” Dave says, “because that’s a big part of protecting the wilderness: trying to ensure more people—a more diverse group of people,

especially young people—experience the wilderness first-hand.”

Though Governor Dayton has come out in strong opposition of Twin Metals, the Freemans say there is still a need for the public—of all ages—to advocate for and commit to protecting the Boundary Waters from sulfide mining pollution.

“There is still work to be done,” Amy says. “I hope that people will stay engaged in the issue and continue to voice their opinion to elected officials and heed calls to action that will come about in the next several years. This is an ongoing issue and it will take awhile to make sure the Boundary Waters watershed is entirely protected.”

**For more information about
the Campaign to Save the
Boundary Waters, visit
www.savetheboundarywaters.org**

The Freemans’ work to protect the Boundary Waters was not over when their journey ended. Three days after exiting the wilderness, they traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with elected officials and other decision-makers.



PolyMet Pushes for Permits, Twin Metals Sues for Mining Rights

By Greg Seitz

Two proposals to mine copper, nickel and other metals in northern Minnesota are reaching critical points. After completing its environmental review earlier this year, PolyMet Mining is applying for the permits it needs to operate. Meanwhile, Twin Metals is fighting for its very existence as government regulators consider cancelling its mineral leases.

PolyMet Permits

PolyMet intends to mine near Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota, in the headwaters of the St. Louis River and within the Lake Superior watershed. Its open-pit mine proposal has been the subject of several rounds of environmental review, public comments and hearings, and controversy about its long-term impacts on clean water. The company's Final Environmental Impact Statement was deemed "adequate" by regulators in March, paving the way to transition into the permitting phase. In July, the company submitted applications to discharge wastewater from the mine, use water at the construction site, and maintain the dams around the basins that will hold waste from the processing plant.

Then, in early November, PolyMet submitted a 15,000-page application to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for its most important permit, the permit to mine. The document not only contains its plans for mining and remediation, but also the first details about the "damage deposit" it would provide to cover cleanup if the company goes bankrupt or otherwise abandons the mine.

Mining critics were not happy with their first look at the application. "The lack of detail from PolyMet is insulting to Minnesota taxpayers, who reasonably expect that PolyMet will show that it can pay for its own cleanup before it starts digging," the Mining Truth coalition said in a statement.

The DNR's review of the application is expected to take several months, during which the application will probably be modified to accommodate the agency's

input. The DNR also announced it might seek a hearing in front of a judge before approving the document, to clear up legal issues before reaching the public comment period. After the DNR is done, the document may be released for a public comment period.

Twin Metals Mineral Leases

Twin Metals is wholly owned by the Chilean mining conglomerate Antofagasta PLC. It proposes to build and operate an underground mine next to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, along the South Kawishiwi River and Birch Lake. In recent months, the mineral leases it holds, which date back to the 1960s, have come into doubt. When the company tried to renew them earlier this year, the Bureau of Land Management declared it did not have to automatically renew the leases.

The Superior National Forest held a comment period in June and July about whether or not it should give its consent to the BLM to renew the leases. The Forest Service stated significant concerns about the prospect of such mining near rivers that flow into the wilderness." A final determination on consent has not been made," a statement reads. "However, the Forest Service is deeply concerned by the location of the leases within the same watershed as the BWCAW, and by the inherent risks associated with potential copper, nickel and other sulfide mining operations within that watershed."

In September, Twin Metals filed suit in federal court to force the government to renew the leases. The company claims that the BLM and Forest Service do not have the discretion to reject the renewal. It took exception with a legal opinion from the Interior Department lawyers that gave the BLM the go-ahead to consider cancelling the leases. "The recent abrupt reversal in the federal government's position on the right to renewal of the leases, as stated in the Solicitor's opinion, appears to be motivated by political pressure and unsupported allegations about potential impacts of future mining development in the region," the company stated in a press release.

If the leases are not renewed, it would effectively kill the project. Twin Metals says cancelling the project would mean wasting its \$400 million investment, as well as the potential revenue, jobs, and tax dollars they say the project would create.

Wilderness advocates point to 65,000 public comments the Forest Service received during its comment period in June, saying the lawsuit would silence those voices.

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The website features a green header with the foundation's logo and name. Below the header, there are links for About, Projects, Explore Quetico Superior, Wilderness News, and Get Involved. The main content area is titled "Wilderness News Blog" and includes two recent articles: "Watch: Gorgeous Northern Lights and Fall Voyageurs National Park" and "PolyMet Applies for Key Mining Permit". Each article has a thumbnail image, a brief description, and a "Continue Reading" button.



The Facebook page shows a cover photo of a lake at sunset. The profile picture is the same as the website. The page has a "Like" button and a "Learn More" button. A post from the page discusses the PolyMet mining application, featuring an aerial image of the proposed mine site.