

09-02

ADD ADJACENT PARCELS OF LAND TO THE BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS

The year 2008 marked the 30th anniversary of Congressional passage of the BWCAW Act (P.L. 95-495). The Minnesota Division and the national Izaak Walton League have been actively involved in protecting this forested wilderness since 1926 when Ernest Oberholtzer and the League battled timber and waterpower interests for one of the first wilderness preservation efforts in the country.

Today it has become one of America's top ten vacation destinations hosting over 200,000 visitors each year while remaining home habitat to black bears, moose, timber wolves, pine martens, beavers, lynx and over 150 species of nesting birds. In addition to the boreal forest cover, it contains over 1,000 lakes, hundreds of small ponds, creeks and rivers, 1100 miles of canoe routes and thousands of miles of shoreline.

Those first efforts, in which the IWLA has been so heavily invested, have secured just over one million acres of roadless canoe country wilderness. It is very important that we now add to the BWCAW nineteen (19) contiguous parcels (chart enclosed) totaling approximately 49,000 acres. These are small pristine areas that adjoin the BWCAW. There are occasional, small incursions of private land but approximately 90 percent of it is currently owned by the United States Forest Service.

Rising population levels and economic development are putting continued pressure on natural resources and open spaces. Increasing activity by extractive industries is a constant threat to our resources and the more than 200,000 people who seek restoration of body and spirit each year by visiting true wilderness will be well served by our preservation efforts now. An attempt was made in 2005 by the Breckenridge Chapter of Brooklyn Park to make an even larger inclusion of wilderness lands in Northeastern Minnesota into the BWCAW, but it failed to gain support at the national level. We have scaled back our acreage request by about half in hopes that the National IWLA will accept our proposal, help re-investigate our plan to increase and preserve this only lakeland wilderness in the country and hope that the new administration will look more favorably on these efforts to enlarge this precious resource.

Therefore be it resolved the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America in convention in April 2009, seeks to permanently protect the pristine water, air and forest habitat contained in these nearly 49,000 roadless acres within Minnesota's Superior National Forest, and make them contiguous with current BWCAW boundaries. We urge the Federal Government to support and facilitate this addition to the BWCAW.

Submitted by the Jaques Chapter