

LOCALNEWS

National park staff fight rising tide

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

In response to rising water levels on Rainy and Kabetogama lakes, officials at Voyageurs National Park have closed campsites that fall under the park's new reservation system.

VNP Chief Ranger Chuck Remus said the sites are closed until June 30, and people who had outstanding reservations have been refunded, as the sites aren't usable.

"When you reserve a campsite, you're paying for the amenities at the site," Remus said. "If the amenities aren't usable, then what's the point?"

Many of the docks at the park's campsites are underwater, Remus said, and some have gotten loose and floated away. Officials are also concerned about people walking on docks that are underwater, he said, as they become slippery and unstable, and people can fall.

Most of the campsites are still "high and dry," Remus said, but it's become an issue of not being able to access the campsites. Campers aren't able to tie up their boat to the dock, he said, so they would have to tie it away from the shore or to a tree, which creates issues with hazards.

There are still some hardy campers out on some of the backcountry sites that don't require a reservation, Remus said.

"People who want to use the nonreservable sites can still come," Remus said. "There's just a lot of chal-

lenges to keep their boat safe, and they have to be more creative about tying it away from the shore."

Rising water levels have drugged up a lot of floating debris, logs, and dock parts, Remus said, so boaters need to be careful when they're out on the lake. Officials have had to start marking rocks that were above water previously, he said, as they're now underwater and create an unseen hazard.

There's also floating cattail mats, which are clusters of cattails which float on the surface of the lake, Remus said. Officials had to move one which was as large as the park headquarters, he said, so boaters didn't run into it.

"I would be really cautious if you have to do any traveling on the lake at night," Remus said. "In fact, I would recommend not traveling on the lake after dark."

The park is home to numerous forms of wildlife, and Remus said nesting loons could be affected by the rising waters. The birds like to nest as close as possible to the water, he said, as they don't walk well. With the lake level rising this much, he said, their nests could be flooded out.

To deal with the rising water levels, Remus said park staff have been trying to put weights on docks to keep them from floating away. They've also been helping with the local sandbagging efforts, he said, like at City Beach in Ranier.

"We're dealing with the same thing everyone else is dealing with," Remus said. "We're just trying to help



STAFF PHOTOS BY SPENSER BICKETT

Park officials at the Lake Kabetogema Visitors Center use a filled canoe to try to weigh down a dock.

More information

The following campsites at VNP are closed until June 30:

Backcountry Lakes

- All lakes and campsites

Rainy Lake

- Lyle Mine Island (R93)
- Dryweed Island (R11)
- Loon Bay (R63)
- Saginaw Bay (R22)
- Kempton Entrance East (R91)
- Kawawia Island (R16)
- Virgin Island South (R27)
- Rainy Lake Group Campsite (R74)
- Sunrise Point (R26)

Kabetogama Lake

- Bald Rock (K1)
- Peterson Point (K25)

Namakan Lake

- Day Marker 23 (N5)
- Voyageurs Narrows (N41)

Sand Point Lake

- Browns Bay View (S3)
- King Pin (S10)
- Burnt Island (S4)

the local businesses and the residents too."



This home on Lake Kabetogema has sandbags lined up right on the edge of the rising water line.



The rising water level on Lake Kabetogema has this boat house almost under water.

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