

LOCALNEWS

Littlefork area seasonal road and trail closures take effect Friday

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

As warm weather approaches, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has temporarily closed many of its roads and motorized trails on state forest land.

Road and trail conditions are expected to deteriorate rapidly this spring and many will not remain firm enough to support vehicle traffic without being damaged. This includes state forests, recreation area and wildlife management area roads and trails.

The temporary closures could remain in effect until sometime in May, depending on weather conditions.

State forests in the Littlefork area include Pine Island, Koochiching and Smokey Bear, along with the wildlife management areas located in the forest boundaries. A list of roads to remain open will be

More information

For closures and updates, go to “current conditions” on the DNR website at www.dnr.state.mn.us/trailconditions or call the DNR Information Center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

posted on the DNR website.

“Many forest roads are given weight restrictions, and others are closed due to their susceptibility to damage during spring break-up,” said Joe Brown, Littlefork area forestry supervisor. “We ask that people use good judgment, obey the closures and check the DNR website for updates.”

Road conditions can change quickly and the DNR advises people to first check the individual state

park, state trail or state forest Web pages before planning trips.

Road and trail users should pay attention to state forest closures. A closed forest means all roads and trails are closed. Signs will be posted at entry points and parking lots. The closures include all unmarked roads and trails, unless specifically listed on the DNR website.

Online road and trail condition information is updated every Thursday by 2 p.m.

For closures and updates, go to “current conditions” on the DNR website at www.dnr.state.mn.us/trailconditions or call the DNR Information Center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

For information on roads and trails on county land, contact the county directly.

Gas prices see slight increase

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Average retail gasoline prices in Minnesota have risen 0.3 cents in the past week, averaging \$2.30 per gallon Sunday, according to GasBuddy’s daily survey of 2,856 gas outlets in Minnesota. This compares with the national average that has increased 0.4 cents in the last week to \$2.43 per gallon, according to gasoline price website MinnesotaGasPrices.com.

No current gas prices in

International Falls were available on the site.

Including the change in gas prices in Minnesota during the past week, prices Sunday were 116.8 cents per gallon lower compared to the same day one year ago and are 9.7 cents per gallon lower than a month ago. The national average has increased 3 cents per gallon during the last month and stands 112.6 cents per gallon lower than this day one year ago.

“One thing seems con-

stant in this world aside from death and taxes, and that’s gas price fluctuations,” said Patrick DeHaan, GasBuddy senior petroleum analyst. “Though last week, many areas didn’t see much fluctuation, there certainly were some outliers last week, as there almost always tend to be week after week. Florida, Ohio and Indiana saw notable jumps at the pump, while Michigan, California and Oregon saw the largest declines.”

Boise Paper employees award safety funds

Maintenance employees presented safety funds to the Salvation Army and Koochiching Aging Options last month and were acknowledged for leading the mill safety observation process.

Boise Paper, A Division of Packaging Corporation of America, donated the \$4,000 in recognition of employee safety participation and a goal of zero-incidents. In addition to the Salvation Army and Koochiching Aging Options, the monies were distributed evenly to Backus Community Café, Falls Hunger Coalition, and Koochiching Senior Center.

“I extend my congratulations to the non-profit organizations and to maintenance employees for their safety leadership,” says Bert Brown, International Falls mill manager. “We are proud to sponsor the Safety Award Program as it supports mill safety and a healthy community.”

For the past several years, monies have been set aside to assist organizations in Koochiching County based on internal safety efforts. Those interested in information about the program are encouraged to call 218.285.5312.



L-R: Maintenance employees Billy Carlson, Don Walker, Tyler Anderson, Jasen Mayfield, Tyson Whitbeck, Bill Thomas, Mike Gansch, and Bob Manka join Salvation Army representative Bev Mayfield and Koochiching Aging Options representative Doug Skrief at a charity presentation held in March.

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New study confirms impact of drug courts

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

With the approach of the 10-year anniversary of the establishment of Borderland Substance Abuse Court, a statewide study confirms the positive and long-lasting impact that others have touted locally.

A new evaluation released this month by the Minnesota Judicial Branch finds that drug court participants continue to show significantly lower recidivism rates and reduced incarceration costs.

The recent evaluation was a follow-up to a 2012 evaluation, which tracked the progress of the same drug court participants and similar offenders over an additional year-and-a-half.

Lisa Santee, problem solving court coordinator for the local court, said the report confirms what many local participants and team members know: Drug courts benefit participants and their communities.

“I feel and I know and I see it’s working, but when an independent contractor doing that kind of work sees those results it’s good,” she said. “The status quo seems to be working well.”

Santee said the local court has served 136 people since it started nearly 10 years ago and has seen 72 people graduate from the program. Seventeen people are now active in Borderland Substance Abuse Court, she said.

A celebration of the 10 years of success is being planned for this summer, Santee said.

Meanwhile, the Minnesota Judicial Branch in 2012 released the first comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Minnesota’s drug courts. The groundbreaking study, which compared 535 drug court partic-

ipants to similar offenders who experienced traditional court processes over two-and-a-half years, found that drug courts significantly reduced recidivism, improved community outcomes, and reduced incarceration and related costs for drug court participants.

“When we first saw the results of our 2012 drug court evaluation, we were thrilled to see the real impact that Minnesota’s drug courts were having on some of the most high-risk drug offenders in the state,” said Sixth Judicial District Chief Judge Shaun Floerke, co-chair of the Drug Court Initiative Advisory Committee. “At that time, we decided that we also needed to continue monitoring the progress of these drug court participants, to learn whether these improved outcomes were sustainable in the long-term. Thanks to this new evaluation, we are now able to see the long-lasting impact drug courts have on the lives of participants, and the real benefits drug courts provide to our communities.”

According to the newly-released follow-up evaluation:

■ Drug court participants continue to have a significantly lower rate of recidivism: Comparing offenders who spent similar amounts of time outside of incarceration (“at-risk time”) during the evaluation period, the new study shows drug court participants consistently had significantly lower recidivism rates. For example, among those offenders who reached four years of “at-risk time” during the evaluation, 28 percent of drug court participants had received a new conviction, compared to 41 percent of non-drug court participants.

■ Drug court participants

spent fewer days incarcerated: Drug court participants spent, on average, 74 fewer days incarcerated in jail or prison compared to similar offenders during the four-year evaluation period. The average cost savings for each drug court participant was \$4,288 as a result of this reduced incarceration.

■ Drug courts are specialized, problem-solving court programs that target non-violent criminal offenders who suffer from addiction to alcohol or other drugs. The programs involve close collaboration between judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, treatment providers, probation officers, law enforcement, educational and vocational experts, and community leaders. Through this collaboration, drug courts closely monitor a defendant’s progress toward sobriety and recovery through ongoing treatment, frequent drug testing, and regular mandatory check-in court appearances. The programs use a range of immediate sanctions and incentives to foster behavior change.

In the past year, the Minnesota Judicial Council approved the establishment of nine new drug court programs in the state. This includes six new drug courts funded in part by an increased appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature, as well as three new DWI Courts funded through a grant from the Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety. Minnesota now has 50 operational drug courts.

The newly-released follow-up evaluation and the original 2012 Minnesota Statewide Adult Drug Court Evaluation are available in the Publications and Reports section of the Minnesota Judicial Branch Website at <http://www.mn-courts.gov/?page=519>.

CITY OF INTERNATIONAL FALLS
STATE OF MINNESOTA
MAYORAL PROCLAMATION

National Public Health Week Proclamation 2015

Whereas, the week of April 6 – 12, 2015, is National Public Health Week and the theme is “*Healthiest Nation 2030*,” and

Whereas, since 1995, the American Public Health Association, through its sponsorship of National Public Health Week, has educated the public, policymakers and public health professionals about issues important to improving the public’s health; and

Whereas, over the past 25 years, U.S. life expectancy has increased, but at a slower rate than in other countries and studies consistently show we have a lower life expectancy than comparable countries; and

Whereas, there is a 16 percent difference in health status between the most healthy and least healthy states; and

Whereas, even in the for-profit sector, we see companies seeking a better balance between their profits and the health of their customers; as an example, CVS Health has stopped selling tobacco products and has expanded their programs to help people quit smoking; and

Whereas, public health action, together with scientific and technologic advances, have played a major role in reducing and in some cases eliminating the spread of infectious disease, and in establishing today’s disease surveillance and control systems; and

Whereas, while heart attack and stroke are still the nation’s top killers, the public health community has helped achieve remarkable declines in deaths from both diseases; since 1950, deaths from cardiovascular disease have declined 60%, and stroke rates have declined 70%.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert W. Anderson, Mayor of the City of International Falls, MN, by virtue of the authority vested in me, do hereby proclaim the week of April 6 – 12, 2015, as **National Public Health Week 2015** in the City of International Falls and call upon the people of International Falls to observe this week by helping our families, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and leaders to better understand the value of public health and supporting great opportunities to adopt preventive lifestyle habits in light of this year’s theme, “*Healthiest Nation 2030*.”

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand this 23rd day of March, 2015.

Robert W. Anderson
Robert W. Anderson, Mayor of International Falls, MN