

Daylight Saving Time begins

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Bernath recognized

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B3



The Journal

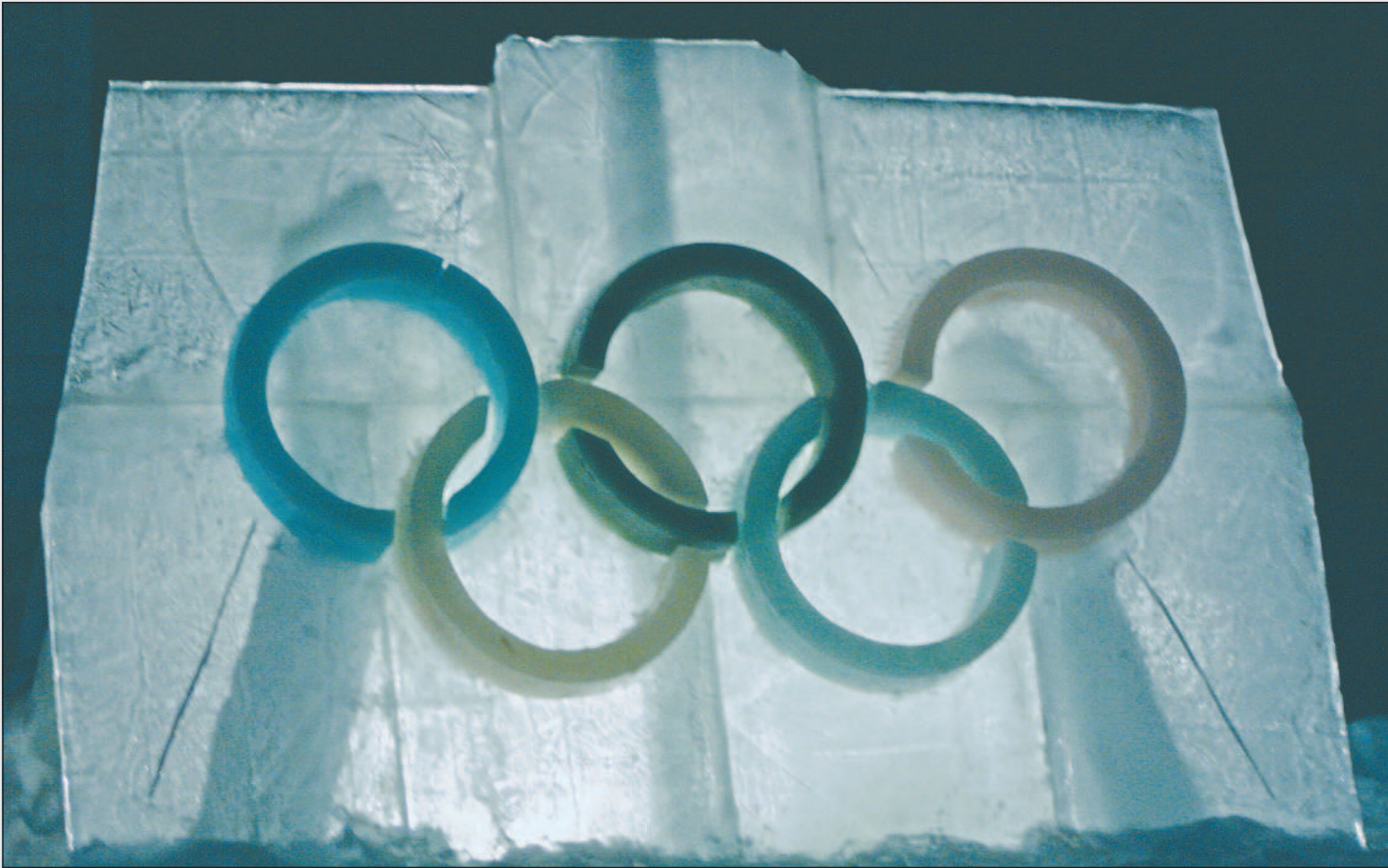


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International Falls, Minnesota

www.ifallsjournal.com

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STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Mark LeBlanc used ice to design the five interlocking Olympic rings in the front yard of his Third Avenue West residence. LeBlanc, who has been creating different frozen designs off and on for more than two decades, said this particular project took him about two weeks to create.

Frozen memories

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

The flame of the Olympic torch may have been extinguished in Sochi two weeks ago, but the rings are still under the spotlight in an International Falls man's front yard.

Shaped out of ice by Mark LeBlanc, the five interlocking rings can be seen at his Third Avenue West residence — right behind the Northern Lights Motel.

"This was a perfect year to work with ice like this," LeBlanc said. "Too perfect."

The city of International Falls employee began making ice for the project shortly after the new year.

"I have about five trays I use to make sheets of ice," he explained of the process. "I'm not sure how many hours I have into this project, but I know there is about 800 gallons of water."

A brief period of warmer weather earlier in the winter put the project on hold, and then the cold spell hit.

"Then I was making ice like

crazy," he said. "I was emptying the trays almost daily...It got too cold to even work on the thing."

LeBlanc said this winter marks the first since 2011 he has built something out of ice and was unsure of what to create. Originally, he thought he'd design a castle for a young family member undergoing treatments for cancer, but quickly realized his timeline was shrinking.

"There is so much detail that goes into castles and I was running out of time," he said. "I was really stumped on what to do."

After a phone call to his brother in Florida, LeBlanc's sister-in-law reminded him this was a year for the Olympics.

Bingo.

He'd fashion a design matching the Olympic rings.

"The rings are made out of a mold," he said. "I cut some rings out of a 55-gallon drum."

The colors of LeBlanc's rings match those on the actual symbol, but it took some experimenting, he said, to figure out how to make the color stick.



LeBlanc uses a meat cleaver to work on a wheelchair he will add to his Olympic ring design in honor of the Winter Paralympics.

Ice to A7 >

Group tries to head off fishing concerns

With Rainy River walleye season open, it's a waiting game for the accesses to open

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

Anglers fishing the spring Rainy River walleye season will find a few changes at Koochiching County parks and boat ramps.

The season, which opened March 1 and closes April 14, brings thousands of anglers from across the Midwest, and their boats and trailers, to Borderland's river accesses.

The season benefits lodging operators, bait stores, restaurants and gas stations in both Lake of the Woods and Koochiching counties, say tourism officials.

But it also brings the need to handle hundreds of boats attempting to get onto the river, parking of trucks and trailers, camping by anglers and concerns about maintaining boat ramps.

A meeting held Wednesday at the Koochiching County Courthouse drew more than a dozen people representing county and state resource agencies, law enforcement, and elected officials, along with tourism directors from both counties.

The meeting was a follow up from a meeting held in September in Birchdale, where a number of concerns involving what's usually the state's first open water opportunity to catch and-release a large trophy-sized walleye. The walleye/sauger aggregate possession limit is two. All walleye 19.5 inches or longer must be immediately released. Activity on the river normally continues with the catch-and-release lake sturgeon season, open from March 1 through April 23.

Most of the concerns addressed the large number of boats and trailers coming to river accesses in what often ends up being a compressed time period because of river ice conditions.

Law enforcement officers said they would attempt to provide

Fishing to A7 >

VNP campsite reservation, fee program begins in April

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

With the completion of a user input process, Voyageurs National Park is gearing up to implement a campsite reservation and fee program April 1.

In 2013, Voyageurs National Park completed a three-year "civic engagement" process to

determine if campsite reservations and fees were warranted for the park.

After conducting multiple public meetings and gathering public comments, park officials determined the majority of the public supported the program. Despite a moratorium on new or modified fees, the director's office of the

National Park Service approved a reservation system and fee rates for Voyageurs National Park.

Over the past several months park officials have worked in conjunction with www.recreation.gov to come up with a four-phase process for the implementation of the park's program for campsites, houseboat sites, and boats on in-

terior lakes. A phase-in process will allow park staff to ensure all aspects of the system provide the intended service to visitors. It also allows a season for visitors to get used to the changes.

"During civic engagement a lot of people requested we phase this process over a couple years so that visitors would become

accustomed to the process," said VNP Superintendent Mike Ward. "We fully agree with their input."

Phasing in the program over a period of years will give the park time to monitor how these 34 sites are used prior to continuing implementation.

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