

LOCALNEWS

Falls airport to receive \$610,000 grant

Grant will help fund airport terminal update plans; rehab of runway, taxiway

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

The Falls International Airport has been granted more than \$610,000 from the Federal Aviation Administration. The grant, which comes from the Department of Transportation, will go to-

ward repairing cracked sections of the airport's apron, taxiway, and runway, as well as funding the design phase of a planned expansion to the airport terminal. The Falls International Airport is eligible for up to \$1 million dollars annually as long as its enplanements remain more than 10,000 travelers annually, reported Bob Anderson, chairman of the International Falls-Koochiching County Airport Commission, which oversees airport operations. Enplanements is the number of travelers who get on planes at the airport, which

is jointly owned by the city and county. The money from the FAA's Airport Improvement Program, known as AIP, will be used for pavement rehabilitation of the 7,400-foot main runway and the adjoining taxiway, said Anderson. "Weather extremes, both hot and cold, take their toll on bituminous surfacing and the airport has contracted with KGM Construction to make repairs this summer on those areas needing attention," he said. The balance of the funds

are to be used for final design of an update to the terminal building, he said. "The final design plans will give the city of International Falls and Koochiching County, owners of the airport, a set of plans that are ready should the airport receive funds through the state bonding bill scheduled for the 2014 session of the Legislature and some discretionary funds from the FAA and AIP." Anderson said the cost of updating the terminal building would exceed the amount for which the airport is eligible and there-

fore the airport commission would request additional money for the project through the FAA. "This is the process that was used to secure funds to build the present terminal building in 1978 and our hope is the airport is successful again in securing the necessary monies to make improvements as the airport is very important to our timber and tourism industries here in this area," said Anderson. "International Falls Airport is a vital hub for business people and tourists alike," said 8th District

Congressman Rick Nolan in a statement to The Journal. Nolan is a member of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee's Subcommittee on Aviation, as well as the General Aviation Caucus. "This grant means critical infrastructure jobs here in International Falls, across Koochiching County, and along our northern border, while helping assure that planes take off and land on a smooth, safe surface, regardless of what our northern Minnesota weather brings," said Nolan.

Bald Eagle nesting areas reopened in VNP

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Voyageurs National Park officials report it has reopened to public use three visitor use sites closed in May to protect pairs of nesting bald eagles. The areas reopened for public use are: Rainy Lake – Sand Bay South (marked on the park's use site map as R25) and Skipper Rock Island (R45) houseboat sites. Kabetogama Lake – Yoder Island (K 37) houseboat site. One undeveloped area on the west end of Sphunge Island, Kabetogama Lake was also reopened. The park is obligated to follow the conservation management actions of the Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Management Act. Each year since 1992, the park has temporarily closed the land and water areas around active bald eagle

nests to visitor use during their critical nesting periods. "We appreciate the public's assistance in protecting the bald eagles of Voyageurs National Park," said VNP Superintendent Mike Ward in a statement. "Reducing the potential adverse impacts at eagle nesting areas ensures that we are successful at sustaining the park's population of eagles, an extremely important component of the aquatic ecosystem."

FLEDGE RESULTS

Park officials reported last week 30 young eagles fledged this year from 24 park nests: six at Rainy Lake; 14 at Kabetogama Lake; five at Namakan Lake; three at Sand Point Lake; and two at Crane Lake. VNP staff report nesting

failures occurred at 16 of 38 territories in 2013, a rate of 42 percent. Rainy and Kabetogama lakes, in particular, experienced an unusually high proportion of nest failures — 45 percent and 55 percent, respectively. Three nests failed on Kabetogama Lake due to extreme winds which blew nests and nest trees down. Other causes of nest failure are unknown. The number of young produced per occupied breeding area for the 2013 breeding population in Voyageurs National Park was 0.79. Sixty-three percent of breeding pairs occupying a breeding area successfully raised at least one fledgling. Breeding success of 70 percent is considered characteristic of a healthy bald eagle breeding population; long-term averages for Voyageurs National Park approach this threshold.

PREPPING FOR SCHOOL



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Steve Kruse, pastor at First Assembly of God, gives a backpack away to a young student Friday. Kruse said about 60 backpacks with supplies were distributed to area students as part of an effort to pay it forward, he said. Kruse reports he knows there is a need to help others in the community and said he was excited to see people take advantage of the opportunity. "I just like to bless people," he said.

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