

# OUTDOORS

## CALL OF THE WILD

The Journal welcomes ideas for stories about people in our community who have a unique hunting, fishing or outdoors tale.  
**Call the Journal at 285-7411**

## Dill seeks extra money for deer feeding

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Considering the 10 to 12 inches of new snow that fell Monday and Tuesday across much of northern Minnesota, Rep. David Dill, DFL-Crane Lake, is urging the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to free up an additional \$100,000 to immediately invest in the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association's current deer feeding program in northern Minnesota.

In March, the program — the first state-financed feeding program in 17 years — began with food being delivered to eight drop-off sites near Cook, Moose Lake,



Rep. David Dill

has allocated \$170,000, but \$118,000 has already been spent and Dill said the urgency remains. An additional \$100,000 would extend the program by more than three weeks and allow the association to expand the number of supplies. Any unused money would be returned to the

Hibbing, International Falls, Virginia, Esko, Grand Rapids and McGregor-Wright.

The Department of Natural Resources

fund, he said.

“There is a danger that the Deer Hunters Association may now run out of feed before the snow cover has melted,” said Dill in a news release. “If deer can’t browse then they’ll starve. We expect to lose deer because of the weather; we don’t expect to lose them because of lack of funds.”

Dill called the people feeding deer through the program “dedicated volunteers who are making the program work and are making a difference.”

Nearly 1,000 volunteers have distributed about 660,000 pounds of feed, according to MDHA.

## County river ramps, parks iced up

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Koochiching County officials are monitoring the boat ramps and parks that provide access to anglers as the Rainy River spring walleye season unfolds.

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.

Koochiching County Land Commissioner Dennis Hummitzsch met last week with the county board to brief them on the condition of ramps at county parks this season.

A notice sent out Tuesday said the river is still ice covered 10 miles east

of Birchdale.

At this time, county staff will not open overnight camping spots at Nelson Park because of the large amount of snow there and no place to put it, reported county staff.

Birchdale’s Nelson Park ramp, normally the first to get used during the walleye season, has solid ice and lots of snow in the park, reported Land Commissioner Hummitzsch.

“We won’t do any park snow transport unless there is significant melting,” he reported. “The ramps will be opened when the river opens and shore shelf ice is down to 12 feet from shore.”

He said the season may end before the ramps are open.

County highway and forestry department staff will monitor conditions and will attempt to open river ramps as soon as practical, he said.

He said boat ramps at Frontier and Vidas parks will be cleared of ice if weather cooperates by providing warm temperatures, higher winds and rainy weather.

“But who really can predict?” he wondered.

Tom Toratti, county forester, also provided information in the update sent out Tuesday to Department of Natural Resources area fisheries offices and local tourism offices.

“Too much winter, think spring,” he advised in the Rainy River access and park update.

## LAST SNOWMAN?



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sam Listiak, from St. Louis Park, was in International Falls this week visiting grandparents Patty and Kurt Growette during the spring break of his school. In celebration of his visit, the trio built snowmen as depicted in his favorite cartoon, ‘Calvin & Hobbs.’ Patty Growette reports that one snowman had his head rolling off and he was catching it and the other fell through the snow, showing only the head and arms.

## Winter severity index hits 182

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The winter severity index for the International Falls area was 182 on Wednesday, reports Larry Petersen, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources area wildlife manager.

The WSI was 137 last year at this date, and 42 two years ago, Petersen notes.

The average WSI for this date is about 115. The harshest winter in the mid 1990s had an index of 196 on this date, according to Petersen.

All the winter severity data dates from 1966 to present.

The snow depth is around 28-34 inches in the International Falls vicinity.

March alone had 47 WSI points which tied a record, set in 1976, for that month, reports Petersen.

The winter severity index is a standardized

number we use when considering impacts of the winter on deer. It is calculated using temperature and snow depth in the period from Nov. 1 through April 30 or whenever winter ends. Every day the daily low temperature is zero or below is one point, and every day the snow depth is 15 inches or deeper in an open aspen woods is one point. The points are added each week until winter ends.



Larry Petersen



## DPS: Call 811 before digging to avoid an emergency

DPS STAFF REPORT

Inspectors on scene after a natural gas emergency hear it often: “I noticed a strange smell but didn’t know what it was so I didn’t do anything.”

That rotten-egg smell could mean there is a natural gas leak — and it could be deadly.

The best way to avoid an emergency or unintentionally striking an underground facility is to call 811 before you dig.

As winter-weary home-

owners get ready to enjoy the warm weather and tackle their spring yard projects, The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Pipeline Safety reminds Minnesotans to call before they dig.

“When you’re planning your spring project do not forget to call 811 at least two business days prior to digging,” State Fire Marshal and MNOPS Director Bruce West said. “It’s a free service in place to protect you, your family and your

community.”

Simple projects like building a deck, planting a tree or replacing your mailbox can be dangerous if people don’t know what’s below before they start digging. Buried underground facilities — including electric and natural gas lines — can run inches from the surface and be easily damaged with household tools.

State law requires anyone excavating to notify Gopher State One Call at least two days before beginning a project

so utility companies can mark the approximate location of potentially hazardous underground facilities.

Digging without knowing the location of underground utilities increases the likelihood of unintentional damage, which can cause serious injuries, service disruptions and repair costs. Call 811 first so you don’t have to call 911 later. Or go to the GSOC website and request underground utilities near the area you’re digging be marked.

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