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Locals discuss use of Twitter

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Response to Boise mill layoffs taking shape

STAFF PHOTO BY LAUREL BEAGER

Randy Lasky, center, facilitates the first meeting of the Business Development and Retention Team.

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

A variety of activities are taking place in Borderland in response to layoffs at Boise Inc.'s paper mill in International Falls.

Three teams developed to respond to the economic impact of the layoffs met Wednesday to organize and consider their role to address community needs.

The meetings of the teams are being facilitated by Randy Lasky, president of The Northspan Group, a Duluth-based firm that provides professional business development and community development consulting services. Lasky has assisted in similar community responses to paper mill shutdowns and layoffs in Minnesota.

The teams are named for their focus: business development and retention; long-term vision and strategy; worker retention and assistance.

Members of the business development and retention team met Wednesday morning, when they reviewed conversations about the impact of the layoffs they are hearing in the community and developed a mission: Address the immediate needs of existing businesses and entrepreneurs to retain and create job opportunities.

Meanwhile Koochiching County Commissioner Rob Ecklund reported to the county board Tuesday about a meeting he and fellow Commissioner Brian McBride attended about the layoffs that includes Boise mill manager Bert Brown and Lori Lyman, Boise public affairs manager. McBride was filling in for Commissioner Wade Pavleck, a member of the Economic Response Team also called the Path Forward Committee. Also present at the meeting were team members Bob Anderson, International Falls mayor, and Falls Councilor Pete Kalar. Anderson compiled a list of 15 items discussed during the July 19 meeting.

Among the items discussed were:

■ On May 2, the day the company announced the job termination, the International Falls paper mill employed 691 hourly and 153

Layoffs to A7 ➤

STAFF PHOTOS BY ERIC MATHEWS

Two Voyageurs share stories of what life was like for a voyageur back in early America.

Alouette!

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

Going back in time doesn't require a DeLorean these days. All it takes is a short drive down the road to Voyageurs National Park's Rainy Lake Visitor Center. There, visitors can go back in time and experience the life of a voyageur on a mammoth canoe.

Rainy Lake Visitor Center is one of three visitors centers at Voyageurs National Park, the other two being Kabetogama Lake and Ash River. Rainy Lake offers six different tours, with four of them aquatic-based while the other two are land-based.

The North Canoe boat tour puts visitors in a historically-accurate voyageur canoe, and features a presentation on how the voyageurs lived and what their jobs were like. They often worked 16 hour days, filled with paddling and portaging across the land to trade their wares, which included beads, iron goods, cloth, and tea for valuable pelts.

Park Ranger Justin Olson said his personal favorite tour is the Grand Tour, but that the North Canoe tour offers a unique experience.

"The North Canoe tour is great because of the history and getting the hands-on experience with a voyageur really is great," he said.

The fact that most of Voyageurs National Park is water means these aquatic-based tours are important to get the best experience at the park.

"The boat tours get you out on the water and into the park, which you really can't do with the land-based tours," he said.

While attendance on the tours is down compared to last year, Olson said the addition of more canoes mean there's more opportunities to go on the North Canoe and Family Canoe tours.

Voyageurs National Park is open year-round, and the Rainy Lake Visitors Center is the only center open during the winter.

Beaver pelts, like the one shown here, were sought by voyageurs.

A voyageur displays a block of tea, which they would have used to trade with Native Americans during their travels.

Granola bar company aids habitat restoration

Preserve the Parks program benefits National Parks Conservation Association

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

About 3,000 new trees will find a home along the shoreline of the Rat Root River in August as a result of a grant from a popular granola bar company.

The Rainy Lake Sportsfishing Club, a local resource advocacy group, recently received an $18,000 grant from Nature Valley, a granola bar company, and its funding partner, the National Parks Conservation Association, to purchase trees to plant along the Rat Root River.

"This is good news," said Tim McKay, RLSC board member.

Nature Valley is a longtime supporter of national park preservation through its Preserve the Parks program – now in its third year – which benefits the NPCA, says a press release from NPCA. Over the course of the three-year relationship, the Preserve the Parks program will have helped raise more than $1 million to benefit restoration projects in support of America's national parks.

This year, Nature Valley is continuing to help preserve America's national parks while encouraging education, outdoor exploration and support, the release said.

McKay explained that the RLSC is a grant recipient because of the Rat Root River walleye project, which is intended to restore the traditional walleye spawning run through a variety of efforts.

The project teams the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District with the RLSC. The club provides the initiative, the district is the financial agent for the funding,

Habitat to A7 ➤

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