

“ Ely Echo Editorial

Outfitters concerned over potential new Forest Service commercial regs

A meeting on Monday may finally shed some light on what the Forest Service has up its sleeve for commercial operations in the Superior National Forest, including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

This is the first of two meetings on the issue and will start at 4:30 p.m. at Vermilion Community College. The second meeting will be held at 4:30 p.m. on Sept. 26 at the Cook County Courthouse.

Area outfitters are going to get a sneak peek before the public meeting on Monday and each is bound to have a load of questions.

This issue dates back to 2015 when Wilderness Watch sued the Forest Service and reached a settlement agreement. That lawsuit was over limiting commercial towboat operations in the BWCA.

Basically what happened was towboats, which disperse canoeists further into the BWCA, were not counted in the motorboat quota. Groups like Wilderness Watch sued and the Forest Service fumbled the ball, saying it didn't keep good records of how many towboats there were and how many trips each made.

There was also the Chain of Lakes issue where exempt permits were put on boats owned by people who had property on Moose, including resorts and outfitters.

So you could go without a motor permit from Moose to Newfound and Sucker lakes to fish or to get to Prairie Portage.

That ended around 2004 when the exempt permits were no longer allowed.

Back in the day there were 100 cabins on Moose Lake being rented out, now that number is under 30. That makes comparing numbers from then like apples to oranges.

From 1978 to 1983 there was also a phaseout of the big towboats, where there was no 25 horsepower limit. Other changes were made involving U.S. Point on Basswood Lake. As you can see, this is a complicated issue with lots of history.

There are those banking on that history being forgotten and new rules and regulations being put in place that will further stifle

Ely's economy.

Just looking at towboats or who can take photos commercially in the BWCA is one thing. But it's much scarier than that.

The Forest Service cast a much wider net and set its sights on all commercial operations in the Superior National Forest.

"The Forest Service determined that a more holistic examination would better serve the public and the Forest."

As the study started, the Forest Service stopped providing any new commercial permits. There was no warning, no study, no EIA, no nothing. Just an edict and a door slamming shut.

For three years no new permits could be issued so something as simple as a new fishing guide would have to find an existing service and go under that permit. A typical example of government overreach and stifling employment opportunities.

What we don't know is what is going to happen next. Could the Forest Service strictly limit the number of outfitters? Or the number of commercial operators sending people into the BWCA? Or how about not transferring special use permits currently held by outfitters to new owners?

And will motorboat quotas be reduced even further? The agency has already eliminated the permit lottery, which attracted the attention of our elected officials in Washington. We better hope they are paying attention now.

Ely can't afford any more hits to its economy. We have a wilderness area that fewer people are going to visit. The BWCA is no longer the economic driver of tourism here. We have fewer resorts, fewer outfitters and fewer people.

Outfitters in town have every right to be concerned about how this will all play out. But we as a community should be paying attention as well.

The track record of the U.S. Forest Service in regulating business is a poor at best. This is not an agency looking to help the economy. Truth be told, when it comes to the BWCA, it's done more harm than good.



Letters

...DNR refused to compromise

Fellow outdoors people of Northern Minnesota, Beware! Do not let what happened to me happen to you!

Last November I was issued a civil citation, by mail, from one of our local over zealous DNR conservation officers. He was not on site. He did not witness my alleged infraction. He used only circumstantial evidence to issue this citation.

I appealed the citation because it was an unmitigated lie, not in any way supported by a preponderance of quality evidence.

The Minnesota DNR refused to compromise with me. They acted flippant and dismissive.

The Minnesota law system directs these appeals to an Administrative judge, instead of sending it to a district court. The Administrative judge is a lawyer, hired by the state to act like a judge for such cases.

The hearing ensued via phone. The administrative judge was less than professional in his recommendation to uphold the citation. The judge allowed several broken Federal and State circumstantial evidence laws, presented by the conservation officer, to be used against me. Yes, the officer broke several laws in issuing his citation and presenting his false testimony to the judge. The "judge" was ineffectual enough to miss these law infractions and did not immediately dismiss the case for lack of lawful circumstantial evidence.

I spent over \$700.00 appealing my case to the Minnesota Court Of Appeals.

My case was dismissed before I could bring it before a real judge, and prove the unlawfulness of the citation. I sent my original legal documents to the Court of Appeals, via Fed Ex rather than USPS, as the law states, hence the dismissal. This is just another one of our senseless laws.

This is my take. Our laws are for the rich. I will not have justice because I do not have the money to proceed. I can not go further with my case to the MN Supreme Court or our Federal Appeals Court. Second, the Administrative Hearing Judges will back the state employees regardless of gross violations on their part. Third, the DNR is dismissive and flippant toward our public. They will back their man. Fourth, we have a conservation officer that is allowed to break the law when issuing citations. This is lawlessness! Fifth, why can't the DNR and/or, the officer, admit the citation was a mistake and dismiss it? We all make mistakes, they are not above human nature.

Be careful out there. Know your rights. Don't be a victim of the DNR and our Minnesota justice system. If you are innocent of an alleged infraction, fight it. If enough people fight these injustices perhaps someone will wake up and see we are not being protected or served by our Minnesota DNR law enforcement, or our judicial system.

Know your rights, fight for them.

Thank you.

Dr. Thomas Andler, Ely MN

...help shape the 2020 referendum

Letter to the Editor: Dear Ely community members,

Great changes are in the future of ISD 696!

Red surveys emblazoned with the Ely name and logo may have arrived in your mailboxes or post office boxes this week. When you hold this survey, you hold the future of our historic district in your hands. What will this future look like? That is for all of us, the taxpayers and community members of our district, to decide.

We at Ely Education Association (EEA) hope that each and every recipient of this survey complete it. It will take just a few minutes

of time to help shape the 2020 referendum.

We further hope that each and every recipient of this survey endeavor to be informed. Ask your children or grandchildren for information about their experiences, or strike up a conversation with any school employee.

Better yet, come and see for yourself. EEA is hosting a Facilities Open House on Friday, Sept. 27 from 3-5 p.m. We welcome you to walk around our school building to see the present conditions--and picture the future!

Ely Education Association

...hope that your story may be a catalyst for others to connect and show interest in

Dear Hailey and Kyle:

I am writing you from Iowa and hope this gets to you via the Echo staff who promised to do so.

I have no connection to Ely other than yearly canoe trips in to Quetico for 40 plus years. My long standing subscription to the Echo keeps me in touch with what is going on and it is just a fine paper.

I was deeply touched by the story of you, Raymond

and Tinky. As a owner of a couple therapy dogs who visit our school regularly (I read while the dogs mingle) I can vouch for all the good things that dogs do for kids.

Taking it the next step of people connections is a lesson for us all. Much like dogs can connect with kids, the value of generational friendships comes through loud and clear in what you are doing for Raymond. You give him reason to live and

things to look forward to. And, as is often the case, we actually get more out of giving than receiving.

I hope that your story may be a catalyst for others to connect and show interest in those less fortunate. The wisdom of elders is a precious thing often underappreciated in our culture. You have hit the bullseye of things that "really matter."

As a token of my appreciation for your message I have

enclosed \$20 to help with the many DQ visits that are part of your time with Raymond. Have a blizzard on me!

The ripple effect of your story made it all the way to Iowa and most likely to everyone who reads the Echo.

Bless you. Say hello to Raymond for me.

Joseph Olsen
Independence, Iowa

...thought is on a dog park ...exchange ideas Monday, Sept. 30

Dog owners -

This is the time that we can shine to show the people of Ely that there is a need for a dog park.

A dog park is a huge stress relief for dogs able to run that stress off rather than redirecting that energy to negative behavior. A dog park can teach other dogs and their owners how to act around other dogs and their owners, how to get around

other dogs and humans.

A dog park will give owners a chance to interact with each other. Even a non-dog owner will benefit from more stress free dogs, friendly and more behaved dogs.

So grab your puppy and come on out, meet other dogs and their owners to share ideas, stories.

In order for this to work, there will be a need for support. Sure we need about an

acre of land, construction of the park, but mostly for this to happen, it has to prove that there will be support for this park's maintenance.

How far are you willing to go for a dog park? Would you use a dog park?

If yes, would you help in construction? Fundraising? Maintenance?

Whatever your thought is on a dog park, please come out and ask questions, ex-

change ideas Monday, Sept. 30 at 5 p.m. at the Trezona Trail, near the Veterans Memorial.

Please bring your puppies (and pick up after them). Use leashes and control pets. If bad weather, the meeting will be held the next day, same place, same time.

Bruce Wheelright,
Ely



From the miscellaneous drawer

by Anne Swenson

One of my friends panicked when I noted I might get my desk cleaned in retirement. No fear. It's as messy as ever.

Ely's summer residents are already departing for warmer climes.

Despite the variances in daily temperatures of late - I have a pesky visitor who is checking out potential winter quarters.

Some years back I had the front of my house dug up and window wells installed where needed.

One of them is lined with a metal which has horizontal ridges from underground to the surface. The topside is covered with a fiberglass ridged top.

My four-footed visitor - a squirrel - is small enough to slip between the grooves and drop the four feet below.

From there he recognizes he is in trouble and scrambles to climb the ridged walls to get out. So far he has made the mistake twice, the last time at 3:30 in the morning. Both times he managed to get out after a bit of racket.

Trust me, I do not open the window to invite him inside.

Since I sleep in a room nearby, the attempts at escape wake me up.

We're thinking of fitting a metal mesh over the base unit, under the fiberglass. Or maybe he'll learn that this is a suicide mission.

In the Ely Echo for Sept. 20, 1999, 20 years ago, the headlines were:

- Ballpark renamed to honor Ely's vets;
- Reassessment begins on Fall Lake parcels;
- County board raises levy by 4.6 percent;
- Ely set to receive \$200,000 CDBG grant for Spaulding project;
- Northshore Mining cancels planned September shutdown.

Write a letter to the editor and sign your name, phone #. Send it to: Ely Echo, 15 East Chapman St., Ely MN 55731 or email to: elyecho@aol.com. The Echo reserves the right to edit.

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