

Voyageurs National Park

Development of Overnight and Day Use Sites February 7, 2008

Submitted by: _____
Chair, Campsite Committee Date

Approved by: _____
Superintendent Date

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to recommend a list of sites for the development of overnight and day use sites within Voyageurs National Park. The *General Management Plan* (GMP 2001) set the target range of visitor sites within the lakecountry area between 280 and 320, including 15-20 visitor destinations. As of 2007, 231 lakecountry sites have been developed. The campsite committee (see Appendix B) was charged with developing a process to determine the distribution of the remaining sites to develop. Selection of visitor destinations has followed a different process and is only discussed briefly in this recommendation.

Table 1: Relationship of Existing Developed Sites and General Management Plan Recommendation

Type of Site	GMP Target	Already Developed	Potential for Development
Small Campsite	129	114(33 Rainy, 81Namakan)	15
Large Campsite	24	19 (9 Rainy, 10 Namakan)	5
Group	3 (2 Namakan, 1 Rainy)	2 (1 Rainy 1 Namakan)	1 (Namakan)
Small Campground	2	2	0
Houseboat	108	79 (33 Rainy, 46 Namakan)	29
Day Use	28	15 (7 Rainy, 8 Namakan)	13

PARAMETERS

The *Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan* (LBSMP 1988) provides site selection criteria and an available site inventory. It defined the three most important criteria for evaluating a site for development as: (1) adequate soil area and depth (at least 3 feet) for a pit toilet unless a vault or composting toilet is used; (2) island size must be at least five acres unless the use of wood fires is prohibited; (3) consideration for critical vegetative, wildlife, archeological and historical resources or leased or private land

The LBSMP also established additional site selection criteria to evaluate sites for development potential: Water access (approach, landing, shoreline, exposure to wind and waves), resource protection (expansion potential—appropriateness of site type to site location, firewood availability, and soil impact capacity), and development potential (access to core area, room for core area, adequate flat ground for tent pads, circulation potential that doesn't encourage extensive social trail development, site intervisibility, breeze potential and scenic attributes).

The GMP endorsed continued use of the site selection criteria found in the *Lakecountry and Backcountry Site Management Plan* (LBSMP 1988). In response to comments, and in order to provide a less crowded and more secluded camping experience, the GMP provides for fewer sites than the LBSMP. It also divided the lakecountry area into subareas (high, moderate and low density of development zones) and established density as a tool for guiding future development. In addition to the criteria provided in the LBSMP and GMP, the committee considered the following concepts:

- Meet the GMP targets but leave room for future development.
- Make a priority the construction of sites that protect resources.
- Use visitor data to help determine the type and location of sites needed.
- Build sites that serve the visitor and reflect trends in use and need.
- Make a priority the construction of Day Use.
- The distribution of sites between basins should be 60% Namakan and 40% Rainy
- Focus attention on Rainy Lake to bring the number of sites up to 40% of the total.
- Harmonize the number of houseboat sites between the basins.
- Favor previously disturbed areas before developing undisturbed areas.

ISSUES DISCUSSED

There were a number of issues raised during discussions by the committee that helped the committee shape and define the recommendation.

Distribution of Sites between Management Areas

The distribution of overnight and day use sites in the LBSMP is approximately 60% of sites in the Namakan basin and 40% on Rainy Lake. The miles of shoreline, or developable resource in each basin reflect the same ratio. The 2003 creel survey shows that 36% of users surveyed were on Rainy Lake and 64% in the Namakan basin.

Houseboat Users

There are currently 46 developed houseboat sites in the Namakan basin and 32 developed houseboat sites on Rainy Lake. Observations by rangers indicate that houseboats sometimes exceed the number of sites available. This was supported by the 2003 creel survey which showed that the number of houseboats periodically exceeds the number of available sites, particularly on Rainy Lake.

Density of Use Zones

The GMP recommends that sites be developed that meet the site selection criteria and that do not create a higher density than that established for lakecountry areas (I-61). Sites that were not identified in the LBSMP could be developed if they met the site selection and subarea density criteria. The subareas were generated based on existing density of developed visitor sites, natural and cultural resource conditions, relationship to development, and the desire to provide areas with a range of densities.

Subarea 1 (high density: three or more sites within a ½-mile radius)—about 130 miles of shoreline

Subarea 2 (moderate density: fewer than three sites within a ½-mile radius)—about 280 miles of shoreline

Subarea 3 (low density: a maximum of one site per ½-mile radius)—about 240 miles of shoreline

The density zone is graphically applied by placing a circle with a ½-mile radius or “bubble” around each developed site, seeing which and how many proposed sites fall in the circle, and determining which subarea they are in. The application of density in this manner revealed several issues: it doesn’t take into account the terrain within the bubble; the subarea may change within a bubble; the subareas reflect the density of campsite development at the time but do not reflect density of cabin development in areas such as Dryweed Island, or current visitor use patterns, or designated, but undeveloped sites in the LBSMP. Applying density of use as the foremost criteria would eliminate many otherwise desirable sites.

The committee applied the density of use tool to all the proposed sites and then combined that with other criteria to shape the recommendation and provide for a range of visitor experiences and resource protection.

Limited Development Shore Lunch Sites

The committee was asked to consider limited development shore lunch sites in this recommendation, in order to segregate and accommodate fishing guides working in the park.

Naming Visitor Sites

The committee was asked to provide a list of recommended site names to the Management Team for consideration. The committee will use existing site names, and geographic names found on USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle maps to guide site naming.

Paddle-In Sites

The committee was asked to consider specific camping accommodations for paddlers that may find it difficult to find available campsites because of the limited distance they can travel in a given time period.

SITE SELECTION PROCESS

The Superintendent and the park's Management Team met with the committee on November 19, 2003 to give direction regarding the context and framework for recommending sites. The committee then met 25 times to develop a recommendation for development of sites. This included meetings to discuss issues as well as on-site visits to apply selection criteria to evaluate potential sites.

Phase 1: Initial Screening of Potential Sites

The committee reviewed 397 potential sites for development. This initial group included sites previously evaluated in the LBSMP but not yet developed as well as sites not included in the plan. Sites not included in the LBSMP but considered were vacated Reservations of Use and Occupancy tracts, sites suggested by houseboat companies, site suggestions gathered during the public comment periods for the GMP, and sites recommended by park staff.

A spreadsheet was created to record information about each of the potential sites. Categories included the critical site selection criteria and additional site selection criteria from the LBSMP and the density of use parameters from the GMP. As information was gathered about each potential site, the categories were filled in and comments made about each site's characteristics. Potential sites with issues that could not easily be mitigated (e.g. private ownership, long-term use and occupancy, historic structure, ethnographic or archeological resource that could not be protected) were eliminated from further review. All proposed sites in both alternatives meet the Critical and Additional Site Selection Criteria from the LBSMP.

Phase 2: Field Visits and Site Evaluation

Potential sites considered were visited by a quorum of the committee, where a site evaluation was completed. Each site was evaluated for suitability by applying the Critical Site Selection Criteria and Additional Site Selection Criteria found in the LBSMP.

The site selection criteria, density of use, and other specific characteristics were recorded for each site and summarized on the spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was sorted to reveal the sites that had no unmitigated issues.

Phase 3: Development of the Recommendation

Once the evaluation and field visits were completed for potential sites, the committee started to develop the recommendation. A number of proposed sites (31) had no issues with the criteria. It also became evident that the most desirable sites tended to cluster in three areas of the park—Dryweed Island, Three Sisters area on Rainy Lake and the mouth of Grassy Bay on Sand Point Lake.

OUTCOMES

The **campsite committee strongly recommends the following:**

Make a priority the construction of sites that protect resources. Build sites that serve the visitor and reflect trends in use and need. Build day use sites first. Harmonize the number of houseboat sites between the basins. Focus attention on Rainy Lake to bring the number of sites up to 40% of the total. Construct paddle-In sites.

The committee is the decision making body for the construction of campsites. The committee will meet annually to make a recommendation on the location and type of site to be constructed in the following year. This recommendation will be subject to the review and approval of the Superintendent.

Distribution of Sites between Management Areas

Although the total number of sites proposed was reduced by the GMP, the committee recommends retaining the 60-40 ratio (60% on Namakan and 40% on Rainy) for distribution of the total number of overnight and day use sites that is in the LBSMP and supported by visitor use statistics. The committee recommends focusing construction on Rainy Lake to bring the ratio of constructed sites closer to the 60% 40% distribution.

Houseboat Users

The 2003 creel survey indicates a need for more houseboat sites, particularly on Rainy Lake, however the committee recommends harmonize the number of houseboat sites on Rainy to the current number in the Namakan District (46) and limiting further development until a houseboat management plan is completed. This will provide some flexibility for future conditions and recommendations made in the houseboat management plan. The GMP calls for initiation of a houseboat management plan when overnight houseboat use has reached 60 boats per basin.

Limited Development Shore Lunch Sites

The committee does not recommend designating limited development shore lunch sites. However, the committee recommends installing larger and more effective fire rings at some day use sites and visitor destinations and retrofitting some existing day use fire rings. The fire ring currently used by the park is not large enough for a traditional shore lunch. The committee recommends installing docks at some day use sites to accommodate visitors with mobility issues, and boats that are hard to get out of.

Sites Recommended for Dock Construction

Namakan	Site Name	Designation
3188	Round Bear Island	DU w/Dock & Big Ring
4107	Sheen Island	DU w/Dock & Big Ring
5029D	Sand Point	DU w/Dock & Big Ring
4118I	Twin Beach	DU w/Dock & Big Ring
Rainy		
7004	Little Cedar Island	Universally Accessible
1010H	Drywood Island	DU w/Dock & Big Ring
1024F	Saginaw Bay East	DU w/Dock & Big Ring
7008	Lost Bay West	DU w/Dock & Big Ring Could be Accessible

Paddle-In Sites

The 2003 creel survey found that 12% of the observed boaters were in paddled craft, suggesting the need for overnight accommodations for this group of users. A draft summer use study showed 9% kayak, 3% canoe respectively. Therefore, the committee recommends developing paddle-In sites in both basins that will accommodate short distance and long distance paddlers. The committee recommends that paddle sites accommodate more than one group, and have multiple cores. There should be group size limits so that the sites are not dominated by large groups. The committee needs time to visit the proposed sites in summer 2008 and apply the site selection criteria. The committee will follow up with a Paddle Site specific recommendation in summer 2008. Several core areas may be developed at each site to accommodate more than one group. Site design should fit the characteristics of the proposed site.

THE PLAN FOR CONSTRUCTION

This Implementation Plan will result in the development of 73 overnight and day use sites bringing the total to 306 (including 15 visitor destinations). The plan focuses development in high density subareas, at areas formerly occupied with a large number of cabins, at heavily-used traditional campsites, and where there is a demand for visitor use sites.

Eight sites (2 day use, 2 small campsites, 1 large campsite, 3 houseboat) would be developed on Dryweed Island in addition to the existing 10 sites (8 small campsites, 1 large campsite, 1 houseboat). Clustering some sites close to the west entrance of the park, would allow visitors on houseboats to be near the houseboat owners' base of operation at the beginning and end of their scheduled visits. In addition, visitors who are new to the area and not as adventurous would have more sites available to them that have shorter and less-demanding distances to navigate. Visitors in non-motorized craft would be less likely to have to compete with visitors in motorized craft for day and overnight sites because of the longer distances that can be traveled in a motorized craft.

Dryweed Island was once heavily developed with nearly forty private recreational cabins. The plan will develop several of these historically-used sites and focuses development at already disturbed areas. These former cabin sites tend to be the most-appealing sites for development and would better meet the additional site criteria. Dryweed is a very large island with many bays and inlets, sites would be dispersed around the island, except for the Harrison Bay area, where several sites would be clustered. The south side of Dryweed Island is adjacent to the main boating channel with an elevated level of noise and activity. Eagles and other wildlife in this developed area have become adapted to the presence of humans and would be less impacted by overnight and day use site development than some other areas of the park.

The Three Sisters area on Rainy Lake is a series of islands located east of Brule Narrows, immediately west of Kempton Channel. The plan will develop eight sites (1 day use, 4 small campsites, 1 large campsite, 2 houseboat) in this area in addition to the existing 3 houseboat and 1 small campsite. Sites located in this area would be developed on historically-used camping areas and areas that were once developed with private cabins. The Three Sisters area provides more protected harborage and site suitability that is not available for quite a distance in either direction, particularly from Hitchcock Bay to the east end of Rainy Lake. Although development in this area would change density from medium to high, the sites would still be fairly secluded from each other. The Three Sisters area is adjacent to the main boating channel with an elevated level of noise and activity.

The plan will develop six sites, including three day use, 1 small campsite and 2 large campsites would be developed in Grassy Bay on Sand Point Lake. The plan will provide day and overnight sites close to the resorts and houseboat base located at Crane Lake. It would provide options for visitors who do not feel comfortable traveling long distances from Crane Lake. Residents, business-owners and visitors have requested additional day use sites in the Crane Lake area, this plan will meet that need. Although the density of

sites would be greater than that provided in the GMP, proposed sites will be fairly dispersed and none of the sites would be intervisible to another site. The mouth of Grassy Bay is adjacent to the main boating channel, providing easy access to visitors.

The plan provides for seven overnight campsites designated for paddlers—two sites on Rainy Lake and five in the Namakan Basin. The sites would be spaced to accommodate paddlers out for a day, point-to-point paddlers, and those circumnavigating the Kabetogama Peninsula. Paddle-only sites would have smaller tent pads to accommodate up to nine people, 2 picnic tables, a bear pole instead of bear locker, a fire ring, a vault toilet (or pit toilet if pumping of a vault toilet cannot be accomplished), site sign and notice to paddlers sign. No mooring aid would be provided.

A list of specific sites for implementation through this plan are found in Appendix A.

Development Summary

TYPE OF SITE	PROPOSED		EXISTING		TOTAL
	Rainy	Namakan	Rainy	Namakan	
Small Campsite	9	2	33	81	125
Large Campsite	3	4	9	10	26
Small Campground	0	0	0	2	2
Group Campsite	0	1	1	1	3
Houseboat Site	13	2	33	46	94
Day Use Site	7	10	7	8	32
Visitor Destination	7	8	1	1	17
Paddle-only Campsite	2	5	0	0	7
Total # of Sites	41	32	84	149	306

In response to public input, and following the direction of the GMP the following sites are recommended for construction in 2008.

Sites Proposed for Construction in 2008

Sand Point Lake		
5062A	Casareto	DU Destination
5027A	Grassy Bay Island	DU
Rainy Lake		
1010H	Drywood Island	DU
7004	Little Cedar Island	DU Accessible
7029	Harrison Bay Southwest	HB
7030	Harrison Bay Southeast	HB
7063	Arden Island View	HB
1028D	Hitchcock Bay North	HB
1032E	Three Sisters Island	LC
1010I	Lyle Mine Island	LC

Site Development List

NAMAkan DISTRICT

Day Use

3049	East Three Sisters
3120A	Martin Island
4084	Snake Island View
4107	Sheen Island
4118I	Twin Beach
4180A	Junction Bay South
5027A	Grassy Bay Island
5029A	Grassy Bay Beach
5029D	Sand Point
5059	Northwest Arm Beach

Large Campsites

3152	Wolf Island View
5012A	Partridge Point
5032A	Jensen Bay
5045A	Ingersoll Cove

Small Campsites

4380A	Hammer Bay Point
5042A	Sandpoint

Houseboat

4118F	Central Namakan
4320A	Sandy Cove

Group Campsites

3198A	Kabetogama Narrows
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Paddle-only Sites

Subject to review

3192	Larkin Island
3022A	Gold Portage
4083	Mica Bay
4112	Deep Slough
4118D	Grassy Portage

RAINY DISTRICT

Day Use

1037B	Emerald Bay West
1010H	Drywood Island
1044	Anderson Bay Beach
7003	Harrison Bay East
7008	Lost Bay West
7004	Little Cedar Island
1932F	Shelland Island

Large Campsite

8012	Blueberry Island West
1032E	Three Sisters Island
1010I	Lyle Mine Island

Small Campsite

1044 A	Anderson Bay West
1090D	Smith Point
1024D	Saginaw Bay West
8007	Nelson Island
1032A	Kempton Entrance East
1032D	Pine Island View
1010K	Tango Channel
1033	Hitchcock Island
1002A	Channel View

Houseboat

7001	Dryweed Island South
7076	Kempton Channel East
7077	Stoffel's Point West
7063	Arden Island West
7005	Edwards Island South
7067	Oveson's View
1110B	Fishcamp Point
1028D	Hitchcock Bay North
1039G	Browns Bay South
1025A	Marion Bay Central
1035	Kawawia Bay West
7029	Harrison Bay Southwest
7030	Harrison Bay Southeast

Paddle-only Sites**Subject to review**

1090A	Virgin Island North
8020	Gaylord Point

Voyageurs National Park
Campsite Committee

Dave Little, Rainy District Ranger
Chuck Remus, Namakan District Ranger
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