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Summer 2015 Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW)

Permit Registration Opening Day is January 28

MN Outfitters Prepare for Summer in America's Most Visited Wilderness

Minneapolis, MN (January 21, 2015) – The **Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW)** will begin accepting online reservations for the 2015 summer season on Wednesday, January 28. The BWCAW, spanning 1.1 million acres, is America's most visited Wilderness, attracting 250,000 visitors annually. Visitors are drawn to the pristine location to enjoy its more than 1,200 miles of canoe routes, 237.5 miles of overnight hiking trails, and approximately 2,000 designated campsites.

Beginning at 9 a.m. on January 28, BWCAW summer 2015 reservations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and may be made online at

<http://www.recreation.gov/wildernessAreaDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&parkId=72600>.

"This day is particularly important for groups that want a specific entry point or entry day," said **Steve Piragis**, Ely-based outfitter. "If you are not the plan-ahead type, don't fret, you'll still have access to hundreds of permits through the spring and summer using the website or contacting an outfitter in the area."

The BWCAW is one of the first wilderness areas protected by the U.S. federal government. In 1964, the Wilderness Act set aside an initial 9.1 million acres of wild lands, including the 1.1 million acres of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, for the use and benefit of the American people.

Today, Boundary Waters Wilderness drives the economy of Northeastern Minnesota, where tourism supports 18,000 jobs and brings \$850 million in sales annually to the region, according to the Minnesota Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board.

"The **U.S. Forest Service's** system of allotting registration and permits is key to helping protect the unspoiled waters and lands in the area," said Piragis, who co-founded Ely-based **Piragis Northwoods Company** 25 years ago with his wife **Nancy Piragis**. "We work with customers from all over the world who come to us for the equipment they need for their adventures or to join us on guided adventures in the wilderness."

Another Ely outfitter, **Jason Zabokrtsky**, who founded **Ely Outfitting Company** in 2007, organizes and outfits camping trips through the BWCAW and **Quetico Provincial Park** during the summer months. “We make trip planning fun and simple, providing the outfitting and wilderness skills for exceptional first experiences for our guests,” he said. “Our commitment to the environment and protecting our beautiful wilderness is evident through our dedication to leave-no-trace ethics and practices that preserve wild places.”

As outdoor enthusiasts and outfitters begin plans for summer 2015 trips in the BWCAW, the threat of proposed sulfide-ore mining operations near the Boundary Waters looms on the horizon. Sulfide-ore copper mining is a risky type of mining that has never before been permitted in Minnesota, and concerns are growing over proposed mines in the BWCAW watershed that would drain into the area’s lakes and rivers. Minnesota-based adventurers **Dave and Amy Freeman**, named **2014 National Geographic Adventurers of the Year**, recently completed a 2,000-mile canoe voyage from Ely to Washington, D.C. to call attention to this issue. Along the way, they gathered approximately 20,000 petition signatures for the **Save the Boundary Waters** campaign. For more information about the issue, their voyage and upcoming related events, please visit www.savetheboundarywaters.org or <https://www.facebook.com/savetheboundarywaters>.

For interviews with outfitters Piragis and Zabokrtsky and/or the Freemans, contact Cathryn Kennedy at Cathryn@cathrynkennedy.com - (612) 309-3951 – or Pam McCarthy-Kern at pam@cathrynkennedy.com - (612) 360-0647.

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