

Sister Sites Arrangement

—between—

Quetico Provincial Park

LaVerendrye Provincial Park

Grand Portage National Monument

Superior National Forest

Voyageurs National Park

NE Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



BACKGROUND:

The Ontario Parks Branch's Quetico and LaVerendrye Provincial Parks; the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Superior National Forest; the U.S. National Park Service's (NPS) Grand Portage National Monument and Voyageurs National Park; and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Northeast Region have benefitted from cooperation concerning the management of parks and forests and other protected natural and cultural heritage sites for the purpose of conservation, preservation, recreation, and public education. The National Park, National Monument, National Forest, and Provincial Parks concerned here wish to continue the Sister Sites Arrangement to further mutually beneficial cooperation of the 5.5 million acres (2.2 million hectares) managed by these agencies.

This Sister Sites Arrangement builds upon the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation of Wilderness Conservation between representatives of Canada, United Mexican States, and the United States of America signed on November 7, 2009 in Mérida, Mexico, which states, "This memorandum has as its objective the creation of a voluntary framework for cooperation and coordination among the participants concerning the commemoration, conservation and preservation of wilderness areas." The two million acres (809,000 hectares) of designated wilderness between Quetico Provincial Park and Superior National forest are an existing example of this kind of cooperation.

Evidence of past collaboration between these five specific areas is recognized in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, which states "...that all the water-communications, and all the usual

portages along the line from Lake Superior to the Lake of the Woods; and also Grand Portage, from the shore of Lake Superior to the Pigeon river, as now actually used, shall be free and open to the use of the citizens and subjects of both countries.”

Further examples of collaboration include establishment of the International Joint Commission in 1909 between Canada and the United States “...to manage these [boundary] waters wisely and to protect them for the benefit of today's citizens and future generations,” or more recently the Border Agreement for Fire Management and Suppression that benefits citizens and resources in both countries.

This Sister Sites Arrangement is further reinforced by:

- **US Department of Interior's (USDI) *A Call to Action***; which *Connects People to Parks* and helps communities protect what is special to them, highlight their history, and retain or rebuild their economic and environmental sustainability. And *Preserves America's Special Places* and is a leader in extending the benefits of conservation across physical, social, political, and international boundaries in partnership with others.
- **United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service (USFS) Strategic Plan** which includes, *the transfer of knowledge, technology, and applications will help the global natural resource community make better management decisions in our collective effort to care for all lands and deliver sustainable benefits to people... Through international cooperation, we exchange innovative technologies, and address cross-boundary challenges...International cooperation is necessary to conserve biodiversity and sustain the ecological, social, economic and commercial viability of global forest resources.... Through collaboration and effective communication, land managers strive to make forests and grasslands become more resilient to a changing climate, discover more effective tools for natural resource stewardship, and improve our understanding and integration of socioeconomic factors... By linking the skills of our...staff...with partners nationally and internationally to address the most critical land and resource management issues and concerns.*
- **Ontario Parks' objectives:** of *Protection*: To permanently protect the best examples of Ontario's ecosystems; to protect biodiversity and provincially significant elements of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage; and to manage these areas to ensure that ecological integrity is maintained. *Recreation*: To provide opportunities for ecologically-sustainable outdoor recreation and encourage associated economic benefits. *Education*: To help increase knowledge and appreciation of Ontario's natural and cultural heritage. *Science*: To enable scientific research and support the monitoring of ecological change on the broader landscape.
- **State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Mission** to work with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.

PARTICIPANTS:

QUETICO AND LAVERENDRYE PROVINCIAL PARKS, SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST, GRAND PORTAGE NATIONAL MONUMENT, VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK & NORTHEAST MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The six protected areas manage lands and waters along ~300 miles (483km) of the Minnesota-Ontario border, from Rainy Lake on the west to Lake Superior on the east. This 5.5 million acres (2.2 million hectares) shares common history, biotic and physical resources. Today, many recognize the geographic wholeness of the region by such terms as “canoe country,” “border waters,” and “Heart of the Continent.” It is an area that is highly sought after as a premier recreational and natural resource linking one protected area with another.

The six protected areas share a great deal despite being segmented by an international border and different agency jurisdictions. All are dominated by water and forest rich in a shared cultural history. The parks, monument, and forest are all located at the headwaters of three major watersheds (to Hudson Bay, Atlantic Ocean, and to the Gulf of Mexico).

These transboundary public lands and waters share the common ideals of stewardship and preservation of the resources. The “Sister Sites” wish to increase their already substantial efforts to:

- preserve public lands and waters and their flora and fauna;
- maintain the wilderness character of both designated wilderness and areas managed as wilderness;
- provide sustainable visitor opportunities to experience these public lands and waters;
- promote an inclusive culture within all public lands and waters;
- provide holistic interpretation of the significance of and links between the sites;
- support viable social and economic development in gateway communities;
- develop, enhance, and share volunteer programs to encourage involvement with all participants;
- implement research, inventory, and monitoring programs necessary to achieve success in preservation, restoration, ecological integrity and resilience;
- encourage scholarship and programs which protect, and promote understanding of, natural and cultural heritage resources; and
- share and/or exchange staff and/or resources among the participants

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the “Sister Sites” arrangement is to promote national and international cooperation and support for the mutual benefit of these special places, and to enrich the experience and training of the site personnel. The relationship allows the Sister Sites to benefit by sharing experiences and approaches to collaboration, including local efforts to work with gateway communities, regional and local economies, friends groups and partner organizations. This may be accomplished primarily through the exchange of managerial, technical and professional knowledge, information, data, technology, training, and experience.

While all these Sister Site agencies have cooperated collegially for decades, this continued arrangement acknowledges the value of prior, current, and future cooperation.

COOPERATION:

The “Sister Sites”, where appropriate, will be guided by the three country *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation of Wilderness Conservation*, which states that “the forms of cooperative activities...may include but are not limited to exchanges of technical and

professional information; participation in joint seminars, conferences, training courses, and workshops in areas of professional and technical interest; joint planning and research teams; sharing volunteers, and exchanges of specialists. The type of activities carried out under this voluntary cooperative framework is subject to the availability of funds and personnel of each Participant and subject to the laws and regulations of their respective countries.”

UNDERSTANDINGS:

Regarding the Government-to-Government relationship between the United States and federally recognized Tribes, this agreement seeks to provide a voluntary framework for cross-border technical cooperation between land management agencies subject to law, policy, and regulation of the respective countries and, as such, nothing in this agreement shall exempt or serve in place of the requirement of the US Forest Service and Department of Interior to consult and/or fulfill their trust responsibility with federally recognized Tribes.

Cooperation under this relationship will be for a 5 year period (2022-2026). The term may be extended or modified in writing, or cooperation may be discontinued at any time by any Participant; written notification of discontinuation of that Participant’s involvement should be provided.

Each sister agency is to fund its own participation in this continued relationship. It is generally understood that when one participant collaborates with another, the sending participant is responsible for the cost of travel and accommodation expenses. Each exchange is to be negotiated individually and is dependent upon available resources.

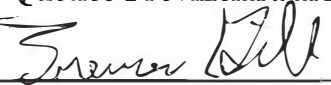
On behalf of
LaVerendrye Provincial Park


Mike Holm
PARK SUPERINTENDENT

Date

July 14/23

On behalf of
Quetico Provincial Park


Trevor Gibb
PARK SUPERINTENDENT

Date

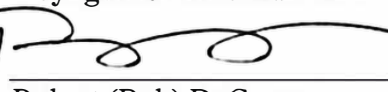
July 14/2023

On behalf of
Superior National Forest


Tom Hall
FOREST SUPERVISOR

7/14/23
Date

On behalf of
Voyageurs National Park


Robert (Bob) DeGross
PARK SUPERINTENDENT

07/31/2023
Date

On behalf of
Grand Portage National Monument


Heather Boyd
PARK SUPERINTENDENT

7/14/2023
Date

On behalf of
Department of Natural Resources


Shelly Patten
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Northeastern Minnesota

071423
Date