

# Boundary Waters Canoe Area

## 2026 Trip Report



## BWCA TRIP: 12 – 21 JUNE, 2021

5 anglers / 3 canoes



- DRIVE TO ELY, MINNESOTA (2 DAYS)
- CANOE – CAMP – FISH THE BOUNDARY WATERS (5 DAYS)
- DRIVE HOME (2 DAYS)
- 2800 + MILES

ANGLER'S COMMENT: GO AROUND CHICAGO

Ely, MN

B

8 Hours

12 Hours

Milwaukee

14 Hours

Chicago

11 Hours

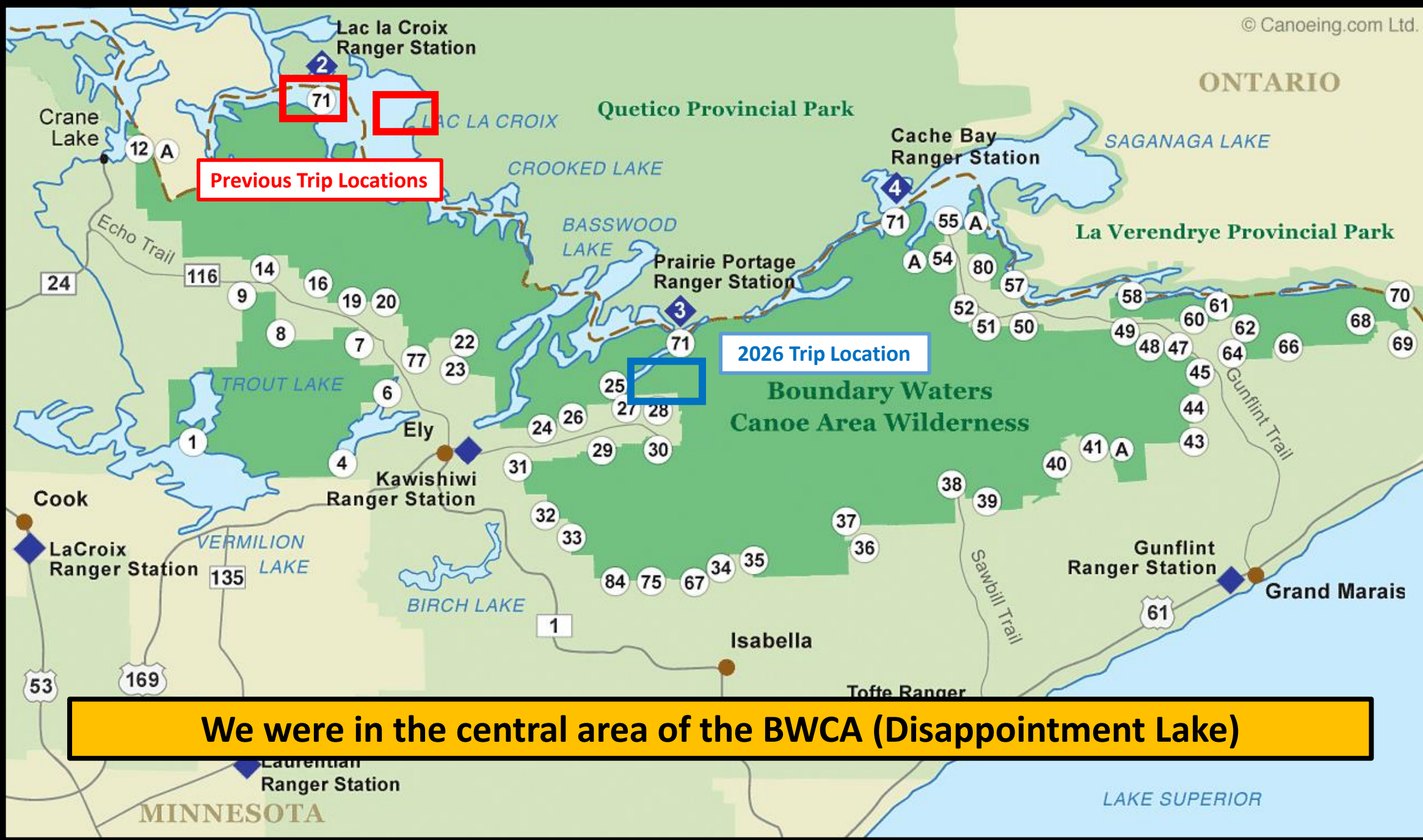
Fredericksburg

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## Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA)



- **NE Minnesota**
- **1,000,000 acres / 2000 lakes**
- **Canoe / Camping Area:**
  - **1500 miles of canoe routes**
  - **1000 lakes / streams**
  - **2200 campsites**



**We were in the central area of the BWCA (Disappointment Lake)**



529 E. Sheridan St.  
Ely, MN 55731

218-343-7951

[info@ElyOutfittingCompany.com](mailto:info@ElyOutfittingCompany.com)



# BWCA SUPPORT

**Canoes, Packs, Shuttle Service**  
- We secured our own permits

**Intro / Orientation Briefing \***

**Bunkhouse Cabin night prior**

**Parking for trip duration**

**Small convenience store**



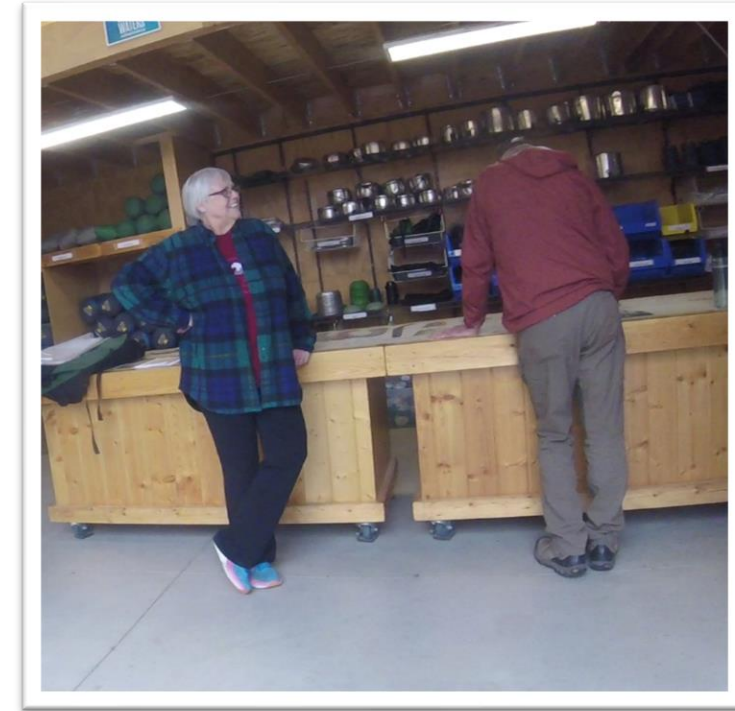
# BWCA SUPPORT – ORIENTATION BRIEFING



**Shouldering Canoe  
Demonstration**



**Route & Fishing Area  
Review**



**Equipment  
Draw**

# Weather Forecast - Partly Cloudy All Week





















Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

 Partly Cloudy  Mid 60's  Mid 40's  12-15 mph	 Partly Cloudy  Mid 60's  Mid 40's  8-12 mph	 Partly Cloudy  Mid 60's  Mid 40's  8-10 mph	 Partly Cloudy  High 60's  Mid 40's  8-15 mph	 Afternoon Rain  Mid 60's  Mid 40's  12 -15 mph
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## Actual Weather - Rain for part of 4 out of 5 Days





















Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

 Partly Cloudy  Mid 60's  Low 40's  12-20 mph	 Partly Cloudy Light Aft Rain  Mid 60's  Mid 40's  8-15 mph	 Partly Cloudy Afternoon Rain  Mid 60's  Mid 40's  8-10 mph	 Partly Cloudy Lt Night Rain  High 60's  Mid 40's  8-15 mph	 Partly Cloudy  Mid 60's  Mid 40's  12 -15 mph
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# Getting There – Shop to Launch Point



- 8 Person van for anglers
- Trailer for canoes and packs / gear
- ~35 minute drive from Ely to Snowbank Lake canoe launch

# Getting There – The Launch Point



Snowbank Lake Canoe Launch



Platform to load / unload

# Getting There – The Paddle

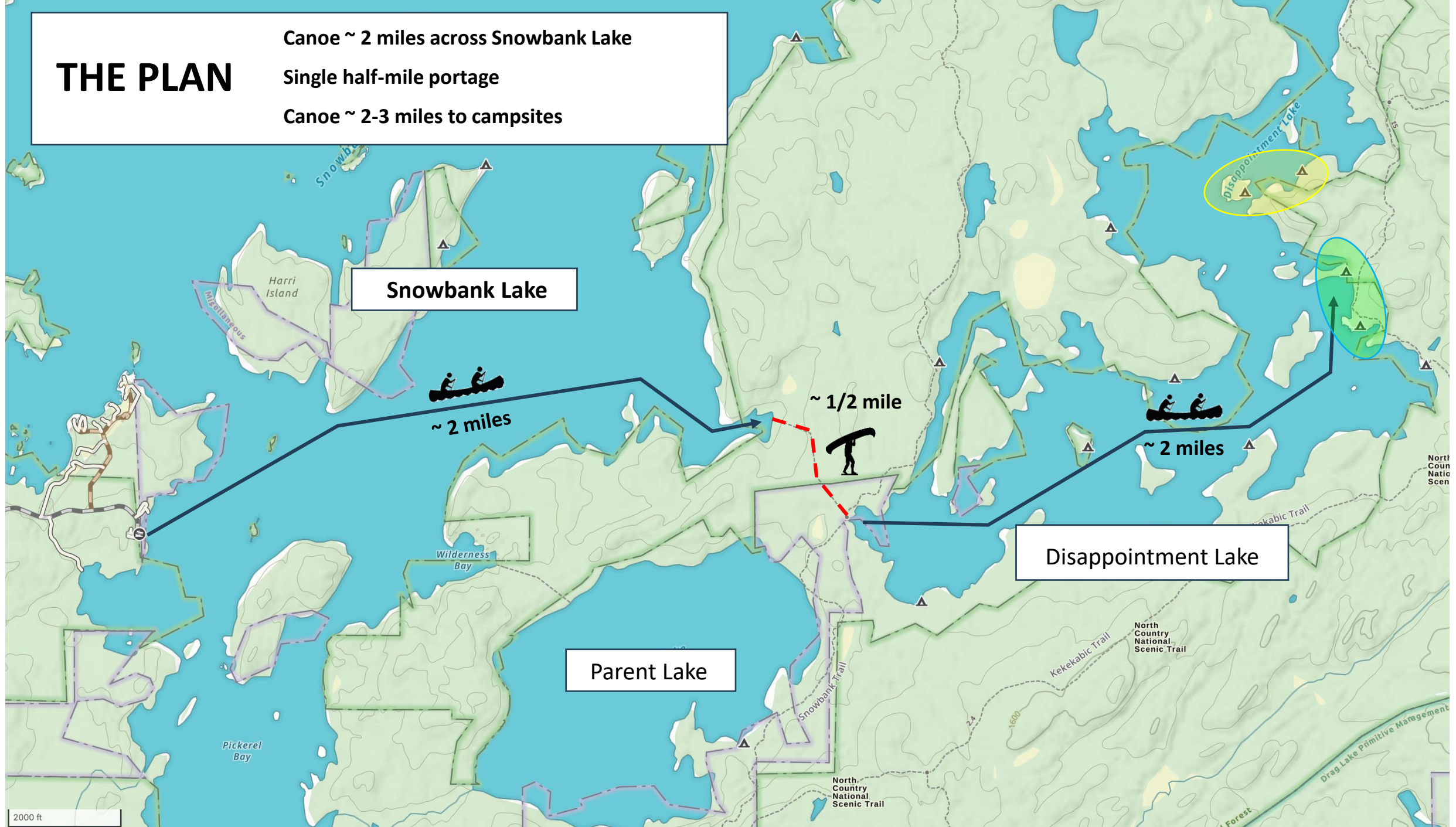


# THE PLAN

Canoe ~ 2 miles across Snowbank Lake

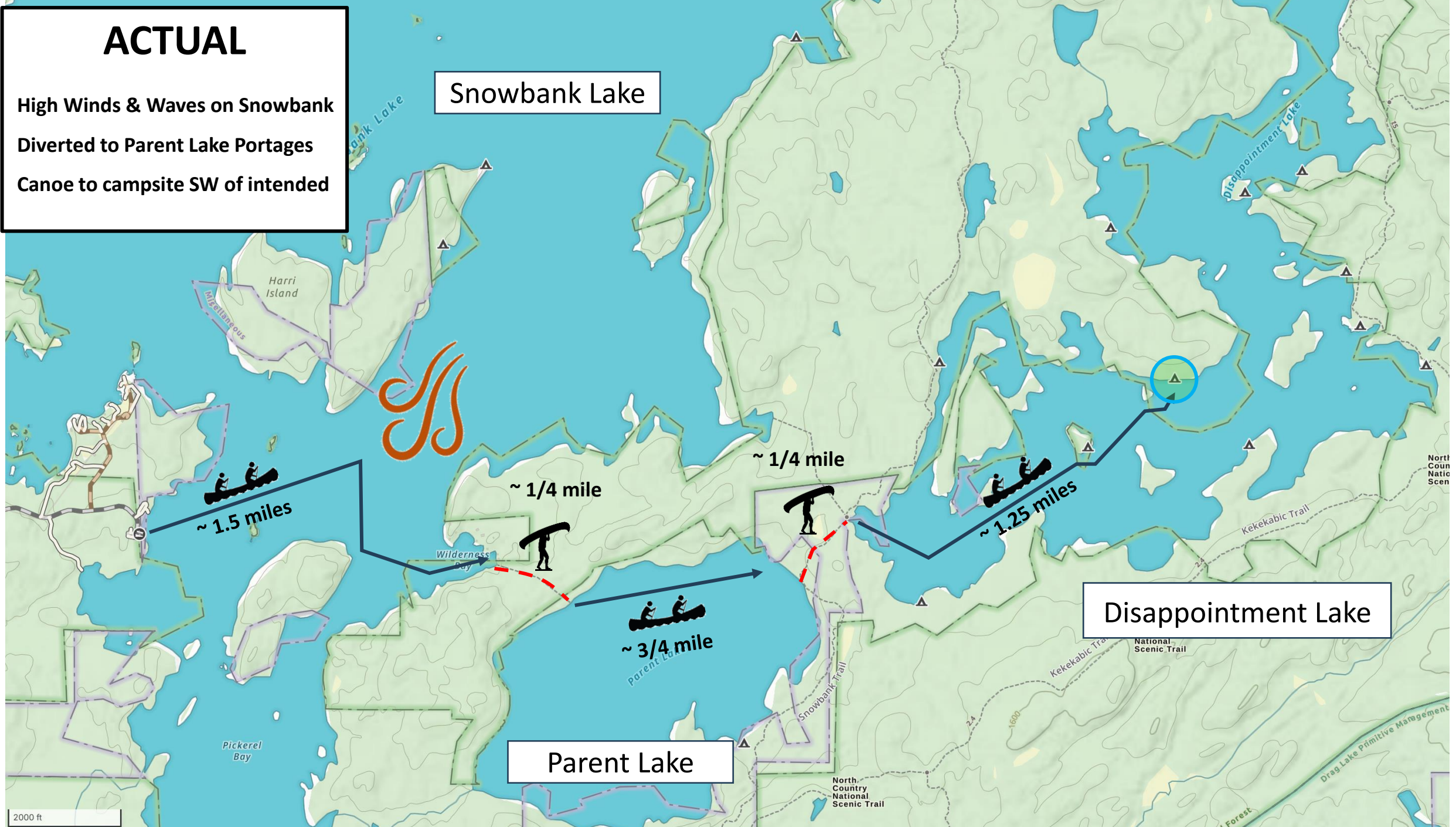
Single half-mile portage

Canoe ~ 2-3 miles to campsites



# ACTUAL

High Winds & Waves on Snowbank  
Diverted to Parent Lake Portages  
Canoe to campsite SW of intended



# Getting There – The Portage(s)

An Easy Walk in the Woods



**BW Packs & Barrel**



**Canoes**



**Other Gear**

***Some Thoughts on Portaging at Anglers' Comments Section (end of presentation)***

# BWCA CAMPING

- **Must use USFS established / approved sites**
  - Fire Pit & Pit Toilet
  - No external marking (signs)
  - Marked on maps, but sites rotate
- **No reserved sites / First Come, First Served**
- **Permit System Limits Number of Campers**



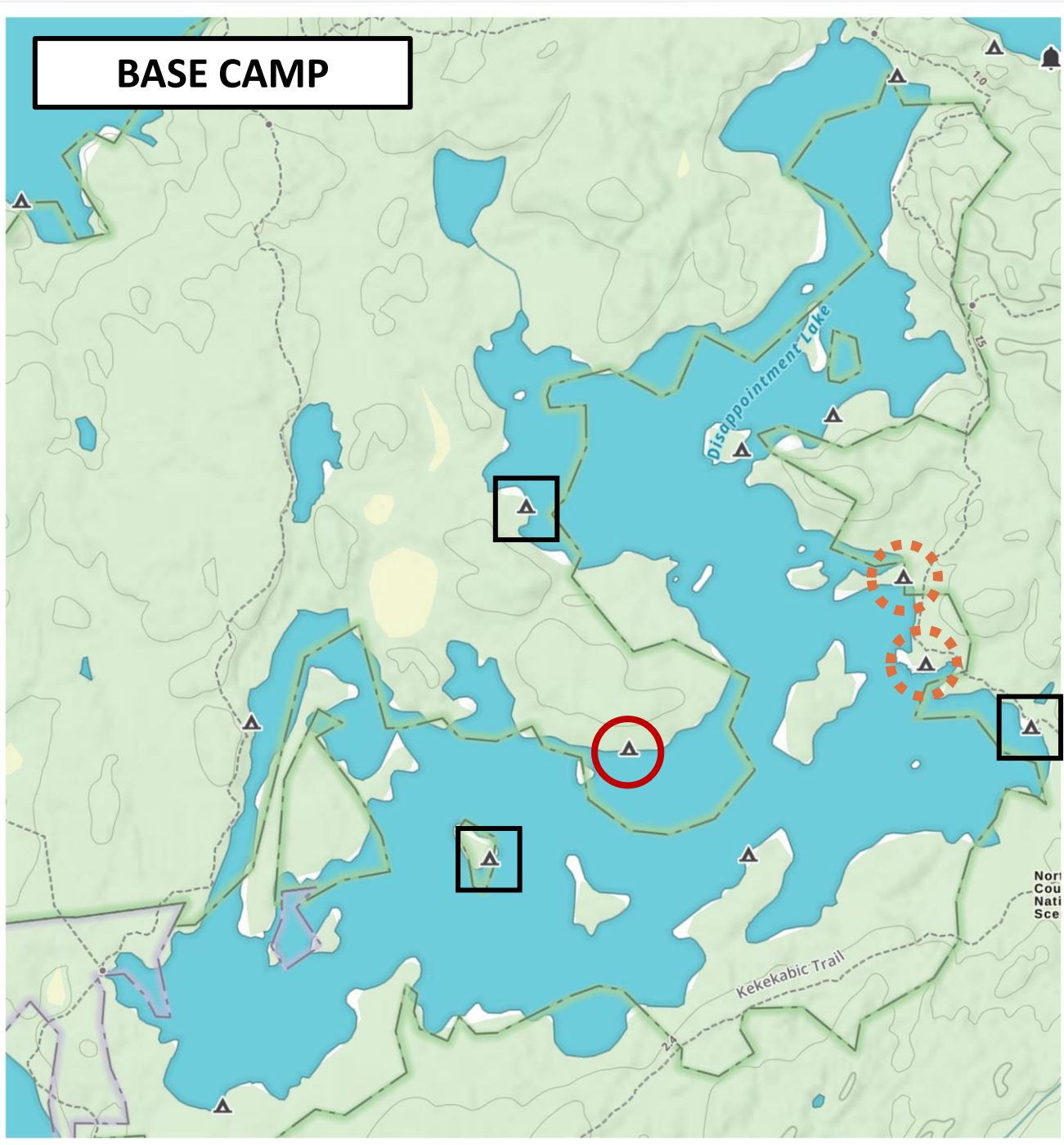
**OUR CAMPSITE**



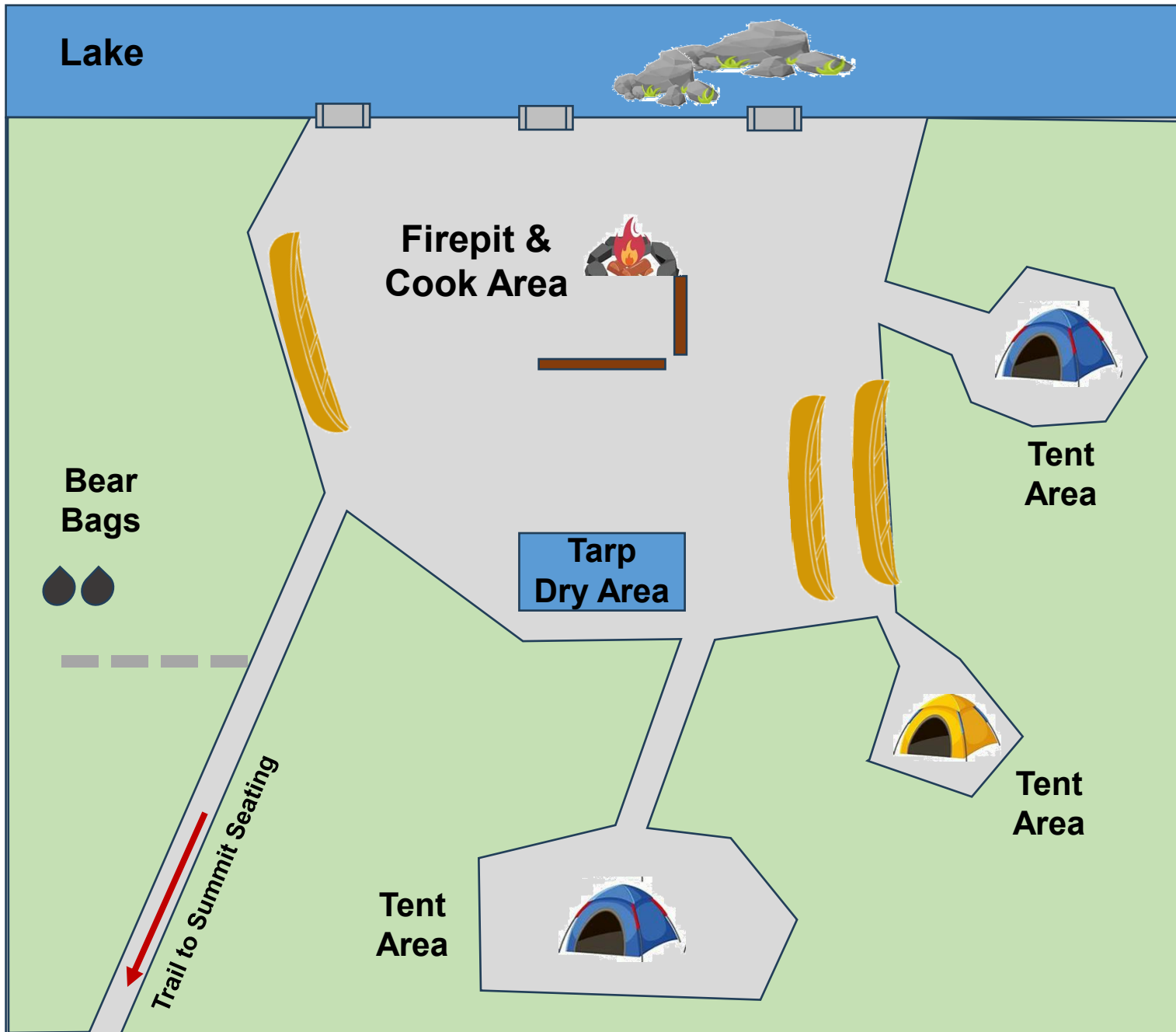
**PLANNED CAMPSITE**



**RECOMMENDED FUTURE CAMPSITES**



# OUR CAMPSITE



# BWCA FISHING



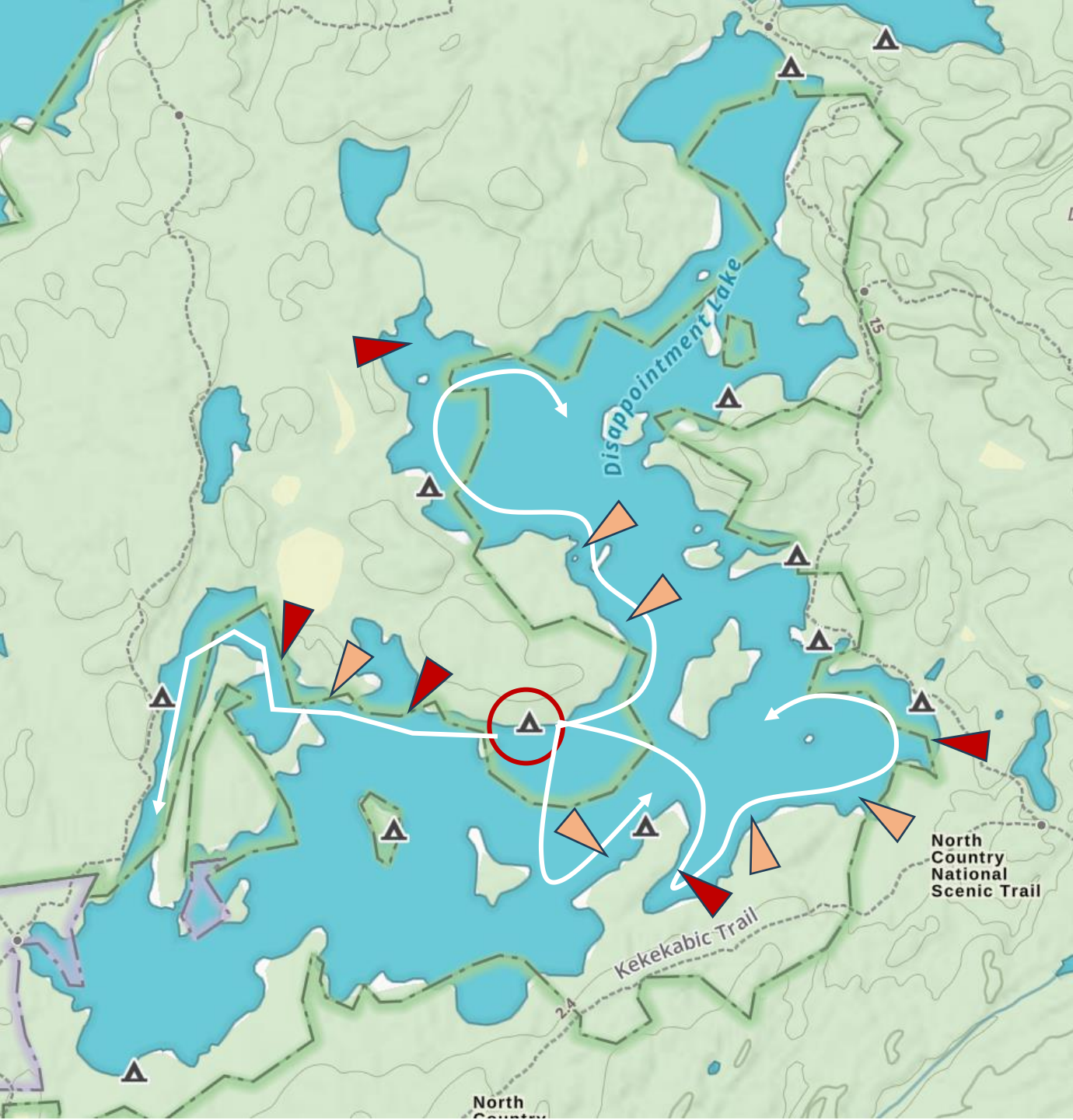
WORKING DRAFT - 3 JULY

# Fishing Our General Areas

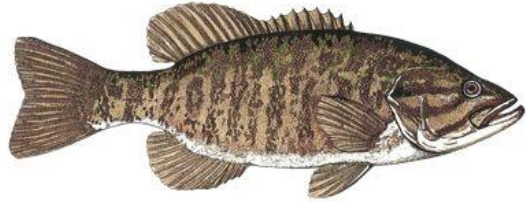
- **Within a mile of campsite**
- **Rocky areas for bass**
- **Weedbeds for pike**

 Hot Area

 Good Area



# The Fish



**Smallmouth**

15-16" w/ a few to 20" +



**Largemouth**

15-16" w/ a few to 20" +



**Pike**

18-20" w/ a few to 24" +

# The Flies



**Poppers**



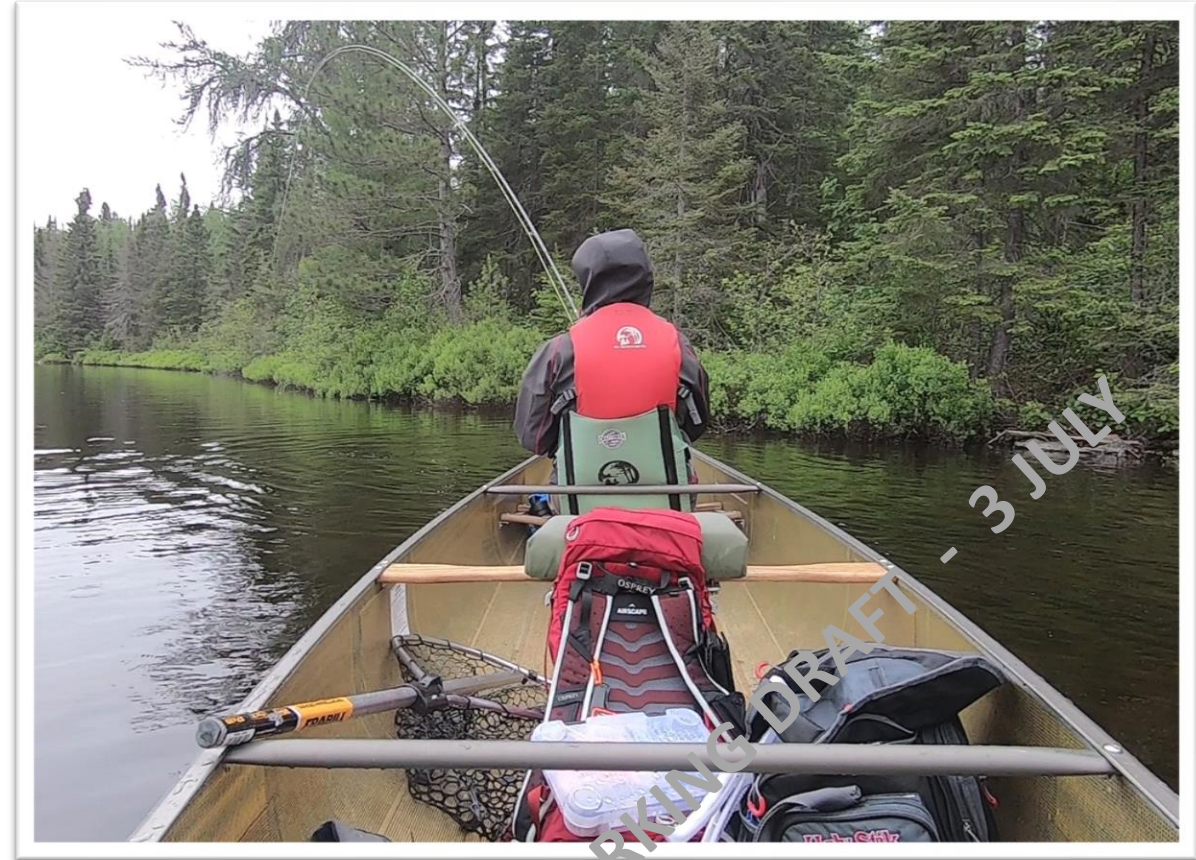
**Streamers**



**Divers**

And just about everything else

# Fished Predominantly from the Canoes





**Fore, Aft, and  
Behind the Back**

**Hook-Ups**

**But Shore / Wade Fishing Available**



# Some Fish Pics



# More Fish Pics



# Some Toothy Fish Pics



# More Toothy Fish Pics





**And Some**

**Rare Fish**

# Angler Comment: The Difference Between a Bass and Pike Strike

The Bass Strikes  
Were Like . . .



The Pike Strikes  
Were Like . . .



# CAMP LIFE



# Camp Life



**Luxury  
Accommodations**

# Camp Life



**Open Concept  
Kitchen with  
Built-in Grill**



# **GOURMET MEALS**

**Pre-packaged foods  
with butane stove**

**Fresh fish in foil  
over the campfire**



# Camp Life



**Dining Room with  
Seating For 5**

# Camp Life



**Large Living Room  
With Built-In Recliners**

**Three Canoe Parking**

# Camp Life



## Expansive En Suite with a view

- + New Style
- 100 yards on uphill trail
- Overdue for servicing

# Camp Life



**Daily Showers**

**Available**

# Camp Life



**Wildlife**

**Threats**



**And The Million  
Dollar View**



**And The Million  
Dollar View**

# Angler Comments & Lessons Learned (Re-Learned)



**Lesson Learned**

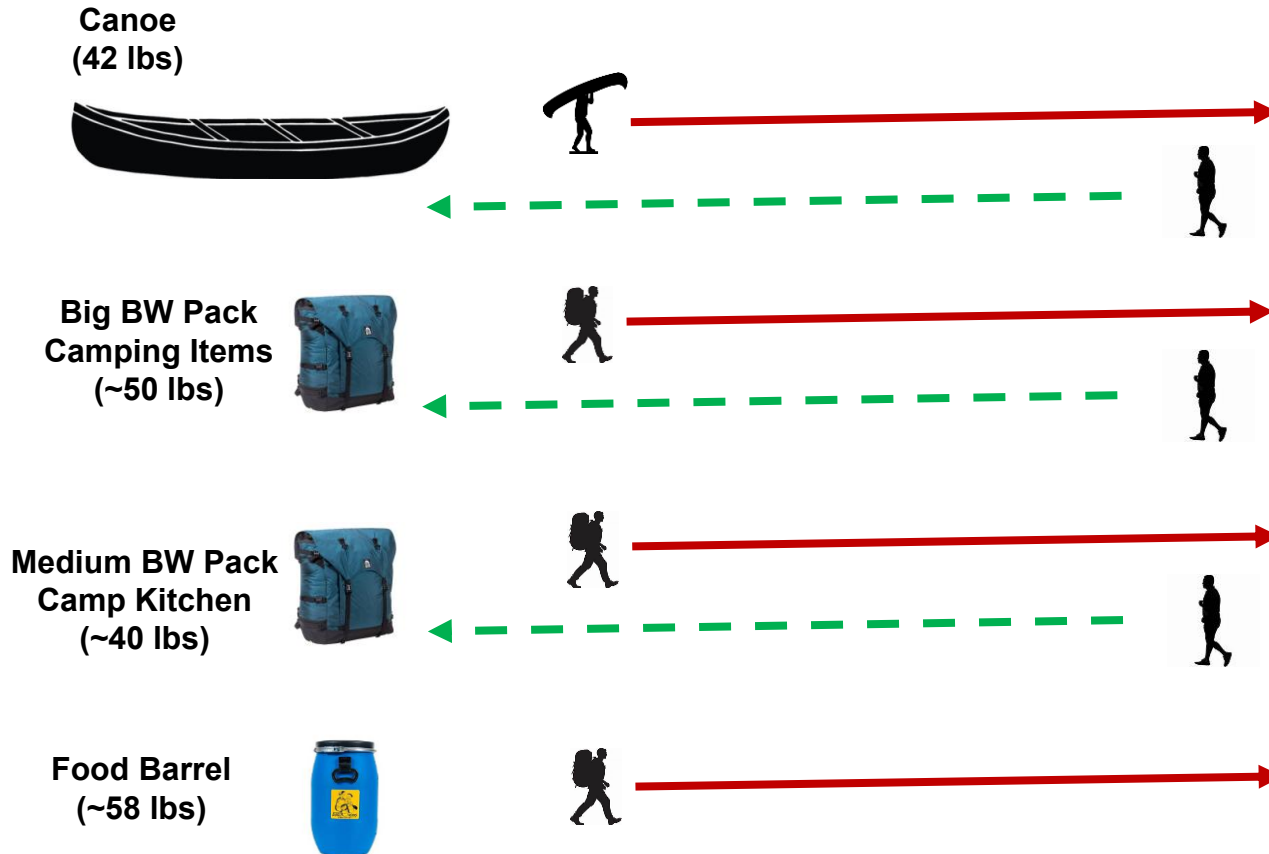
# Some Thoughts on Portaging



**We used our alternate sites  
through Parent Lake**

**2 x 1/4 mile portage = Easy**

# That easy 1/4 mile portage



x back & forth 4 times = 1 & 3/4 miles

x 2 portages = 3 & 1/2 miles

+ 40-50 lbs loads half the time

+ uneven, rocky terrain

+ unloading & loading time

## = Not So Easy



[See Video](#)

# Some Thoughts on Portaging



**Rocky Terrain**



**Peeled the soles off muck & wading boots**

# Some Thoughts on Portaging



**Skip the blue barrel; go with a medium BW pack for food**



**Reduce gear to no more than 3 trips per portage (and 2 trips better)**

**- 2 paddlers (porters) = 6 Items**



## OTHER PORTAGE CONSIDERATIONS

- **Access Points**
  - **Difficulty, space**

Info / Photos  
On Internet

- **Trail length, condition, & difficulty**
- **Reduce weight & bulk**
  - **Remember, gear may be wet on return**
- **If not used to carrying packs, get in shape prior**
- **Pack marking systems help (tell story)**



# Were the bugs bad?

*Maybe a little irritating,  
but could be mitigated  
with proper preparation*

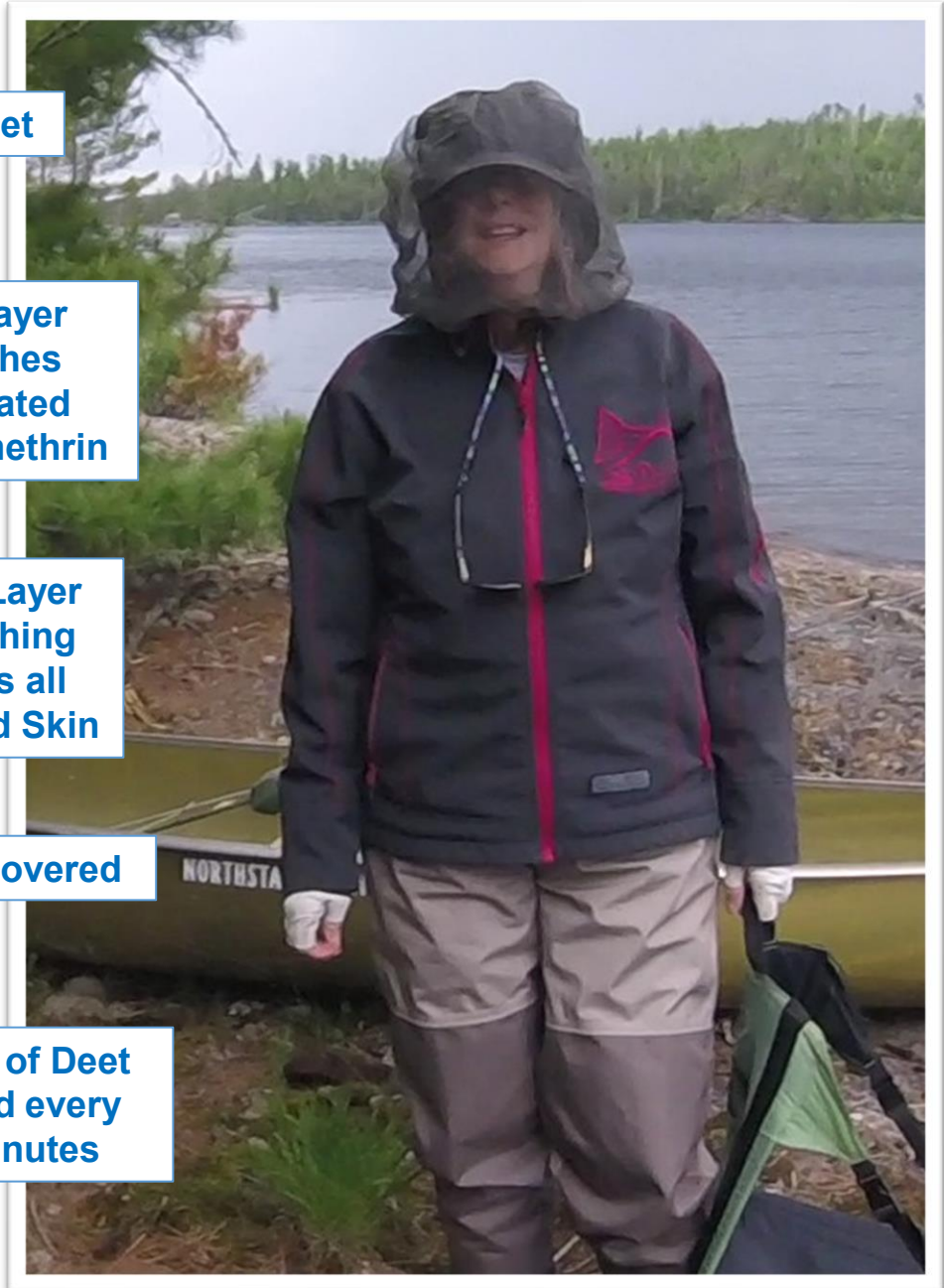
Head Net

Inner Layer  
Of Clothes  
Pre-Treated  
with Permethrin

Outer Layer  
of Clothing  
Covers all  
Exposed Skin

Hands Covered

2 pints of Deet  
applied every  
15 minutes



## Lesson Re-Learned

# Organize & Prepare Before Leaving Home

- “We’ll do it at the hotel” became  
“we’ll do it at the campsite” became  
“I’ll have to find it” the whole trip

## On site, don’t put off to tomorrow . . .

- Reversed Tarps, Tent Footprint, Fishing Bag



## Canoe nav-station !



Map & compass (and/or electronics) secured to canoe bar for quick reference

Tough to access and read map / reorient in heavy winds / waves

## Consider arriving day earlier

- See Ely, the amenities, and make final gear adjustments



Consider recovery day before follow-on travel

## Lesson Re-Learned



## Chotas / Wading Pants Very Beneficial

- In & Out of Canoe = In & Out of the Water
- Normal Water in canoe bottom

## Lesson Learned



## Consider your portage footwear

- Wading shoes will work . . . Until they don't
- Change from water-proof to hiking boots

# Canoe Fishing



- Seated casting, odd angles challenging (different than kayak)
- The seat / seated posture: From uncomfortable to painful
- Holding canoe in wind while fishing
  - - Make-shift anchor system helped with single canoe
- If not familiar – go out and practice



- **The outfitter's folding seat cushions are terrible**
  - - Take your own



## **Leave the Trout Gear at Home**

- **8 wt rod, 0-3X leader & tippet, bass / pike flies (hooks)**



## **Pike**

- **Great fishing experience – Be Prepared**
- **2X worked for smaller fish (take wire tippet for larger)**
- **Take fish grippers (& know how to use)**

## Lesson Re-Learned



### **Water Seal / Plastic Bag Everything (heavy duty)**

- Anything in the canoe can get soaked



### **Crocs type shoes proved very useful in camp**

- Easy on / off at night

- **Research BWCA fishing: On-line forums, You-Tube, Outfitters**
- **Learn more about area (terrain, water depth) of fishing areas**
- **Bring a more focused set of bass, pike, & walleye flies**
- **Spend at least one day walleye fishing**
- **Bring the back-up rod(s)**



**AND A NEW FALMOUTH FLATS TRADITION**



**Mark cleans & cooks fish  
on every trip from now on**

**- Best camp fish meals ever**

# The 2026 BWCA Trip

Questions?

