Beltrami Island Land Utilization Project (LUP) and Red Lake Wildlife Management Area Lands
Roosevelt, Minnesota 56673

Annual Narrative Report
1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993

Submitted by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to the
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as required by the LUP Lease
INTRODUCTION

The Beltrami Island Land Utilization Project (LUP) lands consist of 81,480.88 acres in scattered parcels throughout the Beltrami Island State Forest and Red Lake Wildlife Management Area in northwestern Minnesota (Figure 1). All of the LUP lands are located in Lake of the Woods, Roseau, and Beltrami Counties.

LUP lands are under Federal Ownership. They are leased to the State of Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the administrator of the lease. DNR's Section of Wildlife is the designated surface manager of these lands and they cooperate with the DNR Division of Forestry.

The entire Beltrami Island area was originally inhabited by native Americans. Early in Minnesota's recorded history, it became part of the Red Lake Indian Reservation. During the settlement period in the late 1800's and early 1900's, portions of this land were opened by the federal government to be purchased (at about $1/acre) by homesteaders from the Red Lake Indian Band.

After most of the timber had been cut and sold and during the Great Depression in the 1930's, the homesteaders began to undergo many financial difficulties and most couldn't keep up with their tax and ditch assessments. Many became tax delinquent and their land was transferred to the State. This land is now known as Consolidated Conservation land.

Many others decided to sell their land to the Federal Government through the U.S. Resettlement Administration between 1934-36. This land is what now comprises the LUP land.

The Beltrami Island LUP and Red Lake WMA area is in the prairie/forest transition and the southern boreal forest ecotones. Habitat types range from sandy pine ridges to vast lowland brush and peatland communities. The diversity of habitat types in this area attracts a wide range of resident and migratory wildlife.

The objective for the LUP lands, as stated in Executive Order 9091, is that "such lands be reserved as a refuge and breeding ground for native birds and other wildlife." The primary management mission for the LUP and WMA lands is to protect and manage the area's wildlife, native plants, and their communities for their intrinsic values and long-term benefits to the people of Minnesota and the United States.
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A. HIGHLIGHTS

A major article was written about Norris Camp in the Grand Forks Herald Newspaper. (Section E.8).

Approximately 200 Boy Scouts and their leaders held a fall Camporee at Norris Camp and helped with the maintenance of several of the historic buildings. (Section E.4).

A sampling procedure was started to check for brainworm larvae in deer droppings. (Section G.8).

The nomination of Norris Camp to the National Register of Historic Places was initiated by the Lake of the Woods County and State Historical Societies. (Section E.4).

A cooperative agreement regarding the Manweiler Impoundment was reached between the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians and the State of Minnesota. (Section F.2).

A meeting was held by the Lake of the Woods County Board to discuss the DNR’s plans for Norris Camp. (Section D.3).

Portions of two of the peatland Scientific and Natural Areas were posted. (Section F.12).

Several people became stuck with their vehicles in the deep snow and asked for assistance at Norris Camp. (Section E.6).

Prescribed burns were conducted on nearly 1,000 acres of brush and grasslands. (Section F.9).

A new computer system was purchased. (Section I.6).

There were high numbers of voles, red-tailed hawks, and kestrels in the area during the summer of 1993. (Section G.6).
B. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

July and early August were quite dry. However, over 4.5" of rain fell in mid August. This shut down most of our field work for a while such as brush mowing and discing of openings. Three more inches of rain fell during the first two weeks of September, continuing the wet cycle. It dried out enough by late October to enable us to burn 157 acres of forest openings.

The Winter Severity Index (WSI) for the winter of 1992-93 came to a total of 144 (any index over 100 indicates a severe winter). This was the second highest WSI in the state (Thief Lake WMA's was the highest at 152). The snowpack exceeded 18 inches by the end of December and there were over fifty days when the temperature was below 0° F. In spite of the severe winter conditions, there were no losses of wildlife observed due to starvation.

D. PLANNING

1. & 2. Long Range Planning

The first draft was completed in November for the Agassiz Bog and Lowlands subunit (which includes all of the LUP lease area) of the regional plan. A meeting of the subunit committee was held in February to revise the draft, especially where the map was concerned. The map showed the locations for each of the separate subunit goals (also known as future condition statements). A new map was generated in March from the input received at the meeting and from subsequent memos.

The next phase of the regional plan began in May. This phase involves developing objectives and limits for the landscape: how much of what will be where and how should the end products be achieved. Ideas for this phase of the plan were sought from the managers of all the disciplines working in the subunit. Fall of 1993 was set as a goal for the draft of this phase. The drafts of the plan up to this point can be reviewed at the Regional DNR Office in Bemidji and are also included in the library at Norris Camp (in a folder labeled "Landscape Planning"). The plan draft is too lengthy to include as an appendix in this report.
3. Public Participation

On 16 December 1992 there was a meeting about the future of Norris Camp. A tour of the buildings was given at Norris Camp and a meeting was held at the Lake of the Woods (LOW) County Courthouse. Those at the meeting included a couple of interested members of the public, two area legislators, three Central Office DNR personnel including Deputy Commissioner Ron Nargang, the LOW County Commissioners, two area newspaper reporters, and Area Manager Mehmel.

Lots of ideas concerning the future of Norris Camp were discussed, but no decisions were made. Appendix 1 contains a summary of the meeting as printed in the Northern Watch from Thief River Falls on 19 December 1992.

4. Compliance with Environmental and Cultural Resource Mandates

We asked for cultural resource evaluations from the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) for six different projects involving some ground disturbance. Three of these were wildlife opening brush discing projects that were worked up and then seeded to a grass and clover mixture. The other three projects involved dozing a trail to connect two logging roads to make them all into walking trails. All the SHPO evaluations were returned clear of any known cultural resources.

We assisted Jack Arnold and Lance Kuester of the St. Cloud U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Office and John Romito of the Bureau of Land Management in Missouri with information toward permitting three applications by Phelps Dodge Exploration East, Inc. (Prospecting Permits #045817, #045818, and #045089) to do ground geophysical surveys on LUP land. We also gave surface vegetation information in June to the F.W.S. regarding several tracts of LUP land where a Frederick L. Smith was interested in doing some mineral exploration.

E. ADMINISTRATION

1. Personnel

1. Gretchen Mehmel .......... Wildlife Area Manager ......................... PFT
2. Scott Laudenslager .......... Assistant Wildf. Area Manager .......... PFT
3. June Foss .................. Clerk Typist I .................................. 50%
4. Randy Pink ................ Wildlife Technician ........................... PFT
5. Gary Aery ................ General Repairworker ......................... PFT
6. Ell-Kay Foss ............ Laborer General ............................. 90%
7. Neal Slick ................. Laborer General ......................... 90%
4. Volunteer Program

The Boy Scouts of Northwestern Minnesota and Eastern North Dakota volunteered their assistance with the maintenance of Norris Camp on 26 September 1992. They volunteered approximately 200 hours scraping and painting two buildings (the kitchen and the blacksmith shop), repairing the doors on the blacksmith shop, rebuilding the stairs to the recreation building, and removing dirt from around the base of the gas and oil sheds. Their volunteer hours helped them earn a "Historical Trail" badge, which requires public service hours. (See Appendix 2 for an article about the Boy Scouts' project as printed in the Williams Northern Light on 30 September 1992.)

5. Funding

A total of $306,556 was expended in carrying out all of the projects within the Red Lake WMA work area during this fiscal year. $144,125.16 of Beltrami Island funds were spent and the remaining part of the budget came from the general Operation and Management funds (from the State Game and Fish Account) and the Deer Habitat Improvement Program funds. A complete breakdown of income and expenditures is shown in the Financial and Accomplishment Reports accompanying this narrative.

6. Safety

There were no lost work days due to accidents during this last fiscal year. One permanent employee was injured in an accident, but no time was lost beyond the day he was injured. General repairworker Gary Aery cut his head on a disc loaded on a flatbed truck. After bending over to check the tie down chains, he bumped his head when he stood up. He was treated at the Lakewood Health Center on the day of the accident and received four stitches and a bandage. He returned to work the following day.

Norris Camp staff helped several people whose vehicles were stuck in the area during 1991-92. These people included two different hunters who tried unsuccessfully to negotiate wet logging roads; a logging truck that took a turn too tightly and slid into the ditch; an older couple who were checking out a remote timber sale and got stuck on the winter logging road; an older man who had to spend the night in his car after he drove off the road in the Hogsback gravel pit; and several teenagers who were attempting to drive down unplowed roads in January and had to walk four miles to Norris Camp. Assistance ranged from actually pulling them out to offering them a phone to use to call for help.

Many maps were also given out to aid people who had become disoriented. Norris Camp has been a focal point for many people who have been driving around the state forest roads without a clear idea of where they are. Many maps and verbal directions were given out throughout the year.
An electrical problem by the recreation building was repaired in September 1992. The electrical hookup to this building had been disconnected some years earlier (~1987), but the wiring had never been properly shut off. The lines were still live to the electrical box outside the building. So the electricity was reconnected to alleviate this safety hazard. The electrical wiring was also checked out and Ok'd in the main shop area.

7. Technical Assistance

As usual, there were many phone calls this year asking for general information and technical assistance. Only one, however, required an out of the office visit. This was a visit to a cabin owner's property who wanted to enter the Stewardship Incentive Program and was interested in improving his property for wildlife and aesthetics. The other phone calls related to woodpecker problems on cedar siding, deer in the garden, banded birds, homing pigeons, and injured wildlife, to name a few of the topics.

Manager Mehmel became part of the Warroad School Forest Committee in May. She and Area Forest Supervisor Bob Wennerstrand are the committee's technical advisors. The committee is working on such topics as a sign, a nature trail, teaching curriculums, wildlife habitat and forestry projects, and guest speakers.

8. Other Items

The history and future of Norris Camp were again topics for discussion during this past fiscal year. In July, several people from the State and Lake of the Woods County Historical Society came to the Camp for a field visit. Their intent was to initiate a nomination for Norris Camp to the National Register of Historic Places. Also in July, the Lake of the Woods County Board, in a letter to DNR Regional Administrator Merlyn Wesloh, again expressed its concern about the planned closure of Norris Camp. DNR Commissioner Rod Sando, in a response to that letter, reiterated the Department's plans to close the Camp.

There were four more consolidation meetings held concerning the planned new building in Warroad. Discussions at these meetings centered on the topics of building location, budgeting for the proposed building and other new consolidated buildings throughout the state, and the question of what to do with Norris Camp.

In August, the Grand Forks Herald held interviews with several people at Norris Camp and ran an article and an editorial about it on 10 August (see Appendix 3 for the editorial). This, along with the actions of several local people, set off a campaign of letter writing by the public to the DNR and their local legislators to keep Norris Camp open. In December a petition, signed by 1,339 people, was sent to Commissioner Sando asking for the Department to maintain the Camp.
These letters and the petition prompted the meeting described under Section D.3. In spite of the meeting, no plans were changed. And in January 1993, plans continued toward the design of the new Warroad building. However, it was doubtful about whether there would be enough funds left of the 1992 appropriation for building consolidations. Two other buildings (in Two Harbors and Aitkin) had received priority for these funds.

F. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

2. Wetlands

Coordination work continued with the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Manweiler and Shilling Dam restoration projects. In August, Dennis Hall, an engineer for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, with Technician Randy Pink, ran levels and did the survey work necessary for the engineering of the project. Soil borings were done by the Soil Conservation Service in September. Regional DNR engineer Ramon Lind circulated preliminary plans and a cost estimate for the project in November. And, by February, the DNR Protected Waters Permit had been applied for and then received.

The DNR and the Red Lake Tribe finally agreed to the cooperative agreement in June. This was significant as it had undergone many revisions. The flowage easement required by the State from the Red Lake Band and the BIA also required some revision work. This was due to some discussions about whether the BIA should be included in the easement and also as to the length of the easement (perpetual vs. "until rescinded by the Red Lake Band"). As of the end of June, the easement had yet to be approved.

Permits and project proposals were obtained to restore several small wetlands by plugging abandoned homestead-era ditches in the western portion of the work area. Work was anticipated to begin on these restorations sometime in July or August of 1993.

The repair work on the Keller Dam spillway was completed in August of 1992. The boards were put back in to the control structure again to fill the pool.

By the end of May, the beavers had helped both Keller and Brown's Lake Impoundments to be filled beyond their capacities. Removing beaver dams at the structures became an every other day occurrence. Therefore, in June, Clemson Beaver Levelers were installed in both structures. The intent of these levelers is to fool the beavers by extending the water intake through the structure further out in to the pool. The water enters through a perforated and wire-ringed pipe that extends through the structure via a flexible tube. These levelers will be monitored for effectiveness throughout the next year.
Routine maintenance and water level survey work was done on the structures, dikes, and pools of the six functioning impoundments in the area. Water level management, by impoundment is as follows:

- **Keller Dam** ............. All boards installed in August of 1992 (mentioned above).
- **Winner Dam** ............. All boards but two were removed by June of 1993. The purpose in drawing this impoundment down was twofold. It was meant to aid revegetation of the disturbed Hanson Creek road removal project upstream and to experiment with lower water levels to see what sort of vegetative and waterfowl use response there would be.
- **Dam 1** .................. All boards were left in place to hold water back from the Hanson Creek road removal project area.

3. **Forests**

We coordinated with DNR Forestry on 90 timber sales and 46 forest development plans (planting, herbicide treatments, etc.). LUP land comprised 19 percent of the total acres cut and 26 percent of the total acres planted during this fiscal year. Our coordination involved reviewing planned cut lists and development plans, and making comments and suggestions for ways to modify these cuts and developments to benefit wildlife. See Appendix 4 and 5 for a complete listing of these sales and plans.

307 acres of forest openings were maintained by brush mowing during the summer or shearing in the winter. Thirty acres of forest openings were worked up and seeded to a grass legume mixture. No new openings were created.

4. **Croplands**

Twelve acres of rye was put in on one food plot. This area has been a food plot and traditional public deer viewing area for many years. The other food plot field, last seeded in the fall of 1991, was planted to native grasses (see below).

5. **Grasslands**

Warm season native grasses were seeded to 23 acres on two different sites. One site was formerly a food plot next to Brown's Lake. This area will now, if the planting is successful, function as a nesting cover area for waterfowl. The other area picked for native grass seeding was an opening with extremely sandy soils and little vegetation. It's hoped the natives will be a more suitable vegetation type.
6. Other Habitats

**Brushlands:** 816 acres of brushland were sheared. The early snow fall delayed the ground from freezing until late January. This also delayed the start of shearing in the lowland area; which is why the number of acres sheared this past year is lower than normal.

9. Fire Management

There were 157 acres of openings burned in the fall, primarily to provide early spring green up and to set back brush encroachment. Burning conditions were also good the next spring when 832 acres were burned in three separate burn units. All three of these burns were located in the south west corner of the WMA, near Mertz Corner. Two were ignited with the heli-torch and one was ground ignition. The Norris Camp staff assisted with five other burns in adjacent work areas.

There was one wildfire in the area. This was confined to a forest conversion area and the fire started in the slash piles of aspen and balsam poplar. The spruce plantation/conversion site that the fire was in is located next to the dike on the northeast corner of the Moose River WMA.

12. Wilderness and Special Areas

The winter logging road across the Mulligan Lake Peatland Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) was used for the second season during this fiscal year. Loggers using the road were careful about freezing it down before they started using it and making sure there was always a good layer of snow on it while they used it. Therefore, the road remained in good condition throughout the winter. The logging operation was still on-going at the end of the winter and it was expected that the road would be used again during the winter of '93 - '94.

Norris Camp staff assisted the SNA program by posting portions of two Peatland SNAs. The Mulligan Lake Peatland was posted by the old snowmobile trail accesses into it. Painted signs that tell snowmobilers to stay on the main trail were also placed by each entrance to the SNA. The Winter Road Lake Peatland SNA was also posted by snowmobile trail entrances with both the SNA signs and the painted, "no snowmobiles off the trail" signs. The portion of that SNA that is along the Roosevelt Forest Road was also posted with the SNA boundary signs.
1. **Wildlife Diversity**

Several habitat management practices (mentioned under Section F) were carried out to promote wildlife diversity throughout the work area. The key, though, has been a diversity of diversity. For example, some community types include many wildlife species, such as differently aged aspen areas peppered with wildlife openings, and some communities have comparatively fewer species, such as large blocks of mature lowland blackspruce.

Therefore, the strategy is to use a variety of management practices across the landscape; or choose not to use them. Timber cutting is laid out in different areas and sizes. Openings are maintained in certain areas and left to succeed to forest or brushlands in others. Burn units are of different sizes and are burned in a variety of intervals. And impoundments are held in a range of depths. This assortment of management practices is especially important in a landscape such as the Beltrami Island area that has such a diverse array of ecological community types within it.

2. **Endangered and Threatened Species**

There were sightings of the following state listed endangered species: peregrine falcon (one was observed migrating during the fall of 1992) and the ram's head lady's-slipper (several were seen in the area near Bemis Hill where the County Biological Survey biologists had located them the previous year).

The following state threatened species were seen: bald eagles (many migrated through this area in the spring and fall and some were observed feeding on deer gut piles in the fall) and gray wolves (there are many wolf packs in this area).

3. **Waterfowl**

Only a partial brood survey was done during the summer of 1992. Just four of the impoundments were surveyed, so a direct comparison with 1989 (the last time a survey was conducted) is not possible. However, even with fewer areas counted, there were more ringneck broods observed this year than in both 1989 and 1986. The pie charts in Figure 2 illustrate this.

Mallards, blue-winged teal, and woodduck numbers were down, but this must be attributed to the reduced survey areas - especially since the ditch networks and the Rapid River area were not counted. Besides the surveys, casual observations revealed waterfowl numbers (both ducks and geese) to be normal.
The three most common species, by percent

1992 BREEDING WATERFOWL - NORRIS CAMP

(41.5%)

MALLARD
BLUE WINGED TEAL
RING NECKED

1989 BREEDING WATERFOWL - NORRIS CAMP

(64.8%)

MALLARD
BLUE WINGED TEAL
RING NECKED

Figure 2
4. **Marsh and Water Birds**

There weren't any large concentrations of water birds noted this year. The colonial waterbird nesting survey wasn't done this year. However, it was noted that the great blue heron rookery by the Moose River Impoundment control structure was still active. There were also many cormorants observed near there during the waterfowl survey.

6. **Raptors**

The unusual numbers of hawk owls observed during the winter of 1991-92 were nowhere to be seen this past year. Although there were a few sighted north of the Canadian border near Sprague, Manitoba. There were also fewer great gray owls observed.

However, during the summer of 1993, there were many red-tailed hawks and kestrels seen in the area. They were frequently observed perched on snags in clearcut areas throughout the forest. This influx of raptors was likely due, in part, to an increase in the vole (*Microtus spp.*) population.

Boreal owls were not heard this year during the annual owl survey in March. Many great horned owls and saw whet owls were heard though. A survey of the boreal owl nestboxes put up last year revealed that there was no use.

7. **Other Migratory Birds**

The annual woodcock survey in May resulted in another decrease. There were 8 singing males counted as opposed to the 10 that were heard during the 1992 spring survey. This is a continuing downward trend from 13 that were heard in 1991 (see Figure 3).

8. **Game Mammals**

State game mammals that occur in the area include white-tailed deer, black bear, moose, red fox, bobcat, fisher, otter, beaver, mink, muskrat, raccoon, snowshoe hares, and pine marten.

A. **Moose:** There were 92 moose counted in the intensive moose management area during the 1993 aerial winter moose census. This works out to be 0.16 moose per square kilometer (or .40 moose/square mile). These figures compare to 79 moose, or 0.13 moose/sq. km (.35 moose/sq. mile), which were counted in the 1991-92 census (see Figure 4).

Deer dropping samples were collected in March to test for the incidence of the meningeal or brainworm (*Parelaphostrongylus tenuis*). Bill Peterson (DNR - Grand
Figure 3
MOOSE/SQ.KM IN WINTER SURVEY RLWMA—BISF

INTENSIVE MOOSE MANAGEMENT AREA

Figure 4
Marais) and Murray Lankester (Lakehead Univ. - Thunder Bay, Ontario) analyzed the samples. Of the 75 samples collected, 67 contained the brainworm larvae (89%). This is a high percentage and it was suspected that sample collection procedures might have contributed to it. The larvae may have been passed on from one sample to the next through a contaminated spade. Plans were made to change the methods next year to avoid this possibility.

B. Deer: Deer over-wintered well even though the WSI was the second highest in the state at 144. Several deer yards were visited with no noticeable mortality detected. Although snow depths were approximately 24 inches, deer mobility was not as severely hampered because snow fell in two to three inch amounts. This allowed trails to be kept open and deer were never "socked in" to a specific wintering yard. Deer numbers were estimated to be at 14 to 16 per square mile.

C. Bear: The results of the bear bait survey from July 1992 had to be compared to the results from July of 1990 as this regular survey was superseded in 1991 by the statewide tetracycline study. There was a decrease from the 27% overall visitation rate in 1990 to a 22% visitation rate in 1992.

The bear food survey said that blueberry, pincherry, and juneberry production was excellent while other bear food production was average. Hunting success was slightly higher than in 1991. Bear numbers appeared to be the same as last year. The trend seems steady or increasing.

D. Furbearers: The 1992 predator scent post survey showed decreases in coyote, red fox, wolf, fisher, raccoon, and skunk numbers and increases in bobcats, bears, and weasels. Increasing water levels and beaver numbers resulted in an increase in problems with beaver dams along roadside ditches and water control structures.

10. Other Resident Wildlife

A. Ruffed Grouse: Six drumming counts were run (two were added to include areas of good habitat and to assess possible ATV hunting impacts). There was an average of 2.3 drums per stop for the traditional routes and 2.1 drums/stop when the new routes are included. This was a small increase over the 2.0 drums per stop heard during the spring of 1992. This, it's hoped, is a sign that the cyclic downtrend has bottomed out.

B. Sharp-tailed Grouse: The spring sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground survey again showed the population to be declining. The numbers of birds counted on the dancing grounds dropped 25% from the spring of 1992. The only bright spot was that three new grounds were discovered. If these birds are counted, the decline was only 7%. Twenty-two grounds were surveyed.
H. PUBLIC USE

1. General

The number of visitor contacts this year was about the same as last year (approximately 3,000). This includes people who came to, or called, the office for various forms of assistance including wildlife or plant information, camping or trapping permits, directions, or to look at the historic CCC camp.

2. Outdoor Classrooms - Students

Five field trips for students were led by area staff. One was in September of 1992 when Area Manager Mehmel gave a presentation about the history of the area to a group of Boy Scouts who were at Norris Camp for a Camporee. Mehmel also assisted Thief Lake WMA staff with a "Goose Hunters' Roundup" in October. This was a workshop for hunters to help them determine shooting ranges and shot patterns. On the same day, Assistant Manager Laudenslager led a nature hike for groups of youth in the Ruffed Grouse Society. In May, Mehmel gave nature hikes to several groups of firearms safety students. And in June, she gave a talk to and led a nature hike for a group of Girl Scouts who were camping in the Norris Campground/Picnic Area.

4. Foot Trails

Approximately six miles of walking trails were put in and designated this year. They were all existing, abandoned logging trails that were gated off and mowed for maintenance.

6. Interpretive Exhibits/Demonstrations

A new display was added this year to the headquarters office at Norris Camp, which serves as the visitor contact center. Some relic, unexploded, smoke bombs from the Pete's Homestead area were added to a shelf by the skull collection. A new hide was also hung on the wall for display. It is of a 96-pound male timber wolf that was illegally shot in the area south of Swift. The wolf hide, along with the other skin, skulls, and brochures from the office, was used in many programs throughout the year and was much admired by office visitors.

7. Other Interpretive Programs

Norris Camp staff helped with the DNR's Roseau County Fair exhibit in July and four interpretive programs were given off the area. These included two slide/talk shows to preschoolers about feeding birds and putting up bird houses, a Career-Day talk at the Warroad middle school, and an elementary school group presentation about area wildlife.
Several radio interviews were given during the hunting season about wildlife population estimates, hunter success, and related information. One radio interview was done in March about winter wildlife survival and welfare.

8. Hunting

The Red Lake WMA work area is hunted extensively. The most popular species hunted include white-tailed deer, both ruffed and sharp-tailed grouse, woodcock, black bear, and waterfowl. Moose are hunted by members of the Red Lake Chippewa Indian Tribe.

No formal hunter surveys are done locally for ruffed grouse, woodcock, or sharp-tailed grouse. Ruffed grouse hunters had only fair success in the fall of 1992. The number of grouse in the bag was definitely down from previous years. Woodcock hunters, however, had better success. And sharp-tailed grouse hunters' success continued to be poor.

Deer hunting results from Killblocks 211 and 212, which includes most of the work area, showed a harvest increase of 2%. Antlerless permits were increased from 1100 to 1300. There were 2461 total deer harvested during the firearms deer season, 49 during the archery season, and 40 in the muzzleloader season.

There was a 17% increase in the number of bears killed by hunters in 1992 compared to 1991. A total of 109 bears was harvested in Permit Area 12, which includes the Red Lake WMA work area. Since 300 permits were issued (350 were available - 10 more than the year before), there was a 36% hunter success rate.

There was very little waterfowl hunting in the area, even though there are opportunities for hunting on the six impoundments within the area. There is little hunting pressure here because of the proximity of this area to the excellent duck and goose hunting on and along Lake of the Woods, less than 20 miles to the north.

10. Trapping

Twelve regular trapping permits were issued for the Red Lake Wildlife Management Area in 1992. The reported harvest was 21 mink, 24 beaver, 13 muskrats, 1 otter, 4 fisher, 9 red fox, 1 coyote, 1 ermine, and 1 striped skunk. Two trappers wrote that they didn't trap the WMA during the '92 season.

Several trappers wrote that they had noticed an increase in the numbers of fisher and muskrats. A decrease was noted in the numbers of mink.

Two trappers were hired by DNR Forestry and given a permit by us to trap beavers in the spring along the roads south of Gates Corner. They trapped 51 beavers.
11. **Wildlife Observation**

There was a steady flow of visitors to the area throughout the year to observe wildlife. This primarily included bird watchers, but it also included people looking for deer, moose, wolves, and wildflowers. Several photographers came to Norris Camp during May to photograph orchids, especially the Calypso orchids that grow just north of the Camp.

13. **Camping**

The number of campers using the area increased significantly due to the two groups of boy and girl scouts that were here. And, as usual, the Norris Campground was very busy during the fall grouse and deer hunting seasons. It was also used intermittently throughout the summer and spring by bird watchers, ATV enthusiasts, and berry pickers.

14. **Picnicking**

The annual Old Settlers' Picnic in June again drew approximately 300 people to the Norris Picnic Area. The picnic area was also used a lot throughout the year by people passing through the area on day trips to snowmobile, ski, pick berries, hunt, or just drive through the area for nature observation.

15. **Off-Road Vehicling**

The major off-road vehicles in this area are snowmobiles and ATVs. There is a matrix of designated snowmobile trails, but, in addition, they are allowed to go anywhere on the state forest or WMA. The peatland Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) are off-limits to snowmobiles, except on established snowmobile trails. In January of 1993, these trails were posted to notify snowmobilers that they could not go off the established trails (see Section F.12). WMA staff followed up on this posting by checking the trails later in the winter. Snowmobilers using the grant-in-aid trail through the Winter Road Lake Peatland abided by the rules and did not go off the trail. However, as evidenced by their tracks, several snowmobilers using the unofficial trail through the Mulligan Lake SNA did not stick to the trail and in many places ventured far away from it across the peatland.

ATVs are not allowed within the WMA, except by special handicapped permit. There were three ATV handicapped permits issued this last year. ATV use outside the WMA in the state forest is extensive throughout the hunting season (especially grouse) and intermittent the rest of the year.
17. Law Enforcement

Manager Mehmel and Assistant Manager Laudenslager have Level II law enforcement authority within the Red Lake WMA work area. Most of the law enforcement work occurs during the ruffed grouse and deer hunting seasons. It involves patrolling the area looking for violations ranging from uncased or loaded guns in vehicles to over-limits of game and illegal use of ATVs in the WMA.

One citation was issued by Laudenslager during the fall of 1991. It was for operating an ATV within the WMA. We assisted with several citations written by area Conservation Officers. Most were for having loaded firearms in vehicles (while they were preparing to shoot at a grouse decoy), two were for shooting at a deer from a roadway, and one was for hunting in Hayes Lake State Park. Several warning tickets were issued for various other infringements.

I. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

1. - 3. New Construction, Rehabilitation, & Major Maintenance

The major rehabilitation work done to the headquarters facilities at Norris Camp this year was the work done by the Boy Scouts in September (see Section E.4). Paint that was left over from the Boy Scout project was donated to the State and the Norris Camp staff used it, along with some paint purchased by the State, to paint the tool house and the front and one side of the office building.

An emergency repair job was also done to the water system at Norris Camp. In late March, water pressure was lost to the office and it was discovered that there was a break in the water line somewhere. A plumber found the break under the duplex building and repaired it. The line froze and then it broke where it came up from underground to supply and old hose system for fire fighting mounted on the side of the duplex. This area was insulated again after the repair.

More work needs to be done in the way of maintenance and rehabilitation to several of the Norris Camp buildings. However, since the 1986 decision was made to close Norris Camp, only emergency repairs to the buildings and grounds have been authorized.

4. Equipment Utilization and Replacement

The system of sharing equipment with other DNR field stations is going well. The JD-450 dozer from Williams Forestry is used by Norris Camp staff throughout the summer and winter for openings maintenance. Forestry uses it during the wildfire seasons in the spring and fall. The D-5 dozer and dump trucks from Thief Lake and Roseau River WMAs are
shared between those stations and Norris Camp. The benefits of sharing equipment are that it saves money and it encourages more communication between field stations. The down side of equipment sharing is that, while generally it works quite smoothly, at times it can be less than efficient when there is a lot of competition for the equipment due to workloads and/or inclement weather and one station must wait for the equipment for a long time. Work planning is critical.

Two pieces of equipment were turned in for replacement. The 1976 International Schwartzbed truck was replaced with a Chevrolet C-70 rollback flatbed truck. And the 1966 Allis Chalmers crawler/loader was replaced with a 50-horsepower John Deere 350C crawler/loader/backhoe.

Toward the end of the winter shearing season, the state's 1946 D-8 developed several problems. A trunion was broken, a front idler was cracked, and the bearings went out for a front track roller causing damage to the rails. It was judged by Field Services staff not to be worth the cost of making repairs since the entire undercarriage was in such bad shape. The issue of whether this dozer would be replaced with another was still being discussed at the end of the fiscal year.

6. Computer Systems

A new computer system was purchased in November. This system includes a 250 MB, 486-equivalent IBM clone computer with a color monitor and a Hewlett Packard DeskJet 500C color printer. The software purchased with the system includes: DOS 5.0, Windows, Stacker (to make more room for storage on the hard drive), Wordperfect for Windows, and ArcView. The main purpose in getting the new computer was to have the capabilities for using Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

J. OTHER ITEMS

1. Cooperative Programs

The Red Lake Band's Circle of Flight projects to repair Manweiler and Schilling Dams mentioned in Section F.2 was the major cooperative program worked on in FY '92-93. We also cooperated with the U.S. F.&W.S. on the annual woodcock survey, the breeding bird survey, and the mineral exploration work that was described in Section D.4.

4. Credits

This report was completed by Gretchen Mehmel, the Red Lake Wildlife Area Supervisor, with help from Scott Laudenslager, June Foss, and Gary Aery.
Efforts made to save Norris Camp

Area residents petition DNR to retain station at meeting in Baudette Wednesday

by Mark Olson
Staff Writer

FOR SALE OR LEASE: 16 historical buildings on 10 acres of land. Willing to negotiate.

Norris Camp was a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp, spawned by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The camp, located in Beltrami Island State Forest, operated from 1935 to 1940 creating jobs during the depression.

This product of the depression has become a problem during the recession.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials, area residents, the Lake of the Woods County Board, and area legislators met Wednesday afternoon in Baudette to discuss the camp's future.

The Minnesota DNR plans to close the Norris Camp Wildlife Management Area office (the only entity functioning at Norris Camp) and merge the office with its Forestry division in Warroad.

The Norris station currently employs seven workers. The manager and the assistant manager live at Norris.

Area residents (1,339 signed petitions) protest the move because they favor the current office location and worry about potential destruction of historical buildings.

The DNR faces a massive budget cut and officials said they can not afford to maintain the site.

"I'm staring right now at a $23 million budget reduction (governor's proposed budget) for the department. I can't maintain all those (state park) facilities with $23 million out of the budget," said Ron Nargang, deputy commissioner of the Minnesota DNR at the meeting.

Nargang also said the DNR faces cutting 270 employees and decreasing the length of state park season next year.

The DNR plans to build an office in Warroad to house the Wildlife and Forestry divisions. The Forestry division is located in Warroad.

Consolidations at other DNR offices in Blackduck and Cloquet each have resulted in $300,000 annual savings, Nargang said. A large portion of this savings comes from eliminating a level of supervision.

Other costs include maintenance. Gretchen Mehmel, Norris Camp Area Wildlife manager, said the cost of maintaining the camp averages $4,000 annually for work such as roofing, rewiring and painting. The electricity cost is around $1,000 each year and $2,000 each.

A former CCC camp located at Beltrami Island State Forest, Norris Camp, houses the area DNR Wildlife headquarters. The DNR plans to move the office to Warroad with its Forestry office. Officials met Wednesday afternoon to discuss the camp's future.

(Continued on Back Page)
Local efforts being made to save Norris Camp

(Continued from Page 1)

year for heating.

Arguments For And Against Keeping DNR At Norris Camp
Money is not the only argument for closing the station. Nargang
said a consolidated office allows "an integrated staff making inte-
grated resource decisions" and the ability to share equipment between
the two offices.

Everett Helmstetter of Roosevelt, local lifetime resident and leading
opponent of the move, said the faculty)," Helmstetter said. necessarily
saying that has to hap-

Nargang said he will make deci-
sions regarding future DNR
involvement in Norris Camp after
the legislature convenes this spring.

Historical Value
The Minnesota Historical Society
is currently researching Norris
Camp to determine its potential as
a National Register historical site.

Nargang said the DNR is com-
mitted to consolidating the facili-
ties, but is willing to form a part-
tnership in caretaking the facility
and perhaps locating a DNR worker
at the site.

The purpose of the consolidation,
Nargang said, is "getting area
supervisors under one roof. I'm not
necessarily saying that has to hap-
pen with every warm body that's at
Norris Camp."

Nargang said the DNR could
reach a partnership with another
public or private enterprise to care
for the camp.

Stan Cornelius, Lake of the
Woods County Board Chairman,
said the county cannot afford to
take over the operating costs. "I
wouldn't even consider that on any
agenda because it's not feasible," Cornell said.

Options were also discussed of
selling or leasing the land to the
Boy Scouts, a logging camp, or a
deer hunting organization.

"Relative to selling a hunting
or logging camp, my feelings as a
public servant and working in such
a vast area of public land is that it
would be a real loss to the public at
large if all of a sudden this place
that was public before is all of a
sudden closed up, " Mehmel said.

Ron Abraham, County Board
chairman-elect, asked the probability
of the camp becoming a CCC
camp again with President-elect
Bill Clinton's WPA-esque propos-
als.

Stump offered another potential
and said the state is currently exam-
ing a "boot camp" concept for
certain types of criminal offenders
at a location east of International
Falls.

Helmstetter favors the DNR's
current involvement with the camp.
"It's very peripheral. A lot of people
need that facility for the reasons
we speak of. Historical preserva-
tion to be achieved is a conse-
quence of (the DNR station),”
Helmstetter said.

Nargang said he will make deci-
sions regarding future DNR
involvement in Norris Camp after
the legislature convenes this spring.

Optional Uses For Norris Camp
The historical value of the build-
ings is one of the prime arguments
for maintaining a DNR facility at
Norris Camp.

"I think, in fairness, if we're
going to vacate the camp we can
assume it's going to get trashed,"
Nargang said.

Norris Camp houses the area
manager and assistant manager,
providing a deterrent to vandalism.

"We're in the midst of our work
area,” Mehmel said. If the camp
was closed work boundaries would
be divided differently between
other DNR offices. The DNR
would house machinery in Warroad
and transport the machinery to the
sites.

Distance from the work area is
one of the arguments against the
move. "Vehicles do not run cheap-
ly these days. Money on the road
can be better spent (on the Norris
facility),” Helmstetter said.

Other concerns are the use of
Norris Camp as an outlying source
of emergency assistance for hunters
and other outdoor enthusiasts and
a fire-prevention checkpoint.

Compromises which could be
reached, Nargang said, are tele-
phone stations for emergencies
and a temporary DNR worker at Norris
Camp during hunting season.

As far as fires — "I suspect
what we're doing is encountering
higher risk in wild fires. I think
that is a conscious decision made
with downsizing the division. We
spend less money on it, we're going
to have a higher risk of wild fires,”
Nargang said.

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Ron Abraham, County Board
chairman-elect, asked the probability
of the camp becoming a CCC
camp again with President-elect
Bill Clinton's WPA-esque propos-
als.
"It was the nature of design and construction," said Susan Roth, National Register historian, that most of the buildings were torn down or relocated.

Norris Camp has 16 CCC-era structures. However, their use over the years has changed and many of the original barracks have been remodeled.

"Research shows a number of buildings were moved or altered, both the interior and exterior," Roth said. Many original buildings have also been moved on their foundations or are gone, Roth said.

The DNR uses most of the original barracks for storage. Some of the buildings are remodeled and are used to house visiting wildlife specialists. There are buildings, such as the lavatory, the shower room, kitchen and pantry which remain intact. Other buildings, such as the dining hall, collapsed and were demolished.

Roth said a researcher has been going to a number of state offices determining how the camp has changed. The researcher is waiting for material from the National Archives to make a final determination. Roth expects to get most of the information by the end of February.

The CCC program started in 1933 to employ people during the Great Depression. Workers built Norris Camp in 1935. According to National Park Service material, enrollees were unemployed single men between the ages of 18 and 25.

Minnesota CCC workers were located at 49 federal camps and 22 camps in state and municipal parks.

The workers served many functions. They built lookout towers, recreational areas, roads, dams and planted trees.

The workers had to be physically fit, a U.S. citizen and show financial need. Most of the workers were from large urban centers.

Each enrollee received food, clothing, shelter and $30 per month. The program required that the workers return $25 to their families. Workers were guaranteed a job for a six-month period with a two-year maximum.

According to Norris Camp material, the Works Progress Administration and the Resettlement Administration replaced the CCC program one year after it started.

The WPA and RA programs accomplished much of the same tasks as the CCC program. At its largest size, Norris camp housed 1,000 people. The camp closed in 1940. The Red Lake Wildlife Management Area headquarters has been located at Norris Camp since 1932.

Appendix 1

Everett Helmstetter, Roosevelt resident, holds petitions with 1,339 names of people who want the DNR to keep the Wildlife station at Norris Camp in Beltrami Island State Forest. The DNR plans to move the office to Warroad with their Forestry division.
Norris provides diverse resource for Boy Scouts

Ben Yanok of Warroad Troop 151 sharpens his hatchet after gathering firewood for the evening campfire.

The Boy Scouts continued their good deed ethic last week at Norris Camp. One hundred-sixty-five scouts and 35 parents and leaders came together at the camp, located in the heart of the Red Lake Wildlife Management Area, south of Roosevelt for a two day Camporee.

According to the project coordinators, the Scouts came from as far away as North Dakota and Crookston, and as close as from Warroad and Baudette. The Baudette Troop 62, under direction of Dan Black of Graceton, was under special invitation since the Northern Lights Council cuts off Lake of the Woods, which falls into the Headwaters District.

This was the second time that the scouts found themselves at Norris Camp in the past few years. According to Milt Arneson, Scoutmaster for Troop 151 of Warroad, the crew camped on the camp's airplane landing strip in 1990. This year there was perhaps a heavier sense of duty to work on the Norris facility. Since the state of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources announced last year that the facility was to be closed, Scouts and Scoutmasters alike have been concerned that the site will vanish into history.

"What we plan to do this weekend is show our concern," said Milt Arneson.

To do that, the group planned to scrape and paint neglected buildings and learn the history of the camp, while taking to the woods to learn about nature. The entire program was designed around the requirements for the Scouts to advance within the ranks of their troops.

According to Arneson and Black, the crew went to work Saturday morning scraping and painting buildings, rebuilding steps and repairing others, while taking tours of the site and learning what took place while the camp was under direction of the state and federal government during the days of the Civilian Conservation Corps when the camp held up to 200 men and officers.

"Our desire is to save this camp," said Arneson. "When you abandon a building, it doesn't take long before you can't save it. There's been a lot of hard work done this weekend, and if the state decides it absolutely has to close the station, then we're going to ask if we can adopt one or more of the buildings. This is a great place to bring the Scouts, there's a lot of public people who also make use of the camp. Whether they're berry pickers, naturalists, snowmobilers, or hunters, they all need a place of safety and information. And this is a significant part of the area's history. The Scouts are going to learn what that history is, and hopefully remember what happened out here thirty or forty years ago. It seems we have enough trouble in the world without losing our history."

Some time ago a committee including Warner Gouin, Frank Marvin, Milt Arneson and Will Heppner of Warroad, and Dave and Jean Kleven of Roosevelt began preparing for the working weekend. The committee contacted and received exterior paint, brushes and scrapers from Valspar, Marvin Hardware and through Trustworthy Hardware stores.

Appendix 2
"The boys accomplished a lot more that we or the DNR had planned for," said Scoutmaster Dan Black. "They really dug in and went to work."

It was not the desire of anyone to camp indoors, but had the weather turned foul, the former bunkhouse at Norris would have been headquarters for the Camporee, and is another reason the Scouts want to preserve the site. With that exception, the troops were on their own. According to Bill Adams, Voyagers Trails District Executive, each troop was required to bring their own supplies, and provide for themselves.

"Everyone chips in," said Adams. "These guys can make anything that you make at home. We all are responsible for feeding ourselves, and sometimes we get pretty creative. But when you're camping, even the tinfoil dinners (made of hamburger and potatoes, wrapped in tinfoil and cooked in fire coals) tastes awful good."

A sampling of the scouts cooking expertise came Saturday night, when the Warroad Olympic stars Roger Christian, Gordon Christian, Henry Boucha, Dan McKinnon, and Frank Marvin showed up to talk to the troops and to judge the scout's 25 entries in a chili contest. Also during Saturday's bonfire get-together, Norris Camp manager Gretchen Mehmel provided an in-depth look at the camp's history and Everett Helmstetter addressed the assembly with discussion of the proposed closing of the camp, and what it meant relative to the continuing history of the area. Adding traditional flavor to the evening's activities was harmonica music provided by Scoutmaster Art Heinze of Thief River Falls.

The Scouts left Norris Camp on Sunday with a little history, and fulfilled many of their Scouting requirements, including that they have at least a two day camping expedition, provide a service project at the location they camp, learn the history of the site, and fulfill service obligations towards advancement.

"I had many comments from the veteran Scoutmasters that this was possibly the best Camporee that we've had," said Arneson. "It's rewarding when you can leave a place in better condition than when you arrive. We'll be back again, and hopefully the camp will still be here waiting for us."

According to the DNR, the camp is still scheduled for closure possibly as soon as next year, providing the proposed new building is constructed in Warroad. Part of the justification for the $800,000 Warroad facility comes from the abandonment of the Norris facility, and requires moving the staff off the Wildlife Management Area into the new offices at Warroad. The proposed move has brought controversy from local residents due to the historical significance and safety value to persons visiting the Wildlife Management Area.
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**TIMBER APPRAISAL REPORTS FY93**

**ACRES**

**RADIUS**

**S**

**LUP**

**RLOMA**

**COMMENTS**

**WOOD FROM SALE Y6822**

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**APPENDIX 4**
EDITORIAL

Our opinion/ Norris Camp is important to resource management in northern Minnesota.

DNR shouldn't shut down Norris Camp

Norris Camp should not be closed.
Norris Camp is more than a pleasant spot in the woods.
It is an important part of natural resource management in northwestern Minnesota.
It is also a vital link to the past.
Plus, it is potentially a tourist attraction of exceptional interest and value.
Norris Camp is a pleasant spot in the woods. It's located south of Roosevelt, Minn. By road, it's about 150 miles from Grand Forks to Norris Camp — allowing a few extra miles to wander around in the woods looking for the place.
Once found, Norris Camp provides a takeoff point for excursions in Beltrami Island State Forest and the Red Lake Management Area, an area of magnificent wilderness and wildlife habitat, as well as commercial logging.
The Department of Natural Resources keeps a staff there. This is important for several reasons. Perhaps the most important is that these people are a first line of defense against forest fires. They provide emergency assistance to people who visit the area. These include hunters, snowmobilers, berry pickers, birdwatchers, sightseers, joy riders and explorers, many of whom are lost, but some of whom are scared or injured.
The DNR personnel are close to the resource at Norris Camp, so they know what's happening on the ground in the forest. That's important. On-the-spot management is better management. Naturalists at Norris Camp will be in a position to advise the department far more effectively than naturalists in offices in any of the towns nearby.
That's the philosophy that led to the establishment of Norris Camp in the first place.
The camp has been headquarters for the Red Lake Wildlife Management Area since 1932, when it was established. Over the years, it's housed the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration and the Resettlement Administration. There's a lot of history in the buildings of Norris Camp. What happened there has touched thousands of lives.
The combination of history — still well-preserved in the many buildings at the camp — and natural resource management creates a unique opportunity at Norris Camp. It can be a destination for day trips or for weekend camping outings. It can be a place where humans go to get close to nature and to learn about it.
These are opportunities that the Department of Natural Resources should not pass up.
The DNR believes its plans to close Norris Camp are irreversible — but they shouldn't be. People in towns surrounding the Red Lake Wildlife Management Area want to keep the camp open.
Their view is based on a solid understanding of what's good for the human and natural communities of northern Minnesota. They also understand that closing Norris Camp and moving the offices to Warroad would cost money. There's the cost of new office facilities for one thing. Then there's the fuel that wildlife officers would burn driving to the wilderness from their offices. Road time is not productive time.
The DNR could manage the resources in its charge, as well as the public's money and its employees time, far better by keeping Norris Camp.

Mike Jacobs
for the editorial board
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