



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Ottawa National Forest
Watersmeet – Iron River
Ranger Districts

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File Code: 1950

Date: January 18, 2012

Waltraud Brinkmann
Friends of Sylvania
PO Box 697
Watersmeet, MI 49969

Dear Ms. Brinkmann,

This letter is to inform you of my decision to modify the Crooked Lake boat landing to a carry down only facility for the launching of boats in Crooked Lake on the Watersmeet Ranger District. The boat landing is located in the Sylvania Perimeter Area in Section 34, Township 35 North, Range 40 West, Watersmeet Township, Gogebic County, Michigan.

The purpose of this action is to reduce the threat of introducing and spreading aquatic invasive species (AIS) in Crooked Lake. Requiring the launching of boats by carrying them to the lakes edge will not eliminate the potential for introducing AIS into Crooked Lake and thus there will be continued efforts to survey for and control any invasive species that are found. Control efforts will continue as needed and may include hand-pulling, chemical treatments or other methods as authorized in the Ottawa National Forest Non-native Invasive Plant Control Environmental Assessment, January 2005.

Another critically important prevention method is to provide information to the boating public and to seek their assistance in inspecting all water craft and accessories for AIS. Encouraging the use of best practices to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS will further assist in preventing the introduction and spread of AIS. Modification of the boat landing is an action which is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement and which does not require the development of a Decision Memo.

A meeting on September 30, 2011, at the Watersmeet Ranger Station, presented options for reducing the threat of AIS being introduced into Crooked Lake. This meeting also provided an opportunity to hear from the Crooked Lake Riparian Owners and others about their concerns and to learn about other possible means of reducing the threat of introducing AIS into Crooked Lake. Several ideas were offered including the installation of a permanent boat washing station near the Sylvania Entrance Station, mandatory inspection of all watercraft before launching into Crooked Lake, and the installation of a gate to restrict access at times when the Sylvania Entrance Station is closed. Discussions with and input from other interested citizens and tribes, as well as letters from interested citizens, were also considered in my decision.

I have decided not to implement these options for a variety of reasons. Installation of a permanent boat washing station would not provide assurances that it would be used unless it was staffed continuously during the boating season. Mandatory inspection of all watercraft is a



desirable option but again would require full time staffing at the boat landing or the Sylvania Entrance Station during the entire boating season (generally from mid to late April – ice out, until early November – freeze-up). Installing a gate to restrict access and prohibit the launching of all watercraft during times when the Sylvania Entrance Station is closed would present an inappropriate restriction for accessing National Forest System lands and to the Sylvania Wilderness. A gate could also present a blockage for people that have previously entered but who are trying to exit the Sylvania Perimeter Area after the gate is closed and locked.

Providing information and education about AIS and seeking voluntary compliance from the boating public will remain an ongoing effort as this is critically important to preventing the spread of invasive species. This, in addition to modifying the boat landing to a carry down facility, further reduces the threat of introducing and spreading AIS in Crooked Lake.

Modification of the boat landing in a way that requires carrying boats to launch them in the lake may mean that some people may not be able to independently launch their boats. This could be the case for individuals that do not have the physical strength to lift and carry their boat or canoe to the water's edge. Boats, especially those equipped with electric motors, which can be used within the Sylvania Wilderness portion of Crooked Lake, may be too heavy for some that are faced with launching the boats by themselves. To address this concern, the Ottawa National Forest will explore the availability and development of a facility that may be used to assist in launching canoes or other boats equipped with electric motors.

The Ottawa is actively working with the Crooked Lake Riparian Owners on an agreement that would provide them the opportunity to continue using the existing boat landing via gated access, which is the only boat landing on Crooked Lake. The riparian owners utilize this boat landing for access to their lake front property and for motor boat use in the non-wilderness portion of Crooked Lake. The owners of the Foxes Den rental duplex, their family members, and guests can also use motorboats in the wilderness portion of Crooked Lake as provided in a previous federal court order. Entering into an agreement with the riparian owners for their continued use of the boat landing will include provisions for assuring that their boats and trailers are free of invasive species. The boat landing will also continue to be available for Forest Service administrative use, and to meet the needs for the official use of other agencies.

This decision is being implemented immediately and will be in place prior to the spring season. This decision is not subject to an administrative review or appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(f).

Further information about this decision can be obtained from the Ottawa National Forest, Watersmeet Ranger Station (Address: Ottawa National Forest, E23979 US Hwy 2, Watersmeet, MI 49969); Voice: 906-358-4551; Fax: 906-358-4000.

Sincerely,



NORMAN E. NASS
District Ranger