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# *2021 Summer Canoe Landing Report*

## *Brule River State Forest*

*By Jenn Janness*

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### **Summary**

The strategies I utilized to educate the public regarding Bois Brule River rules, in addition to talking directly to people at the canoe landings, were developing a positive relationship with Brule River Canoe Rental staff, walking through the campgrounds and talking to people with canoes, kayaks, and fishing gear, and specifically engaging with children. This enabled me to expand my reach to people I may have missed at the canoe landings.

My general approach was to first talk to people preparing to go out on the river. I covered the topics that applied to them and then answered any questions. I checked to make sure each person had a wearable PFD, inspected coolers for glass, and then checked that beverages were secured in coolers and attached to the kayak or canoe. During times when the landings were especially busy, I focused on checking for PFDs, glass, and secured coolers while conveying the most important to each group. For example, when I spoke to youth groups, I would emphasize the importance of respecting others using the river and keeping their voices at a reasonable level. If people had fishing gear, I would make sure they understood the fishing regulations. When talking to any groups that had coolers full of beer, I emphasized keeping the river clean and keeping their voices down.

The relationship I developed with the Brule River Canoe Rental Company was especially important. This enabled me to learn where and when larger groups would be launching, and which landings would be the busiest among their clients, so I could be present. Aaron, the current owner, and I discovered that he and I live very close to each other in the Fox Cities area during the off season which helped us build rapport. After that initial conversation, he would regularly ask how things were going at the landings and was open to feedback about his staff. Some of the rental staff would introduce their groups to me when they exited the van, so I was easily able to talk to them and check for glass/secured beverages before they left the landing. I was also able to educate and reinforce the rules with the staff to increase the likelihood that they would pass the information on to their clients. For example, I overheard one young staff person telling a client that a seat cushion was an approved personal flotation device, so I quickly corrected him.

I found that talking to kids and having fun things to hand out engages the entire family. The families were especially happy to have activities for the kids to do while waiting for adults to shuttle vehicles and prepare canoes and kayaks. I often handed out nature scavenger hunt sheets that I received from one of the regional educators. The kids were excited and would continue to talk to me while doing the activity. This gave me a great opportunity to talk with both the kids and adults about the river rules.

Another group I educated were people visiting the landings while planning future trips down the river. I was able to go over the rules with them while also providing them maps and other information to help them prepare. If I would see them later as they were going out on the river, I reinforced the rules a second time.

## Data

### Topics Covered Verbally

Month	Contacts	Beverages	PFDs	Fish Regs	Inflatables	Litter	Other (noise, designated landings, etc.)	Glass Found
June	385	105	205	10	3	237	254	0
July	2181	1312	1580	170	0	1115	1651	2
August	1118	572	700	63	25	327	920	4
September	782	473	523	84	22	429	696	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4466</b>	<b>2462</b>	<b>3008</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>2108</b>	<b>3521</b>	<b>11</b>

### Print Information Given Out

Month	Fish regs	Visitor Info	Paddle Info	Explorer Books (kids)	Activity Books (kids)	Explorer Packs (check out)	Wild Card Sets	Other
June	1	3	2	13	8	3	52	18
July	27	7	1	12	4	1	45	112
August	5	2	4	4	6	2	59	71
September	8	3	2	4	30	0	28	31
<b>Totals</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>232</b>

## Overall Impressions

The majority of people I encountered were friendly and listened to the information I conveyed to them. In most cases, the people who would have violated the rules had I not approached them, simply were not aware of the rules. People expressed their appreciation daily for the information I provided them. Many people commented that they had never seen anyone checking the landings before but were glad it was happening now. Several people told me they hoped the position would continue in future summers. I handed out several comment cards to people who wished to express their appreciation to the DNR that the landings were being monitored.

People who were not as open to the information I provided, sometimes changed their attitudes when I let them know about the fines they could incur by not following the rules. One example of this was a family who forgot their life jackets at their campsite and was going to go kayaking without them. The father was not happy but went back to the campsite to get them after I informed him about the fines. When he returned, there were 4 wardens at the landing preparing for some training. The father then thanked me profusely for encouraging him to follow the rules.

The very few times that people were not cooperative, I let the warden and other staff know in case they encountered those people. This happened much less frequently than I expected, however.

One thing I could have done better is tracking people that I talked to in the campgrounds, angler lots, ranger station, and when driving around the property. If I didn't have my tracking forms handy, I sometimes forgot to add those people to my forms. I also could have gotten to know some of the guides and local residents earlier in the season. There were a few instances when guides were happy that I was checking other canoes and kayaks but felt their canoes didn't need to be checked.

## **Other Accomplishments**

- Cleaned bathrooms, deep cleaned several bathrooms
- Maintained clean landings, campground, angler lots, etc.
- Assisted with hanging reservation tags, checking money boxes, and refilling information at campgrounds
- Worked with staff to order Wild Cards and other informational material, helped restock Ranger Station with print materials
- Made up sets of Wild Cards on rings with fish found in the Brule River to hand out. Encouraged families to visit ranger station and other state parks to get more Wild Cards
- Provided general customer service at and near the ranger station
- Created a mobile information box so information could be handed out to people on any topic related to the forest or surrounding area
- Put together activity bags for kids and handed them out at landings and campgrounds
- When notified that a youth group would be camping or canoeing, took age appropriate items such as frisbees, nature booklets, or coloring books to hand out when talking to them about river rules.
- Replaced faded maps and other information at every landing and angler lot
- Checked all Explorer Backpacks for missing materials, created more visible tags with information on where to return them
- Put up new metal signs and trimmed branches at landings
- Identified and measured signs along the Stoney Hill Nature Trail for replacement
- Created spreadsheet and tracking forms for data
- Saved information on a USB drive for future staff
- Connected with Sue Johansen-Mayoleth, the regional educator for the area, about educational materials

## **Recommendations**

- Contact Brule River Canoe Rental in spring and ask to arrange a time to speak to their entire staff at the beginning of the season to go over the rules of the river.
- Materials specifically for kids on paddling and/or river rules
- Small tv tray type table to set up at landings with a “Landing Host” sign to put materials on and be a more visible presence
- Inform locals and guides in advance that a landing host will be checking canoes in kayaks
- Periodically collect additional data, potentially with the help of a volunteer or staff person. For example, one day per month track how many people are using the river independently or through the rental company. Note how many people through the rental company vs others would have violated rules had they not encountered the landing host.
- Be able to sell vehicle passes at landings when office is closed
- Brule River State Forest specific stickers or other souvenir items to sell or give away. This is something I was asked about multiple times by visitors.
- Painting type ladder with shelf for cleaning supplies when cleaning ceilings and windows in bathrooms
- Signs with fines to put up at landings. See example below.

**Brule River State Forest Fines**

No wearable PFD: \$162.50

Glass bottles/unsecured beverages on river: \$162.50

Littering, including cigarette butts: \$\_\_\_\_.

Excessive noise: \$\_\_\_\_.

**On a personal note...**

I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to spend my summer in one of the most beautiful places on earth, doing work that I strongly support. In my opinion, if we do not preserve our environment for future generations, then literally nothing else will matter. I met so many wonderful people, learned so much about the area, and even started fly fishing! In addition, the Brule River State Forest staff have been a joy to work with. Everyone was supportive and made me feel right at home. I can't imagine a better way to spend my summer.