



**\* Legacy Debris Cleanup Success! \* FOW Plans for 2022 \* \* Wabakimi 2021! Wet & Wild \***



**Planning for 2022**

By Vern Fish, FOW President

We're an active volunteer group with monthly board meetings and Conservation, Expedition, Marketing and Cartography committees. We welcome your feedback on our planning for 2022. We need your involvement.

- We have two openings on our [board of directors](#). We strive for a balance of Canadian and U.S. members. We ask that board members attend a monthly Sunday evening Zoom meeting and actively participate in some way. We're an entirely volunteer group. Drop us a message [info@wabakimi.org](mailto:info@wabakimi.org) if you're interested in one of

Report from Wabakimi Provincial Park

**2021 - Planes, Paddles and Portages - Legacy Debris Removal in Wabakimi Provincial Park**

**November to December 2020:** Friends of Wabakimi raised over \$7300 CAD for the Legacy Debris Removal project in partnership with Wabakimi Provincial Park (WPP).

**June - July 2021:** WPP Canoe Rangers completed two trips in the park to prepare and stage debris for removal. June site visit to Surprise and Cache Lakes resulted in 13 abandoned, burnt and damaged items removed from portages and moved to an

accessible area. In July, items along the Grayson River heading towards Whitewater Lake were staged for removal. ([See maps and photos in the official report!](#))

**September 2021:** Turbo Beaver hired from Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services (AFFES) in Dryden. The plane was a specialized 'amphibious' vehicle that has floats with wheels. This allowed it to be staged out of the Armstrong airport and allow for easy landing/unloading of material. All items from Surprise and Cache Lakes were removed within one day of flying (4 flights) spanning over 13 hours. Due to low water levels, the flight to remove debris from the Grayson Lake area had to be deferred till the Spring of 2022.

### Results

- Four park staff contributed time to the project over three separate field excursions to the park
- All materials from the southern sites in the park (Surprise and Cache Lake) was successfully removed and all scrap recycled
- The northern sites in the Grayson area are prepped, and a plan is in place to follow through with the removal in the spring of 2022 when water levels are higher

### Challenges

- During the winter of 2020/2021 our main flight carrier for Wabakimi Provincial Park was sold. Due to COVID-19 and other challenges the

our committee or the Board.

- We're working on the next Stewardship and fundraising project with Wabakimi Provincial Park. We'll be announcing that in the near future.
- We're missing the *camaraderie* many of us had during The Wabakimi Project years, so in the works is our first Wabakimi Rendezvous, tentatively Sept 8-11, 2022. A gathering to promote our vision for the Wabakimi area and a sharing of information. This could be in Thunder Bay or Armstrong, or likely both. Some of us will schedule a canoe trip, either before or after.
- More Zoom Webinars with a focus on trip reports and route planning.
- We'll be at [CanoeCopia in Madison, Wisconsin, March 11-13](#), with our information booth and a new line of "Swag", large and small boat stickers, hats, etc. (suggestion is to include a canoe, float plane and a caribou emblematic of the Wabakimi experience). We'll hold our 2022 Annual Meeting there on March 13<sup>th</sup>, with Zoom access too.
- We met our goal of reaching 200 members in 2021 (currently over 220 members). We'll once again offer our CanoeCopia membership coupon specials (Guidebook, Planning Map & some "swag"). Our goal is at least 300 members in

carrier was not able to get an inspection/certification to fly Ontario government staff. This limited our ability to book a local carrier through the summer.

- The 2021 fire season was the busiest in northwestern Ontario in the past decade. AFFES planes were allocated to assisting with the busy fire season and were not available to book till later in September
- Low water levels prevented the movement of boats in the Grayson area to an accessible position for bush plane access

### **Conclusion**

The park staff are very appreciative of the support FOW has provided for this project! The removal of materials from the various sites in the park, some of which predates the creation of the park by several decades, is a great example of the environmental stewardship that is vital to protect and preserve Wabakimi Provincial Park for future generations. Returning the sites to a clean, natural condition is a benefit both to the 'wilderness experience' of those travelling through, but also to the vegetation which can now reclaim and regenerate in these sites that were once covered by debris. In addition, the experience and collaborations that evolved from this project are extremely valuable and will be applied to future stewardship efforts within the park moving forward.

2022. We're reaching out to outdoors businesses & outfitters with our Business/Sponsor membership.

- Longer term, we've discussed converting our FOW map volumes to a new digital format, easier to update and to use.
- Our Expedition Committee is actively meeting to create a database of Wabakimi canoe routes. [Our 2022 Trip Program](#) will continue, with self-directed expeditions documenting canoe route conditions and experiences. A real challenge is that some routes are returning to the wild without enough use.
- We'll continue our [Conservation work](#), promoting greater protections for canoe routes and habitat in the forests surrounding Wabakimi Provincial Park. We'll try again for a dialogue with the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry (MNRF) regarding maintenance of those Crown land routes.

Let us know your thoughts and interests.

Vern

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FOW members! You have access to a [membership profile](#) and [a membership directory](#). [You can message other members that way as well.](#)



## ***Wabakimi! Wet & Wild***

By Dave McTeague, FOW Board Chair

Well, relatively speaking that is. ([Video 1](#), [Video 2](#)) While the Minnesota Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA), Quetico and Woodland Caribou, were partially and then totally closed, Wabakimi Provincial Park and surrounding areas stayed open.

As noted by Shannon Walshe, Park Biologist in [our previous interview](#), “Wabakimi ... has a much wetter, more humid climate with much older predominantly black spruce forests and a fire cycle almost double that of Woodland Caribou Park. This climate difference can affect everything including the rate at which lichen regenerates after a fire. Lichen regenerates faster with higher humidity levels. “

The [Ontario Fire Map](#) consistently showed only a few small fires in the Crown land forests near Wabakimi P.P. while western Ontario and Quetico were particularly hard hit. Several Wabakimi paddlers reported periods of great smoke and one notable had to be extracted when it was particularly bad.

As evidenced by our map and Guidebook sales, interest in Wabakimi from Canadians, particularly those in Eastern Ontario picked up considerably. With the border closed, Canadians were interested in alternatives to popular parks like Algonquin, Killarney and closer Crown lands.

Canada opened the border to fully vaccinated and tested U.S. citizens on August 9<sup>th</sup> (though the U.S. has yet to reciprocate). My daughter and I crossed on Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> during Labor Day weekend. Both Ryden’s store and the border crossing at Pigeon River were very quiet. Taking no chances we got our PCR Covid test at both CVS and then Wandertest at the Minneapolis airport. Turns out CVS got our test result to us in 2 days! Also, we entered our info into [Canada’s ArriveCan app](#), which facilitates the crossing process.

Our canoe trip, we traveled down the Boiling Sands River to Smoothrock Lake and then upstream on the Lookout River; passing three groups going the other opposite direction. Boiling Sands was small stream at low water with swifts being barely a channel through a rock garden. Going upstream, the Lookout River had much more water and lovely rapids/falls. Terrific fishing for pickerel (walleye) on Spring Lake. (full report to follow)

**OSTROM PACKS -- New  
Business/Sponsor member!**



[Our new Business/Sponsor member!  
Ostrom packs were much used on  
Wabakimi Project trips.](#)

"Having known Phil Cotton both personally and professionally I would really like to be a small part of the FOW effort. Until recently I did not know Phil's work was being continued. I would be thrilled to be a part of that process. I have spent a lot of time in Wabakimi and appreciate it."

Bill Ostrom

## FOW News & Updates

### Canoed Wabakimi in 2021??

### We need your Trip Reports!

***The Expedition Committee*** [has an initial list of suggested routes.](#) Many of these are in the Wabadowgang Nooping (Armstrong) forest, others are in the Caribou (west side) forest.

*The committee is also in the process of creating a database of Wabakimi canoe routes for quick access to information for trip planning.*

See our [2022 Trip Program webpage](#) along with some resources that will help in planning such trips.

**[We now have a new downloadable FOW Trip Journal form for documenting your Wabakimi trip with greater ease.](#)** This journal also includes other resources to help in the planning of such trips. Or you can send us a narrative & photos to [info@wabakimi.org](mailto:info@wabakimi.org)

We hope that FOW members (and others!) will consider taking self-guided trips into these areas and provide a trip report back to FOW for the purposes of improving our maps and other resources.

***Cartography Committee.*** Do you have info regarding routes, portages, conditions, that need to be considered for Map Volume updates? Let us know. To reach the Cartography Committee directly, email [cartographywabakimi@gmail.com](mailto:cartographywabakimi@gmail.com)

Interested in joining a committee? [Log in and edit your member profile](#) or send a note to [info@wabakimi.org](mailto:info@wabakimi.org)

[Thanks to our Business/Sponsor members below!](#)



The Ultimate Guide to Canoeing  
Where to Go & What to Buy



**Wabakimi**  
Canoe Outfitters & EcoLodge



**PaddlePlanner**  
From Put-In to Take-Out



Moose on the Miskow

Join FOW Today!

## Mission Statement

Through volunteer stewardship and collaboration with other stakeholders, the Friends of Wabakimi will participate in the planning processes to advocate for protection and preservation of the diverse natural, cultural, recreational and historical resources of the Wabakimi Area.



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