

Maggie Whiting USFS Information Specialist, Kawishiwi District  
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I'm Maggie Whiting, and I'm an information assistant at Kawishiwi, the ranger station here in Ely, Minnesota. I was born and raised in the North Woods and Isabella, and I joined the Forest Service in 2006. It's a great place to live and a great place to recreate,

BW Podcast: I understand there's a very important date coming for people who are getting ready to plan their Boundary Waters trips for the permitting season.

Maggie Whiting: It is an important date, and it's just the start of the permit season. It starts Wednesday, January 31, at 9am. And it goes through the whole year until the end of September, when you can make reservations. But this is the big start.

BW Podcast: If someone has not ever reserved, a permit, what are the basics that people need to know ahead of time?

Maggie Whiting: First of all, you're going to have to make sure that you either have your profile, or that you create a profile @recreation.gov, that's imperative, get that in there, get everything right address, phone number, email, all those things, your credit card information, you're going to want to use the latest version of Chrome, because that's the only version that actually works, you're going to want to make sure also that you have at least three entry dates, and three different entry points chosen. So that in case that you don't get the one that you want the most you have a couple others to fall back on, you're going to want to log in at that date, and get ready and refresh. And once 9 am comes, you're going to want to hit the "Explore Available Permits" and get started.

BW Podcast: I know that you're in the Kawishiwi District, so there's East Zone and West Zone. Are all the entry points together, once people click on that "Available Entry" button?

Maggie Whiting: Yes, you're going to be looking at all the available permits ready to go at that point. And that's why it's important to know what you want, so that you're not searching through and trying to decide, make sure that you've picked the entry date and the entry point that fits your needs. And do some research--plan ahead and prepare. That's something that's important in every aspect of the permit process. Plan ahead and prepare, know what you have to do and know the rules and regulations know where you want to go know that you're able to do that route. All those things are important to make a successful trip.

BW Podcast: Because this is based on a quota system, right? So each entry point has a limited number of permits available, is that right?

Maggie Whiting: That's correct.

BW Podcast: If someone logs in, and they have their profile ready to go, and they have their number one entry point choice ready, and for some reason, it doesn't work out, what should people do? What do you recommend?

Maggie Whiting: And that might happen, and your first pick might be gone. Or there might be some reason that you can't, there might be some technical reason, there's always a chance to go back. All

those permits are not written in stone. And so the first day people realize they've made a mistake, or they've reserved too many permits, or they've gotten more than they wanted. And those go back in, if you go in and you realize that that one entry date and that one entry point that you have is not going to be available, and you're worried that it might not show up through the next month or two or three, there's many options. And we can help you with that. There's other points that you can go we can talk to you about that. We can suggest other entry points. And we have 254 backcountry sites that are not in the Boundary Waters Wilderness that you don't need a permit for, you don't need a reservation. It's a first come first serve. We can help you in so many ways, here at the Kawishiwi district and across all the districts that we have. Everyone that is at the front desk and in the Boundary Waters permit system is going to be able to help you find something that will fit your needs.

BW Podcast: And where do people find the information like the front desk number and things like that if they have an issue or they need help?

Maggie Whiting: That's going to be on our Forest Service website. You can you can Google in the United States Forest Service and the Superior National Forest and it's going to come up and show you every district within the Superior National Forest you can google Kawishiwi ranger station. Or Google "Gunflint ranger station, Lac La Croix, Laurentian--we have a trip planning guide that's available on recreation.gov. So once you go on recreation.gov, you can find the trip planning guide on there as well as our website that gives you literally all the information that you need to make your trip successful. And you can call any one of us at any time, that's what we do is answer questions and help you out that guide truly, honestly, has everything that you need in one little packet. And if you have any questions, all on the back of that is all information for all the districts. It also lists all the outfitters that are cooperators with us that issue our permits. And so you can always call them to they're always anxious to help-- help is just a phone call away.

BW Podcast: Is it okay to reserve more than one permit?

Maggie Whiting: Just to be clear, you can have seven permits in your cart. So you can do that. But you are only allowed one permit per day when you make multiple reservations on the same entry date, or you have overlapping reservations with the same trip leader, all but one permit is going to be cancelled by the Forest Service. Without notification. The group leader can only lead one trip at a time. And that group leader must remain with the group for the duration of the trip.

BW Podcast: That's important--that designating a group leader is something that people need to do before they log in. Right?

Maggie Whiting: Yes, and as important--before you close out that reservation, make sure you have added at least three alternates, you can have up to three alternates, those should be added before you close out your reservation, you can't go back and add an alternate if for some reason you can't go. And there's a whole group of people, you can designate three alternates that be able to pick that up. It's so important. I've seen many reservations not being able to be fulfilled because only one person was a trip leader. So you want to remember that it's extremely important. You can't go back and change it. Recreation.gov can't change it.

BW Podcast: If someone makes a mistake when they enter their reservation. What do you recommend people do? Like if they accidentally put in the wrong date or something along those lines?

Maggie Whiting: You have to have the right date, because once you put in your date and you complete your reservation, when you check out, there's nothing to do except to cancel it. Because the date that you pick to go out, we must make sure is the date you have to go out, like a plane or train or bus, any of those things, you have to go on that date. If you go and you make a mistake, and you've already completed your permit, you're going to have to cancel that and make a new one. So go through and make sure that you have all the all the dates, right the entry point, right. And you can add or subtract people once you come to pick up the permit. So if you need to add people at the last moment, if Uncle Fred decides he wants to come on the day you're leaving, that's okay. As long as you're having nine people and four watercraft, you can add him. You can also change people--you can take people off that couldn't make it and add other people to it. But you cannot change the date. And you cannot change the entry point. Those are written in stone.

BW Podcast: Related to that, if you reserve your permit and you have your date and your entry point and you've got your group leader and alternates all lined up, but then something happens and you can't go on that trip. What should people do if you have to cancel your reservation?

Maggie Whiting: You can cancel two or more days prior to your entry date. And then all the recreation fees will be refunded. If you cancel the reservation on the entry date or one day prior to that date, you're going to be charged a penalty of \$32, which is the equivalent to two users fees, but any other recreational fees will be refunded. So it's a really good thing to cancel as far ahead as you can and you'll get all your money back. But life gets in the way. And if you can't for some reason, you will be charged that \$32 And then anything else will be refunded to you.

BW Podcast: I'm sure that there's anticipation from a lot of frequent travelers who want to line up their trips. They're checking their gear, they're getting their groups together. Are there any changes that would be impactful for travelers?

Maggie Whiting: There isn't anything new this year that's been implemented, but it's such a great time to review those rules and regulations--refresh yourself. Once you get your reservation, you're going to get a link to two videos, you're going to have a first video and a second video, which is going to help you remember the rules and regulations and help you plan and prepare and get ready. And then once you go and get to the to the outfitter or the district office, and you're going to pick up your permit, you're going to have one last video to watch. So those are good refreshers for people who have gone for 40 years. Because definitely things chip changed over time, it's good to have a refresher, and also for the new people to realize what is happening at this point. And we're also going to tell you about the weather, and fire and bear activity. So there's all kinds of things that you're going to learn at the last moment. So coming to pick up your permit is a big part of the process, and helps to just settle you down and let you know what to expect. Plan ahead and prepare so that you're ready for a great adventure.

BW Podcast: Great. Is there anything else you want to add Maggie that you feel people should know to get ready for the paddling season?

Maggie Whiting: Just anticipate this great time and it is kind of like everyone is really excited for that first day. But don't be dismayed if your computer isn't working. If you don't have internet, if there's an issue. And by the way, you can always call recreation.gov at 877-444-6777. If for some reason, everything goes down on your system. So you can call but if that doesn't work, there's many ways that we can help you find a trip that will be just as glorious as the one that you have planned in your mind. There's lots of options, and we will do our best to help you have a good trip.

BW Podcast: Sounds good Maggie. Well, I hope that the "Go Live" launch goes well. And I really appreciate you talking to the WTIP Boundary Waters Podcast.

Maggie Whiting: Just remember to give us a call any one of the district offices or [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov). We're all there to help you.

PW Podcast: Are you planning for some trips this year?

Maggie Whiting: Oh, absolutely. Yes. We don't get to do a whole lot in the summer. It's pretty busy. But all there's day trips and hiking trips. And yes, just being out in the wilderness and being out in the woods is why we live here.

BW Podcast: Indeed it is. Thank you so much.

Maggie Whiting: Have a good day.