

Storm Impact Update – August 3, 2016, 9:00 am

LAST UPDATE

This will be the last update issued unless we have significant changes to report. Please contact the local Ranger District Office for detailed information regarding areas you plan to visit.

Work has moved from emergency response to clean-up following the July 21 wind storm. Local Forest Service crews are continuing to work on clearing debris from affected areas on the Superior National Forest and general storm recovery.

As of Wednesday, August 3, the Forest closed 12 miles of the west end of the Kekekabic Trail and all of the Snowbank Trail system, including the Benezie/Becoosin, Disappointment Mountain, and Old Pines Loops. (See details below under Kawishiwi Ranger District - Snowbank Area.)

Response to this emergency has been an interagency effort. The Superior National Forest is grateful for the partnerships of both the Lake County and St. Louis County Emergency Management organizations. Many people have stepped up and helped in many ways. Special thanks to Morse/Fall Lake First Responders, St. Louis County Sheriff's Office and Rescue Squad, Lake County Sheriff's Office and Search and Rescue Team, Ontario's MNR, OPP, and Quetico Park offices, Ely Ambulance, Life Link Helicopter, LaTourell's Outfitters, Voyageur Outward Bound, and the Forest Service seaplane base and Tanker Base staff.

Major roads and recreation sites have been cleared on Laurentian and LaCroix Ranger Districts. Most roads are passable with some downed trees on the Tofte, and Gunflint Ranger Districts. The Gunflint Trail is clear.

The Forest Service is working with partners in Ely to develop a plan, guidance, and resources to assist people in the community with safe disposal of the large volume of woody debris that resulted from the storm. Between the heat and heavy blowdown, it is very difficult going but crews continue to steadily make progress clearing portages and assessing conditions inside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

CAUTIONS:

Watch for crews working both inside and outside the wilderness to open and clean-up portages, trails, and recreation sites. Please drive slowly and defensively.

Forest managers urge visitors to be aware that there are still many leaning trees and hanging branches that can easily fall. Saturated soils make otherwise stable trees prone to falling over. Consider these hazards and winds when choosing a parking, picnic, or camping site.

Some branches and even whole trees are bent under pressure and may spring up suddenly if pressure is released so watch for spring poles if you are clearing blowdown.

Additional details for the Kawishiwi Ranger District

The Kawishiwi Ranger District was the hardest hit part of the Forest with an impact area covering approximately 3 miles wide by 10 miles long. The western boundary runs as a curved line from Hook Lake, west through Cummings and Crab Lake, and south to include the Van Vac Road south of Burntside

Lake. The eastern boundary runs from Ima Lake south to Hudson Lake. Lakes, portages, and campsites outside this area are also affected by scattered fallen trees.

We ask returning BWCAW visitors who have updated information, to please stop by, email or call the Kawishiwi Ranger District Office: 218-365-7600

- **Snowbank Area:** Portages from Snowbank into Disappointment, Disappointment to Parent, and Parent to Snowbank are now passable. Portages have been cleared from Snowbank east to Thomas Lake. The condition of portages from Boot to Caddyman Lake and Gibson to Ensign Lake are unknown. Snowbank/Kekekabic Hiking Trail is believed to be impassable and hazardous for travel, especially around Disappointment Mountain and into Thomas Lake. Portages made passable in the last couple of days include Gibson to Ashigan to Ensign; the Boot, Abinodji, Swing, and Gibson route.
- **As of Wednesday, August 3, and until further notice, the Forest Service has closed 12 miles of the west end of the Kekekabic Trail and all of the Snowbank Trail system, including the Benezie/Becoosin, Disappointment Mountain, and Old Pines Loops.** The overnight hiking entry point for #74 has been closed through the end of the quota season on September 30th. Entry point #56 - Kekekabic Trail East remains open but through-hiking is not advised. Attempting to hike west of Thomas Lake is not advised. Visitors are advised, in general, against attempting travel through blowdown. Use of portages is not restricted. Knowing the potential storm-related hazards that exist on the Trail and how slow an emergency response would be if any hikers needed assistance, Forest managers determined that temporarily closing the affected trail sections to public use is a prudent action. Crews have been working continually since the storm to clear access but have yet to get to the Kekekabic Trail. We simply do not have the staffing to assess and clear all of the trails right now.
- Hiking is not recommended on the **Secret/Blackstone Trail**.
- The **Bass Lake Trail** has been cleared from the trail head to the Falls, the portage from the trail head to Bass Lake, and the portages from Bass to Dry and Dry to High are passable. The rest of the trail has not been cleared and hiking is not advised. Impassable: Dry Lake Loop and most of the Bass Lake Trail from the end of the portage north and east around the tip of the lake and back west to Dry Falls.
- The **North Arm Trails** are in pretty decent shape. Sites on Disappointment and one on Jordan Lake have been cleared. A crew started clearing access into Ima Lake.
- **Lake One Area:** Portages into Lake Two are passable. Conditions beyond are believed to be mostly passable.
- **N. Kawishiwi/Gabbro** area: Portages through Ojibway, Triangle and down into the North Kawishiwi River are passable. Conditions are unknown on the North Kawishiwi River, into Clear and into Eskwagama. Portages have been made passable from Little Gabbro, Gabbro, Bald Eagle, and Turtle to Clearwater Lake. Portages south from Clearwater to Gull have not been worked. The portage from Little Gabbro to Bruin is now passable. The portage from Little Gabbro to Bruin is now cleared.

- The access into **Glacier Pond** is passable.
- **Farm Lake, Birch, and White Iron** roads and campsites are south of the largest impacts but had scattered damage. Roads are mostly passable. The South Kawishiwi and Birch Lake Campgrounds had little damage and are open.
- **Mudro** entry point: North Grassy Road is mostly open shoulder-to-shoulder now but the road is narrow lined on both sides with piled, cut trees. Power is not yet restored on much of the Echo Trail so power company trucks and workers may be on the roads. Please drive slowly! Mudro to Lower Basswood Falls through Horse is passable. Horse to Fourtown is passable. Conditions on portages to the west and north of Fourtown are unknown.
- **Fenske Lake** Campground was impacted but remains open. Yesterday, crews cleared the Fenske Campground Trail, Swimming Beach, Group Site, and the trail to the public landing. They also made the Fenske to Everett Lake Portage passable.
- Portages on the **Circle Route** are clear into Grassy Lake. Camping, however, is not recommended on Bass, High, Dry, and Low Lakes at this time. Hiking the Bass Lake Trail is hazardous due to wind damaged-trees. The trail is passable from the parking lot into Dry Falls. The portage from Dry into High is passable. The Dry Lake Loop of the trail is very hard hit and has not been cleared. A crew will be working the trail again today—please give them room to work. The portage into Bass Lake is passable.
- **Burntside/Crab Lake:** The Van Vac access was hard hit but is now passable. Downed power lines were repaired. The Passi Road was impacted but is now passable. The Crab Lake portage was made passable yesterday. Campers report portages to the west and to the north of Crab Lake as rough but passable. Slim and Little Rice Lakes were impacted. The **North Arm and Slim Lake** Access roads were impacted and are now passable. The portages into Slim, Rice, Hook and Kenue Lakes were made passable yesterday. The portages into Slim, Rice, Hook, and Kenue Lakes were made passable yesterday.
- Contracts to complete opening the **Cloquet Line** and to widen the Cloquet Line and **North Grassy** road to standards are being prepared.
- **Fall and west Basswood:** Newton and Pipestone portages are passable. Campsites on the southeastern shore of Pipestone were especially hard hit. A few campsites on Jackfish and, Back Bays and Newton Lake were also hard hit. Campers must choose sites and tent pads carefully, looking for hazard trees. Back Bay to Frog Bay portage is passable. The Fourmile Portage is passable to Mud, Ella Hall, and the north end of Muskeg. Beyond Muskeg the Fourmile is impassible.
- **Moose Lake Road, eastern Basswood:** The Moose Lake Road is passable but there are still low power lines across the road. Power company trucks and Forest Service crews are working on the road. Basswood and Moose Chain Campsites have not been assessed yet for hazardous trees. Prairie Portage is passable. Portages into Sucker, Birch, and Ensign may be difficult but are passable. Portages farther east seem to have been less affected. Wind Lake portages are passable from Hoist Bay through to Moose Lake.

- **Wood Lake area:** The Wood Lake area including Hula, Indiana, Good, and portages into Hoist Bay are passable.

Some safety tips:

- ✓ Be prepared!
- ✓ Understand that search and rescue takes longer in the backcountry and wilderness than in an urban setting. Also, cell phones do not work in many parts of the BWCAW and other areas on the Forest.
- ✓ Leave a trip itinerary outlining your travel plans with someone at home and remember to check in with them when you return safely. The Forest Service does not automatically initiate searches if a group doesn't leave as planned. If someone is concerned because you are late returning from your trip, they should contact the county sheriff's office.
- ✓ Keep up-to-date with the latest weather forecast.