



Newsletter 2024

- IRBA Update
- NPS Update
- Repairs at Merritt Lane Campground
- Great Lakes Salmon Initiative
Optional Trolling License Proposal
- Passing of Ray Niemi
- 2023 Fishing Tourney Results
- Membership Dues & Scheduled Events

A newsletter to inform the members of ongoing activities within the Isle Royale Boater's Association, promote discussion among its members on various IRBA issues and share members' experiences related to boating, sport fishing, hiking, canoeing, and kayaking.

IRBA Update

by Dave Hand

Most of us in the Lake Superior region have been enjoying a mild winter this year. Typically, this time of year I am moving snow around, ice fishing, and snowmobiling. Moved a little snow but no snowmobiling yet. I did have the opportunity to get the row boat out and go fishing on the last day of 2023. No ice at the launch site of a Keweenaw Lake and after four hours of fishing caught a nice bunch of walleyes and a nice musky. Fresh fish in the wintertime is always a treat. Maybe El Nino will last into this coming year with a warm summer for this upcoming boating and fishing season.

The annual spring dinner meeting was held on May 16, 2023 with 48 members in attendance. The treasurer's report showed our organization was financially sound. IRBA member, Pat Siler, was elected as treasurer to replace the late Ray Niemi.

The 20th annual fishing tournament and fish fry on Isle Royale was a successful event. While the fishing tournament entries were again low compared to previous years, the fishermen had nice catches of fish and it was a fun event. The fish fry at Rock Harbor was tasty and well attended.

IRBA members rehabbed the Merritt Lane shelter and outhouse in early August with a fresh coat of paint and some structural fixes. See article below.

IRBA held a dinner meeting at the Clearwater Event Center in Duluth, MN, on Thursday, September 14, 2023, with about 45 members in attendance. The majority of the meeting was spent on discussing the lack of maintenance on docks used by boaters. Members agreed that more maintenance needs to be done on docks for boaters use. The meeting was well received and another one will be planned for Thursday, September 12, 2024. See notice below.

Many of you may have met Robert Dumas while on Isle Royale as he was the dock master at Rock Harbor this past summer. You may want to check out his Facebook Isle Royale adventures. One post that caught my eye was the many photos of boats on Isle Royale along with some pics of our IRBA Fish Fry this past summer. You may see your boat in one of his photos. Thanks Robert!

NPS Update

by Elizabeth Valencia

Ranger III drydock: Ranger III went into drydock at Fraser Shipyards in Superior, WI, from late October through late December. While there, the ship underwent an inspection of its hull and other components and both main engines were overhauled.

Ranger IV planning update: The conceptual design phase is moving forward and expected to be completed late May, 2024.

Cleaning the exterior of the Rock of Ages lighthouse will take place this summer, using a pressure washer. Masonry cracks will be repaired. Continued work on the interior is also planned.

Crews from Michigan YouthWorks and HistoriCorps will continue log preservation and roof repair on Main Lodge at Crystal Cove. They were last on site in 2022 and will stage at Belle Isle.

Wilderness Plan: The team is reviewing and responding to the over 1800 comments. We are on track to complete the final plan this summer. Alternative B (currently preferred alternative) includes the new campground at Wright Island.

Winter study closed down early because of the warm weather and ice conditions. They left the island on January 31. Before they left, researchers completed a moose survey and began work on a snowshoe hare study. The Houghton visitor center is closed again this winter. We will re-open on April 15.

Boaters are encouraged to continue getting camping permits in advance through the Houghton office. It greatly saves time for everyone.

On June 12, there will be a ceremony to raise the Grand Portage tribal flag at Rock Harbor.

Park staff are completing paperwork to officially change the name of Windigo to Ozaagaateng, as requested by the Grand Portage band. The paperwork will be submitted to the US Board on Geographic Names when completed. Planning is starting for a new main dock at Windigo/Ozaagaateng.

The park will continue to work with the Submerged Resources Center and National Maintenance Dive Team - Wounded Veterans in Parks program to finish installation of buoys remaining shipwrecks, McCargoe Cove entry buoys, and No Wake Buoys in RH Channel.

The park dive team will continue to monitor docks and reefs for zebra mussels.

Remembering Ray Niemi

by Dave Hand

Ray Niemi was born January 30, 1943 and passed away on March 1, 2023 at the age of 80 years old after a short illness. He was the son of the late Wallace and Lillian (Kero) Niemi. Ray was raised in Stanton Township, MI and attended the Liminga and Redridge Schools before graduating from the Houghton High School with

the class of 1961. He attended Suomi College before receiving his teaching Degree from Northern Michigan University in 1970.

Ray was a veteran having served with the United States Army during the Berlin and Cuban Missile Crisis.



Ray Niemi (1943 - 2023)

Ray began a career in education teaching in the Park Ridge School District in Park Ridge, IL and then the EB Holman School, Stanton Township, MI. During that time Ray received UP Teacher of the Year and also the Copper Country Association of School Boards-School Service Award. Ray also taught hunters safety and was a boater's safety instructor for many years. He also was the Houghton County Drain Commissioner for over 20 years. Ray was active in the community with Michigan Public Schools Retirement Association, NRA, US Coast Guard Auxiliary, Whitetails Unlimited, The South Range Snowmobile Club, and the former Hancock Lions club and former Hancock Elks Lodge.

Ray was a founding member of the Isle Royale Boaters Association and served on the board of directors and some time as treasurer. If you

wanted something done in the association just ask Ray and he would see a way to get it done.

Ray is survived by his sister Phyllis Thomas (Burge) of Manistique, MI; Brother Kenneth (Carolyn) Niemi of Alantic Mine, MI; and Sister in-law Susan Niemi of Hancock, MI.

Rest in Peace Ray!
(Iepaa rauhassa Ray!)

IRBA Members Repairs the Merritt Lane Campground by Dave Hand

On the first week of August, IRBA members performed much needed repairs on the Merritt Lane campground. The crew spent three to four days shoring up the sagging floor, cleaning the outside of the shelter and outhouse, and followed up with a fresh coat of paint.

There are a number of shelters that IRBA members use on a regular basis that may require some repair. You can volunteer to perform the repairs if you have the time by contacting IRNP to make the necessary repairs and IRBA can supply the paint or other materials needed. This crew hopes to do some repairs for the outhouses and shelters on Caribou Island this coming summer.



Bruce Sabin painting the outhouse.



IRBA members finishing up painting the shelter.

Great Lakes Salmon Initiative Optional Trolling License Proposal

Ed Blissick

President Great Lakes Salmon Initiative

The GLSI is moving forward with a proposal to offer an optional trolling license to run up to

three additional rods when trolling the Great Lakes for salmon, trout, and walleye. We brought this proposal up at the Lake Huron and Lake Michigan Citizens advisory meetings a few months ago to gauge the level of support from all the various fishing and conservation organizations in our state. We needed to see broad support to move forward with this and we are seeing that.

The GLSI is promoting this to help all anglers be more successful trolling our Great Lakes. It is not unusual to have 1 or 2 rods out of your spread catch the majority of fish in your box. Having a few extra rods that might hold that hot lure could be difference of a catch versus a skunk or a big box versus a small box. Some good action really makes your time on the water more enjoyable. Here are the details and frequently asked questions that we have been getting on this.

This proposal entails selling an optional great lakes license for boats that are trolling for \$26.00. The license would grant the holder the ability to use up to 3 additional rods when fishing from a boat on the Great Lakes and connecting waters. All other rules and creel limits would remain in effect. All revenue generated from this license would be directed toward the DNR's budget for use in enhancing our great lakes fisheries. We will be pushing for the funds to be used for cormorant control which is really needed now. The license would not be in effect for anglers fishing from piers or shore, so it does not create overcrowding in these locations and reduce angler participation. It could not be used for targeting other species like perch, bass, or pike in protected bays like the Les Cheneaux islands area. It also could not be used in US Army Corps of Engineers designated connecting inland waters like the inland waterway that flows through Burt, Mullet, Crooked and Pickeral Lakes or the lower Au Sable from the mouth to Foote dam. It is meant

for open water trolling from boats on the Great Lakes only.

I like this idea; how can I help? - If you are a member of an angling organization, please ask your group to formally support this proposal and contact the GLSI to acknowledge that.

You will need to engage your board of directors. You can also share and promote this with your friends and on social media. The more support we have from anglers the better. Follow our Facebook page or join the GLSI for further developments. We will keep you posted on further developments on how you can help make this proposal a reality. We are wishing you tight lines and full boxes in 2024! We are asking for your formal support of this proposal and welcome your questions so send us all that you have. If you can support this, let me know or for any questions, please contact me at:

Ed Blissick - President Great Lakes Salmon Initiative
Offshore10@comcast.net
231-233-4471

Annual IRBA Isle Royale Trout Fishing Tournament Results

by Dave Hand

The 20th Annual IRBA Trout Fishing Tournament was held at Rock Harbor. The two-day event began sunrise on Friday, July 14, with weigh-in at 5:00 PM and sunrise on Saturday, July 15, with weigh-in at 3:00 PM. Each boat was allowed to enter the three largest fish by weight. Many thanks to fishermen who donated their fish to the IRBA Fish Fry after the awards presentation held at Windigo.

Plaques were given to three boats with the highest total weight. The Dwane "Bear" Falconer

largest fish award was given to the individual with the largest fish by weight taken in the tournament. A plaque was also given for the largest salmon. In addition, the "Wooden Herring Award" travel trophy was also up for grabs by either the Minnesota or Michigan fishermen for the three largest fish by weight.

This year's event had only ten entries which is the second lowest turnout we have had since the start of the tourney. The previous year had only eight entries. Hope the participation increase next year especially from the north shore. This year the big winner was the 'Sea Sue' (Conner Ylitalo, Kyle Mikkola, & Bryce Vanderwest). Their three largest fish weighed in at a total of 70.65 lbs. This is the second year in a row they have taken first place. Nice Job!



First Place - The Sea Sue (Kyle Mikkola, Conner Ylitalo, Bryce Vanderwest)

The second-place spot went to the "Barbara Jean" (Joe Mecklin, Matt Mecklin & Noah Mecklin) with their three largest fish weighing a total of 60.45 lbs.



Second Place - The Barbara Jean (Noah Mecklin, Matt Mecklin, Joe Mecklin)

The third-place spot went to the "Sea Venture" (Kevin Maki, John Lowkowski, Karl Maki, Bob Forsman & Ron Kilpela) for their three largest fish totaling 50.20 lbs. Nice job Guys!



Third Place - Sea Venture (Kevin Maki, John Lowkowski, Karl Maki, Bob Forsman & Ron Kilpela)

The Dwane "Bear" Falconer largest fish honors went to Conner Ylitalo fishing on the 'Sea Sue' weighing in at 29.95 lbs. Great Catch Conner!



Biggest Fish - Conner Ylitalo

The largest salmon category prize went to the Laker Taker (Bruce Sabin, Tom Kukulski, Jeff Leppen & Colin Parks). We don't know who caught the fish because the little salmon weighed 1.0 lb and no one would admit to the catch. Nice Job though!



Largest Salmon Catch - Laker Taker

The Michigan fishermen took the Wooden Herring Award with a total weight of 78.99 lbs. This was a very good overall weight for the Michigan Crews. Congratulations to the Michigan Fishermen!



The Michigan Fishermen with the Wooden Herring Award

IRBA Annual Membership Dues

If you're not sure about membership dues, please take a look at the mailing address on this newsletter. Underneath your name there is a line that shows 'Dues paid '24 '25 '26 Lifetime" your dues. If there is a check mark in the 24, 25, 26 or lifetime your dues are paid up. If there is not a check mark in 24, you will need to pay your dues for this year. A donation is always appreciated! There is a membership form attached to the newsletter if you need it. If not, then pass it on to someone you may know that would be interested in joining.

IRBA Scheduled Events

IRBA Annual Dinner Meeting - Thursday, May 16, 2024, at the Bonfire at the Continental Fire Co. in Houghton, MI. There will be a cash bar from 5:00 to 6:00 pm with cheese and cracker platter. Dinner will be at 6:00 pm and the menu will be marinated roast beef and mushroom gravy, shrimp, mashed potatoes, wild rice, green beans with almonds, and salad. The meeting will begin following dinner. Please RSVP by sending Dave Hand an email (dwhand@mtu.edu) with the number in your party or by text at (906) 370 - 7354.

IRBA Fishing Tournament - Friday, July 19, 2024, and Saturday, July 20, 2024, at Windigo, IR. Meeting July 20, 2024, 4 PM with presentation of the fishing awards, followed by the fish fry.

IRBA West End Dinner Meeting - Thursday, September 12, 2024 at the Clearwater Event Center, in Duluth, MN. There will be a cash bar from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm and the menu will be hand carved sirloin, herb roasted chicken, mashed potatoes & gravy, green beans and carrots, assorted breads and rolls, deluxe house salad, with assorted dressings, and dessert. The meeting will begin following the dinner. Please RSVP by sending Dave Hand an email (dwhand@mtu.edu) with the number in your party or by text at (906) 370 - 7354.

Isle Royale Boaters Association

Founded June 5, 1996

www.isleroyale.org

Our mission is to educate, represent, and promote the interest of power and sail boaters, sport fishermen, canoeists, kayakers, backpackers, and all visitors of Isle Royale National Park. Membership is open to all interested people.

Renewal Membership ____ New Membership ____

Dues: (Check one)

____ 1 Year Family Membership ... \$ 35

____ 3 Year Family Membership ... \$ 90

____ Life Family Membership \$ 500

Additional contribution to support the IRBA mission:

\$ 25 __ \$50 __ \$100 __ \$ _____ Other

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Fax: _____

How do you enjoy Isle Royale?

Power ____ Sail ____ Paddle ____ Hiker ____ Lodge ____

Name of boat: _____

Please print this form and mail it with your payment to:

Isle Royale Boaters Association

PO Box 97 Houghton, MI 49931

Contributions and dues paid to the Isle Royale Boaters Association, a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, are deductible for computing income and estate taxes.