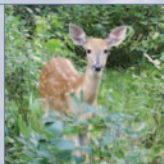


Center for State of the Parks



APOSTLE ISLANDS NATIONAL LAKESHORE

SNAPSHOT

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, established in 1970, sits at the southern edge of Lake Superior and is composed of a 21-island archipelago and a portion of northern Wisconsin's Bayfield Peninsula shoreline. The islands range in size from the tiny three-acre Gull Island to the 10,054-acre Stockton Island, while the mainland segment covers 2,546 acres. In sum, the park encompasses 42,160 acres of land and 27,232 acres of water. In 2006, the park hosted 189,000 visitors.

HISTORY

The archipelago and mainland have rich and varied cultural and natural histories, serving as homes to different groups of people throughout the last several hundred years and as habitat for diverse fauna and flora. For the Ojibwe, the islands are a sacred place, considered the birthplace of their nation. For early European settlers, the peninsula and islands represented seemingly limitless natural resources that inspired the development of several commercial logging and fishing camps. Since the late 19th century, the Great Lakes shipping industry has relied on the islands and their lighthouses and keepers for navigation and safe harbor in stormy weather. Soon after the turn of the 20th century, the Apostle Islands became a summer tourist destination. The her-



Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is home to red sandstone sea caves, some of which become accessible when lake waters freeze in the winter.

itage of the Apostle Islands was preserved in perpetuity with the establishment of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore in 1970.

In addition to their important cultural meanings, the lands and waters within Apostle Islands National Lakeshore have significant ecological value, and increased emphasis has been placed on protecting the natural state of the lakeshore. In 2004, 80 percent of the park was designated as federally protected wilderness. The Gaylord Nelson Wilderness, named for the Wisconsin senator and governor who advocated on behalf of the park, was set aside to preserve the primitive nature of much of the islands.

THREATS

- The park suffers from funding and staffing shortfalls that translate to difficulties protecting resources. The park's size (21 islands spread out over an area the size of Rocky Mountain National Park) and the logistical challenges involved with getting to and from all the islands makes it impossible for a natural resources staff of just two permanent employees to properly monitor and study the entire Apostle Islands. Although the park is home to more historic structures than many other parks put together, there is just one staff member responsible for studying, monitoring, preserving, and documenting the park's wide array of cultural resources and coordinating a cultural resource preservation program.
- Funding shortfalls prevent the park's maintenance staff from regularly maintaining historic structures, leaving them vulnerable to deterioration. Recurring maintenance duties such as roof replacement and repainting are pushed back, and the total cost of deferred maintenance now tops \$4.4 million (although this figure is considered low because numerous restoration projects are not included in the figure due to a chronic lack of historic structure and cultural landscape reports for the park's six light stations).
- The park's museum storage facilities lack fire suppression and climate control systems, exposing artifacts and archives to potential decay and



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destruction. Funds are needed to improve the protection of the park's collection.

- Logging, mining, and agriculture over the past two centuries—compounded by the dispersal barriers—have altered natural forest succession, fire regimes, and biological communities. More contemporary landscape changes are driven by increasing deer populations, recreational visitor impacts, and non-native plant invasions.
- Sandscapes are vulnerable to damage from foot traffic. Monitoring has shown increases in bare ground and decreases in native species.
- Apostle Islands is an ideal location to examine island biogeography theory, which suggests that the distribution of species on islands is directly related to island size and distance from one another and the mainland. Studies at Apostle Islands lend support to this theory. Because of limitations imposed by island living, species are more variable and susceptible to direct anthropogenic influences such as pollution, visitor impacts, overhunting, and habitat loss, as well as more natural influences such as weather, disease, and predation.
- The park's six light stations are a major part of the visitor experience, but due to a chronic lack of historic structure and cultural landscape reports, funding for their maintenance has been unavailable.
- Cultural resources research at Apostle Islands, though limited by available staff and funds, has included important work such as a cultural landscape report and a historic structure report for the Raspberry Island Light Station. Additional work is needed, however, to comprehensively document other cultural resources. This work includes an archaeological overview and assess-

ment, cultural landscape and historic structure reports for the other light stations, oral histories, and an ethnographic overview and assessment.

WHAT'S BEING DONE

- In 2004, 80 percent of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore was designated as the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness, becoming Wisconsin's largest wilderness area. The park has also been recognized by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Natural Heritage Inventory Program for its impressive sandscapes and maritime cliffs and forests.
- In 2004, the National Park Service began an extensive vegetation mapping project. In addition, park staff have also been collecting native plant seeds to revegetate and restore dunes, beaches, and sandspits. Combined with deer management efforts, these activities will help maintain the park's floral diversity.
- The park makes great use of volunteers to staff its lighthouses, which increases visitor access to personal interpretation and deters vandalism on the isolated historic structures.
- Restoration work at the Raspberry Island Light Station has protected the lighthouse and the associated cultural landscape from rapid shoreline erosion that threatened to destroy the resources. Work is still needed to rehabilitate the historic structures and to restore the landscape on the island to its historic appearance.
- Interpretation at the Hokenson Fish Camp, a fishery started by the Hokenson family in the late 1920s, teaches visitors about the Great Lakes fishing industry from the 1920s through the 1960s. Opportunities to tour the camp, explore the historic buildings, and see actual tools used by the fisher-

men has made this fish camp one of the most innovative and popular park attractions.

ABOUT NPCA AND CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks® program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policy-makers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

CONTACT US

For a copy of the full report on Apostle Islands National Lakeshore published by NPCA's Center for State of the Parks, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about Center for State of the Parks, visit www.npca.org/stateoftheparks or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president of Center for State of the Parks, at jnations@npca.org.

For more information on Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, contact NPCA's Midwest Regional Director, Lynn McClure, at 312.343.7216 or lmclure@npca.org, or visit the park online at www.nps.gov/apis. For media inquiries, please contact Tracey McIntire, NPCA media relations manager, at 202.454. 3311 or tmcintire@npca.org. To learn more about what the public and our elected officials can do to help improve the health of this park, visit www.npca.org/take_action.