

National Parks of Lake Superior Foundation Newsrelease:

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Foundation ensures “shutdown proof” Wolf transfer and 61ST year of research for Isle Royale National Park

New Isle Royale Wolves: weathering furloughs and winter whiteouts.

Sona Mehring, Chairman of the National Parks of Lake Superior Foundation (the Foundation) announced today that the Foundation has been working nonstop the past several weeks to ensure two vital projects related to the wolf and moose population on Isle Royale could move forward. Even with the temporary opening of the US Government, this agreement allows these projects to be ‘shutdown proof’.

The relocation of up to 6 Canadian wolves to Isle Royale is considered essential for enhancing the genetic diversity of a re-established wolf population on the island. A relocation plan with park staff and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has been in the works since last summer for an early January delivery of wolves to the island, but efforts were halted by a combination of issues including the furlough on the US side of the border.

The Foundation is ensuring funds that allow the management agencies on both sides of the border to start the operation as soon as a four-day weather window is available to achieve the capture and transfer of wolves from Michipicoten Island in Ontario. As part of the agreement with the National Park Service, the Foundation will, if necessary, place the full National Park Service cost of operations for relocation (and subsequent monitoring of success) in a government account. In addition, National Park Service also required a contingency fund be established for successful closure of the island upon completion of the transfer and monitoring project.

Thanks to a new partnership between the Foundation and Michigan Technological University (MTU), the Foundation also received approval from the National Park Service to use additional donated funds to allow the park to continue to stay open and, among other research objectives, monitor the status of newly relocated wolves and determine the fate of the two original resident wolves.

"The Foundation has worked for more than a decade to help all the National Parks around Lake Superior preserve the natural resources and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of current and future generations of visitors. We are proud to step in and ensure the Isle Royale wolf relocation project does not derail and help to maintain the continuity of the 60 year winter study that has provided invaluable understanding of wolves and their prey in a natural setting." said Sona Mehring, Chair of the foundation. "We're determined to continue to bring together generous donors to ensure the very vulnerable wolf relocation efforts and the long term science can be implemented smoothly despite what curves weather and humans may add to this wild remote landscape."

As part of the agreement, with the National Park Service, the Foundation, with contributions of funds, support, and leadership from Michigan Technological University, has provided the full NPS internal costs of operations for at least two-three weeks, sufficient to provide a good beginning for the 2019 winter study. Rolf Peterson and John Vucetich, MTU's principal investigators on the long-term wolf-moose project at Isle Royale, point out that the continuity of the research is vital to maintaining its scientific value in unraveling the intricacies of this predator-prey relationship in the absence of human hunting of either moose or wolf.

The introduction of new wild wolves last autumn was a landmark event in park history, when actions were initiated to reestablish a robust wolf population on the island. When weather terminated the introduction operation last fall three weeks early, it left a male/female imbalance and park has only been able to watch the activities of the three females through remote satellite signals. Observations during the winter study program by MTU researchers are imperative to determine the level of new wolf interaction with the two original resident wolves, and to determine if any new packs form in this first winter of activity.

Without winter study proceeding this year, MTU scientists would lose the opportunity to collar 20 moose on the island to enable study of how re-established wolves influence moose behavior, especially their ability to forage during the very limiting winter season. In addition the collars on both species will allow researchers to look at how a potentially new dynamic is established between predator and prey.

National Parks of Lake Superior Foundation (NPLSF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation of the natural resources and unique cultural heritage of Lake Superior's five U.S. National Parks. NPLSF funds research, restoration, education, and resource protection projects for Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Grand Portage National Monument, Isle Royale National Park, Keweenaw National Historic Park, and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. The National Parks of Lake Superior Foundation has a proven record of funding projects both large and small providing more than \$1.5 million in funding across all five parks.

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