



May 20, 2025

Salutations from the shores of Bear Island Lake!

It feels like just yesterday that we were shedding our winter layers and eagerly awaiting sunnier, longer, warmer days, and yet somehow, we are just a few days away from officially launching the summer season at Camp Northern Lights.

Right now, cabins are freshened and ready to welcome giddy campers of all ages. Our collection of watercrafts are primed and ready for countless adventures on the water. The surrounding nature-filled woodlands are flourishing and ready to be explored. Staff have moved in and are ready for another epic, unforgettable summer.

Needless to say, we are buzzing with energy as we finish preparing for families to arrive—some returning, some new, some ready to dive right in, and some not knowing what to expect. Most importantly, we want each person to show up knowing they belong here.

Ongoing support from generous donors like you is the cornerstone of this mission and all that we do. It helps us maintain inclusive programming where families from all walks of life have the opportunity to disconnect and reconnect, grow and discover through outdoor adventure, and create lasting memories with one another and others.

Thank you, first and foremost, for being an essential part of our Northern Lights community! Before the summer bustle sets in, I am excited to share some key highlights and updates with you:

- Although we experienced the devastating Orion fire after the first week of programming last summer, it still turned out to be a very **fun, full, and successful** summer season! Even though the fire disrupted key programming and affected our ability to feed staff, we are incredibly thankful that no one was hurt. Our entire staff and broader community responded with incredible **resilience, care, support, and teamwork**, rallying to ensure campers still had an amazing experience.
- We had to pause LDP for four weeks due to the aftermath of the fire; however, we were then able to bring this group back for the last six weeks of camp, which was great. LDP participants returned with the same positive spirit, adapting to a **new “village” of platform tents** and offering invaluable help despite the challenges.
- As a way to deepen LDP engagement, a couple months ago we hosted our **first-ever LDP winter retreat** where ten participants joined for three nights to work on team building, prepping trails for summer, and growing community with one another.
- It's been a time of transition on our team, as we welcomed our **new Program Coordinator**, Kelsa, in October, who will be leading fall, winter, and spring programming. Then, in February, Dan O'Brien moved on from his position as Executive Director to fill the same role at Camp St. Croix, and I was hired on as the **new Executive Director**, stepping up from my previous role as Senior Program Director. I am so excited to be in this new position, continuing to serve this amazing team and community! Finally, last month, we welcomed **Jenessa Carlisle**, our **new Program Director**, who is leading our seasonal summer team.
- We have developed a **new partnership with Friends of the Boundary Waters**, working together to get more students into the outdoors. So far, we've hosted three different schools and close to 50 students at camp for 1–3-night stays, providing them opportunities to explore and engage with nature.

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- After a two-year hiatus, we are thrilled to bring back our **Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Weekend** through our Veteran Relations Staff partnerships. We had five families of veterans or active military members come up for a weekend of fun in October – they had a great few days in the woods connecting and growing as a community!
- The construction of our **new community pavilion** is well underway in Back of Beyond Village. This facility addition will serve as a dry space for our campers and age group programs. It will be screened in, allowing folks some reprieve from the bugs in the early summer months.
- This summer will be our 5<sup>th</sup> one running our **STEPS program**, which has helped create more accessible pathways for families to experience camp. We are running three 6-night sessions and one 3-night session with tiered pricing and scholarship options available to ensure cost is not a barrier.
- We are working hard to continue making **camp more accessible at all times of the year**. In 2024, we ran a STEPS retreat for the second year, working again in partnership with Friends of the Boundary Waters to get underrepresented youth to camp using a grant they received to support inclusive outdoor experiences. We also had a group of families from **Bois Forte** join us for a weekend, again supported and paid for by a grant they received.
- Expanding our efforts to create equitable access to and increased diversity at camp by removing barriers remains a huge focus of ours for this year and beyond. The ongoing support of our **wonderful community of donors (like you!)** is instrumental in sustaining and growing our Annual Fund, all of which goes toward scholarship assistance. Those dollars helped support **81 families** and **18 LDPs** attend a session at camp last year. We hope to grow this critical resource so that we can put transformational camp experiences within reach of even more people.

**We are truly grateful for your partnership that has helped make the above (plus so much more!) possible.**

As we set our compass toward the future, we look forward to keeping you in the loop on all that Camp Northern Lights has going on year-round for families, adults, and groups.



Once again, thank you for showing up for us and all those we serve through your passion and generosity. Here's to another terrific, adventure- and memory-filled summer ahead!

With deep appreciation,

*Isaac Patterson*

Isaac Patterson, Executive Director

