

Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association – WinterFest in Crosslake, MN (St. Paul District, Cross Lake Recreation Area)

Cross Lake Staff and volunteers participated in the 18th Annual WinterFest in Crosslake, MN on February 6, 2021. Four volunteers were from the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association, a 501(c)(3) cooperating association partnership USACE has had since 2004. The Association oversees a 54 mile stretch of highway encompassing five small towns in Northern Minnesota and is engaged in local economies and tourism in the area. The Association donated \$804 in soup ingredients and supplies and contributed 18.5 hours in preparation and serving the soup at the Cross Lake Recreation Area, located adjacent to the city of Crosslake, MN.



The group prepared 20 gallons of vegetable beef soup in a cast iron cauldron over a wood fire, serving over 200 people during the Soupfest competition. Wind chills in the morning were -30 F below zero! They had to get creative knowing that the weather was not going to be pleasant and created a windbreak out of plywood that was decorated with water safety information to protect the cooking fire (and daring participants) from the bitterly cold wind. From the cauldron, a Dutch-oven was filled full of soup and then transferred to the nearby heated portable ice

fishing shelter where Byway volunteers served from. Guests also received water safety materials with their cup of vegetable beef soup. The group took 3rd place in the amateur division of the contest.

The Byway also donated 4 life jackets, valued at \$320 to winners of a water safety themed coloring contest organized by USACE Staff at Cross Lake, featuring Bobber the Water Safety Dog. The contest artwork was created by a local high school student. A local newspaper donated and printed a full-page contest advertisement in the paper the week prior to Winterfest. Contestants of all ages and throughout the upper Midwest submitted their artwork which was judged by USACE Staff.

Event Results:

- \$3,274 donated supplies and services from multiple partners of the Association
- 18.5 volunteer hours contributed
- 200 water safety contacts made
- 31.5 hours of labor contributed by USACE



The Byway holds monthly meetings at the Cross Lake Office during the summer months and contributes to USACE through firewood sales within the campground in which they donate 50% of profits back to USACE annually. Additionally, they participate in other local events, partnering with USACE during a kid's fishing derby, a community chili contest, and an annual Wounded Warrior Camping Event at the site.

