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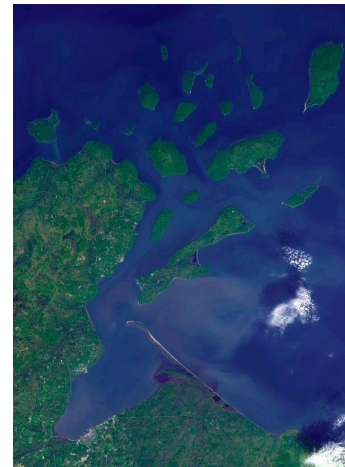
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PROGRESS NORTH ANNOUNCES EARLY OPPOSITION TO APOSTLE ISLANDS NATIONAL LAKESHORE PROPOSAL

Redesignation scheme ignores local stakeholders and risks irreversible adverse changes

Progress North has been informed of the redesignation of the Apostle Islands from a National Lakeshore to a National Park and Sand Island to a National Preserve. These changes will have a profound impact on the economic, cultural, and social experiences of Northwestern Wisconsin - for those who call it home and visitors alike. Both the proposed changes and their impact have not been fully studied nor reported to the public. Additionally, input from the various stakeholders— most notably, the AINL administration and the NPS officials— has not been collected and considered.



Due diligence as directed by the Department of the Interior includes formal consultation of sovereign nations— namely, the Red Cliff Band and the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Progress North believes that these considerations are reason enough for early opposition of this bill. All citizens of the impacted nations and counties are entitled to be a part of the discussion, the debate, and the decision-making process involved in this proposed change.

Background:

There are 21 islands that have rested on Lake Superior for more than an estimated 10,000 years. Commonly known as the Apostle Islands, The Great Lakes Anishinaabeg (aka “Ojibwe”) refer to the archipelago as “Wenebozho Ominisan.” The people have long recognized “The Crown Jewels of the Great Lakes” as their homelands. Madeline Island (or “Moningwanekaning”) is considered the largest inhabited island in the archipelago, with the small town of LaPointe regarded as the capital city of the great Ojibwe Nation. Currently, the town of Bayfield is the mainland home to approximately 400 residents,

and in the tourist seasons, the population of this small town often swells into the tens of thousands.

HR Bill 9111: Introduced by Rep. Tom Tiffany, HR 9111, calls for a redesignation of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore to the “Apostle Islands Park” and the “Sand Island National Preserve.” The bill intends to increase tourism, protect landscapes, and provide hunting access, most notably on Sand Island. HR 9111 states that this action will also create the first National Park in Wisconsin. (Point of fact: that is incorrect. Frog Bay National Park was created in 2012, making it the first of its kind in Wisconsin and in the United States).

Some of the Points of Opposition:

Without much introduction or explanation, this bill has become a source of contention for both tribal and local governing bodies. Businesses/tourist industry workers, and park users have never been given the opportunity to ask questions, obtain information, provide reactions, or offer suggestions

HR9111 would be a strain on the local infrastructure, one that’s already pushed to the limit. Waste facilities, tourist accommodations, available housing, and public safety provisions– are all stretched beyond capacity. There is a backlog of maintenance projects already waiting for funding, as are additional staff positions that are needed (most notably by the Bayfield School District).

Designating Sand Island as a preserve will actually reduce protection of natural resources, leaving the island vulnerable to mining interests and resource extraction by the logging industry. Resource protection exists in the provisions of a number of Native American treaty rights and treaty provisions are maintained as “the law of the land” (see Treaty of 1854. Satz, Chippewa Treaty Rights).

Increased commercial development (resorts, marinas, private water transport service) will be necessary for the increased number of tourists. This calls into question the major historic sites on the islands (i.e. lighthouses, settler communities, tribal member’s gravesites) and how increases in maintenance and protection will be necessary as visitor populations grow.

HR9111 conflicts with the 1964 Wilderness Act and the designation of the Apostle Islands as the “Gaylord Nelson Wilderness.” Any significant increase in usage could

easily result in damage and degradation of what Senator Nelson referred to as an “outstanding opportunity for solitude.” (see Nelson, 1964 Wilderness Act)

The Department of the Interior expects to see tribal consultation on matters of this nature. According to the DOI, any executive department or agency will consult “to the greatest extent permitted by law” with tribal governments prior to taking any action that will directly affect tribal governance. Note that the Red Cliff Band has never been contacted by Congressman Tiffany. The tribe has had no communication with his office. No formal consultation between Tiffany and local tribal administrations. No presentations on the bill itself to tribal council for discussion purposes by Congressman Tiffany.

For the Good of the Cause:

Progress North bears a genuine commitment to accountability, transparency, inclusion, and full participation of all interested parties. Those are guaranteed within a democratic process, and that is a sacred birthright in this country. The above are only some of the significant issues associated with the redesignation of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. All significant issues need to be addressed before any further steps towards passage are taken.

The lives and the livelihood of the citizens of Bayfield and Ashland County are to be given genuine consideration. The members of the City of Bayfield Common Council will stand with its resolution No. 621 opposing HR9111. The sovereign tribal nations of this region expect direct and formal consultation in the near future– as does the U.S. Department of the Interior. Progress North stands with the communities, our neighbors, our families, and the tribes on the issue of redesignation. Within our collective commitment to also support public inquiry, Progress North stands in opposition of HR9111.

About Progress North

Progress North is a trusted organization in the Northwoods, the primary focus of which is connecting the people of northern Wisconsin to each other – and others across the state – across the deep divisions of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and generation. We center all of our work around the values of equity, people centered democracy, and the common good.



We are from northern Wisconsin and we know that people here have a strong sense of identity centered in their rural communities and small towns, and that each has its own unique sensibility. But there are common values and ideals that connect us all and make this a wonderful place to live. We have the opportunity to focus public attention on creating a country where everyone is safe and free, with a care system and economy that works for all of us.

And we have a clear vision for a better future: by coming together to rewrite the rules and making the wealthiest few pay their fair share, we can ensure that everyone — Black, white and brown, native and newcomer — can earn a good living and have a good life; we can resource our schools so that every child can pursue their dreams; and we can provide families with the care we all need to get and stay well.

NEXT7 is one of Progress North's foundational programs devoted to organizing for change in indigenous communities across Northwestern Wisconsin. With four core areas of focus, the program aims to build a future where these communities can see their place at the table, hear their voice in the room, and see their paths forward as a generation of voters and leaders. Two of those main focus areas are (1) environmental & water protection and (2) tribal sovereignty & treaty rights.

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