

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 13, 2016

Thomas Tidwell
Chief, United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Tidwell:

Thank you for your response dated August 29, 2016 in regards to our June 9, 2016 letter regarding the harvesting of cisco fish near Prairie Portage in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) in the Superior National Forest (SNF). We appreciate the United States Forest Service's (USFS) willingness to work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other interested parties. However, because the annual cisco harvest is rapidly approaching, we urge you to allow future cisco harvests (subject to thorough DNR regulation and approval) to go forward at Prairie Portage while an acceptable alternative long-term solution is negotiated.

As the USFS works with the DNR on this issue, we urge you to consider the following factors relevant to the unique nature of the Prairie Portage harvest.

The nature of the harvest is not diminishing the quality or character of the wilderness, and is arguably much less intrusive than other commercially-sanctioned activities. The long-standing harvest is limited in scope, and occurs well after the peak wilderness visitor season. Furthermore, the individual responsible for the majority of the cisco collection is already a licensed and USFS-approved commercial guide and towboat operator in the BWCAW. A natural extension of his livelihood (and use of his license) is the trapping and netting of these ciscoes.

Alternative watersheds for a viable cisco harvest outside the BWCAW are limited. The use and harvest of ciscoes are already subject to additional DNR scrutiny given their susceptibility to contract the aquatic invasive species known as Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS). Bodies of water with economically feasible harvest levels and methods compliant with VHS requirements are limited.

Arguments surrounding previously acceptable commercial use must factor in the increase in activity associated with these special baitfish. In order for a niche but extensive group of anglers to fully maximize their visit to the BWCAW, many of them must rely on the use of these baitfish. Many gain access to the BWCAW via approved sled-dog operators and other guides. These licensed and USFS-approved operators could see their business suffer if anglers lose access to their preferred bait, as well as the numerous bait shops scattered throughout the Arrowhead region.

The commercial activity was happening long before the 2004 Wilderness Management Plan was finalized. While commercial fish harvest is not expressly addressed in your SNF Wilderness Management Plan, it does provide a public service tied to the historical purpose of the wilderness and should be considered an appropriate commercial activity.

Thank you for your work on this issue. With the approach of this year's cisco harvest quickly approaching, we respectfully request a response from you no later than October 1, 2016.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Richard M. Nolan
Member of Congress

cc: Supervisor Connie Cummins, Superior National Forest

cc: Commissioner Landwehr, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources