

# Request for Expressions of Interest

For operation of services at the Kettle Falls Hotel  
in Voyageurs National Park

April 2025



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Voyageurs National Park, Interior Regions 3, 4, 5



## **Introduction**

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking Request For Expressions of Interest (RFEI) for the use of several facilities in the Kettle Falls area of Voyageurs National Park. The sites include the Kettle Falls Hotel, the Kettle Falls villas, camper cabins, and other associated buildings. Proposals and consideration could also include operation of tourboats or other visitor services. The NPS will consider the responses to this RFEI to assist in planning for the use of these facilities beginning in 2027. The NPS may consider issuing a Concessions Contract or a Leasing opportunity for some or all of the facilities. Responses to this RFEI are not limited to current facility operations, meaning new services or changes could be considered if in line with applicable law, regulations, and policies which are later identified.

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (RFEI) ONLY. This RFEI is issued solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue an RFP in the future. This RFEI does not commit the Government to contract for any supplies or services whatsoever. Further, the National Park Service is not at this time seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals. Responders are advised that the U.S. Government will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this RFEI. All costs associated with responding to this RFEI will be solely at the interested party's expense. Not responding to this RFEI does not preclude participation in any future RFP, if any is issued. If a solicitation is released, it will be synopsisized on the sam.gov website ([www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)). It is the responsibility of the potential offerors to monitor this site for additional information pertaining to this requirement.

## **Instruments**

The two instruments most used by the NPS for facilities such as these under consideration in a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) are a concession contract and a lease. These instruments are governed by 36 CFR 51 (concession contracts) and 36 CFR 18 (leasing).

## **The National Park Service**

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson approved legislation creating the Service within the Department of the Interior. That legislation mandated that Congress created America's National Park Service to:

*...conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.*

*54 U.S.C. § 100101 (a)*

Additionally, Congress declared that the National Park System should be:

*...preserved and managed for the benefit and inspiration of all the people of the United States...*  
*54 U.S.C. § 100101 (b)*

The overall mission of the NPS is the preservation and public enjoyment of significant aspects of the nation's natural and cultural heritage. To learn more about the NPS, visit [NPS.gov](http://NPS.gov) [Homepage](http://NPS.gov) ([U.S. National Park Service](http://U.S.NationalParkService)). This site includes information about the NPS, its mission, policies, and individual parks.

## Voyageurs National Park

Voyageurs National Park is located on the northern edge of Minnesota's border with 55 miles of the Park meandering along the Canadian border. Water dominates the landscape of Voyageurs, including four large lakes: Rainy, Kabetogama, Namakan, and Sand Point, which cover approximately 40-percent of the 218,054 acres of Voyageurs. Voyageurs is unique because it is a water-based national park with approximately 8 miles of road.



## Kettle Falls

Kettle Falls is located on the east end of Rainy Lake approximately 27 water miles from the Rainy Lake Visitor Center or 37 water miles from International Falls. It is only accessible by boat or float plane. Access to the Kettle Falls operation is primarily reached from the boat ramp near the Ash River Visitor Center, approximately 14 miles from Kettle Falls.

The Kettle Falls Hotel is located within the Kettle Falls National Historic District and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The hotel was built in 1910 to accommodate lumberjacks, fishermen, construction workers on the Kettle Falls dam and an increasing number of vacationers as word spread regarding the beauty of the area. Logging companies towed millions of board feet of timber over Kettle Falls between 1899 and 1929. When logging declined in the late 1930s, Kettle Falls continued to thrive as an important visitor destination for recreation and tourism. The NPS acquired the hotel in 1978, and the hotel has operated under a concession contract since that time. The NPS closed the hotel for major rehabilitation during the 1986 and 1987 season and reopened for the 1988 season. Rehabilitation included construction of a new foundation, upgrading utility systems to meet NPS standards, new bathroom and kitchen facilities and painstaking reconstruction of the rolling bar room floor. The hotel had settled considerably over the years and the rolling floors and skewed windows gave it a charm and appeal that became part of the attraction for visitors.

### **Gross Revenue by Department and Year**

<b>Department</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022*</b>	<b>2023</b>
Lodging	\$219,541	\$163,371	\$215,366
Restaurant	\$152,570	\$127,400	\$199,113
Bar	\$156,541	\$102,322	\$143,575
Retail	\$163,091	\$127,617	\$150,119
Marina	\$103,247	\$71,580	\$112,856
Transport	\$27,674	\$20,965	\$30,354
Portage	\$27,855	\$10,615	\$23,120

\*2022 experienced historic flooding that caused the Kettle Falls area to open later than normal, likely impacting concessions revenue

## Facilities

<b>Building</b>	<b>Square Feet</b>	<b>Description/Current Use</b>
Kettle Falls Hotel, Restaurant, & Bar	5980	Historic hotel with 12 guest rooms, 3 guest bathrooms, full-service restaurant seating approximately 40 guests, and a full-service bar. Currently 1 of the 12 hotel rooms is used to house an employee.
Hotel Annex Building	456	Used for laundry and storage of supplies
Fish Cleaning House	224	Building with electricity and running water for cleaning fish
Bear Point Villa	1944	4-plex rental unit on two floors with a kitchenette on each floor. Currently the 2 lower units are used for employee housing.
Jesse Villa	1044	2-plex rental unit, one w/ kitchenette
Leaning Pine Villa	1944	4-plex rental unit on two floors, 2 units w/ kitchenettes
Namakan Boat House	480	Storage
Namakan side Garage	480	Storage
Staff Housing Unit 4-plex	1944	Staff housing, each with kitchenettes
Camper Cabins		Four camper cabins with electricity, but no running water, are expected to be in place by the 2026 season.
Villa Waterfront Docks	80	Four docks associated with each of the villas cited above. Currently the docks do not include electricity.
Hotel Generator Building	272	A building housing the generator for the Hotel Building
Comfort Stations	64-80	Three comfort stations in three separate locations throughout the Kettle Falls area
Equipment Storage Buildings	64-240	Four storage buildings of varying sizes, currently used for ice, equipment, garbage, and excess inventory storage
Small historic storefront	394	Small store on Namakan side.

A map of the area and facility locations is included at the end of this document.

### **Lodging**

The hotel retains its historic configuration with a series of guest rooms and shared bathrooms down the hall. Overnight guest accommodations at the hotel currently include 12 simply furnished bedrooms with 3 shared bathrooms on the second floor. A manager's residence and office are also located on the second floor along with a linen closet.

In addition, guest accommodations are currently provided within three villas. The villas are located along a loop road approximately 400 yards east of the hotel and along the shoreline of Rainy Lake. Two villas contain four units which can be rented individually or by unlocking the door between two of the units to create a larger unit. There is a kitchenette in two of the units and its partner has a refrigerator and microwave. The third villa consists of just two units, similar to the four-unit villas in configuration. As discussed below under Employee Housing, the existing concessioner uses two villa units for housing, leaving 8 villa units for rental.

New to Kettle Falls is the addition of four camper cabins which are located on the western end of the Kettle Falls district, near the snowmobile trail. Future plans may include dock space with a trail to the cabins from the water. One of the four will be ADA accessible. There will be electricity in the camper cabins, but no water. In the future non-potable water may be placed within proximity of the camper cabins. A centrally located vault toilet will service the camper cabins. Because they are located near the snowmobile trail, they may be suitable for winter rental.



There is room for growth in overnight accommodations, this would be particularly aided by additional marketing and room refreshes.

### ***Food and Beverage***

The dining room in the hotel accommodates seating for approximately 40 people. The current concessioner uses the screen veranda for additional outdoor seating. In addition, a bar room with authorized alcohol sales has table seating for approximately 16 people. The preparation and sale of sack lunches has historically been an authorized service.

### ***Guest Transportation***

The current concessioner provides round-trip boat transportation for hotel guests from the Ash River Visitor Center to Kettle Falls on an as-needed basis. Additionally, the current concessioner has golf carts to transport guests and their luggage from the dock to the hotel or villa as needed. The total number of golf carts is currently capped at seven.

### ***Employee Housing***

A fourth villa (Staff Housing Unit 4-Plex) each with a kitchenette and bathroom in addition to sleeping space, housing up to two staff each, provides housing for up to 8 staff. In addition to the fourth villa, the existing concessioner uses two villa units for housing its manager. There is a historic house, known as the Company House, that has been leased by the operator to house up to three employees.

There may also be up to four RV pads provided (RVs not included), which can provide housing for up to 8 more staff.

### ***Marina Services***



docks.

A marina service is provided along both the Rainy Lake and Namakan Lake shorelines within the Kettle Falls area for fuel, oil, ice and bait sales, boat and motor rental and overnight docking. The NPS provides a 750-gallon fuel trailer to expediate bulk fuel delivery. There is a 1,000-gallon fuel tank located near the Namakan Lake docks and two 1,000-gallon fuel tanks located near the Rainy Lake

The current Concessioner owns many boats of various configurations--canoes, kayaks, stand up paddleboards, 16-18' fishing boats and motors which it rents out to visitors from the docks on the Rainy Lake side of the facility.

NPS provides and maintains floating docks that can accommodate 25-30 small boats on Rainy Lake and 20-24 small boats on Namakan Lake to support access to the Kettle Falls area. The Park would consider allowing boat rentals on Namakan Lake, subject to sufficient dock space for arriving visitors.

### ***Retail Services***

The Kettle Falls facility also includes a separate building known as the 'trading post' that is on the Namakan Lake shoreline. The current Concessioner uses this building to sell local handcrafts, souvenirs, basic groceries and camping supplies or boating supplies. Souvenirs, snacks, and visitor convenience items are also sold at the registration desk of the Hotel and in the bar room.

### ***Mechanical Boat Portage Services***

A boat portage service is currently provided to meet public demand to transport boats overland between boat launch sites at Rainy Lake and Namakan Lake in order to bypass the Kettle Falls dam. Because invasive zebra mussels have been found in Rainy Lake, no boats may be portaged from Rainy to Namakan Lake without undergoing decontamination. The Service will likely not be onsite more than 6 ½ hours a day to complete this, thereby limiting the hours that boats may be portaged from Rainy. The Service is open to training outside operators on operating the decontamination system, if interested to extend portage hours. Boats may be portaged from Namakan to Rainy without undergoing decontamination.

### ***Authorized Visitor Services***

In addition to the services mentioned above, the following visitor services have historically been authorized for an operator to provide its guests at Kettle Falls. This RFEI would consider these, and potentially additional services submitted in the RFEI.

- Fishing guide services
- Vending machine operations
- Lodging amenity service, include massage services
- Water taxi services from Kettle Falls to approved park destinations
- Park approved boat-based interpretive tours
- Minor boat repair
- Guest service laundry
- Overnight slip rental for non-hotel guests
- Chase boat services

### **Park Overview**

Located in northern Minnesota along several lakes which straddle the US/Canadian border, Voyageurs National Park is named for the voyageurs, French-Canadian and Native American canoe-men who traveled these waters in their birch-bark canoes from the Great Lakes to the eastern United States and Canada, transporting furs and trade goods. The historic waterway, magnificent scenery, geology and rich cultural and natural resources give Voyageurs its national significance. Visitors are drawn to this area to experience the stunning scenery, excellent fishing and boating (of all kinds) and close-up looks at the natural and cultural history of the northwoods.

Demand for this business opportunity is driven by park visitors looking for recreational opportunities with

the Park. As seen in the table below, park visitation has been relatively stable ranging between 199,030 to 263,091 in the last 10 years.

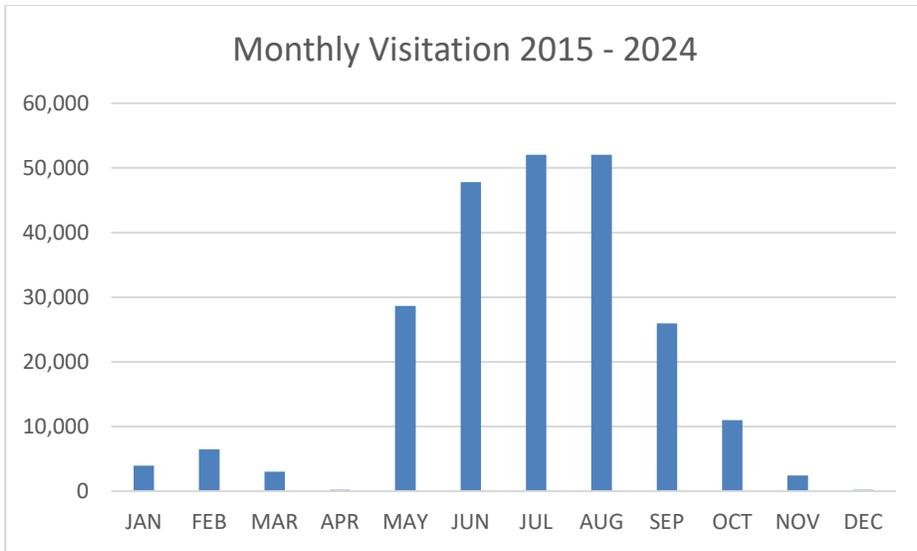
**Voyageurs National Park Recreational Visitation 2015-2024**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Recreational Visitation</b>
2015	238,313
2016	241,912
2017	237,250
2018	239,656
2019	232,974
2020	263,091
2021	243,042
2022	221,434
2023	220,825
2024	199,030

The table below demonstrates that the summer period between June and August sees the highest average number of visitors, with December and April representing the fewest visitors.

**Voyageurs National Park Average Monthly Visitation 2015-2024**

	<b>Average</b>	<b>Share</b>
January	3,962	1.7%
February	6,460	2.7%
March	3,027	1.3%
April	221	.1%
May	28,670	12.3%
June	47,800	20.5%
July	52,014	22.3%
August	52,037	22.2%
September	25,975	11.1%
October	10,973	4.7%
November	2,421	1%
December	192	.1%



### **Financial Requirements**

Financial requirements vary based on the legal instrument under which the business opportunity is issued and may be based on fair market lease value or a financial analysis. In general, the financial requirements for use of one of these facilities would include investing in the operation and maintenance of the facility to the NPS standards.

The operator will be required to comply with all provisions of Executive Order 14026 of April 27, 2021, (Increasing the Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors) and its implementing regulations, including the applicable contract clause, codified at 29 C.F.R. pt. 23. The operator must comply with all provisions of Executive Order 13706 of September 30, 2016, (Establishing Paid Sick Leave for Federal Contractors) and its implementing regulations, including the applicable contract clause, codified at 29 C.F.R. pt. 13. The operator must also be able to maintain the facilities in good to very good condition.

### **Term Length**

Only long-term occupancy arrangements will be considered. Term length will be determined by the NPS. Depending upon the instrument used, the shortest term may be 10 years, and the longest could be up to 60 years.

### **Considerations**

Uses of federal land must be authorized by law and comply with the law under which the use is authorized. Uses of federal land under NPS management must meet certain criteria. For Voyageurs National Park, this means that the use must:

- not degrade or unduly impair the park's resources and values;
- be compatible with the programs of the NPS;
- be consistent with the purposes established by law for the park area in which it is located; and
- ensure the preservation of the historic properties involved with the use.

Additionally, the use must follow all applicable local, state, and federal laws, such as health, safety, food handling, and labor and employment law. Uses must be compliant with environmental and historic preservation policy.

The NPS will consider the responses to this RFEI to plan for the use of these facilities beginning in January of 2027. There are very limited circumstances under which the building may be used by a non-NPS entity without a public solicitation.

The pertinent laws, regulations and policies, can be found at:  
<http://home.nps.gov/applications/npspolicy/index.cfm>

More information on the NPS commercial services program can be found at: [Concessions \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#).

Information about other ways to do business with the NPS can be found at: [Doing Business with Us \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#) or [Leasing \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#).

Information specific to Voyageurs National Park is available at: [Do Business With Us - Voyageurs National Park \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#)

### **Submission Guidelines**

Respondents are encouraged to provide input that demonstrates how their concept will support the park's purpose. Responses should not exceed 15 pages total. Any viable option may be considered. Please submit:

- A transmittal letter indicating your name, company or organization, legal structure, and contact information for representative(s) including email address.
- Provide a narrative of your ideas for the use of these facilities.
- If your proposal includes only some of the listed facilities, be sure to clarify which ones are included.
- If you have any previous hospitality management experience, please provide.
- Previous National Park Service Concessions operation experience, if any; and
- Any other pertinent points or conditions.

Please indicate in your submission whether you would like the NPS to retain your contact information and notify you of future Business Opportunities.

Please submit your response by June 30, 2025. In addition, respondents are encouraged to submit an electronic copy of their response in any format. All submittals become the property of the NPS.

### **Site Visit**

Site visit is scheduled for May 21, 2025 (reservation required).

### **Primary Point of Contact:**

Tracy Simmons, Commercial Services Chief, National Park Service  
601 Riverfront Drive  
Omaha, Nebraska 68102  
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(402) 661-1750

# Existing Facilities, Kettle Falls

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Voyageurs National Park  
February 2, 2018



Site map for Kettle Falls, camper cabins have been added since this map was made and they are situated above the bay near the road that leads to the NPS Maintenance building.