



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Apostle Islands National Lakeshore
415 Washington Avenue
Bayfield, Wisconsin 54814-4809

February 24, 2023

Mr. Mark Abeles-Allison, ICMA
Bayfield County Administrator
117 E. Fifth Street, PO Box 878
Washburn, WI 54891

Dear Mark:

Thank you for sharing information with me about the proposed grant to upgrade Bayfield County Highways A and N between Iron River and Barnes, Wisconsin. Upgrading this road to make it safer, and allow it to be used in all seasons, would be a very good thing for the visitor to the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, located in northeast Bayfield County.

Visits to the National Lakeshore have averaged over 211,000 the last five years (2016-2020). While the park consists mainly of islands in Lake Superior, road access is critical as virtually all park visitors come to the area by car before they get into a boat. Most come from Minnesota or southern Wisconsin, and an additional route through this area will provide more options for drivers to access the park. Peak visitation periods overload existing road infrastructure, alternates would help spread out traffic loads.

In addition, several severe storms have closed both state and US highways commonly used to access the National Lakeshore for several months during peak tourism season. Additional all-season roads will provide visitors with safe alternate routes.

Cold, icy winters are actually a huge attraction for this area; the park's ice caves have become renowned since 2014 and when the conditions are cold enough, we will see more visitors on a winter day than the busiest day in the summer. In fact, there were several days in winter 2014 where we counted over 10,000 people in a day. We saw 134,000 visitors for the winter, and 290,000 for the calendar year. It would certainly be an asset to our area and the local economy if Highways A and N were all-season roads.

The economic impact of the Apostle islands National Lakeshore is significant; in the peak (2014) visitation year, visitors are estimated to have spent \$44 million in communities within 60 miles of the park. That spending supported 702 jobs in the area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$53.8 million. Another road which improves access year-round would certainly add to these numbers.

Sincerely,

Lynne Dominy
Superintendent