

Norris Camp Interpretive Center Conceptual Master Plan

November 9, 2015

Executive Summary



NORRIS CAMP (CLEAR RIVER, WARROAD, BELTRAMI ISLAND)

Known Company Numbers: 720, 3721

Dates: 1933, 1935–36

(also 1936-42, Beltrami Project)

Notes: Company 720 operated the camp from June 13 until November 6, 1933. As a Warroad camp, twenty African American enrollees may have been assigned to it from July to November 1933.

The camp, also known as Norris or Beltrami Island, served as headquarters for the federal relief program known as the Beltrami Island Project, a pioneering experiment in relocation and land-use planning on formerly forested land, which took place from 1936 to 1942.

The camp site has been the headquarters for the Red Lake Wildlife Management Area of the Department of Natural Resources

Few in the CCC would have called their work "revolutionary," but they knew it was special. Enrollee Harvey Richart put it this way: "What the CCCs accomplished will never again be equaled. It made our lives for the rest of our time."

The camp was reestablished on June 11, 1935, and operated by Company 3721 until January 13, 1936. Its assigned work area was Beltrami Island State Forest.

since the late 1930s. Fourteen original remaining CCC buildings were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

(Sommer, Barbara W. (2009-07-01). *Hard Work and a Good Deal* (Kindle Locations 2382-2386). BookMobile. Kindle Edition)

SITE MAP



*Rich, rich stories
of history, and the
environment*

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While working with the Friends of Norris Camp, along with the other folks who contributed to this plan, I couldn't help but sense the pride and connection of those individuals and their families to Norris Camp.

There are so many stories to be told. An Interpretive Center will afford the local community a place to celebrate their past, and visitors the opportunity to enjoy its richness.

The resulting concept plan will interpret the:

- Area's history
- New Deal's impact
 - Civilian Conservation Corps
 - Resettlement Administration
- Environment and natural resources

And most importantly, protect and share the historical buildings of Norris Camp.

John Beckwith, planner

Goals

An Interpretive Center will be established in order to:

1. *Utilize the buildings and resources of the Norris Camp Civilian Conservation Corps Camp to serve as the primary visitor interpretive center.*
 - a. Create new signage to welcome guests and put them at ease in touring the camp and surrounding area.
 - b. Utilize the existing buildings to house appropriate display areas.
 - c. Establish a self-guided tour of the historic camp and buildings.
2. *Establish a self-guided walking tour to discover the landscape, flora and fauna of the surrounding area.*
3. *Improve classroom and student connections* through improved facilities and greater opportunities for learning, both on-site and through participation in the classrooms.
4. *Create a virtual experience through use of technology* to share the stories of Norris Camp with visitors unable or simply too great of distance from the area to make regular visits.
5. *Looking to the future:* The plan has suggestions for possible events or activities, and projects that will have folks talking about their experience when they get home. These activities will be made possible, or greatly enhanced by completion of the improvement phase of the interpretive center.

Cost Estimates:

Goal / Support	Est. Cost
New signage to welcome guests	\$32,000
Utilize existing building for display.	\$196,800
Tour of the historic camp.	\$31,000
<i>Tour of landscape, flora and fauna.</i>	\$71,000
<i>Improve student connections.</i>	\$31,400
<i>Virtual experience of Norris Camp.</i>	\$60,300
Subtotal	\$422,500
Design Support	\$71,160
Management and Administration	\$33,800
TOTAL	\$527,460

Plan made possible by:

Friends of Norris Camp
 MN DNR, Red Lake Wildlife Management Area
 Giziibii Resource Conservation and Development
 Northwest Minnesota Foundation
 University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships
 University of Minnesota, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Community Assistantship Program

ASPIRATIONS

The aspirations that were the force behind this entire planning process were to thoughtfully preserve the historical value of Norris Camp and to create a tourism venue that will tell the many stories of the Norris Camp area in a fun and memorable way.

Implementation of this plan will provide for:

1. A greatly enhanced opportunity for on-site and remote visitors to understand the history and natural resources of the area through exploration of the historic sites as well as hiking the improved trails.
2. Visitors feeling welcome to explore more deeply the many resources already available such as the homestead sites, hunting trails, or solitude walk off into the remote areas.
3. Development of the site with specific learning messages identified, resulting in an improved educational experience and wisely used funds and contributions.
4. Partnerships with other local venues to encourage regional tourism and improve the overall visitor experience when in Northwest Minnesota.
5. The protection or restoration of a valuable historic site for future generations.
6. An increase in visitor days as well as numerous special events and activities will be made possible, and very likely to occur.