

# Order of the Arrow Boy Scouts repair BWCANW portages



Order of the Arrow Boy Scout trail crew member Allen Reed, OA Voyage Foremen Travis McCormick and Pedro Miller working on turnpike through swampy section on the Birch to Frog portage.

by Travis McCormick

The Order of the Arrow Wilderness Voyage (OAWV) is in its 10th summer. It is a cooperative effort of the Northern Tier National High Adventure Base of the Boy Scouts of America and the U.S. Forest Service. It offers young men of "Scouting's Honor Society" a chance to both serve others and to experience a life changing wilderness experience. The program combines one week of portage trail rehabilitation with one week of canoe trekking. The goal is an experience that is physically, mentally and spiritually challenging. The program is designed to foster personal growth in participants while teaching them the values of friendship and servant lead-

ership.

The Order of the Arrow (OA) is the national honor society of the Boy Scouts of America. The organization recognizes scouts who are selected by their peers as best exemplifying the Scout Oath and Scout Law in their daily lives. The backbone of the OA revolves around the dual concepts of brotherhood and cheerful service.

"The OA Voyage has been an outstanding partnership for the Forest Service and the public. Through the efforts of the staff and participants we have been able to complete a tremendous amount of portage work which will be used and appreciated for many years to come." said Mark Van Every, Kawishiwi District

Ranger.

The trails and portages to be maintained are selected by Cory Mensen, the Trails and Volunteer Coordinator of the Kawishiwi District. The majority of projects deal with erosion control and prevention, water diversion and re-crowning overused tread that has been gullied out by portagers over an extended period of time.

Trail maintenance can be tedious and difficult. Gravel is a cure-all when doing trail construction, but in the northwoods there are no gravel pits. Sledge hammers are required, making maintenance tedious and difficult - not a job for the faint of heart. Never the less, the OA has completed major turnpike trail

features through knee-to-waist deep swampy sections on several trails including Boot to Ensign, Thomas to Kekakabic, Birch to Frog and Knife to Vera.

Over the past ten years, the OAWV has completed 15 miles of trail, 800 check dams, 140 water diversion bars, 3,000 feet of turnpike, and 9,000 feet of tread work. Approximately 70,000 hours of volunteer service hours have been contributed to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness - nearly one million dollars in value. At the end of the summer, there will have been a total of 756 Scouts who have participated in the OAWV program.

In 2003, the OAWV program received the U.S. Forest Service Chief's Award for Volunteer Support and Youth Services. The program, based at the Charles L. Sommers Canoe Base on Moose Lake, sparked the collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service of the largest nationwide service project for the Boy Scouts of America since World War II. ArrowCorps5 (pronounced Arrow Corps Five) is a direct result of the OAWV program in the Boundary Waters. Up to 1,000 scouts at five separate national forests are doing major conservation projects across the nation this summer. Much of the leadership and operations of this program will be led by past OAWV staff from



Order of the Arrow Boy Scout participants Jake Knudsen, Mike Cowell, Matt Gabay, Ben Stilwill, Kyle Kuzmick, Jimmy Manderscheid, Daniel Wygoda pictured with turnpike work on Big Knife portage. Submitted photo.

Northern Tier.

Participants also receive in-depth instruction and practice in Leave No Trace (LNT) outdoor ethics. Scouts spend the work week learning each principle of LNT. They spend the entire trip learning best practices in the Lakes Region of Minnesota.

This summer, the OAWV staff consists of seven LNT Trainers and two LNT Master Educators. The goal is to instill the values of LNT in the participants so they will take them on future outdoor adventures.

The OAWV program has

spent the past nine years developing into a program that not only serves the Boy Scouts, but provides a valuable service to the public. Their trail work within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness has secured the existence of the trails for years to come.