

CONGRESSMAN TOM TIFFANY

SERVING THE 7TH DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

15 FAQs Regarding the Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve Act

- 1. Why should the Apostle Islands be considered for the **prestigious designation** of a national park?**
 - 30 states, including Minnesota, Michigan, and Indiana, have National Parks. Why shouldn't Wisconsin join their ranks? While Yellowstone's geysers and Yosemite's El Capitan are world-famous, the Apostle Islands boast sandstone cliffs, historic lighthouses, and ice caves equally deserving of recognition. That's why I am seeking to elevate the Apostle Islands from a National Lakeshore to Wisconsin's first National Park. This stunning archipelago offers visitors a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural history deserving of greater recognition. Wisconsin merits its first National Park, and the crown jewels of Lake Superior are a perfect candidate for this prestigious designation. This is a real opportunity to showcase our state's natural heritage and make a lasting, positive economic impact on the surrounding communities for generations to come.
- 2. Will **treaty rights** be impacted by the bill?**
 - No. This is something that the National Park Service themselves confirmed with us during consultations on the legislation before it was introduced. The bill text states, "*Nothing in this Act shall be construed as affecting any rights granted, reserved, or established pursuant to treaty, statute, or executive order pertaining to any Tribe, including, but not limited to, rights to hunt, trap, fish, and gather on lands included within the boundary of Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve or any other rights asserted by any Tribe.*"
- 3. Are there assurances that the proposal isn't an attempt to open the **Apostle Islands up to increased mining or logging**?**
 - This land is already protected federal land under the National Park Service, and nothing in this bill modifies its existing boundaries, treaties, and the tribes' right to hunt and gather. Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve will still be managed and protected by the National Park Service. Furthermore, in 1976, the [*Mining in the Parks Act*](#) closed all units of the National Park System to new mining. Therefore, the Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve will not be mined.
- 4. What will be the **economic impact** of this bill?**
 - The National Park Service measures local gateway communities as communities within a 60-mile radius of the park. Historically, similar upgrades from national lakeshores to national parks, such as the 2019 elevation of Indiana Dunes, have come with substantial increases in economic activity. For example, in 2018 while still a National Lakeshore, Indiana Dunes had 1.75 million visitors who spent \$77 million in gateway communities, which in turn supported around 936 jobs. By 2022, as a National Park, visitation surged to 2.8 million, generating \$141 million in local spending and supporting 1,685 jobs. I use Indiana Dunes as an example due to the fact that it is the most recent upgrade of a national lakeshore to a national park.
 - Applying this model to the Apostle Islands could potentially double the economic impact in surrounding communities. Many businesses in and around national parks are small businesses employing local people who have a passion for the outdoors. I have firsthand experience with this.

After owning and operating Wilderness Cruises near the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest for 20 years, I have seen how federal lands can support small businesses. The increased tourism would bolster local economies, create new jobs, and generate revenue that can be reinvested back into our community.

- Moreover, many surrounding communities have applied for numerous tourism grants, and this legislation will help create more tourism revenue. By leveraging the National Park designation and recreational opportunities of the Apostle Islands, we can foster permanent economic growth throughout northern Wisconsin.

5. **Will this legislation create more federal bureaucracy?**

- The National Park will be managed by the same agency as the National Lakeshore. Therefore, the National Park Service will continue to manage it, and the land will remain federally protected. It would not add more land to the federal bureaucracy. If anything, a National Park will ensure more conservation educational programs and greater prosperity while allowing visitors to experience the beauty of Lake Superior.

6. **Will this legislation alter existing park boundaries?**

- The bill will not change any existing boundaries. It will be the same boundaries as the current Lakeshore. Therefore, the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness designation will remain unaffected, and Madeline Island will not be included as part of the National Park.

7. **The current National Lakeshore has a long list of deferred maintenance projects. Will this bill help with that?**

- An elevated designation to a National Park is one of the best ways to ensure additional federal investment for conservation programs and infrastructure improvements. One reason I am doing this is to make sure that this special place gets the broader recognition, additional resources, and protection it deserves, which is what happened when Indiana Dunes was elevated to a National Park. For example, five years after the Indiana Dunes National Park designation, NPS funding was up over 9%. Making the Apostle Islands a crown jewel of the Park System will only help ensure further prioritization of projects in the park.
- Additionally, the maintenance backlog in our parks is not a funding issue, but an agency mismanagement issue. Congress must continue to provide the overdue oversight needed to right the ship and start making the necessary improvements all Americans want to see at our national parks, which has been a focus of mine as the Chairman of the Federal Lands Subcommittee.

8. **What will park and camping fees look like as a result of this bill?**

- [Camping, recreation, and parking](#) fees will continue to be administered the same way they are right now. The same with park fees. Nothing in the bill does anything to change how these fees are currently administered, and they will remain at the discretion of National Park Service. Currently the Lakeshore does not have an entrance fee, and across the entire National Park Service, which includes 425 units, only [109 charge an entrance fee](#).

9. **Why will Sand Island be a National Preserve?**

- 99% of the time, hunting or trapping is not allowed in national parks. However, it is allowed in national preserves. Sand Island would be [designated as a National Preserve](#), protecting hunting access – a model similar to the recent designation of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve in West Virginia, which we used as an example after consultations with the Park Service. The preserve on Sand Island will be managed exactly how hunting is currently managed on the Lakeshore and will still be administered and protected by the National Park Service. Fishing and other recreational activities will also be protected and managed by the National Park Service.

10. **Were the Tribes consulted on this legislation?**

- My office proactively engaged, consulted, and met with Red Cliff and their lobbyist numerous times, including sharing the bill text with them prior to the original introduction in 2024. Any claim to the contrary is false. We have addressed every question and concern raised by their tribal

consultant regarding this legislation and remain open to addressing any further questions. Our office also met with Bad River on March 7, 2024, the same day we met with Red Cliff, and shared the proposal with them then.

- Furthermore, the underlying bill text also directs the National Park Service to enhance interpretative displays within the Apostle Islands to the Ojibwe tribes, the original inhabitants of the Apostle Islands who have called the area home for centuries. The Apostle Islands are integral to the culture of the Ojibwe people and elevating this unit to National Park status will help promote their history and unique connection to this special place.

11. Who was **consulted regarding this legislation?**

- My office consulted with numerous towns, officials, and organizations regarding this legislation. Here is a current list of supporters: Congressman Bryan Steil (WI-01), Congressman Derrick Van Orden (WI-03), Congressman Scott Fitzgerald (WI-05), Congressman Glenn Grothman (WI-06), Congressman Tony Wied (WI-08), Representative Rob Summerfield (AD-68), Senator Romaine Quinn (SD-25), Washburn County Board, Hayward Mayor Gary Gillis, Superior Chamber of Commerce, Town of Oma, WeGrowBiz, Sawyer County Board, Burnett County Economic Development, and Price County Board of Supervisors.

12. How will this bill help with the **lack of housing in the area?**

- It's a little disingenuous for people to say that they care about the lack of economic development in the region – and then oppose legislation that will help create it. Making the Apostle Islands a bucket-list destination will help support small businesses, employ more local people with deep roots in the community who have a passion for the outdoors, and generate revenue that can be reinvested back into our community. It also has great potential to attract new investment to the area, including investment in housing and hospitality, provided local officials don't take steps to erect unnecessary barriers to prevent it.

13. How will this bill impact **infrastructure and tourism in the Bayfield area?**

- Related to tourism and local infrastructure in Bayfield, the City of Bayfield is one of only a handful of cities in Wisconsin that has been allowed to charge a Premier Resort Destination Tax (PRAT) of .5% to cover expenses for added tourist demands. Any seller who makes sales of products or services subject to Wisconsin's 5% state sales tax is also required to collect the Premier Resort Area Tax on those sales. According to the [Wisconsin Department of Revenue](#), proceeds from the Premier Resort Area Tax may only be used for infrastructure expenses within the jurisdiction of a premier resort area. Infrastructure expenses means the costs of purchasing, constructing, or improving parking lots; access ways; transportation facilities, including roads and bridges; sewer and water facilities; exposition center facilities used primarily for conventions, expositions, trade shows, musical or dramatic events, or other events involving educational, cultural, recreational, sporting, or commercial activities; parks, boat ramps, beaches, and other recreational facilities; fire fighting equipment; police vehicles; ambulances; and other equipment or materials dedicated to public safety or public works. Therefore, an increase in tourism would benefit Bayfield, providing additional funds to support its infrastructure needs.
- Additionally, my office will continue to assist local jurisdictions in applying for EMS and public safety grants. The U.S. Coast Guard already has a presence in Bayfield and future funding and resources will need to be accommodated based on demands. The [Coast Guard Bayfield Station](#) maintains a duty crew, ready to respond 24/7 to distressed boaters, medical emergencies in water-only accessible locations, and victims of thin ice during the winter months.

14. Lake Superior is a **dangerous body of water and transport from the mainland to the islands is limited. How will this bill impact that?**

- There are a lot of safety standards in place already, both with the National Park Service and outfitters that take people out on the water to see the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. These safeguards are in place for a reason, to help ensure everyone going out to see the islands can do so

safely. For example, kayak outfitters have strict policies where they will not take people out on the water if the waves or wind conditions are too dangerous, and the Park Service has ample resources to inform [boaters](#) and [kayakers](#) alike about what they can expect from being on the water on Lake Superior. The [Park Service](#) makes it clear that safety on the Apostle Islands is each visitor's responsibility. Ample resources are available to ensure boaters and kayakers understand the risks before venturing out. I have full confidence that the Coast Guard can continue its fantastic work to respond to any incidents on Lake Superior.

15. **What will this legislation look like going forward?**

- There is a rigorous, regular-order legislative process for any bill to become a law, and that's the process I will follow. My office has consulted with local officials, organizations, businesses, towns, sportsmen's groups, the tribes, constituents, and the National Park Service. We will continue to be open to public input.

If you have further questions on the *Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve Act*, please contact my office at (202) 225-3365. The national park's name would be the Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve.