

Spokespeople Available for Media Interviews

Governor Tim Walz



Tim Walz is Minnesota's 41st Governor. Accomplishments from his time as Governor include providing universal free school meals for students, strengthening voting rights, cutting taxes for the middle class, and expanding paid leave for Minnesota workers. Throughout his time as Governor, Tim has prioritized making Minnesota the best state in the country to raise a family.

Explore Minnesota

Lauren Bennett McGinty, Executive Director



Lauren Bennett McGinty was appointed as the Executive Director of Explore Minnesota by Governor Tim Walz in 2021. With more than 15 years of experience in project management, communications and business leadership, she helps drive visitors to experience all of the unique adventures Minnesota has to offer. Lauren continues to fiercely advocate and cheerlead all things Minnesota with a goal of making it a welcoming, top-10 destination in all four seasons.

Nicole Lalum, Industry Relations Manager



Lalum oversees the Industry Relations team for Explore Minnesota. As part of her role with the state's tourism agency, she is one of Explore Minnesota's coordinators for the Governor's Fishing Opener.

Lalum is the liaison between the local planning committee and the state agencies and offices involved in executing the event. Lalum enjoys exploring Minnesota, camping with her family and spending time on the many lakes near her home in New York Mills.

Chris Morgan, Communications and Media Relations Manager



Chris Morgan joined as the Communications and Media Relations Manager for Explore Minnesota in 2023. An experienced communicator with more than a decade's worth of experience in K-12 and higher education, Chris is passionate about promoting Minnesota's beauty and attractions. As an avid outdoorsman, Chris enjoys hunting and fishing with family and friends.

Department of Natural Resources

Sarah Strommen, Commissioner



Formerly the DNR's assistant commissioner, Strommen now oversees a DNR staff of about 2,700 located in St. Paul and around the state, with the mission of working with Minnesotans to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, providing outdoor recreation opportunities, and providing for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life. Prior to coming to DNR in 2015, Strommen served as assistant director at the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) before becoming acting deputy director. She previously served as policy director for Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness and as associate director of the Minnesota Land Trust.

Strommen holds a bachelor's degree from Grinnell College, where she majored in biology and Latin American studies. After graduating from college, she used a Fulbright research scholarship to do field work in Costa Rica and subsequently earned her master's degree in environmental management from Duke University.

She served several terms on the Ramsey city council and was elected mayor in 2012, a position she stepped down from in May 2018. She is an avid outdoors person, spending family weekends fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, camping, and hiking.

Brad Parsons, Fisheries Section Manager



Brad Parsons has been with the Minnesota DNR for 38 years, becoming the fisheries section manager in July 2018. He was the central region fisheries manager from 2010 to 2018. Prior to that, he was a fisheries research scientist in western Minnesota. His research focused primarily on walleye and walleye stocking, but also biomanipulation in shallow lakes, and bluegill and crappie population dynamics and angler harvest.

Col. Rodmen Smith, DNR Enforcement Director



Smith has been in law enforcement for more than three decades and a DNR conservation officer since 1997. For the past nine years, he's been director of the DNR Enforcement Division, responsible for its budget, operations, and 250 licensed and non-licensed employees across Minnesota. The division works closely with others in the DNR and is responsible for enforcing Minnesota's laws related to game and fish; public lands, waters, and natural resources; units of the outdoor recreation system and outdoor recreation-related public safety. Away from work, Smith can be found spending time with his family, peering through a spear hole sawed into the ice, or working to perfect his walleye-fishing techniques.

Crosslake Spokespeople

Jackson Purfeerst, Crosslake Mayor (pronounced per-fer-st)

Availability: Anytime between 6-10 am



Purfeerst began his first term as Mayor in January 2025 and previously served on the Crosslake City Council for two years. He has been a Crosslake resident for 11 years where his family owns and operates Crosslake Fitness. Additionally, he serves on the Crow Wing Power Board of Trustees, the Operation Round-Up board, and is president of the Big Pine Lake Association. Purfeerst is passionate about civic engagement and believes it's important for people of all ages to get involved. In his free time, he enjoys getting outside to downhill ski, boat in his antique wooden boat, water ski, float down the river, hike and bike. He is also pursuing his bachelor's degree in business online through the University of Minnesota and training to become a pilot.

Mike Schwieters, Owner of Boyd Lodge (pronunciation Shwee-ters)

Availability: Anytime between 6-10 am



Mike Schwieters is the third-generation operator of Boyd Lodge, a family-owned resort he has managed with his wife, Ruth, since 2010. He grew up in Crosslake, where his family has been deeply involved in the hospitality industry since 1966. As President of the Whitefish Area Lodging Association and a board member of the Community of Minnesota Resorts, he plays a key role in promoting Minnesota's resort tourism. He also serves as Vice Chair of the Crosslake Chamber of Commerce Advisory Board and previously sat on the Brainerd Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce Board. Beyond tourism, Mike is a founding member of the Greater Crosslake Area Foundation and holds leadership roles with the Ideal Scholarship Foundation and the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway.

Corinne Hodapp, Supervisory Park Ranger, US Army Corps of Engineers (pronunciation Hoe-dapp)

Availability: 8-10 am



Corrine Hodapp is the supervisory park ranger for the Southern Headwaters Project located at Crosslake, MN in the St. Paul District. Corrine began her career with the Student Career Experience Program in 1989 and worked three seasons at projects throughout the St. Paul District. After graduating from Mankato State University with a bachelor's degree in Law Enforcement, she accepted the lead ranger position at Blackhawk Park on Pool 9 of the Mississippi River. Upon completion of the District Leadership Program in 2004, Corrine accepted the lead ranger position at the Eau Galle Recreation Area in Spring Valley, WI. From February 2008 through May 2011, Corrine served as the site manager at the Eau Galle Recreation Area. She accepted the supervisory park ranger position at the Cross Lake Recreation Area in Crosslake, MN, June 2011.

Mike O'Connell Crosslake Chamber Advisory Board Member

Availability: 9-10 am



Mike O'Connell has been an active member of the Crosslake community for over 30 years and has served as Chair of the Crosslake Chamber Advisory Board since 2017. He is also involved in several local organizations, including the Crosslake Area Historical Society, Whitefish Chain Yacht Club, The LAKE Foundation, The PAL Foundation, and The Crosslakers. Previously, he played a key role in the Crosslake St. Patrick's Day Parade & Celebration and has been a member and past board member of the Crosslake/Ideal Lions Club. His deep connection to Crosslake began with his grandparents' family cabin on Sunrise Island, fostering a lifelong love for the area. Today, he and his wife Haley are raising their son Campbell on Cross Lake, embracing the lake lifestyle and small-town values. Whether volunteering or enjoying time on the water with family and friends, Mike is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the community he calls home.