



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Apostle Islands
National Lakeshore

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Apostle Islands News Release

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Apostle Islands Ice Caves to Close Due to Changing Ice Conditions

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Superintendent Bob Krumenaker announced today that access to the ice caves will close for the season no later than Sunday night March 16 due to rapidly changing ice conditions and growing day-to-day uncertainty about safety. If ice conditions deteriorate before then, the access could close sooner.

At a meeting on March 11, partner agencies working with the National Park Service (NPS) to manage the tremendous influx of visitors to the area urged the NPS to be proactive in closing the access to the ice caves to avoid a worst-case scenario of the ice breaking up while people are out on it.

“This has been a remarkable ice cave season,” Krumenaker noted, “the longest and best one anyone can remember, and certainly the most popular. But spring is coming, the ice is weakening, and we can see the edge of the ice pack coming closer to the mainland ice caves every day. The beautiful formations are melting, and some have already fallen, raising concerns. Safety is our top priority, and by planning for a closure, rather than reacting quickly to a change in conditions, we can assure that the season ends on a high note.”

Bayfield County District 3 Supervisor Kenneth “Bucky” Jardine, represents the Port Wing area, which, like most of northern Bayfield County, has benefitted greatly from the influx of tourists. Nonetheless Jardine agrees that it’s time to be prudent. “The lake is treacherous,” Jardine said. “It’s a mean old lady. I don’t want to see anyone die out there.”

While the NPS anticipates that ice conditions will still allow access through this weekend, Park Rangers will be monitoring conditions very closely and will make an immediate announcement if an earlier closure becomes necessary. The NPS suggests people call the automated ice line (715-779-3398 x3) or check the park’s Facebook site

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(<https://www.facebook.com/apostleislandsnationallakeshore>) to find out the latest status. The park's Bayfield visitor center will remain open through March 23rd and will reopen in May.

Bayfield Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Bureau Executive Director David Eades estimates that there's been a \$10-12 million boost from the increased winter traffic. "This has been an amazing boon to the regional economy and although we would love this to continue for another month, the safety of the visitor always comes first." Eades stated, "Although the sea caves will not be accessible again until summer, the area still has plenty of snow for all the other winter activities in the area."

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