



ADAPTIVE WILDERNESS WITHIN REACH

Our Mission

We believe that wilderness experiences should be accessible to everyone, regardless of physical ability. Our mission is to eliminate physical, financial and community preparedness barriers to adaptive outdoor recreation to empower individuals with disabilities to challenge themselves while enjoying the beauty of the wilderness and the benefits of outdoor recreation. At AWWR, we are committed to creating a culture of inclusivity in outdoor recreation and we believe that everyone benefits, when everyone participates.

Our Vision

To create opportunities for everyone regardless of physical ability to thrive and grow in the wilderness. We envision a future where adaptive outdoor recreation around the Boundary Waters is not only accessible but empowering, allowing individuals with disabilities to fully engage with the beauty and challenges of nature. Our goal is to develop an adaptive recreation community that inspires our participants not only to survive, but to thrive, safely pushing their limits and embracing the transformative power of the outdoors. We also strive to strengthen relationships among individuals with disabilities, their families and friends, fostering deeper connections and a sense of community through shared outdoor experiences.



AWWR, founded in 2022 by Sean and Jill Leary, is a 501 (c)(3) Minnesota-based non-profit organization that brings adaptive recreation within reach for people living with permanent physical disabilities. The organization partners with public and private entities to provide adaptive outdoor recreation opportunities, including canoeing, kayaking, summer and winter fishing, swimming, dogsledding, cross country skiing, mountain biking and hiking. Their programs are tailored to participants' abilities and interests and are designed to be inclusive for people with disabilities and their families, friends, or support groups.



Outdoor Recreation for All

AWWR partners with North of North Wilderness Resort in Ely, MN, a fully accessible resort located near the entrance to the BWCA and surrounded by the Superior National Forest.

In the summer of 2024, AWWR installed an ADA kayak launch system at North of North and purchased several adaptive kayaks. The kayaks and launch system allow participants to access the wilderness of Birch Lake, a 7,700-acre lake with 75% of its shoreline protected by federal and state land.

Additionally, AWWR purchased adaptive cross-country sit-skis, and North of North has groomed classic cross-country ski trails to accommodate adaptive skiing. The past two winters, adaptive sports enthusiasts traveled to Ely for a range of activities, including adaptive dogsledding, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing.

Each week during the summer season, AWWR participants travel to Ely for adaptive kayaking, canoeing, and fishing. Looking ahead, in early fall 2026, AWWR will host its third annual wild rice harvest, where native guides will lead participants through the process of wild ricing, from harvesting to preparation.



About the Founders

Sean Leary, who was paralyzed in a motor vehicle accident in 2001, is an avid outdoor enthusiast who was passionate about canoeing and camping prior to his injury. He and his wife, Jill, who was a canoe guide before they married in 2010, are committed to making wilderness experiences more accessible for people with physical disabilities. Through AWWR, they are focused on breaking down barriers to access and creating inclusive outdoor adventures for all.



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