Group Discussion Topics for Wilderness Philosophy Trip – Please make time throughout the trip to fully address all of these questions and construct the necessary outlines/responses.

1. You are a group of DNR officials charged with creating a new use plan for George H. Crosby Manitou State Park. There are two special interest proposals on the table. There is only enough funding to support one of these in the new management plan. You must choose one of these proposals to integrate into the overall plan, or you may decline both. Please outline the pros and cons for each, summarize major points of your discussion, and provide justification for which special interest proposal you chose to endorse. If you decide not to endorse either, justify your rationale. In any case, be prepared for scrutiny from proponents on all sides of the issues.

a. Proposal A will widen the West Manitou River Trail (along the river) to allow wheelchair access to campsites on the inner loop, as well as a section of trail leading to the river. The path would allow differently-abled persons to engage in a backcountry experience that is presently not available in any Minnesota State Park along the North Shore of Lake Superior. Likewise, individuals would gain access to a portion of old growth forest and the Manitou River Cascades, to which they do not presently have access. Trail construction would require regrading and widening the trail, and building wide boardwalks over portions of the existing trail. This would require the extraction of approximately 20 old growth white pines along a ¼ mile corridor of the existing trail, as well as filling an approximately ½ acre portion of an unaltered wetland near the top of the trail. Additionally, the project would require the installation of accessible latrines and well-pumped water access at each campsite, which would require variances to existing riparian zone and excavation regulations.

b. Proposal B will develop a wind energy plant on ridges above both sides of the Manitou River drainage approximately 1.5 miles north of Ninemile Creek in the Finland State Forest. A 10-year study has indicated that convection currents in this zone are prime for wind energy, and would supply enough electricity to power the George H. Crosby Manitou State Park, as well as the towns of Finland, Illgen City, Little Marais, and Tofte. The state would own and manage the plant, and profit approximately $250,000 annually from the sale of energy to the surrounding area. This money will initially be used to develop a new interpretive center at the entrance of George H. Crosby Manitou State Park, and will subsequently be used for educational outreach and development within the State Park system. To prepare the site, crews would need to excavate land above both sides of the creek, including blasting approximately 1000 square surface feet of bedrock. Initial environmental analysis indicates that runoff from site preparation will not cause notable pollution to the watershed, and once the plant is in place, it will not use or impact the surrounding natural resources. However, wind turbines with intermittent airplane beacon lights will be visible from several places within the park boundary, and most campsites throughout the park.