



Baxter State Park Authority Meeting Minutes

Kidney Pond Campground, Baxter State Park

Friday, October 14, 2016

10:00 a.m to Noon

Attendees:

BSPA: Janet Mills – AG, Chandler Woodcock – Commissioner, IF&W, Chair, Doug Denico – Director, MFS, Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry

Assistant AG- Lauren Parker

BSP Advisory – Laurie Nale, Chair

BNY Mellon Endowment Fund Manager: Michael Daley, CFA Senior Portfolio Manager, Brian Noyes, Investment Committee Chair

BSP Staff: Jensen Bissell, Stewart Guay, Christine Theriault, Bruce White, Theresa Theriault, Alex Bradley, Justine Rumaker, Elise Panzner, Julianna Hansen, Jon Schmidt, Dean Levasseur, Diane Freelove, Georgia Manzo

Guests: Aaron Megquier – Executive Director, Friends of Baxter State Park, Paul Renaud, Charlene Woodcock, Ed Parker, Wyatt Viles

The meeting was called to order by Chair Denico, followed by introductions.

With a moment of silence, Commissioner Woodcock noted the passing of Donn Fendler this past week (October 9) at the age of 90. Woodcock mentioned that Fendler was awarded a lifetime Maine fishing license, but that he returned to get his free license yearly just for the opportunity to talk with people he met about his experience on Katahdin. “He was a true gentleman, and for decades he spread the gospel about Baxter State Park and Katahdin with grace. This is a significant loss. He had an amazing impact on us – and us on him”, said Woodcock. AG Mills said that years ago Donn Fendler regaled her family (niece and nephew) with his story “right here in the Kidney Pond library, and shared his message of faith, self-reliance and strength of family. It was a strong and potent message”.

Denico moved to accept the May 20, 2016 minutes, seconded by Mills. No discussion, all in favor.

Brian Noyes, chair of the BSP Endowment fund recognized the very talented, capable group of volunteers on the Investment Committee saying, “They give countless hours of their time on this fund”. He added that the Investment Committee met last month to consider a new private equity fund that compliments the investment objectives of the fund. The Stewardship

Index looks at the last ~15 years and we are in line with goals. Longer term, our disciplined spending policy remains.

Michael Daley provided an overview of modest changes since May. The big event was the Brexit (Euro Union) results. The markets saw significant sell-offs in the days following the vote. There were wide expectations that the vote would fail but it passed 52-48 percent, leading to temporary market drops. Referring to the chart on page 5 of the report, Daley noted the orange bars across asset classes showed market declines (post Brexit decline (6/24/16 – 6/27/16) as well as the post-Brexit rebound (6/28/16 – 9/30/16). However, fixed income had positive returns during the selloff; that's why the fixed income asset class is important in the portfolio – it acts as a shock absorber. . Most market indices have performed well YTD. In both equities and fixed income, risk has paid off. Emerging markets are up 16 percent while high yield bonds have generated similar returns. Daley provided a snapshot of the BSP (Consolidated) portfolio, comparing the previous year end balances with the current year. As of 9/30/16 the market value is \$73.3M, up from \$70.0M at year end 2015, with \$1.4M in outflows during the year. The overall portfolio continues to show steady growth. BNY Mellon Focused Equity Opp Fund and MC Multi-Strategy Fund have seen some underperformance so the managers have reallocated funds from those strategies into index funds. BNY Mellon did modestly reduce developed international allocation given concerns about future growth resulting from Brexit. Most of the reduction took place within small cap international equity.

Through August the consolidated portfolio has generated a 5.7% net of fee return, due primarily to a healthy allocation to both public and private equity. With the upcoming election, heightened market volatility is expected. The market anticipates a Clinton victory; however a Trump victory could lead to additional volatility given that this is not the base case expectation by market participants.

Bissell thanked the Investment Committee and echoed Noyes's sentiments about their contribution to the Park saying their approach is effective, structured and deliberate.

Bissell provided a summary of donations, saying that BSP is appreciative of (and fortunate to have) contributors who recognize Search and Rescue efforts and other Park work. The strong quarterly Wilderness Fund of ~\$66,000, and the Edward & Elva Hawkins annual donation, help the Park to implement trail initiatives and allow the management of such projects as the Roaring Brook culvert replacement and the Kidney Pond Bridge project.

The biennial budget was reviewed by Theriault and Bissell, noting that actual from years past look at revenues fluctuation. BSP carried revenue from 2015 to 2016 due to some capital items the Park needed so the 2016 entrance fees look high, but is due to \$150,000 from the

previous year. The balance forward amount will be decided once the Capital budget is completed. Revenue figures do not include what the Authority may act upon in the next agenda item (Fee Review Protocol). Bissell and Theriault noted that the Capital portion of the budget is not complete. Estimates for capital spending for the biennial are in the vicinity of \$250,000 each year, but specific projects and cost estimates are still being worked out. The addition of capital expenditures will not change the endowment revenue expectation as capital costs will be covered from the existing balance forward. After discussion, Bissell recommended the the budget decision be tabled until the next meeting (December) when the capital lines will be completed and the entire budget can be acted upon.

The annual yard sale realized \$1,000. In the Operating Budget, it was explained that the Personal Services budget will be broken down by line when the Actuals are determined. The biggest change is in the Casual Labor line is that BSP is now funding the MCC crews (contracted services) for work (including work on the Abol trail relocation and the Dudley trail repairs). We will need additional crews, hence the increase in that line.

In Technology, an OIT representative and Bissell looked at this budget and combined lines. Woodcock noted that Network Access (Line 5331) almost tripled, but Theriault noted that all 5300s in lines below that are combined in that FY18 budget total.

Paying I&E Interns, Trail Stewards, and SFMA Interns are all combined in Casual Labor.

Woodcock moved to table the vote to accept the FY 18/19 Budget until capital expenditure lines are completed, seconded by Mills. All were in favor.

The next agenda item, Fee Review Protocol, began with Bissell noting that the protocol was developed 20 years ago. Objective qualifiers look at changes in Maine per capita wages, changes in the Consumer Price Index (inflation) and changes in fees charged at comparable facilities since the last fee change at BSP. BSPs last fee change was in 2010. They were looked at again in 2012 and 2014 and were not changed. Inflation was mild and BSP's schedule was fairly comparable to others'. (BSP looks at fee increases incrementally, not all at once.) This fee review suggests that the objective criteria (wages, cpi, comparables) have changed significantly since 2010 and fee increase is advisable at this time. Proposed fee increases for Summer 2017 included Campground Lean-to or Tent sites increasing to \$32/site from \$30/site currently. (Refer to Summer and Winter Fee Listings in the Protocol for the Review of the BSP Camping Fees for all proposed increases.) Canoe and Kayak rental fees were not changed, nor were Firewood Bundle costs or DUPRs. Woodcock questioned the note in the Background section that referred to revenues from fishing licenses. Theriault noted

that the \$2 agent fee per license issued is what that refers to, not the total cost of the license, and will be corrected.

Woodcock moved to accept the recommendation to adjust fees in 2017 as written, seconded by Mills and with no further discussion, all were in favor.

The Administration and Operations Update discussion started with Park use in general; it was a busy year, and through September, camping remains the same (full), but Day Use is up 10%. Visitor Center numbers were close to 25,000 visitors. We engineered the replacement of the Roaring Brook Culverts, and a new bunkhouse in Nesowadnehunk Field was constructed (sleeps 8) and will replace Camp Cozy that will become a two-person rental cabin. Search and Rescue numbers reflect a very busy year with over 60 incidents (32-40 are the average). Park Staff and SAR volunteers did a great job.

AT use went up as expected, increasing by 23% over last year. BSP will continue talks with AT leadership. Denico said he was not impressed with AT representation. Woodcock agreed, saying he was dismayed with the behavior of a portion of the thru-hikers and would like to see more focus put on this. Mills said that those discussions are ongoing. Woodcock expressed additional concern regarding a personal experience at the peak involving Mrs. Woodcock overhearing significant vulgarity. It was disappointing and detracted significantly from the experience for other hikers. Other reports included that there were naked hikers at the peak and vulgarity pointed at the state of Maine. "Governor Baxter would not have tolerated this irresponsible behavior, and it won't be long before I say they shouldn't be there", said Woodcock. Jon Schmidt, BSP AT Steward, said "I've been a Park representative to the AT Community and have an alternate view. Probably no one sees the AT hikers more than I do, and almost without exception, they've been respectful, appreciative and prepared. Bad reviews, almost without exception, have involved day users. I don't see that from the AT community. I patrol from Abol Bridge and Katahdin Stream daily so I see them as they are moving. "

Woodcock expressed his appreciation for that perspective, but said there are a small percentage of thru-hikers who do not respect at all and are affecting the reputation of that group. Denico stated that his patience was also coming to an end. Woodcock expressed that policing at the top of the mountain needs help and that the AT group needs to take a stronger tack. Bissell added that the summit experience is important to everyone, and we protect impacts on the peak by limiting access – except for this group. With increases, we have to include this group with number limits. We're making headway – people are listening. We'd like the opportunity to work through this. There is a meeting scheduled for next week with the AT group, and another with leadership in November.

Dean Levasseur mentioned that AT hikers are not the only visitors causing problems, and cited an examples of day use campers/hikers issues. He added that he hoped that the actions of a few would not affect the whole and that there used to be a person in uniform on the peak and that education is needed. Paul Renaud added that he has seen a tremendous change this year in AT hikers in that they are much more respectful. "I ask them how they are being educated. The posters are helpful and the word is out there and they are seeing it. What we're doing with this permit system is a good thing. We will always have some problems with some hikers, but hikers are policing each other everywhere; and maybe one percent are acting up. I tell them they are ambassadors and that they set the example", said Renaud. Elise Panzner, BSP Wilderness Educator, added that her experiences with issues (i.e. hikers stepping on protected plants) were primarily with day hikers. Woodcock, though stressing his appreciation for all viewpoints and efforts, noted that the issues on the peak as earlier stated are separate.

Justine Rumaker and Elise Panzner, Wilderness Educators, spoke of monitoring peaks and trails, tending to plant life, and educating visitors. A survey of Arctic Butterflies resulted in 26 sightings - much higher than the average. Children's programs in the Park and in the local communities, teaching about respecting wildlife and about not littering were described.

Documentation since 2002 of erosion and stream fencing on the Tableland above and below Thoreau Spring was discussed. Panzner took photos from 9 photo pointes this year that match photos taken in 2008 and 2011. Rumaker and Panzer said the photos confirm that the plant life is growing back along the disturbed trail edges outside the string fence and the trail corridor is returning to standard width. Monitoring is ongoing. Other work involves moose patrols (of 142 visitors asked, only one moose was sighted). Recent monitoring and removal of purple loosestrife has been done. The annual loon count conducted with 20 volunteers, resulted in the sighting of 23 adults and five chicks.

Bissell introduced Theresa Therriault and Alex Bradley, new Trail Specialists who were hired mid-season. Therriault arrived after three MCC crews were in the Park (one working on blowdowns, one working at Abol). Therriault moved another crew to Abol Trail Relocation to provide a concentration of work there to expedite the project. Crews installed over 200 stone steps (on Abol Trail) and cleared over 200 miles of blowdown (parkwide). Bradley arrived just before the crews arrived this spring in time to deal with the unexpected slide at Dudley that was being flagged and cut out by the MCC crew and will continue through the summer and fall of 2017. This impacts Chimney Pond visitors wanting to hike Knife Edge and Katahdin as well as administrative and SAR access. Bissell explained that relocation efforts of trails will take two-three years of work on average. The section of the Dudley trail that is being worked on was put into place in the 1920s. Jen Sinsabaugh and Rob Tice looked at new locations on

the upper end but the terrain is difficult. This area has also been examined by a botanist (Glen Mittelhauser). We are at a point of construction in a safe and stable location. This is historic and should be a stable location for the trail for many years. Therriault and Bradley are taking ownership of the Trails Program and establishing priorities.

Bissell mentioned that work will begin on the next edit of the Trail Guide for next season's reprinting. Work is also being done on the new Website as well as the technology at the gates. Tracking the AT hikers at Katahdin Stream is the first of many steps.

Aaron Megquier thanked the Wilderness Educators, noting that the primary mission of the Park is that it is Forever Wild, and recreation is second. Most visitors want to see the wild place, managed very well.

Levasseur asked Woodcock who is managing the levels at Nesowadnehunk Lake, as the stream level is very low but the lake is high; stating his concern that, ecologically, the stream will be damaged. Woodcock stated that biologist Nels Kramer is already looking into this.

Mills mentioned that she attended a celebration hosted by the Maine Conservation Alliance regarding the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, and with concerns of increased visitors in BSP, she recited the following (of historical note):

Whatever our personal views, our responsibility is to reflect and channel the wishes of Governor Percival Baxter who entrusted us with the care of this unique Park. Many are now celebrating the establishment of a National Monument to the east. Others – both day hikers and Appalachian Trail through-hikers – are celebrating their visits to the Park in a way that disturbs others' enjoyment of the Park.. These challenges I hope we will face with a goal of harmony rather than conflict. But it is a good time to reflect on the mission and the values of Baxter State Park.

I have been thinking about the early Native Americans and their reverence for Pamola and the mountain which they named "Ktaadn." I've been thinking too about Henry David Thoreau's visits to Katahdin and Governor Baxter's enormous love for this pristine area. What did they find here? Why did they love it? What did they command us to preserve about it?

I think it was here that they found peace. And it is peace they expected us to preserve – peace for ourselves, peace for the wildlife who make this their home. They expected people who come here to do so with that same reverence, with a longing for peace.

This is why we don't have fishing derbies, or 5k races, or marathon runs along the Tote Road, or big bonfires with high pitched songs, or fireworks on the Fourth of July. The Park is its own quiet celebration. Its meaning lies in its quietude, in its broad spaces, in its deep peace.

That is a tough concept for the culture of today, when people of all ages are bombarded with bits and gigabits of information every second of our lives; when music, news and the clutter of conversation confuse our minds, making us feel as dizzy as fireflies on a dark starry night. Some days peace is almost impossible to find.

This Park is an escape from all of that, a place of respite and repair. We love it in its human silence – only the wind to cheer you on or to challenge you at the summit, only the rush of water to comfort you in the stream, only the stare of a curious moose to give you all the conversation you need.

Here isolation is a virtue, almost a prerequisite at times. The founders and heroes of this Park envisioned contemplative walks, hikes and climbs by individuals, fishing alone on small lakes and big streams, not among clingy crowds of tourists and onlookers. The Park is uniquely non commercial.

The Mountain doesn't need a play date with you. It wants you to explore on your own, without appointment or celebration; the goal is not the summit but the getting there. You do not conquer it; it accepts you.

That is why we continue to say, the Park represents a different culture, a different psyche than the national park phenomenon, different from other places of cultural refuge. It is a place with a different mission, different values. It is not for everyone. We do not invite groups and crowds, posses of civilization through the open gate and along the rough marked trails.

The Park is a place in my mind where I can go on a deep winter's night, a picture in my soul, a thing I know will always be there, no matter how strange the storm, how wild the wind, how far the ride, how tough the seasons of a life.

It is our duty to honor it, to preserve it.

Attorney General Janet Mills, BSPA member, October 14, 2016

Followed by applause, Denico added that this should be the Authority's mantra going forward. Mills added that Bissell is charged with the responsibility to carry it forward..

Woodcock motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mills. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Georgia Manzo
Park Secretary