



## MEMORANDUM

Date: Feb 29, 2024

To: Baxter State Park Authority

From: Park Director Kevin Adam

Subject: Park Operational Updates for 03-08-2024 Authority Meeting 10:00 AM

### BSP Personnel:

#### Committees:

- BSP Advisory: Commercial use and Statement of Purpose Committees have been actively meeting.
- SFMA Advisory: Upcoming meeting in April with all the members.
- Research Committee: Meeting on March 1 to consider research proposals that are either continuing or new for the upcoming season.
- Investment Committee: Meeting on Feb 29. Review investments, returns, and distributions.

**Human Resource:** The following reflects the recruitment activities for the 2024 Season. Recruitment is a high priority and continues to change daily. As represented below, employees have benefited from opportunities for promotion and internal transfers.

2024 Recruitment Activity				
Position	Vacant	Internal Transfers	Internal Promotion	External Hire
Customer Representative-HQ	3	1		
Customer Representative-VC	2			
Customer Representative-Gates	3	1		
Campground Ranger	4	1	1	1
Enforcement Ranger	2			
Park Services Manager	1			1
Business Administrative (Formerly HR Administrator)	1			1
Interpretive Internship	2	2		
Trails Laborer	2			1
Maintenance Project Manager (Daicey)	1			1
Crew Laborer (Daicey)	4			

Total 2024 Resignations: 16 #

Did not return for 2024 Season 9

Resigned for internal promotion or transfer 6

Resigned but continued to work for NRSC 1

#### Resignations Reasons

Opportunity for full-time employment 2

Not returning to Maine/area 4

Opportunity at NRSC 1

Seeking seasonal <40 hours per week	1
Family needs	1

**Reservations:** The reservation office has been busy processing reservation requests for June and early July 2024. Headquarters staff returned to two full-time employees during February. We are still recruiting for two seasonal positions. Winter camping will soon end on March 31, 2024.

### Information and Technology:

No significant updates.

**Financial:** FY24, Q3 Report: Report for the period of January 2024 – March 2024 will be provided at the April 2024 Authority Meeting.

**Information & Education (I&E):** I&E staff have updated a flier regarding the April solar eclipse for the Park, for online, local, and other distribution. In collaboration with Friends of BSP and DAFC (Jim Britt, Communications Director), they plan to publicize an op-ed style piece from Director Kevin Adam about typical Park conditions and the associated limited access in April, and how to find better alternatives for solar eclipse viewing in the area. Staff have also worked with Friends of BSP on eclipse-related information for their upcoming newsletter. Communication also includes contact with the Katahdin Region EMS, Fire, Police, and other supporting agencies, local landowners such as the Nature Conservancy, local Lower Togue camp owners, and Camp Natarzwi, as well as outreach to Acadian Timber to better understand their policies on camping and road use around the perimeter of the Park, with meetings forthcoming.

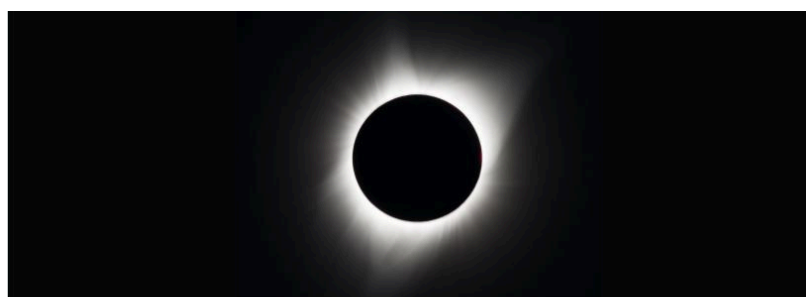


Photo by Aubrey Gemignani via NASA

### NOTICE: Spring Restrictions in Baxter State Park Will Remain in Force During the April 2024 Total Solar Eclipse



**No Camping in the Park**

With thinning ice on the ponds and lakes and variable snow cover for cross-country skiing and snowmobiling, the unpredictable conditions of spring in northern Maine make access to the wilderness difficult at this time of year. Therefore, **all campgrounds close** throughout April each year. It is **illegal to camp outside of designated campgrounds** in the Park at any time of year.



**Katahdin & the Traveler Range are Closed**

Katahdin and the Traveler Range are home to **highly fragile ecosystems**. The critically important plants that grow in these alpine environments **cannot withstand foot traffic** during spring weather conditions. To fulfill our primary objective of preserving the Park's ecosystems, we close these trails every April. You can help us in this endeavor by observing the rules and respecting trail closures during this time.



**No Vehicular Access to Park Gates**

During the winter months, approach roads to the Park gates are not plowed and are designated snowmobile trails. For safety reasons, **it is illegal to drive any other motor vehicle on a snowmobile trail**.

Snowmobiles may access the Park during this time, but are restricted to the **Tote Road only**.

#### Heads Up!

The eclipse will be somewhat low on the Southwestern horizon; to view the sun with Katahdin, you will need to be at a high vantage point northeast of the mountain.



#### Where Else Can You View the Eclipse?

The Katahdin Chamber of Commerce provides a listing of viewing locations ("Star Parks") and eclipse events in the Katahdin region: <https://www.katahdinmaine.com/eclipse-events/>

The Maine Office of Tourism lists eclipse viewing events and opportunities along the path of the eclipse across the state: <https://visitmaine.com/things-to-do/in-the-sky/solar-eclipse-2024>

Thank you for being safe and helping us to protect our treasured park!



During the President's Day week in February, Interpretive Specialist Cassandra Knudsen and Natural Resource Director Nava Tabak presented lessons as part of Vacation Camp - a week-long program for local youth organized by Friends of Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument. The programs taught about the unique features of Baxter State Park as protected land and recognizing animal tracks.



*Nava Tabak (left) and Cassandra Knudsen (right) with Vacation Camp participants*

I&E Staff created a Daicey Pond cabins project webpage, which includes answers to frequently asked questions, project updates, and a history of the campground. Cassandra has been planning and scheduling educational programs for the summer season in the Park and also working with Friends of BSP on photo selection and authoring captions for the 2025 BSP calendar. Nava has initiated work with a consultant to update the Park's digital maps, which are used on the website, and Avenza - a popular GPS application used by Park staff and visitors alike to navigate in the Park.

The I&E team is pleased to be welcoming Chloe Tardanico and Katie Fink as this year's Interpretive Interns.

**Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA):** Trucking road toll rates have increased starting in 2024, in some cases considerably. Lands Manager Shane Miller has been working with two new wood buyers who are looking for high-quality softwood logs for tonewood (musical instruments) and clapboard, including the necessary logistics for wood tracking and payments. Shane and Forester Dee George are refining a new sampling methodology for forest inventory that will provide valuable planning information. Natural Resource Director Nava Tabak has joined the Executive Committee of the Cooperative Forest Research Unit (CFRU), and she and Shane have been reviewing and voting on new preliminary research proposals to the CFRU (with full proposals scheduled to be presented and voted on in April).

Shane and Nava inspected the yard of the Park's new firewood processor, Dennis Henderson, to ensure that its location and site conditions (such as size and access to piledown areas, invasive species threats) meet the needs of the Park.

In January, the main access road in the Austin Cary Forest (in Harpswell) flooded and sustained major damage where it crosses a tidal marsh. Private landowner members of the road association, which includes the Park and several private landowners with a right of way over the road, are seeking funding sources for longer-term work to make their access more reliable.

Wet and warm conditions are presenting challenges to SFMA operations, including trucking road closures, and limitations on the use of winter-only roads. Staff are assessing conditions continuously and directing the harvest and trucking contractors accordingly.

**Trails:** Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner and Trail Specialist Kris English have spent the winter so far preparing for the upcoming project season and assisting other departments with various projects. Six red spruce and 12 cedar logs have been staged at the Upper Saddle Brook crossing in preparation for replacement later this summer. 80 pieces of bog bridging and their associated cedar rounds have been staged at Sandy Stream Pond. Additionally, the Trails department has assisted with the reopening of a winter hauling route into Center Pond to aid 52 and 57 in their goals to transport materials to and from the Center Pond Leanto. Trails staff has also teamed up with the Maintenance Department/Daicey Pond Construction Crew to haul spruce logs to various cabins for upcoming construction projects. Finally, a myriad of smaller projects are always going on in the background between larger operations. These projects include trail sign routing, tool maintenance/repair/replacement, assisting the UMaine Civil Engineering department in their Nesowadnehunk bridge design, and communicating with trail volunteers.

**Maintenance:** The Maintenance team has been working with the Supervisor Rangers in support of operations over the winter months. Maintenance Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer and Mechanic Frank George assisted in opening the winter trail to Russell Pond to haul supplies. The following day they and a volunteer returned to make temporary repairs to a snowmobile bridge before the start of hauling. Finally, to help complete hauling before the untimely snowmelt, maintenance personnel assisted other rangers in completing the hauling to Russell Pond.



*Repairs being made to a bridge on the winter hauling trail to Russell Pond*

With marginal snow conditions for hauling, Frank George has been diligent in snowmobile maintenance and education to keep the fleet running. There have been multiple minor repairs to

be made, but overall, the fleet has stayed in constant operation with very little snowmobile downtime. This can be best attributed to a strong yearly maintenance routine and excellent preventative maintenance.

Maintenance Coordinator Matt Martin has spent most of his winter servicing the Park's extensive propane infrastructure, including propane lights (100-plus serviced so far), refrigerators, ranges, water heaters, and regulators. This is always challenging due to the backcountry nature of the work, carrying a wide variety of tools and parts on a snowmobile with long commutes to cold cabins. All the work is being documented.

Park Carpenter David Fogg has built two outhouses in the carpentry shop that will be trucked to their destinations in the spring. He has also built and hauled a new lifejacket box and paddle rack to Katahdin Lake. We are fortunate that Dave has a wide skill set as he has also been an asset in repairing multiple hauling sleds and assisting Frank George with snowmobile repair and maintenance.



*New Lifejacket and Paddle Box at Katahdin Lake*

Keith Wehmeyer conducted interviews for the Maintenance Project Manager position for the Daicey Pond Project, and Paul Sannicandro was selected. Mr. Sannicandro was the Baxter State Park Trails Supervisor from 2000 to 2016 and brings extensive leadership experience as well as a round-log working skill set. Interviews for the project crew members are currently being conducted and the Maintenance Supervisor and Crew Leader are pleased to be selecting from a strong group of candidates. They are expected to begin making offers in early March.

The Maintenance Team with the assistance of Trail Crew and a volunteer hauled logs to multiple construction locations in the Daicey Pond Campground. The focus was on getting the necessary



logs cut to length and staged at the more difficult-to-access cabin locations. Over 60 logs ranging in length from 16 to 36 feet were moved by snowmobile in 2 days just before the untimely snowmelt.



*Logs staged at Daicey Pond Cabin 1*



*Preparing logs to be hauled to cabin locations at Daicey Pond*

**Search and Rescue:** On Friday, February 23 a report of a snowmobile crash with possible head injuries was reported just outside the Park boundaries. The winter rangers at Abol and Chimney Pond campgrounds responded with a rescue sled.

The crash location was actually inside the Park at a location where there have been prior incidents. Campground Rangers Andy Borth and Jen Sinsabaugh worked with Millinocket Ambulance personnel to access the patient and secure him for transport to an ambulance.

**Law Enforcement:** District and Enforcement Rangers have been busy with a variety of tasks since the first of December. We have seen several high-wind events that have caused a substantial amount of tree damage in different areas of the Park. Rangers have spent a considerable amount of time clearing the tote road of blowdowns to keep things open for travel for both staff and visitors. One area with considerable damage was in the vicinity of Telos Hill near the old Telos gate. This damage came from the storm system that hit the area before Christmas.



A second and third storm hit the area in the first two weeks of January causing substantial damage in the area of the Marston Trail North to above Nesowadnehunk Field. The wind was so powerful it destroyed the outhouse at Slide Dam. (see photo) A second area that was hit pretty



hard was the area of the Tote Road from Trout Brook Crossing to the area of North Branch Camps. This area also received a lot of snow causing blowdown removal to be very difficult.



Winter Campground Rangers have been busy checking in campers and checking on hikers. Besides this seemingly endless task, they have also conducted winter maintenance activities in their respective campgrounds. This includes working on firewood, snow, and ice removal from the multiple roofs located in their areas. They have been patrolling hiking and ski trails, checking ice conditions for winter travel, and repairing/improving structures. They have hauled firewood to Chimney Pond along with the necessary supplies needed for summer operations that can only be moved in the wintertime. Snow conditions are not the greatest so they are “making hay while the sun shines” and trying to get it all done before conditions deteriorate to a point where sleds can no longer be of use.





In addition to the above work, Rangers have also been working on the following tasks:

Fire Equipment inventory and repair

Fire training

Hauling donated beds from Bowlin Camps to the Park

Hauling National Guard Members to Chimney Pond

Hiking trail and ski trail clearing

Worked on opening Chimney Pond Trail as conditions allowed

Opening the haul trail to Center Pond and taking in supplies

Opening the Russell Pond Haul Trail and hauling supplies via snowmobile

Hauling out old bridge debris from Blacksmith Brook on Chimney Pond Trail

Hauling in Search and Rescue personnel for training at Chimney Pond

Opening the Katahdin Lake Trail

Opening the Williams Pond/Nesowadnehunk Ski Trail

Installed a new wood stove at Camp Cozy Nesowadnehunk Field

Checking a variety of ice fishing and snowmobiling activities with one angler being

summoned for Ice Fishing Closed Waters and two verbal warnings for operating unregistered snowmobiles

Assisting disabled motorists

Assisting local Law Enforcement with incidents

Training with local law enforcement on responding to an active shooter

Interviewing candidates for the positions of Customer Service Rep, Campground Ranger,

Maintenance Project Leader, and Park Services Manager

Assisting maintenance dept with building repairs

Preparing the display for the Orono Sportsman show

Preparing and planning for Spring Training

Supervision of various seasonal staff

Inventoried and updated Inreach devices

Planning for and gathering materials for Pogy Bridge Repair

Preparing for the Solar Eclipse

## **SOLAR ECLIPSE PREPARATION**

### **COMMUNICATION:**

- The Information and Education department has been reaching out to area partners for months now.

-Leadership members have been in contact with the Millinocket Chamber of Commerce, KWW, Attending local planning sessions with Millinocket area EMS, FIRE, POLICE, and other supporting agencies.

- BSP has reached out to Acadian Timber to better understand their policies on camping and road use around the edges of the Park. They will be having meetings soon.

- Communication with other local landowners such as Nature Conservancy to share information.

- Communication with local Lower Togue Camp Owners and Camp Natarswi about accessibility to camps.

- OP-ED with Bangor Daily News about MUD SEASON and what that means in Baxter State Park and the Katahdin Region for access, especially by motor vehicle.

Baxter State Park Operations during the Total Eclipse Event:

- We propose an opening and closing time of 8 am to 5 pm for the Park for the dates of April 6, 7, & 8. This allows visitors to still hike the roads or open trails of the park during daylight hours. This still allows access to fishing waters that may be open to spring fishing yet not during nighttime hours. ( This can be allowed through rule 2.2 Hiking or mountain climbing may be restricted at the discretion of the Director).
- We also propose closing the gate at Caribou Pit if the road is passable by vehicles. This will still be monitored for traffic and parking issues that could arise. This keeps the road to the Park gate open, allows visitor access on foot, and provides for more management around private holdings such as Camp Natarswi.
- All work days start on the weekend and are based on weather and accessibility conditions.
- Volunteers will be enlisted to monitor gates, and trailheads for extra eyes and provide information to visitors and staff.
- Full-time Park staff will be posted at popular entrances to the Park, providing information, visitor count, and situational awareness to other park staff.
- Park staff will monitor hiking on anticipated high use trails or areas.