



Baxter State Park Authority Meeting Minutes
Burton Cross Building, Augusta, Maine
10 am, Friday, January 12, 2024

Approved by Authority Vote (Date): _____ Chair Signature: _____

Attendees:

Baxter State Park Authority: Chair and MFS Director Patty Cormier, ME IF&W Commissioner Judy Camuso, Attorney General Aaron Frey

Assistant Attorney General: Lauren Parker

BSP Staff: Director Kevin Adam, Natural Resources Director Nava Tabak, Director of Administrative Services Lori Morrison, Office Specialist Georgia Manzo

BSP Advisory: Chair Carl Carlson, Charlie Jacobi

Friends of Baxter State Park: Executive Director Aaron Megquier, President Josie Quintrell

Other Guests: Anne Huntington

Chair Cormier called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. with a welcome and introduction.

Consideration of the December 8, 2023 BSPA meeting minutes: Lauren Parker noted that on Page 5, where it stated “Commissioner Camuso moved pursuant to Title 1 §405...” it should have stated, “Attorney General Aaron Frey moved pursuant to Title 1 §405...”. **AG Frey moved to approve the minutes as amended, and Commissioner Camuso seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion carried, 3-0.**

Advisory Committee Update: Chair of the BSP Advisory Committee, Carl Carlson, provided that 13 of the 15 committee seats are filled, and three members are terming off in the spring. Director Adam is engaging with possible candidates. This committee has developed its meeting schedule for 2024 so members can better plan their availability. There will be more in-person meetings at various locations throughout the state as well as time spent in the Park as an Advisory group. The Advisory is also in touch with the Friends of Baxter Park to work together for the benefit of the Park.

There are currently three active subcommittees: 1) the Daicey Pond Project Subcommittee’s work is presently minimal. This committee will stay in touch to provide any help necessary as the project progresses; 2) the Commercial Use (CU) Policy/Permit Subcommittee - whose role is to review the current CU policy and permit process and work with staff to provide recommendations before the policy is brought back to the Authority for review, and 3) the BSP Advisory Statement of Purpose Subcommittee is reviewing the SOP document with Director Adam to bring it up to date, and this too will be brought to the Authority for review/approval.

Park Operations Updates:

Personnel: Kevin Adam stated that interviews for the Project Manager position for the Daicey Pond Project are scheduled, and it is hoped that a member of the Daicey Pond Project Subcommittee will

be available to assist with those interviews. Lori Morrison added that it's a very busy time for the Park as it relates to recruitment, with interviews ongoing for the Park Services Manager and Human Resource Administrator positions (being filled in the interim by Lori Morrison), the Maintenance Project Manager, a Trail Crew member position, the Interpretive Intern positions, and anticipated vacancies for Campground Rangers and Customer Services Representatives. Lori has sent an inquiry to seasonal staff as to who is returning in the spring. Four of those positions were posted internally yesterday for options for transfer. Kevin Adam is working on the Enforcement Ranger position and Chief Ranger position text for posting.

Reservations: The winter lottery was held on Wednesday, November 1 and saw 91 individuals in-person, and an additional 83 by-mail applications were processed totaling 174, and by Thursday, November 2 there were 275 in total. Acceptance of commercial use permit applications began November 2 and 25 CU applications were processed in two days. The Chimney Pond bunkhouse is the most requested and that bunkhouse is completely booked from January through March. Daicey and Kidney Pond cabins are also popular, as well as Abol campground (accessible by snowmobile).

Communication, Security, and Infrastructure: As of January 1, Tim Deetz, BSP's Management Analyst, supporting the Park's networking, IT, and Data Analytics, transitioned to contractor status under his newly established limited liability corporation. Tim will continue to provide the Park with the same level of services. Tim has two residences (Maine and Ohio), and State of Maine employees may not work remotely (outside of the State). To create a means for Tim to continue to support the Park, he established his own business which opened opportunities for us to continue utilizing him as a resource when he is at either residence. Expenses will shift from *Personal Services* to *All Other*. The headcount hasn't been eliminated and will be reviewed during the next biennial budget period. The contract is through December 31, 2024, with a 90-day review process. One of the deliverables in this agreement is for Tim to provide senior leadership with the architecture of our IT infrastructure to ensure redundancy in knowledge and a good repository for those areas of IT for which Tim is our single resource.

Financials: FY24 Q2, Revenue is \$1,336,325 - tracking fairly consistently with FY23. The year-over-year favorable variance is primarily due to the increase in the annual distribution from the Baxter Park Wilderness Fund Trust.

Personal Services expenditures - \$923,625.35 reflected a favorable variance of 14.9% due to vacant positions. The category of *All Other* - \$289,974.88 showed a favorable variance of 40% primarily due to the timing of expenses. *Capital* expenses - \$80,555.8, 21% of budget amount through Q2. FY24 Q2 Revenue less Expenditures = \$51,099. Note: YTD Revenue less Expenditures is \$(50,869.19). The timing of funding for the Daicey Pond project from endowment disbursements and the balance forward impacts the YTD net loss therefore this is not a true reflection of the YTD position.

A contract for our bundled wood and Ranger wood (firewood) is being finalized with Dennis Henderson, Penobscot Firewood.

We're selling between 16,000-18,000 bundles annually. Approximately 35-45 cords of Ranger wood are delivered annually.

Information and Education: Nava Tabak reported that she and Interpretive Specialist Cassandra Knudsen have worked with Acting Chief Ranger Rob Tice, and Inventory and Property Associate Deanna Madore to update Park signage and ensure consistency. Cassandra is also putting the signs into a format that can be edited more easily.

Plans are to hire two Interpretive Interns to work with Cassandra throughout the summer helping with mountain patrol, interpretive programs, sign projects, and other tasks in the Park.

With Nava's guidance, Cassandra developed a flyer for the website regarding the April 8 solar eclipse, essentially providing the Park's limitations and recommending other places to view the eclipse. The Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce hired a coordinator to help encourage the local communities to get out in front of this event and the chamber released a comprehensive document for towns, businesses, and residents with various messages of guidance for each. The New York Times published an article about Millinocket being one of the best places to go in 2024 in particular the day of the eclipse for the planned run organized by Gary Allen. Essentially, the runners will go up the Golden Road until the end of the eclipse totality and then get themselves back, potentially while log trucks are operating on that road.

Aaron Megquier mentioned that an Op-Ed around concerns for conditions and a positive message about where people might go has been drafted by Friends of Baxter Park for release to the Bangor Daily News, Portland Press Herald, and other publications, and will be forwarded to Kevin Adam for consideration, adding that if The Nature Conservancy and the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument wants to sign on to it as well with similar concerns and suggestions, it might be a stronger message. Kevin Adam added that the Park has reached out to MFS and ME IF&W as we develop a plan around this event. It is difficult not knowing what weather conditions will be like. Trails such as Foss Knowlton and Blueberry Ledges typically see low levels of day use, and the influx for this event is unknown. The Staff will come back to the Authority in March with a plan.

December 18 Rainstorm: The storm on December 11 brought 2-3 inches of rain, and the Park came through it relatively unscathed. The storm on December 18 produced another 2-4 inches of rain and brought 40-70 mph gusts inland. BSP trails weathered the storm fairly well, and Park roads suffered significant but not major damage. The maintenance team and contractors worked immediately on repairs to the road. These events are getting more frequent, which led to a discussion with Shane Miller, Nava Tabak, and Keith Wehmeyer about a management plan for roads and how we prepare for these continuing issues. Current conditions - 8" of snow at Chimney Pond, and 5" at Abol, Staff went in on sleds yesterday and conditions were reasonable up to Foster Field. Not a lot of blowdowns until Marsten and Nesowadnehunk.

SFMA Update: Harvesting crews for A&A Brochu have moved to the north end of the SFMA, and with the rain events, are working when conditions allow. (A&A Brochu is the contractor who will be trucking the wood to the contractor who will be processing our bundle wood and Ranger wood.)

Park Operations/Search and Rescue: There has been no search and rescue activity. Supervisor Rangers have been assisting with road cleanup, and monitoring ice conditions and fishing activity on the lakes.

Executive Session: Attorney General Frey moved pursuant to Title 1 §405 (6) (c) and (e) of the Maine Revised Statutes to go into executive session to discuss with our attorney the status of the lease of the Katahdin Lake Wilderness Camps, the condition of those camps, and the future of those camps and the lease. Commissioner Camuso seconded the motion, and the motion passed 3-0.

Authority, staff, and counsel emerged from the Executive Session having discussed the deliberations mentioned in the motion to go into the executive session and did not speak about anything else, and no votes were taken.

Adjourn: Chair Patty Cormier motioned to adjourn at 12:15 p.m. seconded by AG Frey. Motion carried 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Georgia Manzo
Office Specialist