



MEMORANDUM

Date: May 24, 2024
 To: Baxter State Park Authority
 From: Park Director Kevin Adam
 Subject: Park Operational Updates for 3/31/24 Authority Meeting 10:00 AM

Human Resource

Jessica Wheaton started working as the Business Administrator on March 17, 2024. She quickly adapted to her new role, which involves managing Human Resources and taking on accounting responsibilities. She has shown knowledge, skill, and professionalism and has been a valuable addition to the Park's administrative team!

The 2024 recruitment and retention effort has been highly successful, thanks to the collaborative effort of many departments. As seen in the table below, in addition to recruiting numerous new staff to the Park, we are pleased to report several internal transfers and promotions. Nine candidates were interviewed the week of 5/24/2024 for the Chief Ranger position. Second interviews will be scheduled in the upcoming weeks.

2024 Recruitment Activity				
Position	Vacant	Internal Transfers	Internal Promotion	External Hire
Customer Representative-HQ	3	1		2
Customer Representative-VC	1			2
Customer Representative-Gates	3	1		2
Campground Ranger	6	1	1	4
Enforcement Ranger	2		1	
Park Services Manager	1			1
Business Administrative (Formerly HR Administrator)	1			1
Interpretive Internship	2	2		
SFMA Internship	2			2
Trails Laborer	3			3
Trails Crew Leader	1			1
Maintenance Project Manager (Daicey)	1			1
Crew Laborer (Daicey)	4	1		3
*As of 5/21/2024				
Notes:				
Chief Ranger - District Ranger in Active Capacity				
Customer Representative-VC - vacated after the start. Family needs				
Enforcement Ranger (non-supervisory) awaiting FJA approval.				

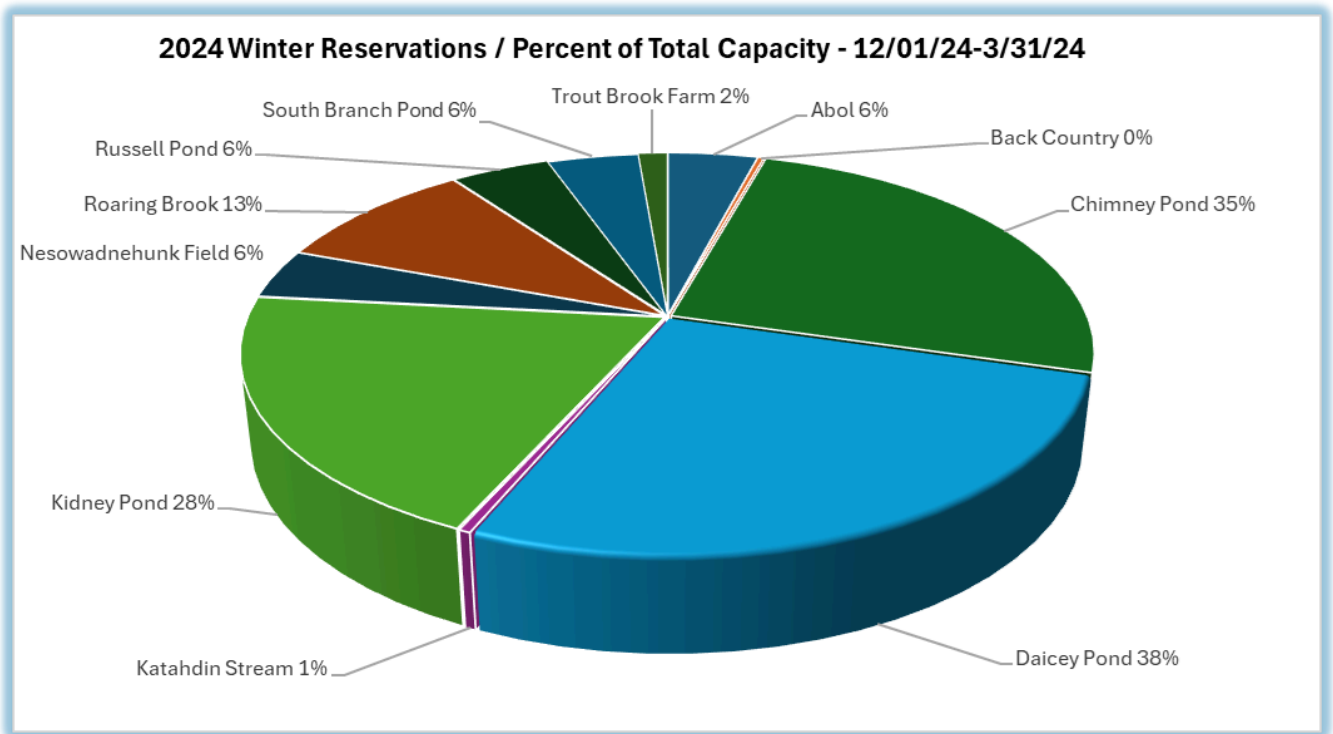
Reservations

Bryan Buhler, Park Services Manager (PSM), is leading onboarding and training for new and returning staff at headquarters, Togue Gate, Visitor Center, and Matagamom Gate. The reservation staff at the headquarters is busy managing visitor reservations and providing information. Staffing at headquarters will return to 4 full-time personnel on May 26th.

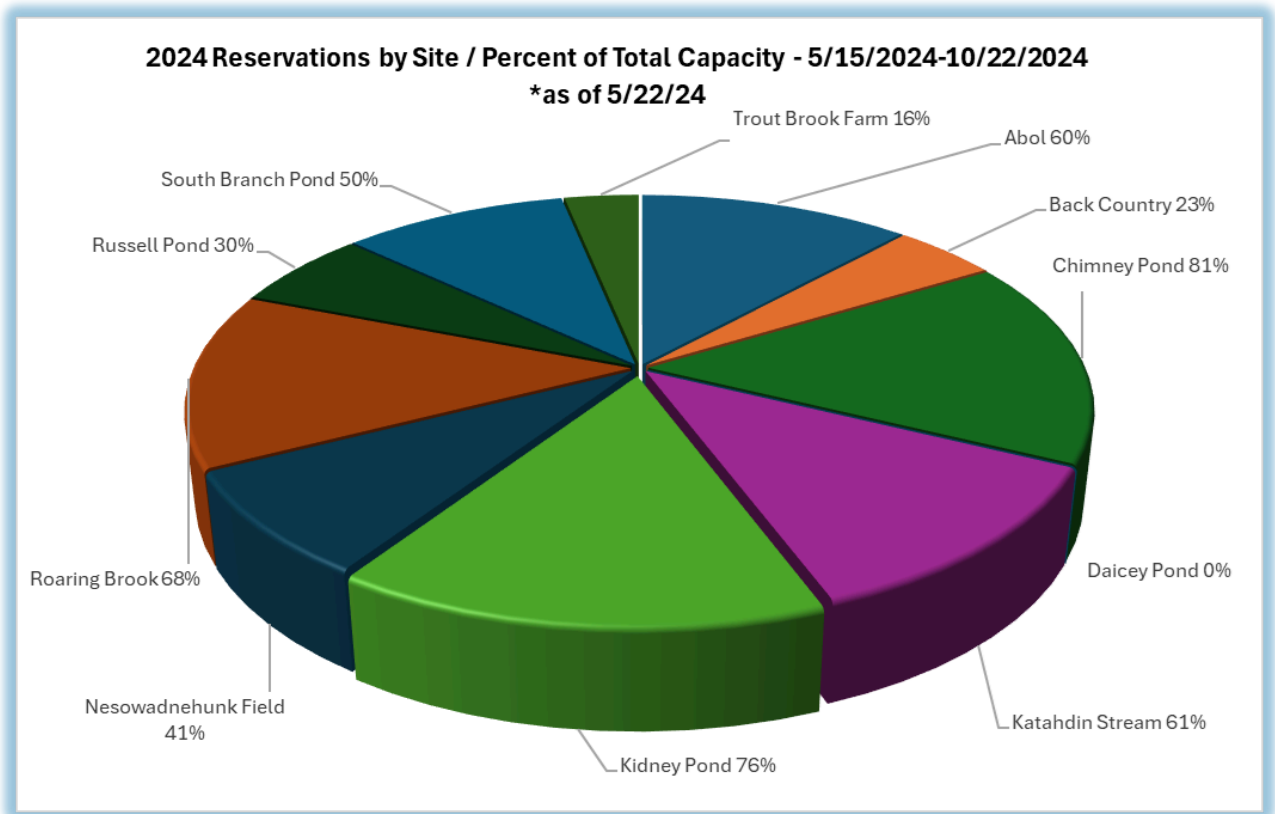
The reservation server upgrade is currently in progress, with its functionality being assessed in a test environment. We expect the new upgrade to be implemented in the fall of 2024.

Tim Deetz has completed a new raceway run in the Reservation office to accommodate an additional radio in PSM's office and to relocate the postage machine.

Winter camping closed on April 1, 2024. The chart below reflects the percentage of total capacity used by the site from December 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024.



As of May 22, 2024, the chart below reflects reservations made by the site and the percentage of total capacity through the rolling period of September 22, 2024.



Finance

FY24, Q3 (January – March) financial position:

Revenue:

- \$3,984,108,107 – (2%) negative variance over 2024.
 - Note: Year-to-date revenue reflects \$89,000 received from disbursements for the Daicey Pond Project. Year-over-year variance reflects an underage in program revenue.

Expenses:

- Personnel expense: \$2,943,498 - under budget, 11% positive variance.
 - Note: Vacant positions
- All Other expenses: \$869,766 - under budget, 16% positive variance.
 - Note: Timing of expense
- Capital expense: \$159,175
 - Note: 55% of the capital allocation was utilized in Q3.
- Q3 Revenue less Expenditures \$65,208.23
- YTD Revenue less Expenditures \$11,668

Daicey Pond Project Finance Update through April 2024:

- Revenue: \$89,000
 - Note: Endowment disbursements: March, April
- Expense: \$34,892
 - Note: 6% of the total budget

Information and Technology

Tim Deetz has been busy with networking and IT infrastructure, including maintenance and enhancement projects.

The data collection process for Park statistics for the Appalachian Trail and the Gates has been improved. Additional gate analyses have been added to respond to the need for answers that could not previously be easily determined. The collection methodology for the Appalachian Trail was improved to prevent accidental field errors.

A new server was installed at HQ to replace an aging 6-year-old server to handle file server and caching duties. A second UPS was added to the primary rack at HQ to support the new server and better distribute the electrical demand of devices within the primary rack.

The Togue Pond Ranger Camp and Matagamon Gate received electrical demand redesigns for networking gear. Network wiring repairs have been completed in the garage following an incident where networking cables became entangled in the garage door mechanism.

Three State of Maine laptops were deployed into the Baxter network. Additional licenses were acquired to permit the management of iPhones issued to employees, with 75% of the Park devices now enrolled in the mobile device management system.

Information & Education (I&E)

I&E staff continued to communicate about Park conditions for the April 8th solar eclipse, including the publication of an op-ed in the Bangor Daily News and Portland Press Herald. Cassandra Knudsen facilitated the process of selecting Jadyne LaDeau as this year's Visiting Artist, who will be in residence at the Park for two weeks in September. Cassandra has also planned a series of educational programs for the summer/fall camping season, including staff and non-staff experts. We have also produced a 2024 "Wildnotes News" insert for the Park's Wildnotes publication, which features articles on the Daicey Pond cabin project, this year's anticipated trail work projects, and educational programming.

I&E staff worked with Bruce White and a volunteer to prepare for and staff a BSP booth at the Eastern Maine Sportsman Show (a 3-day event providing an educational opportunity with hundreds of attendees). In April, Nava Tabak and volunteer Rick Bray staffed a table at the 4000 Footer Club annual award event in Exeter, NH. The table presented a valuable opportunity to educate many peak hikers who plan to come to BSP for specific peak hikes, including Katahdin and North Brother. In an address to event attendees, Nava discussed the special history, mission, and features of the Park, to assist future visitors in planning their trips and respecting Park rules and policies (which members of this group often find frustrating, as compared with other New England high peak areas they visit).

Cassandra Knudsen and Nava Tabak prepared and delivered educational sessions for seasonal staff training, including BSP 101 (for new staff), interpretation in the Park, communications about the Daicey Pond cabin project, natural resources, children’s programming, a nature walk, and other topics. I&E Staff have created a dedicated iNaturalist project for Park staff submissions for May-October 2024 and demonstrated the app at staff training. In just the first two weeks of the project, the number of staff observers exceeded last year’s participation in this powerful community science and learning platform, with the number of observations and species reported being on track to far exceed those from 2023.



BSP outreach events: The Eastern Maine Sportsman Show (left) and the 4000 Footer Club Awards (right).

Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA)

The winter harvest concluded early due to warm weather and rain. Due to spring road conditions, staff facilitated alternatives for the delivery of products to mills. Staff have been preparing for the next harvest, including planning for the inclusion of a new hand-cutting contractor in the SFMA this summer.

The SFMA Advisory Committee held its spring meeting in April, which included discussion of a draft herbicide policy, review of the Annual Allowable Cut summary for 2023-2024, results of CFI analysis, and review of the 10-year management plan and principles of the Master plan.

Shane Miller and Nava represented the SFMA at the Cooperative Forest Research Unit (CFRU) meeting, reviewing and voting on final research project funding for the year. Nava continued to work with the Long Reach Road Association (landowners with right-of-way across the Austin Cary Forest) to explore and apply for disaster mitigation funding for repairs to the storm-damaged section of the road. SFMA staff attended the Maine Invasive Species Network annual meeting in Orono.

Shane Miller, Nava Tabak, and Advisory Committee Chair John Bryant made presentations to staff at the annual spring training/orientation. The SFMA welcomed Silvia Hartt and Lou Packer, the summer’s forestry interns, who will be working in the SFMA with staff during the summer months.

Natural Resources and Research

The Research Committee held its annual meeting in March, which included the review of a new research proposal and two research extension proposals. Extensions were granted to Aaron Putnam’s team studying the glacial geology of the Park and to Arthur Haines’ ongoing rare plant documentation work throughout the Park. A new research proposal about the impacts of human interactions with Canada Jays (feeding) was deemed incompatible with BSP research guidelines. However, research committee members offered to assist the researchers with establishing study sites in northern Maine outside of the Park.

The committee received updates on ongoing research/monitoring efforts, and briefly discussed completed research projects and ongoing natural resource monitoring in the Park.

Nava has been reviewing applications and issuing research/monitoring permits for the upcoming season, updating alpine stewardship (“mountain patrol”) forms and guidelines, and providing training on alpine stewardship to staff.

Trails

May saw the arrival of our new trail crew staff including Crew Leader Emily Long, and members Mia Hayes and Brandt Brownlee. The fourth member, Emmet Schmelling, arrives on Wednesday of this coming week.

The Trail Crew broke away from spring training for specialized training with Griphoist rigging systems, and block and tackle setups for manual mechanical advantage systems. Immediately after staff training the trail crew completed two days of chainsaw training. Emily, Brandt, Mia, and Roving Rangers Alex Mangus and Robert Sweinhart completed their class B certification. The trail crew also assisted the Rovers in up-righting the overturned lean-to at Nesowadnehunk Field.



Figure 1. Trail Crew and Rovers use a compound 4-to-1 system to overturn the lean-to.

Once the first chainsaw training was complete, the entire trail crew including Supervisor Brennan Turner spent two days repairing some of our flood-damaged bog bridging on the OJI Trail, while specialist Kris English attended timber bridge building and trail project management classes at the annual Trails College in North Conway, NH, hosted by the Appalachian Mountain Club.



Figure 2. Bog Bridging - Before (left) and Bog Bridging - After (right)

The Trail Crew spent the week of May 20 completing blowdown patrol in the north end of the Park, fine-tuning their chainsaw skills and clearing the Five Ponds Loop and the Fowler Ponds Trails. While Kris and the crew worked up North, Brennan Turner taught chainsaw classes 2 and 3 at Nesowadnehunk. This year's chainsaw classes went very well and the trainees bucked many of the trees that had come down around the Nesowadnehunk walk-in sites. Several days of training needed to occur for 17 students who came through the class this year, and all 17 left with their B-level certification. Students focused on PPE & safety, limbing and bucking downed trees, and developing their maintenance and sharpening skills.



Figure 2. Rangers Dylan Denlinger demonstrating safe limbing skills (left), and Bandt Brownlee clearing the Five Ponds Loop Trail (right).

This coming Memorial Day week the Trail Crew are planning to clear Doubletop, OJI, and the Marston Trails. While the crew works to clear these trails, Brennan will be fine-tuning the details for our National Trails Day Volunteer event on the OJI trail relocation. This Saturday, Brennan will be joined by our Trail Adopter team to begin polishing the trail in preparation for opening. Additionally, he will review plans to begin rebuilding the bog bridging at the Grassy Pond outlet on the Appalachian Trail starting in early June. Finally, the trail crew is waiting for the first good weather window to break away from their project schedule and climb the Abol Trail to repair the string fencing around Thoreau Springs.

Maintenance

In March Maintenance Coordinator Matt Martin continued servicing the Park's propane infrastructure including heaters, refrigerators, ranges, water heaters, and lights. This concluded the work of servicing the entire Park over the winter.

Fleet Mechanic Frank George and Park Carpenter David Fogg overhauled the Park's new 1993 GMC 1-Ton truck. This truck formerly belonged to the Maine Forest Service and was purchased with less than 16,000 miles from Central Services. A new flywheel, clutch, and brake lines were installed, and a full brake job was done along with other work. This truck has become Frank George's assigned vehicle and will also be used for wildland firefighting. Extensive work on the Park's seasonal vehicle fleet is being done along with inspections and bodywork on multiple vehicles, and routine maintenance on others.

Frank George also continued his work in the Maintenance shop in April, servicing chainsaws, doing routine oil changes, and completing extensive work on the Park's three dump trucks before finalizing their inspections. The Park's 1993 Chevy C70 6-yard dump truck was brought to Houlton for more extensive work including a transmission overhaul and engine work.

Also in April, the Maintenance Department assisted with eclipse coverage while clearing blowdowns in preparation for spring road opening.

Daicey Pond Project

Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer began onboarding Daicey Pond Crew Leader Paul Sannicandro. Wehmeyer and Sannicandro have started reviewing the project plans, materials, and tool lists and are preparing requisitions. Multiple trips were made to Daicey via snowmobile to further review the project. Wehmeyer and Sannicandro also conducted over 10 interviews for Daicey Pond Crew members to fill the four spots. This crew was onboarded in early May and participated in the Park's spring training events alongside all other staff. Crew members are Dawson McKenney, Joshua Roeder, Peter Nerber, and Andrew Brandt.



DAICEY POND CREW

In Late March and into April, Wehmeyer, Sannicandro, Fogg, along with Trails Supervisor Brennan Turner and Trail Specialist Kris English made trips into Daicey to move logs via snowmobile to the campground's more difficult-to-access cabins. This was followed by the demolition of Cabin No. 2. The asphalt roof shingles were stripped and hauled out, removable parts were taken away and saved, and the remainder of the cabin was disassembled and then burned. Cabin No. 4 also had its roof stripped and hauled away via snowmobile while conditions allowed in preparation for demolition later in the year.

In April Matt Martin with assistance from Fogg and Sannicandro converted Cabin 10 at Daicey Pond to staff housing for the four Daicey Crew members. This included the addition of a propane range and refrigerator along with a sink, cabinets, and countertops. Fogg constructed a shower house that will provide privacy when the crew uses the park-provided solar showers. This work is temporary and will be removed following the project.

Lastly, in April one of the Daicey Pond twin pine trees which had sadly died and become a hazard tree was felled. Parts of the tree were saved and will be processed and preserved for multiple uses.

Following spring training P. Sannicandro and the Daicey crew moved to the campground and the crew received chainsaw training conducted by Sannicandro. The crew began jacking and leveling Cabin No. 3, and installing new concrete disc footings bedded in Park-sourced gravel, adding new 8x8 tamarack posts and 2x6 braces, and replacing multiple rotten log components. They have moved on to similar work on Cabin 1. The crew is waiting for more favorable weather before beginning roof structure work on either cabin.

Enforcement Rangers

Baxter Park held several interviews for an open position overseeing the Chimney Pond/ Roaring Brook campgrounds. Laura Whitney was offered the position and has previous experience in the Park as a seasonal campground ranger - first at Nesowadnehunk then at Abol Campground. Laura is preparing for her law enforcement career and has already passed Phase 1 of online training. Laura is attending the Phase 2 or in-person training starting June 3 in Wells, Maine.

Multiple required training classes for law enforcement staff were held including mental health first aid training, active shooter training, criminal justice information service and security training (CJIS), and mandatory firearms qualifications. Another in-depth training involved the Maine Forest Service Incident Management Team hosted at the BSP headquarters with 40 people from multiple agencies including BSP, MFS, NOAA, EMA, Local Fire & Rescue, DEP, and the BSP Authority. The tabletop scenario involved a fire that started in Baxter Park and department roles, deployments, finance aspects, and legal scenarios were practiced. The Fire plan was also updated for this training.

The Solar Eclipse was an all-work day for Baxter Park Staff. An Incident Action Plan for the Eclipse was developed. Multiple meetings with local, county and state agencies were attended for pre-planning. All the preplanning was a success as visitor numbers were about 50 total for the North and South Park areas and only one incident of an illegal hiking party occurred on the Katahdin Trails. We also had assistance from MASAR volunteers during the solar event.

Park Supervisory/Enforcement Rangers have been dealing with an early AT hiker causing issues in and around the Park since early April when he arrived in the area. He did not have firm plans other than wanting to hike the A.T. and head south. He was informed by staff that the mountain was closed and there would be heavy snow loads on the trail through the 100 Mile Wilderness. Several days later he illegally camped in the Park overnight and tried to summit Katahdin. We had multiple talks with him about staying in town near food and services. He decided to camp at a lean-to on the A.T. until several days later when he ran out of food and went to Millinocket.

Enforcement Rangers have issued several summonses over the last few months for violations including camping illegally in the Park, hiking on closed trails, snowmobiling in the Park on closed roads, snowmobiling in the Park off the Tote Road, and operating unregistered snowmobiles.

The two-week training schedule was revamped to provide more actual hands-on learning for new personnel. Returning staff training time was focused on required certifications and safety training. Rangers

Bruce White and Justine Rumaker did a fantastic job preparing, scheduling, and informing everyone of individual roles in the training process.



Authority Member and Maine Attorney General Aaron Frey speaking to BSP Staff at Spring Training

The annual Earth Day Litter Patrol event was a success, with over 40 volunteers clearing roadside litter from Millinocket to the south entrance of the Park.



During Law Enforcement Memorial Week, Ranger Heath was remembered by Park Staff who attended the Maine Law Enforcement Memorial in Augusta and a small gathering at Ranger Heath's gravesite with family, friends, and retired and active BSP staff.

