



## MEMORANDUM

Date: Jul 9, 2024

To: Baxter State Park Authority

From: Park Director Kevin Adam

**Subject: Park Operations Update June 1 - July 1, 2024 for 7/12/2024 BSPA Meeting**

### Human Resource

The interview process for the Chief Ranger position is ongoing with those selected being scheduled for second interviews.

Recruitment efforts continue for Customer Service Representatives for the Togue Gate as replacement staff will be needed to fill vacancies in September primarily due to students returning to college.

### Finance

Lori Morrison, Director of Administrative Services, has finalized the FY25 Work Program to distribute the annual authorized budget amounts for the second year of the approved FY24-25 biennial budget. The FY25 budget is \$6,051,667.00, representing a 2% increase compared to the FY24 budget. This increase accounts for the overall rise in general operating costs, including Worker's Compensation premium, statewide insurance premiums provided through the Department of Risk Management, personnel and fringe benefits, contractor service rates, motor vehicle costs, and general overhead expenses, such as supplies and utilities.

	<b>FY25 Budget</b>	<b>FY24 Budget</b>	<b>% of change</b>
Personnel	\$ 4,140,392.00	\$ 4,029,358.00	2.8%
All Other	\$ 1,566,265.00	\$ 1,563,104.00	0.2%
Capital	\$ 345,000.00	\$ 340,000.00	1.5%
Total	\$ 6,051,657.00	\$ 5,932,462.00	2.0%

Lori is currently leading the development of the FY26-27 Biennial Budget and holding meetings with department managers and the Park Director to review historical and forecasted expenses and revenue. The ongoing meetings and budget work will continue through July in preparation to meet an August 1, 2024 deadline for submission to the State of Maine Bureau of Budget.

The review, compilation, and submission of data to the State of Maine's Risk Management Division for the renewal of the Tort Liability & Employee Bond policy and the Property and Content Insurance Policies was completed in June. Additionally completed was the MEMIC Workers' Compensation annual payroll that is used for the calculation of the annual premium.

Finance Report: FY24, Q4 – (July 2023 – June 2024)

Revenue:

- \$5,202,579 – -1.1% positive variance over 2023.

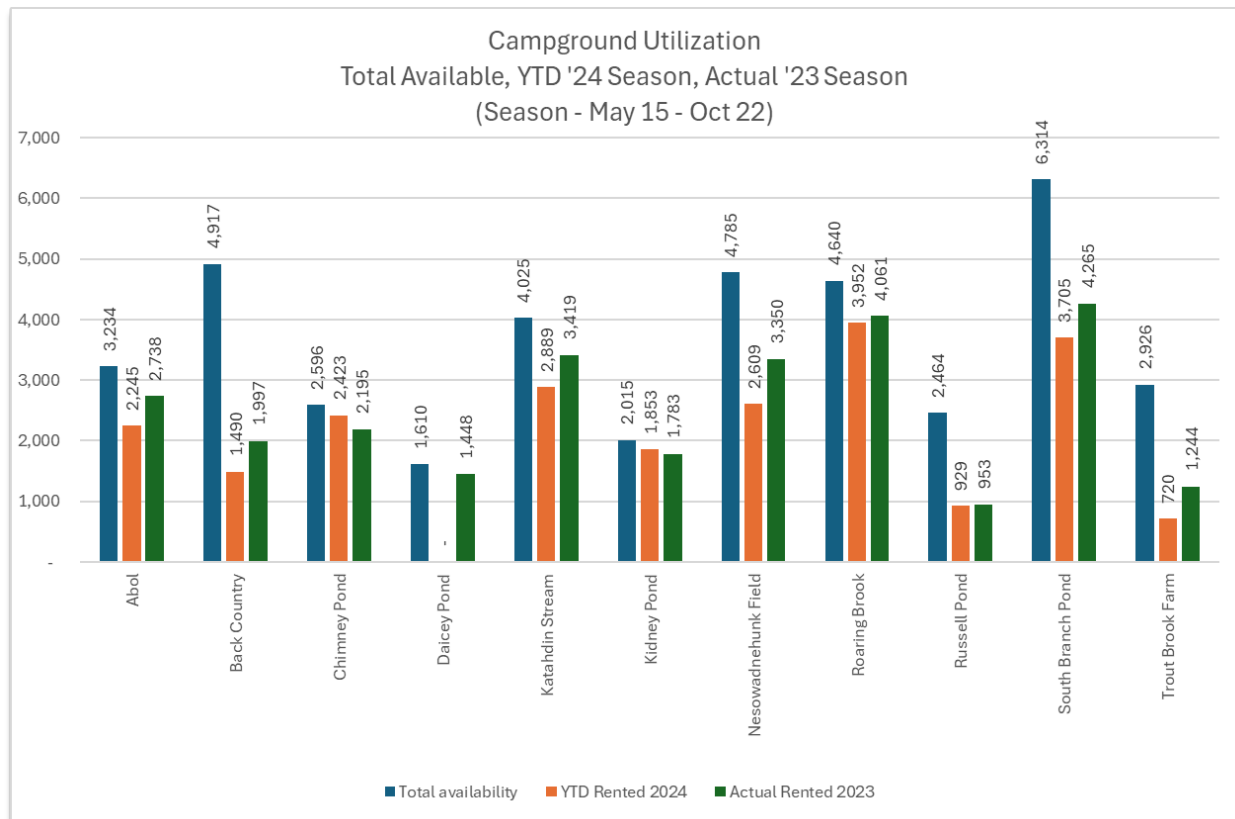
Note: Year-to-date revenue reflects \$168,500.00 received from disbursements for the Daicey Pond Project.

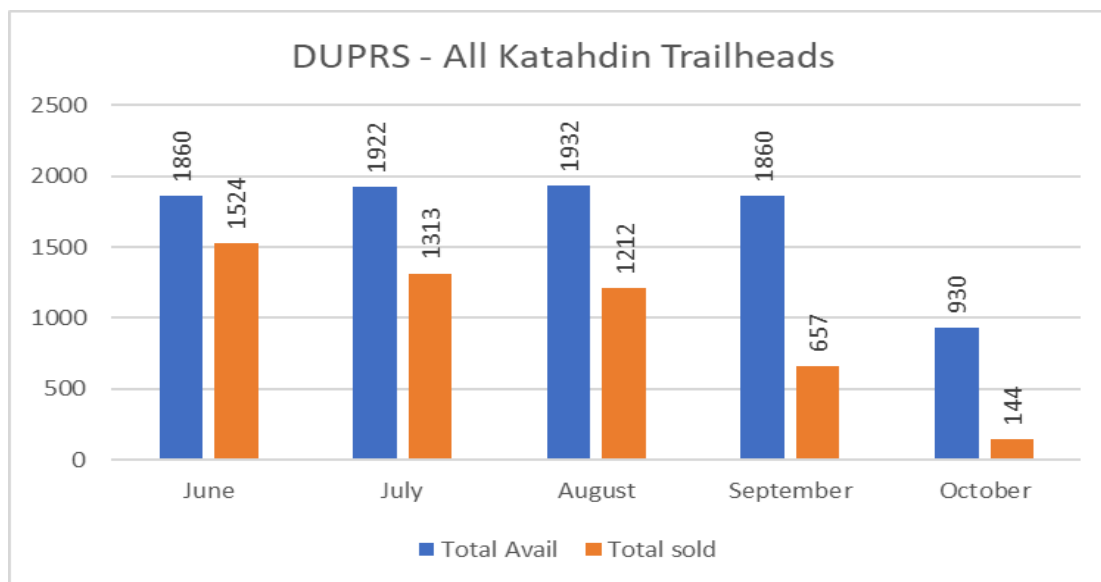
## Expenses:

- Personnel expense: \$3,836,741 - under budget, 8.3% positive variance.  
Note: Vacant positions
- All Other expenses: \$1,296,775 - under budget, 19.7% positive variance.  
Note: Timing of expense
- Capital expense: \$254,798  
Note: 64.5% of the capital allocation was utilized in 2024.

## Reservations

As of June 27, 2024, Park camping volumes have been steady and have surpassed the 2023 utilization levels at Chimney Pond and Kidney Pond. The overall utilization is on track to meet or exceed the 2023 volumes. There is available capacity for Day Use Parking Reservations (DUPRs) at all trailheads on weekdays in July and August. However, as of 6/27/2024, there was limited weekend availability for purchasing DUPRs at all trailheads. From 7/1/23 to 10/1/23, the DUPR no-show rate was 66%.





Finance

### Information and Technology:

No significant updates since the June report.

### Information & Education (I&E)

Sixteen Park staff (and a few volunteers) have made over 2,000 observations in the season's iNaturalist project, including over 500 species of plants, invertebrates, fungi, mammals, birds, and herptiles. Over 50% of the observations have received confirming identifications from staff and the broader iNaturalist community (making them "research grade"), and many of the observations are also submitted to the Appalachian Mountain Club's two research projects in our region.

I&E staff and interns have produced newsletters for staff for the months of June and July. They have also created multiple educational posts for the Park's social media. Park rangers and the Interpretive Interns have been performing "mountain patrols" on Katahdin, providing information and support to hikers, and collecting observations of alpine species for iNaturalist. Nava Tabak provided training on mountain patrol to Rangers based at Katahdin trailheads who are new to the assignment.

(Right: an educational post from the Park's Facebook page in June.)



### Natural Resources and Research

Staff have deployed two stationary acoustic bat detectors in the Park, and are rotating their locations every two weeks. The detectors come from Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries &

Wildlife, who will analyze the data at the end of the season along with similar collections across the state.

Staff and the Interpretive Interns have resumed efforts to mechanically control knapweed (*Centaurea* spp.) and bristly locust (*Robinia hispida*) in several locations in the park. Control efforts that began for both of these species in 2022 are showing good progress with repeated pulling/digging.



Staff from other state agencies have begun seasonal water quality monitoring at South Branch Pond and set out spruce budworm traps throughout the Park (which will be retrieved in the fall). The Park also has a team of geologists for a week at Chimney Pond, as they continue their multi-year project reconstructing the glacial geology of the Park. This team is also producing a 3D model of Katahdin for the Park's Visitor Center that will highlight various geologic features. Park staff and interns assisted volunteers from the Mountain Birdwatch project, who completed 3 surveys of high-elevation breeding birds.

*(Left: interns installing an acoustic bat detector in the Park.)*

## **Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA)**

Contractors transported spruce, fir, and hardwood (for firewood and pulp) from piledown from the winter harvest in the north end of the SFMA, and in mid-June began cutting for this summer/fall harvest in the south end of the SFMA. The primary products expected from this harvest are hardwood sawlogs, veneer, firewood (for the Park), pulp, and spruce/fir sawlogs and studwood.

The Lynx Road is temporarily closed to vehicles due to upcoming trucking for this harvest, and visitors are alerted that Wadleigh Brook Trail passes through areas of active harvest this season. The Brayley Ridge Road is also temporarily closed at Halfway Brook for bridge repairs. Staff and a forestry intern have been performing harvest layouts, forest inventories, and harvest assessments, and have installed water temperature probes and deployed spruce budworm traps for the season. Roadwork planning and maintenance work (by contractors) is ongoing.

## **Maintenance**

*This report includes work done from 6/1/24 thru 7/3/24*

Field Heavy Vehicle and Equipment Technician Frank George and seasonal Maintenance Mechanic Jamie McQuarrie spent a large portion of the last month working on small engine equipment and fleet vehicles in the shop. Notably, they repaired four aging outboard motors used at multiple campgrounds, worked on fire pumps, did a full brake job along with a sensor replacement on Truck No. 19 which is used by the Park's forester in the SFMA, replaced a broken window on the Roaring Brook Campground truck, and mounted a new set of truck tires. They also serviced multiple chainsaws, brush cutters, and generators used throughout the park. In the field, they fixed the exhaust and brake lights on the Park's tri-axel dump truck. Additionally, Frank serviced the batteries on all 16 of the Park's off-grid solar power systems.

Maintenance Coordinator Matt Martin and Carpenter David Fogg replaced roofing panels on the Nesowadnehunk Ranger Cabin which had been blown off this winter. They were assisted by Nesowadnehunk Ranger Sean Sturmer and Roving Ranger Robert Sweinhart. They also made multiple trips to Abol Stream to repair the water line that serves the Park's Field Camp complex. At Kidney Pond, Matt and Dave repaired the drainage system for the Kidney Pond Stream Camp before the Camp was needed by Maine Conservation Corp members working for the Park's trails department. Matt also made a trip to Hemlock Camp in the SFMA to install and service propane appliances.



*Roof Repairs at Nesowadnehunk*

All four Maintenance crew members spent multiple days working along the Park's Tote Rd. This included removing blown-down trees from along the road corridor. These trees were either hauled to locations in the Park to be turned into firewood by campground rangers (estimated to be 8 to 10 cords), or hauled out to where they will be milled in useable lumber for future Park projects. The crew also rock-raked and removed brush from the interior of the Park's road system between Nesowadnehunk and Trout Brook crossing allowing this final portion of the Tote Road to be opened for the season on June 13. Finally, they spent multiple days hauling gravel on the Park's North End from the East Branch pit to repair winter storm damage.

Maintenance Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer worked with Inventory and Supply Associate Deanna Madore and Dead River Company to coordinate the Park's Spring propane deliveries. This includes working with Camp Phoenix so that their delivery was made at the same time. Additionally, Keith coordinated outhouse and septic pumping throughout the Park. Pumping has occurred over three days, with five truck trips and 11,000 gallons pumped and removed from the Park so far this season. 30 outhouses and 3 septic systems have been pumped. All pumping was done by Houlton Septic, removed from the Park, and spread at permitted sites.

On June 25, Keith met with Edward Stamborski of DEP to inspect the Park's Black Brook Service Area. This site was previously permitted by DEP as a spread site for the Park's septic waste but has not been used in the last 5 years. Keith has been working with DEP to surrender this permit,



and the visit with Mr. Stamborski was a final step in this process. The inspection went well and the final paperwork from DEP is forthcoming.

On June 3 and June 4, Keith and BSP Lands Manager Shane Miller met with Stream Restoration Specialist Alex Abbott. Mr. Abbott has vast experience in stream survey and crossing design and was referred to the Park by staff from Katahdin Woods and Waters. Keith and Shane spent June 3 being trained in stream survey techniques while working with Mr. Abbott to survey the area of Bear Brook along the Roaring Brook Rd. This crossing has washed out multiple times in the last two years. Kiah Walker, Natural Resources Program Manager for KWW, joined the group to gain experience with the survey process. On July 9, staff will meet with Mr. Abbott to review the data collected during this survey, after which he will complete a design to restore and improve this crossing. The goal is to improve both the capacity of the crossing and eliminate it as a barrier to fish and other wildlife. June 4 was spent traveling in the Park with Mr. Abbott to take a higher-level look at several other crossings throughout the Park to aid in the prioritization of future projects.



*Stream survey work at the Black Brook Crossing, Roaring Brook Rd.*

## **Daicey Pond Project**

*This report includes work done from 6/1/24 thru 7/3/24*

The Daicey Pond Crew spent the month of June continuing work on Cabin 1, Owl's Nest. The Cabin has been jacked, new posts were leveled, footings have been installed, and the Pond facing wall has been completely rebuilt.

From June 26 until July 3 Keith filled in as site supervisor at Daicey while Crew Leader Paul Sannicandro was on vacation. Work continued on Cabin 1, with Keith and the crew installing new roof purlins, sheathing, insulation, strapping, and finally the new roof deck and waterproof wrap.

In the coming weeks, major work on Cabin 1 will be completed, the roof structure on Cabin 2 will be demolished and redone, and work will begin on Cabin 5. Keith will begin planning volunteer projects at Daicey with outreach happening in the next few weeks.



*Cabin 1 with new front wall and purlins*



*Cabin 1 interior with new roof purlins and sheathing*





*Cabin 1 side view with roof insulation and strapping*

## **Trails**

The month of June was a busy one for the Trails Department as we hosted our annual Trails Day event, attended SAR and Wildland Fire training, rebuilt the Grassy Pond boardwalk, began building the final portions of the OJI reroute, replaced all the string fencing on Katahdin, and welcomed the arrival of the Baxter Youth Conservation Corps, and the Maine Conservation Corps.

## Volunteers

Our annual Adopt-a-Trail Volunteer event kicked off the month of June on Saturday, June 1st, National Trails Day. This year we were joined by trail Adopter volunteers Dave White, father and daughter pair Jim and Anna Liddell, Sue Lussier, Nancy Clark, Charlie Jacobi, and Carla Ritchie. Brennan Turner and the volunteers worked on the final touches on the OJI reroute that will open later in July.



*Brennan with the volunteers at the OJI Trailhead.*



*Volunteers Carla Ritchie and Nancy Clark blaze a tree*



### **BSP Trail Crew**

In between the SAR and Wildland Firefighting training, the trail crew began to disassemble the bog bridging boardwalk that crossed the Grassy Pond outlet along the A.T, approximately 0.4 miles south of Katahdin Stream Campground. This project required the careful disassembly of the existing structure as it had only been built in 2021, and the material was still in good condition. Once the structure was disassembled, we began to rebuild the boardwalk on top of a series of log cribbing, each of which was then loaded with a box made of cedar harvested from the SFMA. These boxes were filled with stone and sand to weigh down the structure and make it more resilient to major flooding events.



*Crew members Brandt and Mia begin disassembling the damaged structure*





to take shape.

*The crib boxes begin*



*Brandt adds the final spikes to our forty-foot-long elevated structure.*





*Approximately eighty feet of bog bridging was replaced adjacent to the elevated section pictured above*

In addition to the Grassy Pond structure, the Trail Crew also began clearing the most overgrown sections of the Dwelley Pond Trail. Finally, the trail crew and the Natural Resource Department worked together in early June to replace all the string fencing on the west side of Katahdin's Tablelands. Looking forward into July, the trail crew will finish constructing the final pieces of the OJI reroute, replace approximately 90 pieces of bog bridging around Sandy Stream Pond, and begin the first of four weeks tackling various projects in the vicinity of Chimney Pond.

### **Baxter Youth Conservation Corps**

The Baxter Youth Conservation Corps (BYCC) arrived in mid-June and has begun assisting the BSP trail crew with a myriad of tasks. The BYCC is a program hosted by the Friends of Baxter State Park and is a paid trail crew that consists of a rotating cast of teens from the surrounding region. They spent their first two weeks in the second half of the month brushing the Kettle Ponds Trail and cleaning drainages on the Abol and Chimney Pond trails. They are now working with the BSP Trail Crew to finalize the OJI reroute.

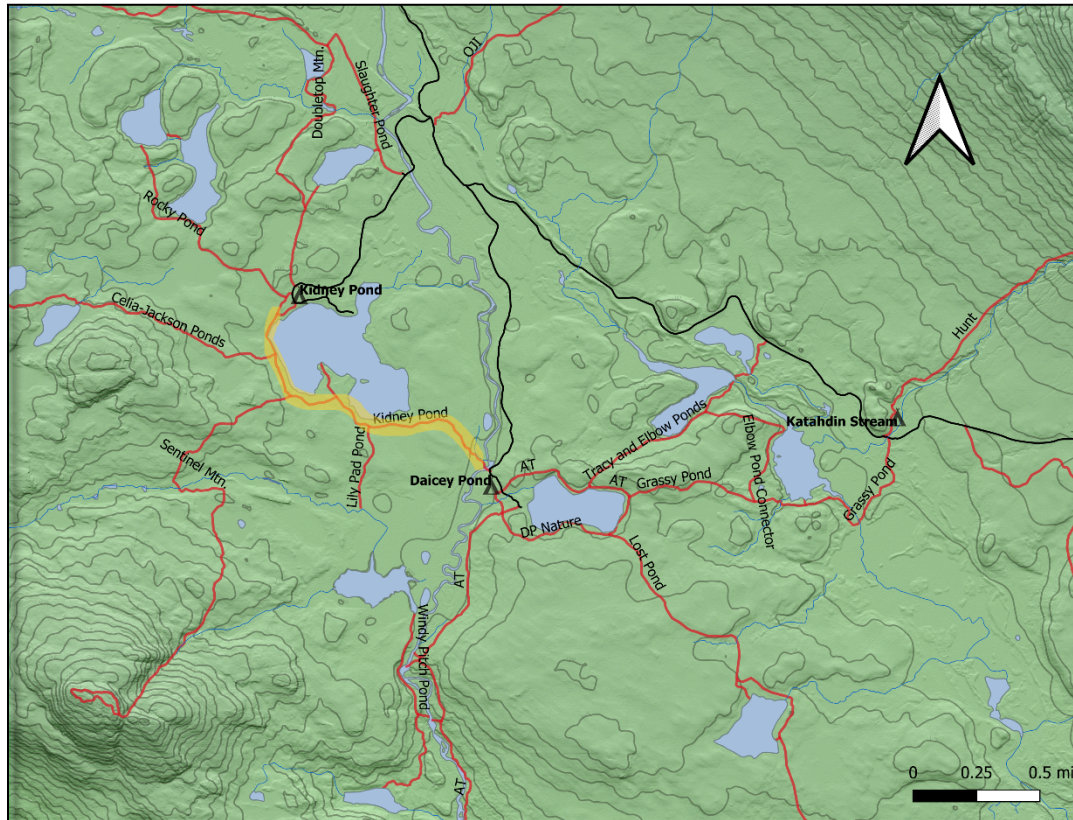
### **The Maine Conservation Corps**

The 3-person trail crew from the Maine Conservation Corps arrived in late June. They will be with us for eight weeks to clear blowdowns and brushing back overgrown trail corridors in the north end of the Park. During their first week of work, the MCC trail crew cleared the 5 Ponds Loop and Trout Brook Mountain trails. They are currently finalizing the improvements to the Dwelley Pond Trail and will begin clearing the Wassataquoik Lake Trail in early/mid-July.



## **Miscellaneous Updates**

The Sentinel Mountain Trail that connects Kidney Pond and Daicey Pond Campgrounds has been renamed the Kidney Pond Trail. This new naming scheme will reduce confusion and sign clutter. Signs, staff, and cartographers have been updated.



*The trail highlighted in yellow has been renamed the “Kidney Pond Trail”.*

## **Field Operations and Law Enforcement**

The Park's newest Enforcement Ranger Laura Whitney completed Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the mandatory Maine Criminal Justice Academy requirements. Laura is now working on her 80 hours of field training and will qualify with firearms in the next few weeks with help from the Maine Warden Service Firearms team.

Introductory Search and Rescue class was taught to new staff and National Park Service Katahdin Woods and Water Chief Ranger Ben Polloni attended. The class concluded with the Maine Forest Service Aviation branch and the Maine Army National Guard



126th Blackhawk at Caribou Pit for basic helicopter crew member safety briefs as well as an overview of the various capabilities of each aircraft.

Law enforcement and maintenance staff responded rapidly to a septic truck spill on the Park tote road. A spill cap loosened up and came off and mostly liquid spilled into the middle of the road before it was noticed and stopped. A clean-up plan was quickly put together and DEP was notified and approved of the plan. The rapid response had the road open the same morning the accident happened.

This late spring Maine Forest Service Aviation Division assisted with getting supplies that we could not haul into Russell Pond because of poor winter conditions. This will allow the Park to do some much-needed construction work at Russell Pond.

Baxter State Park Law Enforcement staff attended firearm training with the Maine Warden Service. Rangers have noticed an increase in vehicle lockouts this year. Rangers have assisted visitors with four locked vehicles thus far this season.

There have been a few motor vehicle accidents along with flat tires - incidents assisted by BSP staff. One crash shut down traffic on the Tote Road between Abol and Katahdin Stream Campgrounds for over an hour as the vehicle was completely disabled after hitting a rock jutting out and breaking the front axle.



*Young Bull Moose by Foster Field.*

There have been several search and rescue events in the Park. These have occurred on multiple trails including Blueberry Ledges Trail, the old/winter Abol slide, Double Top Trail, Saddle Trail, Chimney Pond Trail, and Abol Summer Trail.

Campground Rangers and Supervisors have completed the annual fire ring inspection at established campsites in the park to meet the Maine Forest Service requirements.

**Law Enforcement Rangers issued a summons and or warning for the following violations in Baxter State Park:**

Camping in BSP without a reservation  
Having a dog in BSP.  
Failure to register upon entering the Park  
Hiking a closed trail  
Having a firearm in the game sanctuary on the summit of Katahdin  
Exceeding campsite capacity.  
Using worms as bait in ALO water.

**Additional Law Enforcement and Operational tasks conducted by Enforcement and Supervisor Rangers:**

Conducted several law enforcement fishing details - checked licenses, observed fishermen  
Cleared Park Tote Road from winter blowdowns as the road dried out.  
Showed the new Park Services Manager the field facilities.  
Installed another trail camera at Katahdin Lake Camps.  
Escorted winter firewood delivery to locations in the Park.  
Escorted propane truck to locations in the Park.  
Installed a new dock at South Branch Pond.  
Worked on septic issues in campgrounds Park-wide.  
Put the Patrol boat in on Matagamon Lake.