



MEMORANDUM

Date: December 13, 2024

To: Baxter State Park Authority

From: Park Director Kevin Adam

Subject: Park Operations Update October to present

Finance

Finance Report: FY25, Q1 – (July 2024 – September 2024)

Revenue:

- \$2,157,134-- -41% positive variance over 2024.

Note: Year-to-date revenue variance: \$105,000.00 dedicated revenue for the Dacey Pond Project, 2024 SOM Trust Revenue recorded in Q1, and increased revenue generated by the Park.

Expenses:

- Personnel expense: \$1,416,365 - under budget, 5.5% positive variance.
Note: Vacant positions
- All Other expenses: \$459,697 - under budget, 3.8% positive variance.
Note: All Other expenses tracked as expected for Q1
- Capital expense: \$154,573

Note: 30% of the capital allocation was utilized in Q1.

Dacey Pond Project Budget through November 30, 2024:

Dacey Pond Project Budget Detail through 11/30/2024			
	Actual through 11/30/2024	Project Budget	Remaining Budget
Revenue			
Endowment	\$273,500.00	\$273,500.00	\$ -
BSP	\$ 74,852.71	\$270,593.00	\$ 195,740.29
Total Revenue	\$348,352.71	\$544,093.00	\$ 195,740.29
Expense			
*Personnel and Fringe	\$184,802.20	\$299,618.62	\$ 114,816.42
All Other and Capital			
Building Materials	\$125,286.05		
Minor Equipment	\$ 19,076.27		
Safety supplies	\$ 1,172.95		
Supplies	\$ 15,458.22		
Waste Containers	\$ 2,557.02		
Total All Other and Capital	\$163,550.51	\$244,474.38	\$ 80,923.87
Total Expense	\$348,352.71		
Net Revenue	\$ 0.00		
Remaining Budget			\$ 195,740.29
Financial Note:			
Personnel Expense includes Project Superintendent, SOM Conservation Aid, Tri-State Staffing			

Human Resource

Recruitment was a primary focus during the 2024 season, with increased vacancies for positions like customer representative and campground ranger. Reasons for resignations included internal promotions, lateral transfers, external opportunities, personal circumstances, and probationary issues. Baxter actively seeks employee feedback to identify areas for improvement and enhance retention.

2024 Recruitment Activity						
Position	Seasonal Vacancies	Internal Transfer	Internal Promotion	External Hire	End of Season Vacancies	Total # of Positions
Customer Representative	10	2		7	1	14
Campground Ranger	6	1	1	4		24
Supervisor Enforcement Ranger	2		1		1	3
Business Administrator	1			1		1
Trail Crew Leader	1			1		1
Trail Crew Laborer	3			3		3
Park Services Manager	1			1		1
Conservation Aid Construction Crew Member	4	1		3		4
Building Maintenance Superintendent (Daicey Pond)	1		1			1
Total	29	4	3	20	2	52

Reservations

Reservations Subcommittee:

A Reservations Subcommittee was established to evaluate the reservation processes to enhance visitor experience and improve the overall system. In addition to Advisory members, the Park staff includes Lori Morrison, Bryan Buhler, and Katrina Kinkead. The subcommittee convened on October 4, 2024, and continued to meet biweekly through November.

The subcommittee's goal was to review a prioritized list of processes, including DUPRs, access prior to camping check-in, rolling reservations and extensions, and the online reservation start time. Initially, the group focused on DUPRs and presented a proposal for changes to the BSPA on December 20th.

Reservation Software Upgrade:

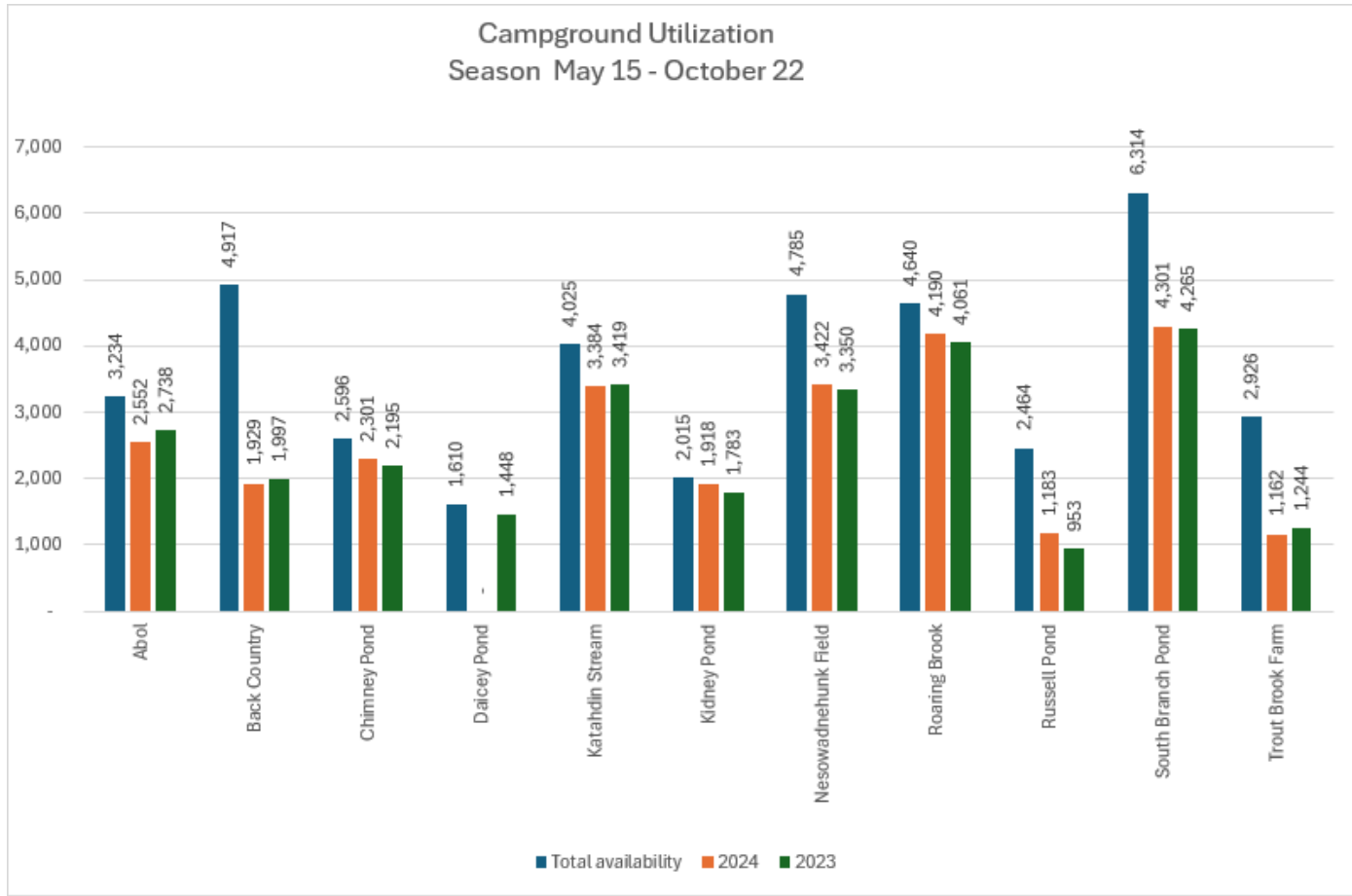
We've modernized and streamlined the reservation system to make it faster, more reliable, and easier for everyone to use. By upgrading our underlying software, improving how we manage data, and refining the overall look and navigation, we've created a smoother experience for visitors and a simpler, more efficient system for our staff. These enhancements ensure that booking and managing reservations at Baxter State Park is now more user-friendly, responsive, and ready to support future improvements.

The system has been completely rewritten and revised due to outdated languages, runtimes, frameworks, and server buildpacks. This update addressed technical debt and improved the user interface. Previously, there was no caching apart from browser caching, but now users receive notifications when updates occur. A new cache database has been added, reducing the load on the main database and increasing site speed.

Database procedures have also been optimized, preventing the need for an expensive database server upgrade

Camping Utilization:

The chart below illustrates that campground reservations for 2024 were remarkably stable and aligned closely with previous years' utilization rates. However, one notable exception to these trends was the closure of Daicey Pond, which resulted in a significant impact on the overall annual totals. In contrast, several campgrounds—namely Chimney Pond, Kidney Pond, Nesowadnehunk Field, Roaring Brook, Russell Pond, and South Branch Pond—experienced higher levels of utilization than what was recorded in 2023.

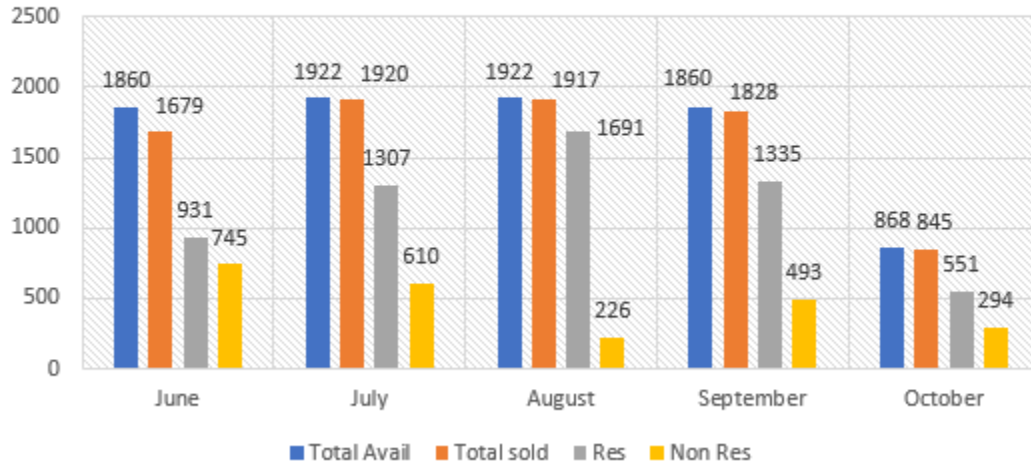


Day Use Parking Pass (DUPR) Utilization:

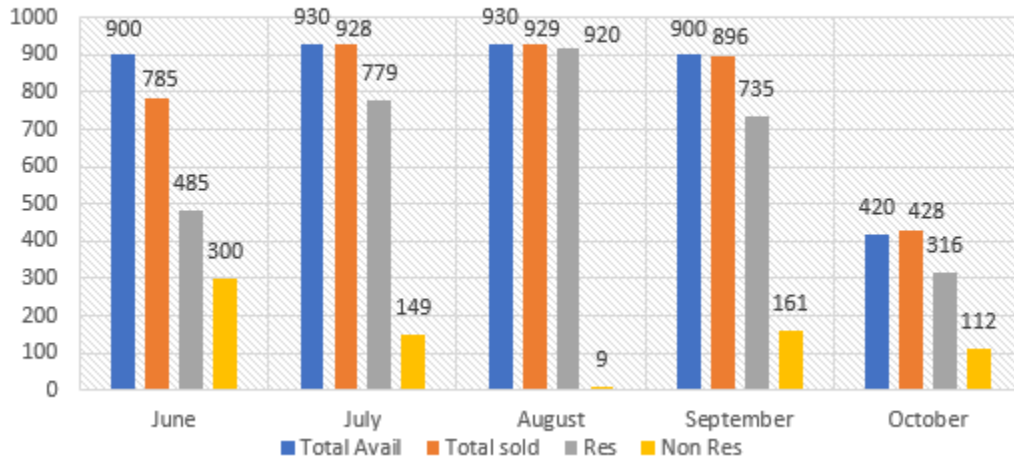
DUPRs became available for purchase on April 1, 2024, for dates from June 1, 2024, to October 15, 2024. Due to the season closure of the Katahdin and Traveler Loop Trails on October 14, 2024, refunds were issued for passes sold for October 15, 2024. As of October 14, 97% of the available DUPRs had been sold for the season. The no-show rate for 2024 was 64%; however, an unknown number of those passes were reissued to visitors who were waiting in line. The monthly statistics are as follows:

- Total available: 8,432
- Total sold: 8,189
- Total sold to residents: 71%
- Total sold to non-residents: 29%.

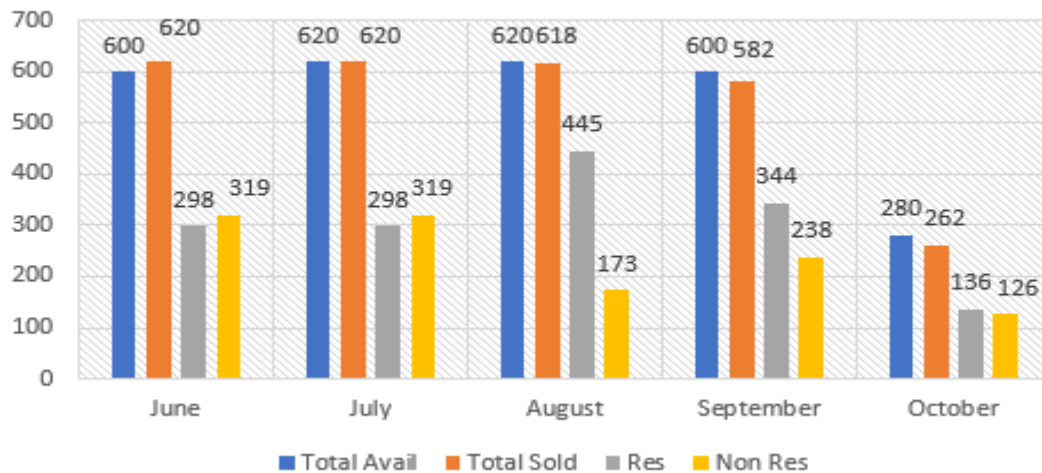
All Trailhead DUPR 6/1/2024 - 10/14/2024

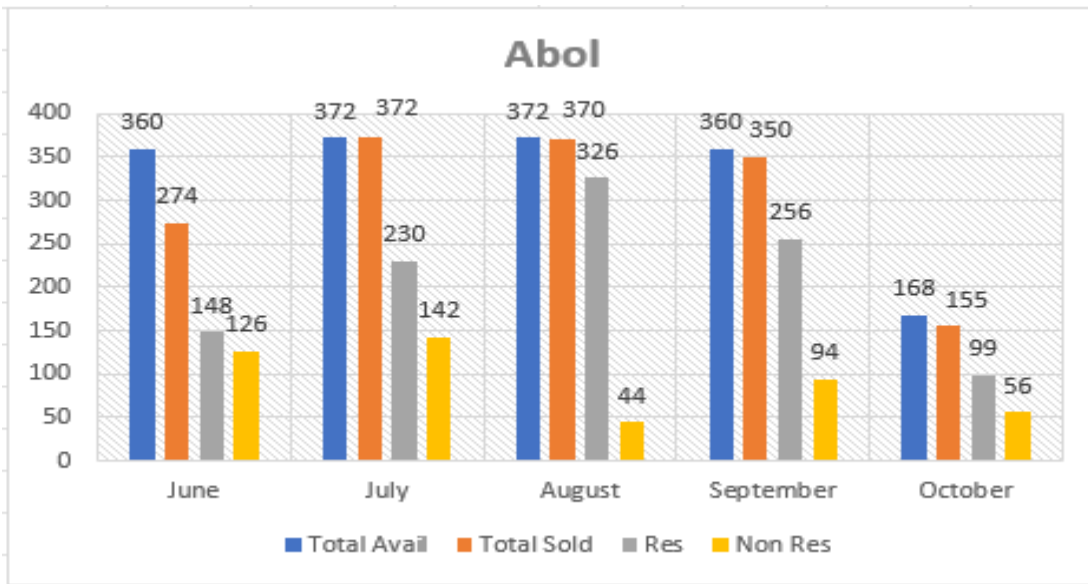


Roaring Brook



Katahdin Stream





Winter Lottery:

The winter lottery took place on November 1, 2024, with commercial applications accepted on the next business day, Monday, November 4, 2024. The following Lottery data compares reservations processed in 2023 and 2022.

Winter Lottery			
11/1/24 Lottery Winter Reservations	11/1/24 Total Reservations	In-Person Attendance	Received by Mail, processed on 11/1/24
2024	141	89	52
2023	174	91	83
2022	83	56	27

11/2/24 Commercial Use Permits 11/4 [2024]	11/2/24 Total Reservations 11/4 [2024]
2024	3
2023	13
2022	9

11/1/24-11/2/24	Revenue
2024	\$ 77,362
2023	\$ 88,779
2022	\$ 73,147

Information and Technology

The primary focus of the IT and Network Infrastructure department was to complete seasonal projects and collect Park computer equipment for winter storage.

Information & Education (I&E)

In the fall I&E staff provided training to various audiences. Katie Fink (Interpretive Intern) presented a program for staff about alpine plant adaptations at the fall staff meeting; Cassandra Knudsen (Interpretive specialist) created a new slide show on BSP's history and natural features and presented it to 4th and 5th-grade students at Bangor Christian School in November; Cassandra and Nava Tabak (Natural Resources Director) provided a customized training for the staff of the Maine Tourism Association, who staff the Maine Visitor Information Centers across the state and often get questions about the Park and hiking Katahdin and the Appalachian Trail. In October, Cassandra Knudsen completed the 10-month Maine Master Naturalist course.

With the close of the summer/fall camping season, staff are focused on finalizing new education products that have been in development over the summer, including a 3-fold brochure on BSP's geology, a fact sheet on reptiles and amphibians, a final update to the Wildnotes publication, and an updated slide show for the monitor in the lobby of Park headquarters. Cassandra Knudsen also began working with Friends of BSP on the production of the 2026 BSP calendar. Nava Tabak has been working with a contractor to update the Park's digital maps, and compiling input from staff for an update of the National Geographic map that includes BSP. The Park's shoulder season also demanded many posts on the website and social media about changing trail conditions, entrance gate schedules, internal park gates (related to road conditions and hunting seasons), and weather-related changes to Park access. Staff have also collaborated with Reservations staff on communications related to the Park's changing fees, the winter camping lottery and general winter visitation materials, and expected changes to the parking reservations process.

Park rangers and the I&E staff and interns continued performing "mountain patrols" on Katahdin into October, providing information and support to hikers, and collecting observations of alpine species. In total, 14 staff completed 73 mountain patrols between June and October, including over 40 visits to Baxter Peak. This effort represents a 28% increase over the 2023 season.

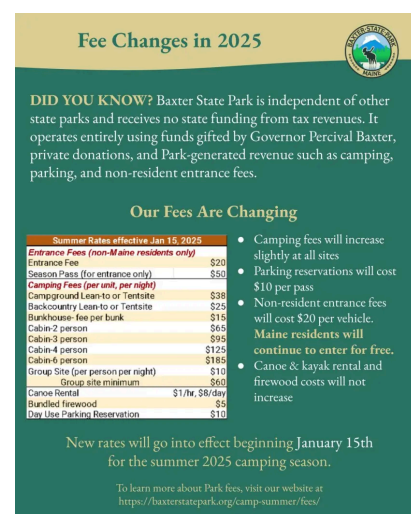
In 2025 the Park intends to host one Environmental Steward through the Maine Conservation Corps' Americorps program, who will focus on interpretive work and projects for the Park. Candidate recruitment has begun, and supervisory training for Park staff and interviews will commence shortly.

Natural Resources and Research

At the fall meeting, staff celebrated the season-long project to submit species observations across the Park to iNaturalist. Fifteen staff from across Park duty stations (and a few volunteers) populated an iNaturalist project with nearly 4,000 observations. Many of these observations were submitted to the Appalachian Mountain Club's two plant phenology projects. These observations included a diversity of taxa, including over 800 identified species, which represents a notable addition to information on the Park's biota.

Colby Bosley-Smith, a PhD candidate at the University of Maine, Orono, will have a second article published on her research in the 2013 Tornado area of the SFMA. Following her publication on the "exclosure effect" and tree regeneration in salvaged and non-salvaged tornado areas in 2023, this analysis focused on the understory vegetation response to these same conditions (and will be published in the journal Applied Vegetation Science).

A research project led by John Hagan of Our Climate Common, and funded by the Collaborative Forest Research Unit, included the SFMA in their ground-truthing of a remote sensing model to



Fee Changes in 2025

DID YOU KNOW? Baxter State Park is independent of other state parks and receives no state funding from tax revenues. It operates entirely using funds gifted by Governor Percival Baxter, private donations, and Park-generated revenue such as camping, parking, and non-resident entrance fees.

Our Fees Are Changing

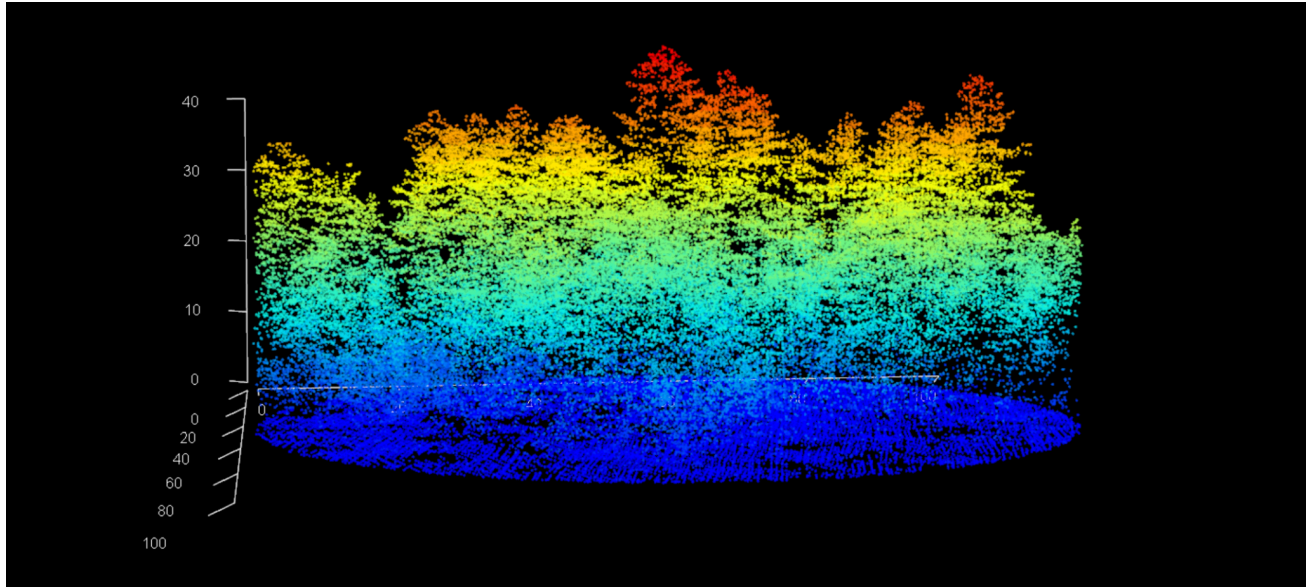
Summer Rates effective Jan 15, 2025	
Entrance Fees (non-Maine residents only)	
Entrance Fee	\$20
Season Pass (for entrance only)	\$50
Camping Fees (per unit, per night)	
Campground Lean-to or Tent site	\$38
Backcountry Lean-to or Tent site	\$25
Backhouse fee per bunk	\$15
Cabin/2 person	\$65
Cabin/3 person	\$95
Cabin/4 person	\$125
Cabin/6 person	\$185
Group Site (per person per night)	\$10
Group site minimum	\$60
Canoe Rental	\$1/hr, \$8/day
Bundled firewood	\$5
Day Use Parking Reservation	\$10

- Camping fees will increase slightly at all sites
- Parking reservations will cost \$10 per pass
- Non-resident entrance fees will cost \$20 per vehicle. Maine residents will continue to enter for free.
- Canoe & kayak rental and firewood costs will not increase

New rates will go into effect beginning January 15th for the summer 2025 camping season.

To learn more about Park fees, visit our website at <https://baxterstatepark.org/camp/summer/fees/>

identify late-successional forest in Maine. Researchers used their LiDAR-generated map to locate extremely large pines (one greater than 150' tall) and post-fire 100-year-old poplar stands with old-growth characteristics in the SFMA. They also found that planted Norway spruce stands near Trout Brook had late-successional characteristics. Baxter State Park as a whole (including the SFMA) is growing more late-successional forest than we are harvesting- a very unusual condition in the unorganized territories of Maine. They have published a report on their work, and will next develop guidelines for managing late-successional forests.



A LiDAR image of the large pine trees located in the SFMA by John Hagan's research team

Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA)

Harvest operations in management units along Bobcat Road have continued without a fall “mud season” interruption. Small volumes of hardwood hygrade and tonewood were sold, along with the primary products of spruce/fir sawlogs and studwood and hardwood pulp. Tamarack sawlogs and firewood were cut for the Park's use. Contractors A&A Brochu completed a partial replacement of the bridge crossing Halfway Brook on Brayley Ridge Road.



Red spruce tonewood logs

The SFMA Advisory Committee held its fall meeting on November 1st in the south end of the SFMA. Committee members were joined by former Park Director and Resource Manager Jensen Bissell and District Forester Lauren Ouellette. The group visited management units to provide input on a first thinning in a fire-origin spruce/fir stand that occurs on a somewhat unusual site in the SFMA, future experimental treatments to be done by the Maine Adaptive Silviculture Network (MASN), and areas harvested in the 1980s

with restoration need and early efforts. They also briefly discussed a site where beaked hazelnut appear to be suppressing desirable forest regeneration. Staff provided the Advisory with updates on harvest operations, SFMA finance, and the status of the draft herbicide policy, which is being considered by the BSP Authority. Barrie Brusilla described the public tour of the Austin Cary Lot (which took place in September), the status of operations (no harvest in the near future, continued invasive species control), and the group briefly discussed the ongoing issues with road maintenance and improvements on Long Reach Lane. Finally, there was a discussion about the status of spruce budworm (SBW) populations and the potential impacts to the SFMA. Young fir stands that were recently thinned may be the most vulnerable to SBW, and there was general consensus that due to the many years of thoughtful management in the SFMA and large-scale changes to the forested landscape in the region since the last major SBW outbreak, there is no change in management necessary in the SFMA at this time.



Lands Manager Shane Miller discussing a management unit's silviculture with the SFMA Advisory Committee.

The Cooperative Forestry Research Unit (CFRU), of which BSP is a member, held its fall meeting. Members of the cooperative agreed not to solicit grant applications in the coming year. Instead, CFRU staff will focus on managing the many existing grant projects, and with support from members will attend to important administrative needs for the organization, including an update of the organization's prospectus and its fee structure.

Maintenance

As the camping season came to a close, Maintenance personnel carried out and supported multiple projects throughout the Park.

Maintenance Coordinator Matt Martin oversaw the delivery of lean-to materials to Katahdin Stream and Nesowadnehunk Campgrounds. This included multiple loads of sawn cedar logs and the coordination of the delivery and unloading of roofing materials and other necessary items. Martin also completed the necessary brush and tree clearing, earth and concrete work, and pole installation for the new solar installation at the Visitor Center, which is set to be completed this spring.

Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer worked with road contractor A&A Brochu to replace the 60' bridge deck, including both the transverse timbers and the wear layer. The crossing was closed for multiple days during the replacement project but was reopened ahead of schedule.

The Maintenance Department also worked with A&A Brochu on multiple areas of road resurfacing and cross-drain culvert replacements. Over 1,000 cubic yards of gravel were hauled and distributed along the Tote Road. Culvert work took place between Ledge Falls and the Dwelly Pond Trailhead. Four old or otherwise damaged steel culverts and one clogged culvert were replaced, and two cross-drain culverts were added. Additionally, the Maintenance Department and contractors stockpiled gravel near the Park's south gate by hauling from Nesowadnehunk Pit.

Keith has reviewed draft plans for the restoration and improvement of the road crossing at Bear Brook. These plans were prepared by Stream Restoration Specialist Alex Abbott. After soliciting input from other staff, questions and comments were sent back to Mr. Abbott. After the plans are finalized, Keith will begin

working on a project estimate. Three other crossing restoration plans are currently being worked on by Mr. Abbott.

Field Heavy Vehicle and Equipment Technician Frank George oversaw the return of the Park's seasonal vehicle fleet. With the assistance of Maintenance Mechanic Jamie McQuarrie, each vehicle was gone over, routine maintenance and repairs were made and more extensive repair needs were inventoried and planned for the spring. Frank then transitioned to prepping the Park's snowmobile fleet, bringing each sled into the shop to do routine maintenance and completing more extensive repairs that were inventoried in the spring.

The Maintenance Department did additional annual work to prepare the park for winter, winterizing buildings throughout the Park, checking winterization work done by others, overseeing propane deliveries, cleaning boilers, covering air condition units, prepping snow removal equipment, and more.

The Park has received two new pickup trucks as a part of its planned capital spending. One ½-ton truck will be assigned to Law Enforcement and is currently being fitted with lights, radio, and other necessary equipment by a Park contractor. One ¾-ton truck, soon to be fitted with lights, a radio and other equipment will be assigned to the Maintenance Department.

Daicey Pond Project

The Daicey Pond crew and Supervisory Carpenter David Fogg finished the rebuild of Cabin 2. This rebuild was made more difficult due to the challenging location of Cabin 2, which required each log to be moved via a high-line cabin downhill to the cabin location. As the Thanksgiving holiday and winter weather

approached the crew completed the rebuild of all remaining roof structures which included Cabins 6, 7, and 8. The project has now transitioned into a winter mode where the crew will move back

through each cabin completing an extensive list of remaining work. This will include metal roof installation, woodstove connections, door construction and installation, exterior cedar shingle work, interior Permachink, and interior partition walls. As spring approaches and the weather improves windows will be installed and exterior paint and Permachink will be completed.



Cabin 6

Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer believes the project is on schedule for the campground to reopen as usual in Spring 2025, while also understanding that winter work particularly in the backcountry can be unpredictable. As the crew goes cabin to cabin this winter it will focus on one side of the campground before transitioning to the other. This will be done so that in the event of a delay, one

end of the campground can be opened while the other has its remaining punchlist completed.



Cabin 8



Cabin 4

Trails

During the first two weeks of October, the Trail Crew was scheduled to begin finalizing the bridge project and adding final touches to the tread construction associated with the realigned portion of the first tenth of a mile of the OJI Trail. This plan was interrupted by Hurricane Helene. The devastation it wrought in the southern Appalachians required Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner to make an emergency trip to his family home in western North Carolina. Without being present to oversee the project, he tasked the Trail Crew with clearing blowdowns and maintaining the trail corridor of SFMA trails. The crew completed a thorough blowdown patrol of the southern halves of the Frost Pond and Wadleigh Brook Trails.



Crew leader Emily Long practices face cuts on a stump.

Upon Brennan's return to work at the beginning of the second week of October, the trail crew returned to the OJI realignment project. This was also the final week of the Trail Crew season, requiring a portion of the week to be spent de-rigging. Hand tools were serviced, camping gear was cleaned and inventoried, the crew vehicle was cleaned, and uniforms were turned in. The crew is prepped and ready to complete the realignment project with the BYCC next season.

The second half of October was Crew Leader Emily Long's last two weeks of the season. During that time Trail Specialist Kris English, Emily, and Brennan worked on the OJI project, cleared the winter hauling trail intended for use for the Katahdin Stream Falls bridge replacement project, provided felling training to Emily and Enforcement Ranger Laura Whitney, scouted and reviewed several of next season's construction projects. Small tasks such as driving rebar through bog bridging in flood plains to "harden" some structures against flood waters were also completed.

During this time Brennan worked with Maintenance Mechanic Jamie McQuarrie to begin transporting bridge material to various staging destinations; spruce and cedar logs and bog bridging were staged at Togue Beach, Roaring Brook Campground, Abol Campground, and the OJI Trailhead. Additionally, 16 8x8x12 hemlock beams have been staged at the Elbow Pond Parking area for the 2025 elevated boardwalk repair project.

After Emily's departure, Kris and Brennan turned their focus to assisting the Daicey Pond Construction Project. The Trails Department assisted with the jacking and leveling of cabins 7 and 8, flooring on cabin 2, framing of the porch on cabin 7, and roofing. During this last week of November, Kris and Brennan stacked the firewood at Trails End, and planned volunteer events for the summer season.



The first of many loads of bridge material

Brennan reviewed all staff-submitted trail reports and sign requests to outline this winter's sign-making plan. There are currently 29 wood-routed sign replacements under construction including the Marston/Mt. Coe trail network, the Baxter Peak sign, and various replacements for signs requested by staff. More are likely to be added to this list over the next few weeks. Kris has begun the design and construction of these signs.

Other work completed by the Trails Department at the end of this period included servicing/repairing log hauling sleds for winter hauling, stacking firewood at the Trails End cabin, digitizing weekly reports from the summer 2024 season, and West Branch Lands bridges were shoveled before the rain storm in hopes of preventing ice-doming of the bridges.

Lean-to at Cabin 3, Nesowadneunk

Operations

Baxter State Park Law Enforcement and Supervisory Rangers accomplished several projects and trainings in addition to duties associated with the busy summer camping season. Among the projects and trainings were portable fire pump training, State mandated annual law enforcement case law training, re-establishing the viewshed at



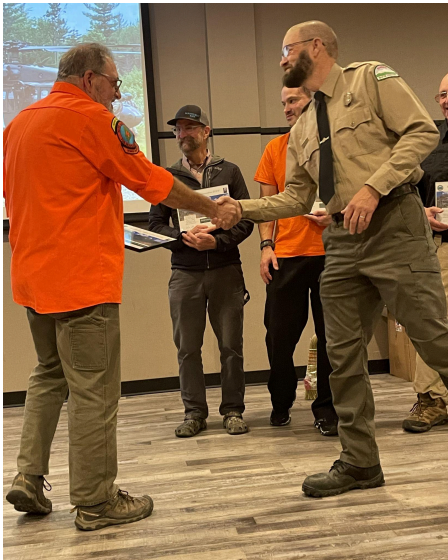
Mountain View, lean-to construction at Nesowadneunk Campsite 3, new tent platforms at The Birches, seasonal shut down of buildings and water systems, conducting staff evaluations, brush pile burns at Nesowadneunk, Rum Brook, and East Branch pits, an inspection of boundary lines, installation of winter signs on Tote Road and park access points, construction of new sled shed ramps, and winterization of seasonal equipment. On October 13th the Park hosted the Mitchell Scholars, who assisted in campsite

stabilization and restoration at Roaring Brook.

Inventory and Property Associate II Deanna Madore has been populating a project list based on campground, gatehouse, and Nature Center requisition books. Deanna has been handling the turning in /inventorying/cleaning of seasonal gear, issuance of winter gear, and working with Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer to coordinate propane and fuel deliveries. Law Enforcement Ranger Justine Rumaker has been working with Deanna to plan the 2025 spring meeting, which requires the coordination of many presenters and supervisors from all of Baxter's departments.



District Ranger Paul Farrington has diligently coordinated contracted firewood deliveries to campgrounds in preparation for the 2025 season. Staff and volunteers have spent considerable time stacking the firewood. Our volunteers are a valuable part of the Baxter State Park team and the Park was able to honor their work at the park's annual volunteer banquet. This event, held on November 3, was expertly coordinated by Office Specialist I Georgia Manzo and Supervisory Ranger Bruce White.



Baxter State Park Volunteers are honored at the annual Volunteer Banquet

The beginning of the general firearms season led to increased hunting and trapping patrols by the Park's Law Enforcement Rangers. Interior Park gates were closed at the Sanctuary line on the Roaring Brook Road, the base of Abol Hill, and at Wadleigh Brook in the Park's north to assist in delineating the Hunting and No Hunting zones. Violations issued during this reporting period include failure to tend a trap, destruction of structure/monument, marker, or notice, imprudent speed, shooting from a motor vehicle, motor vehicle accidents, unregistered vehicle, trespass, and camping in un-designated area/camping without a permit.

Winter camping began December 1st however snow amounts vary throughout the park. The gates at Togue Pond and Matagamon are currently closed until more snow allows the opening of the snowmobile trails.



Type 6 Engine Training from Maine Forest Service



Fire Pump Training

Appalachian Trail:

Appalachian Trail (AT) hiker registrations were on par with 2023 until the Katahdin Massif and Traveler Loop were closed for the season on October 14th. The Park recorded 2,335 AT hikers through October 14th, compared to 2023 which saw 2,383 hikers registering. Supervisory Ranger Bruce White coordinated a meeting on October 25th between Baxter State Park, the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, and the Monson Visitor Center to review the 2024 AT season. This “lessons learned” session was insightful to all who attended and was well organized by Bruce, with the biggest takeaway that communication between all interested parties would remain paramount.

Search and Rescue:

Eight Search and Rescue (SAR) incidents occurred during the reporting period. Locations of recent SAR incidents include the Hunt Trail, Foss and Knowlton Trail, Chimney Pond, Dudley Trail, Trout Mountain, and Katahdin Stream campground.

MASAR teams and agencies who have provided assistance to the Baxter State Park SAR program were recognized at the annual volunteer banquet. These agencies include Millinocket Fire and Rescue, Maine Forest Service, Maine Warden Service, and the 126th Aviation Regiment of the Maine Army National Guard.

District Ranger Rob Tice and Chief Ranger Matt McGuire have outlined the 2025 SAR team coverage calendar and are working with MDI SAR to coordinate a multi-team winter training in the park, as well as staff training that will focus on basic winter mountaineering and technical rescue skills.