



Baxter State Park Authority Meeting
10 am, Friday, October 4, 2024, Kidney Pond, Baxter State Park

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

Attendees:

Baxter State Park Authority: Chair and MFS Director Patty Cormier, Attorney General Aaron Frey

Assistant Attorney General: Lauren Parker

BSP Staff: Director Kevin Adam, Director of Administrative Services Lori Morrison, Natural Resources Director Nava Tabak, Chief Ranger Matt McGuire, Maintenance & Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer, Park Services Manager Bryan Buhler, Business Administrator Jessica Wheaton, Enforcement Ranger Laura Whitney, Interpretive Specialist Cassandra Knudsen, Ranger Pete Sweeney, Office Specialist Georgia Manzo

BNY Wealth: BSP Endowment Fund Manager Michael Daley

BSP Advisory: Chair Carl Carlson, Vice Chair Carla Ritchie, Sam Wright, Lauren Jacobs, Brant Miller, Charlie Jacobi, R. Michael White, Ed Pontbriand, Julianna Hansen, Rick Bray

SFMA Advisory: John Bryant

Baxter Park Wilderness Fund Trust: Trustee Chip Weickert

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

Other Guests: Herb Fithian, Cameron Trubey, Rupert White, Mike Perry, Kent Fletcher, Caroll Minnehan, Paula Minnehan, Vanessa Lee

Chair Cormier called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. with a welcome and introduction.

Consideration of the July 12, 2024, BSPA meeting minutes: AG Aaron Frey moved to approve the minutes, and the motion was seconded by Chair Patty Cormier. No discussion. Motion carried, 2-0.

Introduction-Chief Ranger Matt McGuire: Director Kevin Adam introduced Matt who outlined his 26 years of experience as a field ranger, field supervisor, and assistant regional manager for southern region state parks. Matt has 20 years of experience mountaineering in Baxter Park, is an EMT, and is a technical team member of the Wilderness Rescue Team. Matt added that serving Baxter Park as Chief Ranger is “the pinnacle.”

BSP Portfolio Overview (Michael Daley): The Investment Committee met in September, and invited an external manager from Ares Capital Management to discuss building upon private credit allocation via the new Ares Private Credit strategy. Since the crisis of 2007-2008, banks have become much more regulated, paring back on the amount of risk on their balance sheet, and cutting back on lending, particularly to middle-market companies that need the capital - and that’s what private credit is - typically pooled investment funds that provide lending and a good return stream. Private credit (including Fortress) is approximately 2% of the total Baxter portfolio.

Regarding overall policy allocation, BNY Wealth treats the Baxter portfolio of funds as truly perpetual, investing for the long term. The ranges for the different asset classes are Equities: 50-70%; Fixed: 25-35%; Special Opportunities 0-25% (alternative investments, primarily private equity, and private credit). From an overall risk standpoint we are in a neutral stance - fully invested but not overweight risk. With the upcoming election and still being in a slow-growth environment, along with geo-political concerns, it is appropriate.

Positives: Corporate America is very strong, the job market continues to be very strong, and there hasn't been a recession, proving the economy to be very resilient. There has been a 45 trillion dollar increase in net worth since Covid. Risks/Negatives: There is a huge divide in America - those who invest in stocks, own property, and earn strong wages, and those who do not. Combined with inflation it has been a challenging time for many. There is no evidence that either presidential candidate has taken a particularly serious look at controlling U.S. debt or annual deficits. That will ultimately be a problem, though the markets have "shrugged it off" so far. Inflation has reduced significantly. (A few years the CPI was at 9% year-over-year.) and it is estimated to be at 2-3% by the end of 2025. The rate of price increases is slowing down. As wages move up, companies have to raise prices to keep profits up, and with that, inflation is driven higher. It's truly a balancing act. Cumulative % change since 2020 - food is up 26.7% and shelter is up 24.7%, and these are some of the drivers of inflation.

Asset Class Positioning: Our recommended positioning across major asset classes and within major asset classes include being overweight in large cap Equities and neutral in mid and small-cap Equities, underweight in non-US Equities that carry underlying challenges, and neutral in Diversifiers - or private equity where there is more and more the opportunity as public stocks have declined.

Portfolio Positioning: Total assets for Baxter Park are at \$120M. Two-thirds of those assets are in the Baxter Trust and one-third are in the Endowment Fund. This is a well-diversified portfolio with a long-term policy target of 60% in public equities, 25% in fixed-income or bonds, and 15% in alternative investments. When private credit is added, that will increase the alternatives allocation. 15% alternatives are generally where we want to be in this portfolio.

Investment performance - (Sept month-end): On a consolidated level, a strong start to the year - up over 11%, and on a One-Year basis, up over 16.5%. There is excitement over the Fed now pivoting and starting to cut rates, mostly because inflation has come down.

BSP Advisory Member Recommendation: Director Kevin Adam introduced Herb Fithian, a former Sherman, Maine general store owner for 34 years, and currently the Katahdin District Manager for the Maine Appalachian Trail Club. Herb is also a prolific BSP volunteer and has attended several Advisory meetings to acquaint himself with the roles and responsibilities of an Advisory Committee member. **Attorney General Aaron Frey motioned to approve the recommendation by Kevin Adam for Herb Fithian to serve on the Advisory Committee for a three-year term, seconded by Chair Cormier. All were in favor. Motion carried 2-0.**

SFMA Herbicide Policy: Natural Resources Director Nava Tabak thanked John Bryant of the SFMA Advisory Committee for attending, and Sam Wright of the BSP Advisory for providing some very useful information in preparation for this meeting. The Herbicide Policy is brought forward to

the Authority for consideration due to some specific conditions being experienced in the SFMA. The Park is not generally known for herbicide or pesticide applications for natural resources management, though there is a history of using both as outlined in the memo provided to the Authority. This policy was drafted to provide the option to very judiciously use herbicides in the SFMA as a management tool.

One of the first considerations was whether this was consistent with Governor Baxter's deeds and goals for the SFMA which include providing a sustainable supply of timber, practicing scientific or modern forestry - it is not an experimental forest, more a demonstration forest - and finally being part of the rest of Baxter Park in terms of recreation.

Until now, the Park has been able to use silvicultural practices to avoid situations where we might have to start looking at new tools such as herbicides, which are proven from a scientific perspective but which also introduce risks. Herbicides are proven and modern and used very widely by industrial/commercial timber management companies as well as conservation organizations. It's consistent with and quite necessary to add this tool if we are to continue to meet Governor Baxter's goals and produce a continuous supply of timber, due to relatively considerable areas identified as having failed forest regeneration which prevents the development of desirable timber. As we struggle with mechanical and silvicultural prescriptions and are unable with those tools to restore forest regeneration, we're not using the best scientific and modern tools available and not demonstrating the best and most effective ways to deal with this situation. Using herbicides in this context would be a corrective action whereas in the past in the Park uses of chemicals have been protective or in response to invasive species introductions.

The policy outlines a robust assessment methodology to identify management units where herbicides may be necessary. This assessment would be applied to both areas that have been harvested and areas in which upcoming harvests are planned. This is a very conservative and somewhat limiting strategy, with the idea that we would try it and use that experience in the SFMA along with additional science or development of new tools, and update the policy along the way. This proposed policy has been drafted in collaboration with the SFMA Advisory Committee, and reviewed by former Resource Manager and Director of Baxter Park Jensen Bissell, Director Patty Cormier in her role as a state forester, the BSP Advisory, and the board of Friends of Baxter State Park. Staff have incorporated input from these reviews into the draft that is currently proposed.

Director Cormier stressed the importance of not describing necessary herbicide as "a last resort", and instead, as the useful tool that it is. The species causing issues are mostly native shrubs including hobblebush, hazelnut, striped maple, and American beech which under certain conditions are growing aggressively and creating very dense understories where desirable timber species are unable to regenerate. Different protocols for herbicide use would be followed in response to a new invasive species introduction. It is recognized that these native species are important components of our forests and provide important habitat, and it is not our intention to eliminate them.

AG Frey asked what changed - why is the consideration of the use of herbicide as a tool now required? Nava explained that the cause of the problem is a direct, if slow, reaction to past silviculture practices. All of the areas with this problem have been cut in the past, and certain harvest prescriptions led to these conditions. These areas have an overstory, and though they

were not clearcut the overstory that provides shade that keeps some of these native species from becoming as dense as was removed at levels that caused this handful of species to respond with aggressive growth (in some cases they “sucker-sprout”). Along with harvest prescriptions, site conditions are very important drivers of vegetation response to a harvest. We just completed another 10-year cycle of our continuous forest inventory (CFI) and now have the benefit of 30 years of inventory data and can begin to see how the assumption that trees will regenerate on their own in the SFMA is not true everywhere. The harvests that have led to these failed regeneration areas were mostly conducted in the 1980s.

John Bryant added that the SFMA Advisory Committee does a field tour every fall and as time went on, they began to see a trend concerning the inability to grow sugar maple, and spruce/fir (highly desirable in the market). That led to more discussions and along with the CFI data raised the specter of what is going to happen to these stands. Since the understory represents the future forest (the children of the parent stand), when the undesirable species started to dominate the understory the discussion came around to looking at mechanical/chemical treatments and mechanical treatments are expensive. John assured the Authority that Nava, along with the SFMA Advisory, were very careful with their assessment. He gives Nava and Shane Miller credit for wading into this topic, and credit to Dee George and Shane for spending a lot of time looking at old cuts. John added that it’s important to ensure we can manage the regeneration issue on a site-by-site basis to avoid failures because, at some point, we are going to take the overstory off those stands and see a three-inch diameter tree that could have been managed (removed) when it was a small sapling. Director Cormier commented that changing temperatures are allowing aggressive species like beech to take over stands. Nava added that this kind of dense understory of native species can occur naturally on a very small scale where a tree comes down and beech saplings take over, but it’s a different situation when it occurs on the scale of a forest management unit. Past harvests combined with site conditions have led to understory compositions that can be considered novel, and we can only speculate on how forest development might progress with no action. This policy proposes herbicide use only in the SFMA, and only in a fraction of the operational areas that meet its specific criteria.

Nava noted that when Governor Baxter traveled the world and saw how other forests were managed, one of the things that impressed him the most was that they were farming trees, and like a good farm, you have a crop, grown and harvested intentionally and sustainably. John added that when the Advisory is conducting field tours in the SFMA, inevitably they talk about what Governor Baxter would want, many having read his writings, and what practices he would advocate; the Advisory believes he would support the use of this tool on a limited basis to take care of this problem. Once we have taken care of the areas we can go back to a reliance on silvicultural practices with better knowledge on how to avoid creating these problems.

Carla Ritchie asked about the cons and risks associated with the use of herbicides. Nava responded that we know a lot about which herbicides and application methods are most effective for various species. The risks would primarily be impacts to non-target plant species, groundwater, and perhaps invertebrates; we would use those herbicides that have been around for a long time, have been tested, are effective, and are the least toxic. The chemicals have different properties, some bind to soil very well and are less of a hazard to groundwater, and the licensed pesticide applicator will follow strict protocols. Sam Wright, who works in agriculture,

added that the products are vetted and approved by the EPA, and billions of dollars have gone into testing their effects on animals and the environment. The labels are very detailed, and a professional applicator who can interpret the data will apply the product accordingly. Nava added that as far as humans, the biggest risk is to the applicator so a trained, licensed applicator using proper PPE and protocols will be utilized. Most of these chemicals, once they dry to the touch, are not risky, but the labels provide restricted entry intervals and the policy discusses how when applied near a trail or other public access in the SFMA the treatment area would be delineated and closed off if necessary. The type of herbicide used would be decided upon by the Park SFMA staff in conjunction with the contracted licensed applicator.

Lauren Parker asked about how we came up with the 25' buffer for lakes, ponds, streams, and wetlands, and there's a 100' buffer for ownership boundaries and did we consider a buffer between the SFMA and the rest of the Park? Nava responded that we have riparian management zones around all waterbodies and waterways in the SFMA and the type of silviculture done in these zones is unlikely to have led to the failed regeneration conditions. Still, we would follow the state's required 25' minimum buffer if needed. We had not considered a buffer to the rest of the Park because the areas identified so far have not been near any boundaries but we would treat the rest of the Park as another ownership boundary. Aaron Megquier applauded the incredible thought process that went into the policy. He added that the Acadian forest will be going through climate-driven changes in the next 100 years, and the policy sets out some policies and guardrails for safety and process for decision-making but as far as the species considered desirable and undesirable - those may change over time. Is there enough flexibility built into this to roll with things as they change? Nava responded that what the policy aims to achieve is desirable regeneration, and while currently, the desired regeneration for many of the sites is spruce/fir, what we're expecting to see over a very long time is an increased component of hardwood species that are more adapted to warmer temperatures. With desirable regeneration being the goal, and the policy addressing the species interfering with regeneration specifically but not exclusively, it should be responsive to such long-term change. John added that because this is a new policy this will be a discussion topic for the Advisory Committee for the next 3-5 years and any new species will be discussed and added.

Josie Quintrell asked if this policy would apply to the Austin Cary property. Nava replied that from a practical perspective, it would not apply to the Austin Cary 200-acre forest, since it has very different conditions and history (and noted that herbicides are already used there for controlling invasive species). However, it is important to clarify the intent of the policy in relation to both the Austin Cary and Mount Chase lots.

The Authority members present recommended tabling approval of the policy until it is revised with the suggestions discussed today (e.g. buffer to rest of Park, clarify about Austin Cary Lot), and when the full Authority is present.

Donations Report: Donations under \$1,000 totaled \$900 for this period. Donations \$1,000 and over for the period of May 25, 2024, through September 26, 2024, totaled \$116,000 and, included \$105,000.00 from the Baxter Park Wilderness Fund (their FY24 Q3, and BSP's FY25 Q1). Fund Trustee Chip Weickert commented that the quarterly donations for the year are calculated in March and are very much impacted by inflation. Other donations over \$1,000 included those

from Jim Garland and Edward Hawkins (The Grid Trust). **With gratitude to the Baxter Park Wilderness Fund [Trustees and its founder Frank Trautmann], and to Jim Garland and Edward Hawkins, AG Frey motioned to accept these donations as presented, seconded by Chair Cormier. All were in favor and the motion passed 2-0.**

2024 Fee Review: Lori Morrison, Director of Administrative Services presented the 2024 fee review and proposal. She explained it is a long-standing tradition, in conjunction with the biennial budget, for the Park to review its fee schedule. This protocol is in place to ensure the protection of the Endowment Fund's principal and its ability to consistently generate revenue equal to or surpass the current level. Fees reviewed are for winter and summer camping, non-resident fees, canoe rentals, firewood sales, and day-use parking reservations (DUPRs). We met with the Park's Investment Committee and discussed the biennial budget and the projected disbursement from the Endowment, which they endorsed. The fee proposal was then brought to the BSP Advisory Committee and we received helpful feedback from them, as well as their endorsement of this proposal.

Criteria that guide the fee review process:

- Fees are set to supply a minimum percentage of Park expenditures
 - Fees are a flexible component of the Park's income and help to address the gap between Endowment revenues and necessary spending levels for Park operations
 - Historically, Park fees as related to expenses have varied in the past 35 years, fluctuating between 24% and 39%. The variance between years is largely a function of the fiscal year start date of July 1. Based on the average for the period, the suggested minimum target is 31%.
- Fees must be affordable to the average Maine resident (In accordance with Percival Baxter's wishes) with the following indicators:
 - Changes in Maine per capita income since the last fee adjustment
 - the last release of per capita income in Maine was through 2022
 - since the last review of Park fees in 2020 which showed a 22.7% increase since 2017, there has been an increase of an additional 11.4%
 - Change in the Consumer Price Index since the last fee adjustment
 - CPI change from 2017-2021 was 12.2%), with an additional 12.1% through 2023
 - Comparison of similar public and private facilities in the region and New England
 - BSP is more similar to private sites - self-funded
 - Many parks have increased fees including entrance fees
 - most entrance fees are per person - at BSP it is per vehicle
- Fees must be clear, understandable, and practically administered
 - This includes a Communication Plan via various methods including the Park website and social media

Since 2009, Baxter Park has only increased fees twice - 2016 - 5% and 2021 - 5%.

AG Frey commented that while there are comparisons with what other Parks or businesses do (albeit in some instances the comparison is per person versus per vehicle), the fee schedule considers how the Park resources might be used, and recognizes that there is a ceiling on what people will pay to use it.

Fee Adjustment Proposal: Following this analysis and review with staff and advisors, the fee proposals and data are as follows: (**See the 2024 Fee Adjustment Proposal - Review Date September 2024 for Entrance and Camping Fees, and rationale.**)

Park visitor numbers have been relatively consistent from 2016 to 2024, averaging 62,000/year. Maine resident visitation has increased to 54% from an average of 47% in 2016. Maine's per capita income has increased by approximately 34.1% between 2016 and 2022, outpacing the inflation rate of 24.3% over the same period.

Due in part to a decrease in visitation in FY24, user fee revenues only covered 26% of Park expenses. The 35-year average of revenue collected to total expenses suggests a minimum percentage of 31% is appropriate. The biennial budget for FY26/27 projects 29.4% and 31.2% respectively.

Non-Resident Entrance Fees and Camping Fees Recommendation: Current fees and increases are outlined in Table A of the 2024 Fee Adjustment Proposal. This includes a restructuring of cabin fees, where rates are proportional to the occupancy capacity of the cabin. *Entrance fees and Season passes are per vehicle, not per person.*

Josie Quintrell recommended clarification that entrance fees are for non-residents only.

Day Use Parking Reservations (DUPRs) Recommendation: Increase per pass from \$5.00 to \$10.00. AG Frey asked about the reasoning for increasing the fee - it is described that the purpose of the fee is to encourage actual use when it is to set a fee that helps ensure we are balancing the budget. Those are two different things and clarification in the language is necessary. It is potentially the same amount of money because if we were successful in deterrence, less money would come in so doubling it would help to cover that loss, but it may not be a source of additional revenue.

A robust conversation around DUPRs continued:

- DUPR fee is for the vehicle, not per person
- A day-use parking pass is confusing - it is a pass to summit by parking at a trailhead
 - will be reviewed by the subcommittee to reduce ambiguity
- If a visitor is buying DUPRs and not using them (picking the best day) it is an underuse of the resource
- The intent of the policy originally was to help create more opportunities to summit
- If you haven't arrived at the gate with your DUPR by 7:05 am it is a no-show; others can take those spots
- A no-show means less impact on the Park resources if someone else doesn't fill it

- Those with no DUPR do not come for fear they will get turned away at the gate, especially those traveling a great distance
- DUPRs are non-refundable - Park still gets the revenue if not used (date and site-specific)
- The fee increase recommendation is minimal and addresses the appropriate fee to help balance the expenses of the Park (maintenance of roads/parking lots)
- There is an online market of sales of DUPRs re-selling frequently
- Some have gotten more than six DUPRs because they have multiple accounts
 - This will be addressed by the subcommittee
- Camping reservations are made at the trailhead with no intention of camping
- Visitors are starting up Katahdin later/descending later since they can't buy a DUPR in advance
- Actual revenue received is approximately \$22-23K. Doubling the revenue with the \$5 change is not cost-prohibitive and it will help generate revenue to mitigate the various in the percentage contributed. Likely won't change behaviors.

Canoe Rental Fee Recommendation: No fee change is recommended. Currently \$1/hour and \$8/Day.

Bundled Firewood Fee Recommendation: No fee change is recommended (currently \$5/bundle) though staff will continue to track these costs as they evolve with vendor contract(s).

FY26/27 Biennial Budget: The biennial budget was submitted on September 1, 2024. Lori Morrison spent a substantial amount of time analyzing prior BSP budget expenses and revenues to get a historical context for projecting this budget. FY25 is tracking more positively than FY24. In 'Other Trusts and Donations', the Baxter Trust and Endowment portion of revenue in FY26 and FY27 is 55.8% and 53.2% respectively. Percival Baxter also left a Trust that is controlled by the State Treasurer's Office and its interest and dividends revenue represents 4.7% in both FY26 and FY27. Baxter Park Wilderness Fund revenue represents 6.6% and 6.3% respectively.

For expenses in the FY26/27 budget, Personnel Services reflects the only increase (FY25 Budget \$4.1M, FY26 \$4.5M, and FY27 \$4.8M). As an agency of the State of Maine, the majority of employees are covered by bargaining agreements. In January of 2024, the State and the unions agreed to a 6% rate increase for employees, followed in July by a 3% increase, and then also agreed to a new Step 9 pay grade which is also reflected in the budget, as well as a bonus of \$2,000 on September 1 and other benefit enhancements. All Other and Capital remain flat, reducing and increasing line items where necessary, as shown. Insurance decreased by \$83K due to savings in various risk management policies. Notable in General Operations - the cost of Worker's Compensation insurance has increased by \$30K. STA-CAP FY25 helped to offset some of the cost - that percentage decreased and we were able to recognize expenses to be budgeted for Park operations small equipment. Regarding the Capital budget, the question was asked about resources for unplanned repairs or weather events. In addition to Capital dollars dedicated, operational funds in All Other that come in under budget create unused balance forward dollars to dedicate to future or emergency projects.

Lori concluded, asking for the Authority's approval of the FY26/27 budget, assuring the meeting attendees that we looked at historical usage and the historical opportunity to generate revenue that will meet the bare minimum to offset and stay within the recommended stewardship index of our Trusts.

Recognizing that the Fee Schedule and the Budget are connected yet separate items, AG Frey moved approval of the Fee Adjustment Proposal, seconded by Chair Cormier. All were in favor with a reminder to include additional clarification that Entrance Fees are for non-residents only. Motion carried 2-0. AG Frey moved acceptance of the FY26/27 biennial budget, seconded by Chair Cormier. All were in favor - the motion carried 2-0. Aaron Megquier asked if the Park could absorb a catastrophic situation where for instance two-thirds of the bridges in the Park wash out and we lose a half-season of revenue and it costs \$1-2M to repair infrastructure and if the answer is no, then is Park staff thinking about how it can build up a capital reserve for a situation such as this over time. Lori responded that we do have discussions around this topic as well as with the Investment Committee and every senior leadership team of an organization should be prepared to pivot financially and make some hard choices in the event of a disaster. We would tap into every resource the Park has and the Authority would have profound decisions concerning how we move forward. Chair Cormier added that we are looking at the Management Plan update and that certainly is a topic to be addressed. AG Frey added that the financial order/supplement budget process allows the opportunity to get legal permission to address this, and there may be outside resources such as FEMA. The Authority thanked Lori for the detailed review of the fee proposal and budget along with the thoughtful process in preparing it.

Overview of Park Operations:

Finance: FY25, Q1 financial position will be presented at the December meeting. The Daicey Pond financial update is detailed in the Operations report. Projections are tracking as expected.

Human Resource: Jessica Wheaton has been busy with end-of-season responsibilities. All but two campgrounds will close on October 15, and Katahdin Stream and Kidney Pond will close on October 22. One position has been extended for the Daicey Pond Project and two Roving Ranger positions have been extended for year-end projects.

Reservations: Planning for the November 1 winter lottery is underway and it is expected to go smoothly. The Reservations office will close on weekends starting October 19.

Information & Technology: Advanced firewalls have been installed at the gates to mitigate cyber attack risks and reduce unnecessary network traffic. Tim Deetz has finalized the first version of the BSP Technology Infrastructure and Purchases Services Topology and it is being reviewed. This document will serve as a blueprint for the physical and logistical layout of the BSP network and will be presented to the Authority when it is finalized.

Information and Education (I&E) and Natural Resources: A full calendar of education programs by staff, outside experts, and volunteers has been ongoing and well received. Artist in Residence,

Jadyn LaDeau, just finished a successful two-week stay in the Park. Cassandra Knudsen, Nava Tabak, and other staff tended a BSP informational table at Millinocket's Trails End Festival. Staff have been providing regular educational updates and information through social media. Cassandra and staff across the Park continue to contribute to the iNaturalist project, which tracks the phenology of species in the Park. Cassandra led a second record-breaking year of surveying for the Maine Audubon annual loon count, recruiting many participants to survey 27 waterbodies in the Park (45 loons were observed). We continue to monitor alpine vegetation, have completed a Katahdin Arctic butterfly survey, and have performed acoustic bat detection (in collaboration with IF&W). State agencies and other partners come into the Park throughout the season to look at plants, water quality, fish, spruce budworm, and ground truthing of a late succession/old growth model by Our Climate Common. The Park's Research Committee met virtually in August to review a research proposal to include Katahdin in a multi-year study of plant adaptations to climate change. Staff continue the mechanical control work of bristly locust in the Park.

SFMA Update: The harvest in the south end is going well. The Park contracted approximately 100 acres of pre-commercial thinning. Staff began the next 10-year round of Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) data collection, and completed (with Advisory Member Bob Seymour) the analysis of the last 10 years' data that has fed into the SFMA's 10-year Management Plan. This plan is in draft and waiting for the Authority's decision on the proposed herbicide policy; if herbicides are not approved for use in the SFMA the CFI-based projections of sustainable annual allowable cut volumes will require a downward adjustment. A complete replacement of the Murphy Brook bridge - which is critical to winter operations - was completed by A&A Brochu.

Barrie Brusilla, forester for the Austin Cary Lot forest, worked with Friends of Baxter and the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust to provide a well-attended educational public tour of the property in September.

Maintenance: Chief Ranger Matt McGuire provided an overview of projects including replacing the failed septic system at the Visitor Center, and solar installation work at the VC (to be completed in the spring) to prepare for internet access there.

The Logan Pond Road is not used for Park operations but provides access to easements for property owned by the Millinocket Middle School and The Nature Conservancy, and New England Outdoor Center (NEOC) helps maintain the snowmobile trail there. The bridge on that road was heavily damaged in one of the recent storm events so Keith Wehmeyer and Shane Miller worked with NEOC to develop a plan to replace it. The out-of-water work has been completed and no Park funds will be used for this project.

Keith Wehmeyer met with Stream Restoration Specialist Alex Abbot to look at stream crossings for South Branch Campground, Dry Brook Crossing, and Littlefield Brook. (These are in addition to surveys completed for Bear Brook and Roaring Brook crossings.) Once the five surveys are completed and plans are received we will budget for and prioritize these projects.

Daicey Pond Project: Cabins 1, 3, 5, and 9 are being completed, and Cabin 4 was constructed in nine days (one of two complete rebuilds). The goal is to get them buttoned up before winter so

interior work can be done. Timewise we're looking at a good projection to open those cabins in May and budgeting is looking very good.

Trails: The trail crew has been working on the Hunt Trail re-route and, most recently has built a large, arching staircase that carries the trail around a challenging climbing turn. This exceptional structure will prevent erosion and minimize hiker impact for decades to come. Crews have also been working on a bridge at the beginning of the OJI trail, setting up stringers and cribworks. Most recently crews led by Kris English have been working on heavily eroded retaining walls on the Upper Saddle Brook (flood channel) crossing, starting some tiered stonework and bridge stringers will be staged this winter, then in a dryer period the 30' bridge can be removed and the abutments can be replaced safely. Other work includes bog-bridging, including at Grassy Pond, and several thru-hikers have commented that it is the best bog-bridging in Maine if not New England, a this is a credit to Brennan and his staff.

Baxter Youth Conservation Corp (brushing and building abutments) and MCC crews (corridor and blazing work) played a big part in trailwork this season. Trail Adopters worked on the Rum Pond and Marston Trails.

Operations: In addition to normal operations and related projects, Enforcement Ranger Laura Whitney completed the final 80 hours of supervised field training and firearms proficiency and can now enforce state laws in addition to BSP Rules and will attend the Basic Law Enforcement Training Program later this winter. Laura interacts well with visitors and will be a great ambassador for the Park in her new role.

Rangers spent two days helping the Maine Forest Service on a wildfire at Clifford Ridge (off the Park's southwest boundary). A lightning strike on steep ledges prevented the MFS from being able to fully utilize aerial water drops.

Law enforcement summonses issued in this reporting period were: camping without a reservation or in an unauthorized area and/or without a reservation, use or possession of a UAV, Fishing with worms in ALO water, animals in the Park, fraudulently obtaining a fishing license, imprudent speed, vehicle crash, theft.

The Park has registered 1,963 AT hikers through September 22, with 1,519 traveling northbound and 444 traveling southbound. Information provided at The Birches, the AT Kiosk, and the Katahdin Stream Ranger Station has reduced incidents and allowed for constructive messaging. Staff playing critical roles in education and assisting hikers are Supervisor Ranger Bruce White, Campground Rangers Pete Sweeney and Brandon DeCleen, AT Ranger Don Bolduc, and ATC Golden Road Ridgerunner Melonie Schuck.

Since September 1, BSP staff has been involved in 20 search and rescue and/or medical incidents, and MFS helicopters were involved in two of them - a medical evacuation from Wassataquoik lean-to and another related to a broken arm incident on the Abol Trail. Mountain patrols, of which Nava Tabak is heavily involved, continue, with an emphasis on preventive search and rescue, responding to incidents on the trails, and collecting activity data.

Other Business: Kent Fletcher, who has been coming to the Park since 1987 expressed that he would like to see all bikes prohibited from the Park (including e-bikes and pedal bikes),

describing an incident he had with a biker on the Tote Road who would not let him pass (several times), adding that he has heard of other incidents. Director Kevin Adam has seen and heard of greater bike traffic but no issues were reported. Park Staff will talk with the BSP Advisory to get a wider read on the subject.

Meeting Adjourned at 1 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Georgia Manzo
Office Specialist