

**MEMORANDUM**

Date: 2/28/2025

To: Baxter State Park Authority for the March 7, 2025 BSPA Meeting

From: Park Director Kevin Adam

**Subject: Park Operations Update December 20 to present****Finance****FY25, Q2 (October 2024 – December 2024)**

## Revenue:

- \$1,245,034 – representing a 7% negative variance compared to 2024.

Note: Revenue tracked to meet and exceed the budget. The December trust disbursement was recorded in January.

## Expenses:

- Personnel expense: \$1,273,062 – FY25 YTD through Q2, over budget by 6.3%. Note: This increase is due to post-biennial budget-contract ratifications, which include a 9% wage increase, and a SOM Classification Study one-time prorated payment of \$2,000.

- All Other expenses: \$333,914- representing a positive 11% variance under budget. Note: This variance is attributed to the timing of expenses.

- Capital expense: \$173,272

Note: 52% of the capital allocation has been utilized year-to-date through Q2.

**Daicey Pond Project Budget through January 31, 2025**

Daicey Pond Project Budget Detail through 1/31/2025			
	Actual through 12/31/2024	Project Budget	Remaining Budget
<b>Revenue</b>			
Endowment	\$ 273,500.00	\$ 273,500.00	\$ -
BSP	\$ 102,329.94	\$ 270,593.00	\$ 168,263.06
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 375,829.94</b>	<b>\$ 544,093.00</b>	<b>\$ 168,263.06</b>
<b>Expense</b>			
*Personnel and Fringe	\$ 197,924.60	\$ 299,618.62	\$ 101,694.02
All Other and Capital			
Building Materials	\$ 136,785.55		
Minor Equipment	\$ 19,076.27		
Safety supplies	\$ 1,172.95		
Supplies	\$ 18,313.55		
Waste Containers	\$ 2,557.02		
<b>Total All Other and Capital</b>	<b>\$ 177,905.34</b>	<b>\$ 244,474.38</b>	<b>\$ 66,569.04</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$ 375,829.94</b>		
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>		
<b>Remaining Budget</b>			<b>\$ 168,263.06</b>
Financial Note:			
Personnel Expense includes Project Superintendent, SOM Conservation Aid, Tri-State Staffing			

**2025 Fee Increases**

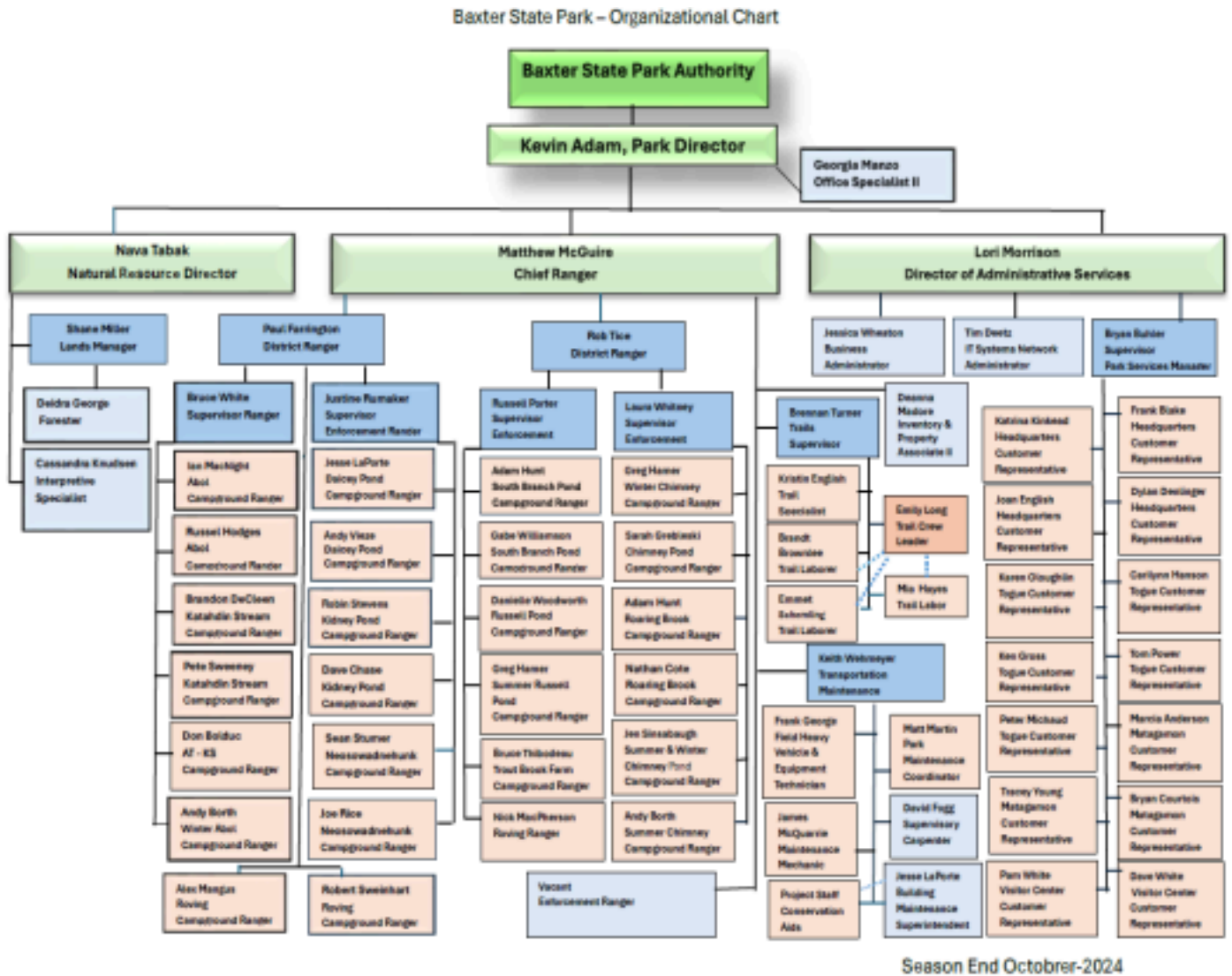
The fee increases took effect on January 15, 2025. Communication efforts were implemented to ensure that visitors were informed and prepared for the new fees. Customer Representative staff received no complaints or negative feedback regarding these changes.

**Human Resource**

Recruitment is a top priority, and interviews have been ongoing throughout February and will continue until all positions are filled. This year, we have seen a substantial candidate pool with many qualified applicants. Our recruitment efforts have included a variety of print and online publications, as well as participation in a recruitment fair at the University of Maine in Orono. Candidates have accepted job offers for the positions of Trails Laborer and SFMA Interns. The chart below illustrates the number of vacant positions and the number of positions filled to date.

2025 Recruitment Activity As of 2/18/2025							
Position	New Position	New / Temp Position	Seasonal Vacancies	Internal Transfer	Internal Promotion	External Hire	Vacant Positions
Customer Representative			2				
Campground Ranger			6	1			5
Conservation Aid - Winter (Daicey Pond)		2					
Trail Laborer			1				
Supervisory Carpenter			1				
SFMA Intern			2			2	
I E Intern (MCC-AmeriCorps)			1				
Summit and Trails Intern			1				

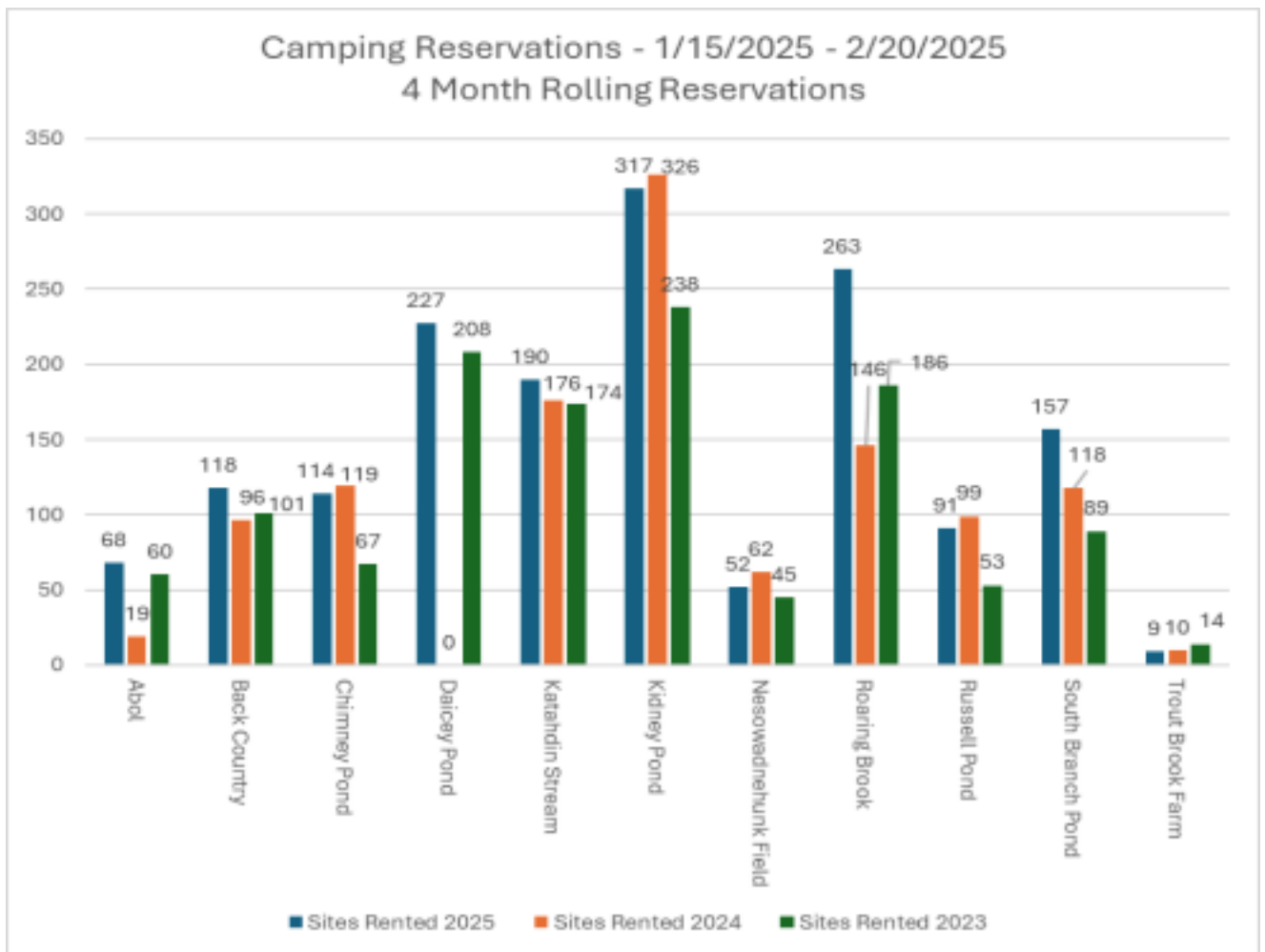
The Organizational Chart has been transformed into a diagram that clearly illustrates the Park's internal structure and highlights the relationships among team members.



Season End October-2024

**Reservations**

Camping reservations for the 2025 season opened on January 15th, and many visitors are planning their trips. Between January 15 and February 20, camping reservations for the period from May 15 to June 20, 2025, increased by 37% compared to 2024. However, since Daicey Pond was closed in 2024, a better comparison is between 2025 and 2023, which shows a 30% increase in overall camping reservations.



**Information and Technology**

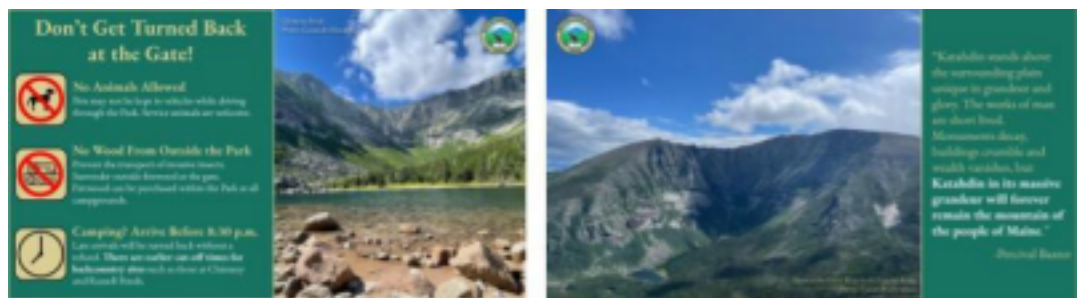
There are no significant updates for this operational reporting period.

**Information & Education (I&E)**

Staff have produced public communications on several topics this winter. A major focus was to update information about the

Katahdin Trailhead Pass (formerly known as “DUPR”) on the

Park’s website. We also continued to provide updates on the progress of the Daikey Pond cabins project. Interpretive Specialist Cassandra Knudsen created a new page for the website with new information/updates for 2025. She is also preparing safety-related educational posts for social media that will be publicized as a series leading up to the summer camping season, and a notice about BSP’s



Two of many new slides on display at BSP Headquarters

anniversary on March 3rd (marking the day of Governor Baxter's first gift of land to the state in 1931). As of January 2025, a monitor at the Park's headquarters reservations lobby is displaying a new informative and inspirational slide show created by 2024 Cassandra Knudsen with assistance from 2023 and 2024 Park interns.

We are currently accepting applications for the 2025 Visiting Artist program (until March 15th). Cassandra collaborated with Friends of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument to provide children's programming for their annual "Vacation Camp" for local youth. She will also provide programming for the Monument's Winter Festival in Patten on the first weekend in March. Volunteer Ellen Manzo completed data entry for a catalog of the books at Kidney Pond Library, which is informative for preserving and updating this collection. Natural Resource Director Nava Tabak has been updating Park GIS data for use in both Park-owned maps and for sharing with other entities (for example, we have contributed new data and updated content for a revision of the National Geographic map of the Park and nearby areas).

I&E staff selected Tzevi Aho for the 2025 Environmental Steward position through the Maine Conservation Corps' Americorps program. Tzevi will join staff April-October to work with Cassandra on regular Park interpretation efforts and special interpretive projects.

### **Natural Resources and Research**

At its upcoming annual meeting (March 7th) the Park's Research Committee will be reviewing 5 applications for new research and monitoring projects in the Park, and will also receive updates on ongoing research work. In late January biologists from ME IF&W installed camera traps in the Park, as part of their statewide project assessing fisher and marten populations.

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

Winter operations in the SFMA are ongoing. Contractors finished trucking from areas harvested over the summer and fall in the southern portion of the SFMA and cutting and trucking is not taking place in the northern section. Along with spruce, fir, and hardwoods, this harvest area has yielded relatively large quantities of white pine. Staff and contractors are focusing on improved sorting of hardwood hygrade both in SFMA yarding areas and at a yard in Millinocket. Lands Manager Shane Miller has substantively completed the transition of SFMA GIS data and work to the State's ESRI platform, and created Field Mapper files that SFMA staff now use (through an app) for work in the field.

The SFMA's current contractor for harvest and road work, A&A Brochu, will be selling part of its operations that includes services for the SFMA to Acadian Timber (the sale is expected to be completed in February). The existing SFMA contracts are being assigned to Acadian Timber, and staff will be working with their representatives to develop new contracts for June 2025 (when the current contracts will expire).

Nava Tabak worked with State Representative Cheryl Golek to submit a legislative bill proposing to enable the transfer of the Austin Cary Lot (in Harpswell, Cumberland County), as required by the Maine Designated Lands Act. The bill has not yet been released by the Revisors office, so it has not become public or been amended. Nava Tabak is preparing to provide testimony in support of the bill for the legislative Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

Shane Miller has circulated a near-final draft of the SFMA's 10-year management plan (for 2025-2035) for final comments from the SFMA Advisory Committee and BSP Authority Chair Patty Cormier. We expect to provide a draft for public comment in early March, and to present a final draft to the Authority for consideration at the May meeting.

**Maintenance**

Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer worked with contractor JH McPartland and Sons to review the heat distribution system at Park Headquarters. Ten thermostats, multiple control valves, several sections of low voltage wiring and other components were replaced. This work was necessary due to deferred maintenance, as well as multiple renovations and additions to the building over the years that did not integrate building heating zones. The result is a more dependable heating system and a more comfortable and efficient building.

The pellet boiler system continues to have feeding issues that have been traced to the high percentage of fines within the pellet deliveries to the storage silo. Keith is working with JH McPartland and the pellet supplier to find a solution, and Inventory and Property Associate II Deana Madore is actively researching alternative pellet vendors. During this period, Field Heavy Vehicle and Equipment Technician Frank George, Maintenance Coordinator Matt Martin, and other park staff have been diligent in making sure the system stays running.

Frank has gone through the Park's fleet of twenty-three snowmobiles, getting each sled ready for the season. Along with general maintenance, the work included full suspension rebuilds, heat exchanger repairs, fuel pump replacements, and lubrications. As winter operations have accelerated, sleds are being brought back in for other repairs resulting from heavy use or minor mishaps, including replacing worn skis, damaged headlights, and worn electrical components. Frank's expertise and ability to make timely repairs continues to be a tremendous asset to the Park.

Matt Martin has been putting in a lot of time in the Maintenance Garage as well. Matt changed over much of the vehicle fleet from summer tires to snow tires, manufactured multiple new T-bar and ramp setups for transporting snowmobiles in pickup trucks, and worked on getting two new Park trucks ready to go into the field. Matt made two trips to the north end of the SFMA to effect plumbing repairs at the North Camp being utilized by the Park's harvest contractor this winter. Matt worked with Frank to replace the hydraulic tank on the Park's Case backhoe as well.

Matt and Frank have been dependable in keeping the Park Headquarters clear of snow by shoveling, plowing, sanding, and clearing the vehicle fleet of snow during and after multiple storms. Sharing the responsibilities, the pair is a dependable resource, answering callouts and keeping headquarters safe.

Park Supervisory Carpenter David Fogg retired in February. Dave had been with the Park since June 2023 and was an asset as both a carpenter and a willing helper for any other tasks. David's expertise and ability have played a significant part in the work completed on the Daicey Pond project to date. The Park has posted the Supervisory Carpenter position vacancy and has received over a dozen applications, with Interviews anticipated to take place during the first week of March.

**Daicey Pond Project**

Low snow totals for December and early January made it possible to move materials, including



lumber and roofing, to Daicey via truck. Crew Leader Jesse Laporte, Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer, and crew member Josh Roedder were able to use these materials to immediately roof the newly constructed Cabin 4.

In January, Keith, Business Administrator Jessica Wheaton, and Chief Ranger Matt McGuire interviewed and on-boarded two additional Conservation Aides to join the Daicey Crew. The selected individuals, Dawson McKenny and Alex Mangus, have extensive experience working in the Park and on the Daicey Pond project in their previous capacities as a Conservation Aide and Roving Campground Ranger respectively. They were able to rejoin the project with immediate effect.

Many of the Daicey cabins are nearing completion. Work completed recently includes porch roof framing on Cabins 2 and 4, metal roof installation on Cabins 2, 4 and 9, door installation in Cabins 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and interior Permachink completed in Cabins 2, 3, 4 and 5. Cedar shingles have been installed on the gable ends of Cabins 2 and 4 as well. Woodstove installation has occurred in most of the cabins, which has helped facilitate the interior Permachink work. Maintenance Coordinator Matt Martin has begun preparing to reinstall the cabin's propane lights with local contractors from Dead River.



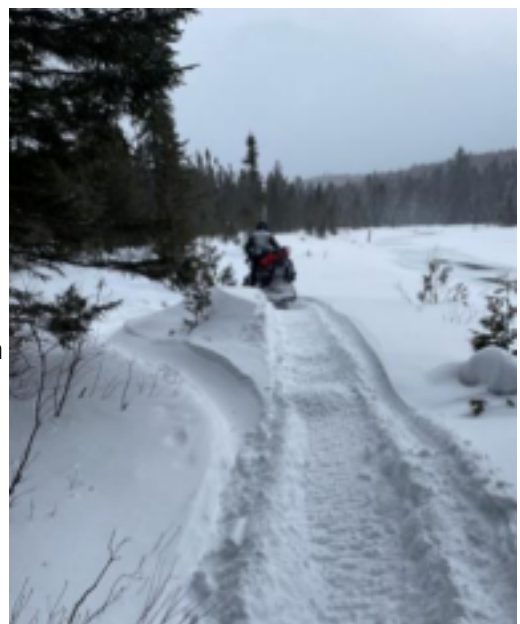
Cabin 3 - Daicey Pond

The crew is transitioning its efforts to the north end of the campground, beginning with preparing to install the roofing on Cabin 6. It is anticipated that the work on all ten Daicey Pond cabins will be completed on time for a normal spring opening. Trails staff and Law Enforcement Rangers have contributed time to work on the project, assisting the Daicey Crew members who are remaining highly productive even with long days of commuting by snowmobile and working in winter conditions.

Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner and Trail Specialist Kris English have been spending most of their time building and preparing snowmobile hauling trails for construction materials necessary for the 2025 project season. These materials include bridge stringers, decking, sill logs, and bog bridging to Sandy Stream Pond, bridge stringers to Katahdin Stream Falls and OJI, and dimensional lumber to the Elbow Pond Outlet.

In addition to building these hauling trails, Trails staff have

**Trails**



focused on keeping materials shoveled out and clear of snow, removing scrap lumber from past project sites, pruning the Foss and Knowlton Trail, maintaining the Abol Stream Trail for staff snowmobile travel, and shoveling important park-access bridges. In between these primary field operations, the Trails staff have prioritized assisting with the Daicey Pond project and the cleaning, inventorying, and reorganizing of the Trails End garage.



Timber construction materials-Roaring Brook



B. Turner, breaking trails, clearing obstructions by handsaw (right), Removing drifts on the Abol Stream Trail (left)



Kris has routed 29 trail signs, some of which are painted and ready for installation. Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner has been working on the three upcoming Chainsaw Training classes, booking an Arborist rigging training in May, refining the project season calendar, and assisting Director of Natural Resources Nava Tabak and District Ranger Rob Tice with the review of applications for the Summit & Trails Internship position.

Finally, Trail staff have finished hiring Trail Crew Members for the coming season. Brennan, Kris, and Business Administrator Jessica Wheaton interviewed several candidates before making an offer to Nicholas Nagy. Nicholas has accepted the position and will be joining the Trail Crew in May. The other three seasonal Trail Crew staff will be returning this year.

9

### **Field Operations and Law Enforcement**

Early winter saw low snow totals and created challenging transportation issues for staff attempting to begin winter routines. Late January had yielded enough snow and local trail grooming activity was occurring such that it was decided to open the Tote Road gates to snowmobiling. The entire Tote Road was ridden and cleared of blowdowns over two days, and the gates were opened for snowmobile travel on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

Rangers have been busy with a variety of winter work including Campground Ranger and gatehouse staff interviews, shoveling bridges, assisting on the Daicey Pond project, completing requisitions for 2025 fire equipment updates, troubleshooting solar batteries, and conducting solar panel maintenance. Several staff were required to complete their CJIS training, a mandated awareness training course for individuals who handle or have access to criminal justice information.

The creation of the Russell Pond and Chimney Pond winter administrative trails has been challenging this year. An effective trail base was unable to be achieved due to cold, dry snow. This cold unconsolidated snow was also prone to drifting, and high winds over multiple weeks meant that staff created, cut, packed and then had to repeat the same trail construction process days later due to drifting. After considerable work, Trails staff and Law Enforcement/Supervisory Rangers are coordinating efforts to ensure trails materials, Russell Pond supplies, and Chimney Pond supplies get moved this winter.

District Ranger Rob Tice and Chief Ranger Matt McGuire have been coordinating with Col. Robbie Gross and Lt. Ben Goodwin of the Maine Forest Service to take on loan a Type 4 engine, BB4 pump, and several wildland fire apparatus to supplement the Park's initial attack wildland fire equipment. Director Kevin Adam, Rob, and Matt represented the Park at Ranger Pilot Chris Blackie's retirement on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Chris flew for the Maine Forest Service for 25 years and was the pilot on 40 percent of the MFS short haul rescues to date. Chris was also the pilot on the first short haul in the state of Maine, which occurred in Baxter State Park in July of 2013. Blackie's expertise and skill have been an invaluable resource for Baxter State Park.

Warnings and/or Summons Issued by Law Enforcement Staff Include:

- Operating a motor vehicle on a groomed snowmobile trail

- Unregistered snowmobile
- Climbing without a permit above tree line

### **Appalachian Trail**

There are no significant updates for this operational period.

### **Search and Rescue**

Two Search and Rescue (SAR) incidents occurred in January. The first involved four males attempting to make their way into Roaring Brook. Park staff responded to a call from Houlton RCC for assistance and, after locating the party, LE Rangers Justine Rumaker and Laura Whitney determined the party should be removed from the park. All four had exceeded their abilities and two of the males were hypothermic. The second SAR incident was a medical transport from Kidney Pond to a waiting Millinocket ambulance. The

10

35-year-old male had nausea, was vomiting, and was dehydrated.

The Maine Association for Search and Rescue (MASAR) teams began providing coverage at Chimney Pond in February. These teams conduct technical rescue training to ensure team readiness to assist the park in an emergency and are on stand-by status during their stay. Wilderness Rescue Team, Mahosuc Mountain Rescue Team, and MDI SAR will provide coverage through early March.

In January, the park hosted a MASAR joint team training focused on introductory winter mountaineering skills. Several MASAR teams, BSP staff, members of the Maine Warden Service, and staff from Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument participated in the three-day training, which was an important introduction to the park in winter for our partnering agencies.



Joint team, multi-agency training