



Baxter State Park Authority Meeting

10:00 am, Friday, May 30, 2025, Kidney Pond Campground, Baxter State Park

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

Attendees:

Baxter State Park Authority: Chair and MFS Director Patty Cormier, ME IF&W Commissioner Judy Camuso, Attorney General Aaron Frey

Assistant Attorney General: Lauren Parker

BSP Staff: Director Kevin Adam, Director of Administrative Services Lori Morrison, Chief Ranger Matt McGuire, Natural Resources Director Nava Tabak, Trails Supervisor Brennan Turner, Lands Manager Shane Miller, Interpretive Specialist Cassandra Knudsen, Campground Rangers Pete Sweeney and Alex Mangus, Office Specialist Georgia Manzo

BNY Wealth: BSP Endowment Fund Manager Michael Daley

BSP Advisory: Chair Carl Carlson, Vice-Chair Brant Miller, Herb Fithian, Carla Ritchie, Cameron Trubey, Julianna Hansen, Ed Pontbriand, R. Michael White, Lauren Jacobs

Friends of Baxter State Park: Executive Director Aaron Megquier, Board Member Hope Rowan

Guests: Brian Olsen, Carol Minnehan, Eric Hendrickson, Anne Huntington, Abby White, Sue Lussier, Tristan Sleeper

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

Consideration of the March 7, 2025, BSPA meeting minutes: Commissioner Camuso moved to approve the minutes, and Attorney General Frey seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion carried, 3-0.

With a change in the order of the agenda:

Executive Session (Katahdin Lake Wilderness Camps): Commissioner Camuso moved pursuant to Title 1 Section 405(6)(C) and (E) of the Maine Revised Statutes to go into executive session to discuss the use of real property and the acquisition of personal property at Katahdin Lake, and the legal rights and duties of the Authority as to the leasing status at Katahdin Lake. Chair Cormier seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed 3-0. Authority, staff, and counsel emerged from the Executive Session. Commissioner Camuso moved to authorize (Chair) Patty Cormier to send a letter on behalf of the Authority regarding the subject discussed in Executive Session to Charles Fitzgerald. AG Frey seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried, 3-0.

BSP Portfolio Overview (Michael Daley): The Investment Committee met on May 14 and reviewed the portfolio and the recent volatility around the tariffs. The committee takes a long-term view as it relates to managing this portfolio, and “there was no panic in the room.” Michael discussed BNY Wealth’s recommendation to modestly pare back risk in the portfolio with the committee. That recommendation came on the heels of ‘Liberation Day’ when the

announcement came out that tariffs were going to be a lot higher than anticipated. As of April month-end, there have been negative returns. The S&P 500 represents 80% of the U.S. stock market and is down 5% through the end of April, whereas international stocks are up 12%, and emerging markets are up 5%. A lot of investment strategists came into the year overweight in U.S. equities, given that corporate America is typically healthier and more dynamic than non-U.S. markets. Through May, the S&P 500 is up 6%, YTD up 1%. International stocks are up 16%. At its low, the S&P was down 20% from its high level right after the tariffs were announced, and has seen a nice comeback. The last couple of months have been volatile, and it speaks to the message and the logic shared at the March 30 Authority meeting to stay invested - it is impossible to time markets.

Calendar year 2024 showed strong returns with the portfolio returning 12.3% or \$13M. The market value from the end of 2023 to the end of 2024 was up \$9M. The Stewardship Index in 2024 was 3.6% of market value, with just over \$4M distributed for the Park's purposes.

Regarding asset class positioning (BNY's recommendation to be underweight, neutral, or overweight in the various asset classes), again on the heels of 'Liberation Day', in equities, overall, the exposure was reduced from a small overweight to a neutral, and what that meant for this portfolio was that equities were pared back by approximately 2%. Fixed income (U.S. Bonds) allocation was increased - they tend to be much safer and are a place to preserve capital in times of uncertainty.

Baxter Park's consolidated market value as of May 20 is approximately \$121M in total assets (endowment and trust), and the overall asset allocations are 60% in public equities, 24% in fixed income (bonds), and 14% in alternative investments (private equity or private credit). This portfolio is built to be resilient, and we are seeing that in these four months of volatility, especially given that the portfolio value has not moved much from the beginning of 2025.

In terms of how the portfolio is being managed, BNY Wealth takes the guardrails established in the Investment Policy Statement (IPS) very seriously, and the ranges in the IPS clearly define the minimum and maximum allocations within the asset classes. By design, the portfolio is generally at the midpoint of each range across the three major asset classes, given where we want to be from a risk standpoint in the portfolio.

Total performance, through the end of April, was down 1%, YTD, and so far in May, the portfolio is up 3.5%, and on a YTD basis, up 2.5%. The good news is that even through the anxiety and volatility, this portfolio has been resilient, has performed as expected, and has participated in the market comeback over the course of the last 30 days.

Mike ended by reiterating that the Investment Committee members are all very comfortable with the portfolio's position, and the committee spends a lot of time in discussion about alternative investments, primarily private equity, and what is expected in that asset class going forward.

Donations Report (Lori Morrison): The donations report for the period September 27, 2024 through May 20, 2025 was presented. Donations under \$1,000 totaled \$6,738.56, and donations \$1,000 and over totaled \$210,000. Lori thanked Friends of Baxter for again planning and managing the BSP sign auction fundraiser, which earned \$4,833.31, representing half of the total (auction proceeds are shared equally between FOB and BSP). **AG Frey motioned to approve the Donations Report as presented, seconded by Commissioner Camuso. All were in favor, and the motion carried 3-0.**

SFMA 10-Year Management Plan (Nava Tabak & Shane Miller): Nava began by describing the timeline for completion of this 10-year plan, including the development of the Herbicide Policy, which is an important part of determining how we move forward in the next 10 years. This 10-year plan is an operational plan and a bit of a departure from past SFMA management plans. Though it is robust, it is much shorter than past plans. Items such as the deeds, the long-term plans, and indices for policies and procedures will all be part of the larger master plan that will be developed at some point in the future. This 10-year plan process was achieved by working with the SFMA Advisory Committee, which has been incredibly helpful, and former Park Director Jensen Bissell, who was also a former manager of the SFMA and provided valuable input. It was opened for public comment, and we heard from the BSP Advisory Committee, Friends of Baxter, and individuals who provided good feedback. This plan is very much a labor of BSP's Lands Manager, and lead forester of the SFMA, Shane Miller, who put a lot of work and thought into its development.

Shane noted that BSP is always concerned with forest sustainability. We recently completed and were able to use a third round of continuous forest inventory (CFI) measurement, whereas in the last plan, managers were working with more limited data from two rounds. This third round of measurement is starting to show trends, and that will become more valuable over time as we go through more and more rounds. One of the changes is that the 2012 plan called for an annual allowable cut of 5,605 cords/year, based on 2010 modeling showing net growth at 6,300 cords/year. Current CFI analysis shows that the growth rate was significantly higher than the 2010 estimate, with recent modeling indicating net growth was approximately 8,000 cords/year in 2010. Since then, growth has increased to 9,000 cords/year due to active management. Within the operational units, accretion is approximately 0.68 cords/acre/year, and ingrowth is about 0.14 cords/acre/year. Mortality is approximately 0.27 cords/acre/year, which is significant, and something we're looking at in the next 10 years to get a handle on why we have so much mortality in our operational units (primarily spruce, so likely blowdowns are a significant factor). Overall, our net growth is .54 cords/acre/year.

With this CFI, we're also looking at harvest rates by species group. For the last decade, we've harvested 93% of spruce/fir growth, and over 132% of growth for wet site species, primarily cedar, and only 13% of growth for pine/hemlock, 19% for northern hardwoods, and 23% for intolerant hardwoods. Essentially, we had an imbalanced harvest. This plan will increase the harvest rate to approximately 7,000 cords/year and aim for a more balanced removal by species groups.

The annual allowable cut for the next 10 years is as follows:

- Maximum volume - 7,098 cords/year
 - Will incorporate horticulture and stand treatments that may not result in wood going to a mill if markets are poor
- Strive to limit regeneration harvest to 183 acres/year
- Strive to harvest a maximum of 2,800 cords of spruce/fir annually
 - There is a contingency for challenges such as spruce budworm
 - A lot of the management strategy under the direction of Resource Manager Jensen Bissell was to build the forest as resilient against the budworm, and we've continued that management.
- A maximum of 20 cords of cedar should be removed annually
- Approximately 26% of the annual harvest should be tolerant hardwood
- Harvest at least 300 cords of intolerant hardwood annually
- Approximately 10% of the annual harvest should be pine/hemlock

A notable improvement to the plan following the public comment period was additional recreational use data, based on reservations and self-registration for both trails and roads in the SFMA.

Commissioner Camuso motioned to approve the Scientific Forest Management Area 10-year Management Plan as written, seconded by AG Frey. All were in favor, and the motion carried 3-0.

A question was asked about tonewood, and Shane is working with a former veneer wood buyer to market tonewood to Bourgeois Guitars. The SFMA has recently supplied them with a high-quality, very mature, clear, tighter-grained spruce that only needs to be 4' long to make their instruments (guitars, mandolins). They also have a market for slightly lower-quality tonewood, which has helped this to become a more flexible market for us. Our clapboard market piggybacks off this and allows us to maximize the amount of use from these logs.

Overview of Park Operations:

Financials (Lori Morrison): FY25, Q3 (January 2025-March 2025) revenue was \$2,058,306 (note: the December trust disbursement was recorded in January). Personnel expense: \$743,099 - under budget by 18.5% with position vacancies. All Other expenses: \$291,341, representing a positive variance of 5%, and Capital Expense in Q3 was \$69,940, and YTD \$415,504. Note: As of Q3, 81% of the capital allocation has been utilized year-to-date.

The Daicey Pond Project budget as of May 20, 2025, has tracked very nicely throughout the project as it relates to expenses, and will likely be closed out during the first week in June once personnel have been paid and all expenses have been tracked. Matt McGuire emphasized that this budget was created two years prior to this project's inception, and with the housing market's cost increases, this is remarkable. We were fortunate to obtain the wood from our Scientific Forest Management Area.

Human Resources (Lori Morrison): Lori reviewed the 15 positions filled this season, and nine were new hires, two were former employees who returned, and four existing employees transitioned to new roles with BSP. We are fully staffed except for the open Enforcement Ranger position, which has been reclassified, and the Maintenance Mechanic position.

Reservations (Lori Morrison): The camping season is off to a great start, with campgrounds tracking to meet or exceed 2024 visitation levels. The reservations statistics presented in the operations report are based on a 4-month rolling reservation system.

Katahdin Trailhead Passes (KTPs) went on sale on April 1st for use starting June 1st. One of the changes implemented allows non-residents to obtain trailhead passes at the same time as Maine residents, and to sell no more than 30% of KTPs to non-residents. Mainers can buy up to 100%. At this writing, for all trailheads, resident purchases stand at 64%, which is slightly below the target of 70%. No more than 2 passes per visitor can be purchased per month.

Information Technology (Lori Morisson): An evaluation of the Park's networking equipment was done to begin replacement planning where needed. We've enhanced Wi-Fi security at all gate locations by hiding SSIDs. This prevents visitors from seeing the BSP wireless network that is solely for reservations and critical functions.

Spring Staff Training and Orientation (Kevin Adam): Annual spring training was conducted from April 28 to May 9, with the first week focusing on new staff orientation and required training, and the returning staff joined them during the second week of training. This format has been in place for two years, and though it creates a lot more work for those planning the training, it is more efficient. The 11 new employees had intensive 4-day Wilderness First Aid training, and during the second week, training and education sessions included Information and Education, Natural Resources, Field Operations, Administration, Reservations, SFMA, Maintenance, Trails, and Information Technology. We were honored to have Director Cormier and Attorney General Frey of the Authority, and Executive Director of Friends of Baxter, Aaron Megquier, join us and speak on May 7th. Required training included MEMIC (workplace safety) and Service Animal rules. We have scenario-based training, which simulates Park situations at the gates and campgrounds and is a favorite among employees and volunteers (along with Bruce White's popular BSP Trivia game that is a fun team-builder and teaches employees about the Park through various topics on the Jeopardy board). A few weeks following training, Lori Morrison and Jessica Wheaton will speak with employees in the field to get feedback on the training once they've had time to get some experience and learn how we can improve training going forward.

Special recognition goes to Enforcement Ranger Justine Rumaker and Inventory & Property Associate Deanna Madore, who did an excellent job coordinating this year's intensive spring training.

Information and Education (Nava Tabak): Interpretive Specialist Cassandra Knudsen, collaborating with Bruce White, organized BSP's successful participation in the Eastern Maine Sportsman's Show in Orono and the Aroostook Sportsman's Sport Show in Presque Isle (2 days). With help from volunteers, Cassandra and Bruce engaged with hundreds of visitors at these events. Park staff engaged with local educators and youth in other outreach events, and I&E staff provided table materials to BSP Advisor Ed Pontbriand, who represented BSP at the 4,000-Footer Club's annual event, teaching attendees how to plan their visits to the Park and trips to their peaks of interest.

Cassandra led the review and selection of this year's Visiting Artist, Lauren Richelieu, who will be in the Park for two weeks in September. Cassandra has also put together a robust schedule of summer programs in the Park and has worked on our publications, website, and social media, along with recent collaborations with Friends of Baxter on the 2025-2026 calendar. I & E staff reviewed an updated version of Friends of Baxter's "Know Before You Go" brochure and completed another version of BSP's Wildnotes and 2025 insert. Nava also gave Cassandra a shout-out for keeping up the communications about the Daicey Pond Project on the BSP website and drafting documentation of the entire project (incorporating information from other staff). This will be finalized for internal use and will be a helpful reference for other projects. Cassandra has also been collaborating extensively with Deanna Madore on signs for the Park.

Natural Resources (Nava Tabak): The annual meeting of the Research Committee was held on March 7 and the committee reviewed new research project proposals, of which three were approved: a study to clarify the taxonomy of the rare Roaring Brook Mayfly, a survey of rare stoneflies, and rare plant surveys by the Maine Natural Areas Program. Ongoing research continues this year, and the Maine Forest Service and other state agencies are involved in several monitoring projects. Alpine breeding bird surveys will be conducted very soon, weather permitting.

Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA) (Nava Tabak): At the end of February, Acadian Timber, with its local operation being Katahdin Forest Management (KFM), bought assets from A&A Brochu, assuming its regional contracts, including those with BSP. Lori and Shane are working on new harvest and road maintenance contracts with Acadian Timber, as the existing contracts expire this month.

Two SFMA interns, both forestry students at UMaine, will be working with staff in the SFMA this summer.

The SFMA Advisory Committee met on April 4th in Bangor and reviewed the Annual Allowable Cut for the year 2024, and discussed wood markets and related challenges with hardwood management. Our wood is harvested to meet our silvicultural plans. The hardwood markets are a lot less profitable than spruce and fir, but there are multiple reasons to retain and restore spruce and fir, which is an ongoing challenge for landowners in the north Maine woods. We are working with a subgroup of the Advisory Committee to determine how we can manage needing to cut this wood but not having good markets for it.

LD 1724, a bill to enable the transfer of the Austin Cary Lot in Harpswell, received a public hearing by the legislative Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, along with two subsequent work sessions. Kevin added that it passed in yesterday's House session, so it should go on to the Senate. The current status of LD 1724 in the legislative committee is 'Ought to Pass Amended'.

Maintenance and Operations (Matthew McGuire): BSP Carpenter David Fogg, who was very involved with the Daicey Pond project, retired, and Jesse Laporte was hired as the new Park Carpenter, having worked at the Park for eight years as a campground ranger, most recently at Daicey Pond. We have a vacancy in the Maintenance Mechanic position, and we are conducting interviews for that position next week.

Field Heavy Vehicle and Equipment Technician Frank George, assisted by Maintenance Coordinator Matt Martin, finished serving snowmobiles and, along with other routine maintenance, did a tremendous job getting our seasonal and year-round trucks and trailers serviced and inspected. Matt serviced the Chimney Pond and Russell Pond campgrounds' propane systems.

Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer, who is also the supervisor on the Daicey Pond Project, graduated from the Maine Development Foundation's Institute for Civic Leadership, a program that began in September 2024. while also attending to normal duties, including serving as the lead on the Daicey Pond project.

Our current focus is the Tote Road, which is closed between McManus Brook and Wadleigh Brook. Conditions are being monitored.

On the Daicey Pond project, 54 windows were hauled into the site by snowmobile because we were concerned about road access in the early spring. To effect that transportation, a contractor leveled the snowdrifts where we get significant drifting along the Tote Road at Togue Pond, Abol Pond, and Stump Pond with a skid-steer.

Cabins two and four were complete rebuilds, which meant new floors were installed. Alex Mangus took a lead role, sanding and applying linseed oil to those floors. Matt Martin worked diligently to set up the propane systems in each cabin, including all new copper lines.

Trails: Supervisor Brennan Turner and Trail Specialist Kris English completed winter hauling tasks, and Brennan finalized the revision of the BSP chainsaw protocols and refined the B & C-level instructional courses and evaluations for staff, and has already started conducting classes. Blowdown patrol is being conducted, prioritizing early-season fishing access trails, mountain trails, and backcountry and long-distance trails. Brennan added that once the blowdown patrol and chainsaw training are completed, all six of the trail crew personnel will be at Chimney Pond for three weeks working on bridge replacements and alpine trail maintenance.

Field Operations and Law Enforcement: District Ranger Rob Tice, working with the MFS and Millinocket Fire Department, received donated fire equipment, including hoses and pumps and we

now have on loan from MFS a Type 4 engine and military water trailer, and are working on getting (also on loan) a Type 6 engine to supplement the Park's firefighting capabilities. This equipment is being brought to a safe, functional condition for the 2025 fire season.

Rob and Chief Ranger Matt McGuire attended the NOAA Spring Fire Weather Operations meeting in Old Town with the National Weather Service, Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, and MFS personnel. This was an opportunity to network with other agencies and look at high or extreme fire conditions, and what capabilities we can offer each other. Rob and Matt also attended the ME Army National Guard Sync ops meeting in Bangor. This multi-agency meeting looked at the 126th Aviation Wing's helicopter operations and capabilities and the agencies that rely on their use. The 126th Aviation Wing will be joining us for our intro to SAR course on June 11 - a refresher for returning seasonals as well as for new staff.

Other activities included Interviews for summer staff, new radio installations, finishing the winter hauling into Chimney Pond and Russell Pond campgrounds, and a lot of time spent preparing for spring orientation. We did a two-day RT 130 refresher course for wildland firefighting, led by the MFS, and year-round Rangers attended a one-day Wilderness First Aid and First Responder refresher course.

Summonses for illegal hiking were issued for two hikers who summited Katahdin via the closed Abol and Hunt Trails. We are currently accepting applications for an Enforcement Ranger position, and staff participated in the annual remembrance for Ranger Ralph Heath who died in October 1963 in a rescue attempt in October of 1963 on Katahdin.

New Campground Ranger Emma Zavaski and returning campground ranger Ian McKnight, along with Cape Elizabeth High School student volunteer Alden O'Brien, conducted a mountain patrol on the Abol Trail in mid-May. That trail was opened today, and there are some AT hikers anxious to either start or finish their hike. In the fall, we learned that the Appalachian Trail Conservancy was only going to have one of the two AT Ridgerunner positions filled this year. We rely on their help at the Kiosk at Abol Bridge. Bruce White was instrumental in working with ATC, and they were able to secure funding for a second position, which will help with our capabilities in working with the public on the AT this year.

Search and Rescue teams from the Maine Association of Search and Rescue (MASAR) were secured and scheduled for the 2025 season in the Park. They help with volunteer projects and do preventive search and rescue (PSAR), talking with visitors to avoid dangerous situations. In 2024, MASAR teams provided 2,675 standby hours and 200 active hours of SAR coverage for the Park. BSP was invited to present at this year's MASAR conference. Rob and Matt discussed the history of SAR at BSP and the 2024 SAR Operations, providing statistics and trends from last year's incidents.

Rob and Matt have been working with Nava Tabak to initiate a Weather Class Day system for areas above treeline. This system utilizes NOAA weather forecasts, the heat index, and Chimney Pond mountain weather observations to provide simple categories about weather conditions for hikers to

help them make informed decisions. It will also assist in how we record the weather for mountain patrols, which Nava coordinates. Friends Executive Director Aaron Megquier asked how the Park will use this “Trail Closure (black - Class 5)”. Matt explained that this isn’t a mountain class day; this is a weather class day, so the intent is not to prohibit or restrict access to the mountain - it is just to provide information about the weather that will be occurring on a given day. The “black close” condition is the Director’s call in an extreme event, such as a death on the trail. Nava added for historical context that this is only for weather above treeline, and the categories are different than in the past (which only had a three-class system, when basically 99% of the days fell into Class 2, making the classes less informative). Cassandra is planning a social media post around this ‘Above Treeline Weather Class Day’ system.

Chair and Vice Chair Appointments - BSP Advisory: Current Chair Carl Carlson was lauded as he steps down from the Advisory, having served three two-year terms. Carl has been on the Advisory since October 2023 and has been an avid 35-year visitor to the Park, and was a positive force on the Committee as a great collaborator. Carl expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve. Brant Miller is currently Vice Chair of the Advisory and is recommended for consideration by the Authority as the Chair of the BSP Advisory. Brant added that he has been coming to the Park for 25 years as a volunteer, has a great love for the Park, and has been on the Advisory Committee for five years. The second consideration by the Authority is for Rick Bray to step up to the Vice-Chair position, having been nominated by the committee to do so. Rick is a long-time visitor to the Park, has served in the capacity of committee member and Chair of the Advisory Committee in the past, and has been a volunteer for 3 decades in the Park. The third consideration is for Eric Hendrickson, a historian of the Park, to be considered for a seat on the Advisory Committee. Eric added he is a retired public educator and has been volunteering at the Park since the early 80s. **Commissioner Camuso moved to approve Brant Miller as Chairperson, Rick Bray as Vice Chairperson, and Eric Hendrickson as committee member to the BSP Advisory. AG Frey seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Motion carried 3-0.**

Meeting Adjourned at 1 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Georgia Manzo
Office Specialist