



MEMORANDUM

Date: 01-09-2026 to the Authority for the **January 16, 2026, BSPA Meeting**

From: Park Director Kevin Adam

Subject: Park Operations Update, October 4, 2025, to the present

Finance:

FY26, Q1 – (July 1, 2025 – September 30, 2025):

Revenue:

All Revenue: \$2,124,936

Notes: Revenue tracking to budget

Expenses:

Personnel expense: \$1,508,124

Notes:

- Positive variance, position vacancies

All Other expenses: \$412,567

Notes:

- Positive variance, tracking to budget
- Expected negative variance in insurance expense due to an overall rate increase in all SOM Risk Management Insurance Programs.

Capital expense: \$0

Notes:

- Capital not allocated in Q1

Capital Reserve Balance: \$399,777

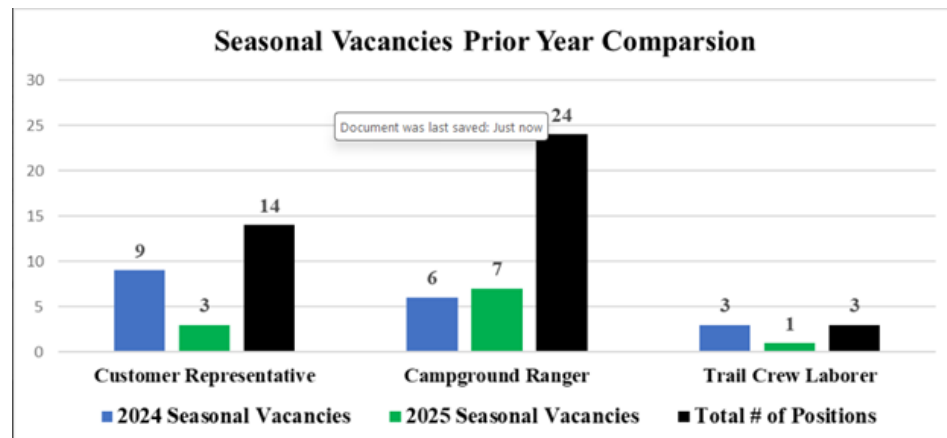
Kidney Pond Project Budget:

The Kidney Pond Project for 2025/2026 will be self-funded by Baxter State Park. This project was not included in the FY26 budget. As of the writing of this report, a financial order has been submitted to the State of Maine Budget Office, and it is expected to be signed by the Governor on December 12, 2025. In addition to maintenance department staff, two temporary positions will be utilized to assist with this phase of the restoration project, which includes work on Cabin 6 & 7, and the library.

Kidney Pond Project Budget Library, Cabin 6 & 7 As of 11/30/2025		
Revenue	Actual	Project Budget
Revenue BSP Funded	\$ -	\$ 118,915
Total Revenue	\$ -	\$ 118,915
Expense	Actual	Project Budget
*Personnel and Fringe	\$ -	\$ 49,000
All Other and Capital		
Building Materials	\$ -	\$ 60,515
Equipment Rental	\$ -	\$ 5,400
Other Professional Services	\$ -	\$ 4,000
Total All Other and Capital	\$ -	\$ 69,915
Total Expense	\$ -	\$ 118,915
Total Revenue	\$ -	\$ 118,915
Financial Note:		
*Personnel Expense includes Limited Period Positions - 2 Conservation Aids		

Human Resources:

Recruitment during the 2025 season was successful, and retention efforts showed improvement. The number of vacant positions in 2025 was lower, with 11 open seasonal positions as compared to 18 in 2024. The reasons for vacancies were consistent with the past years and included internal promotions, lateral transfers, external career opportunities, and other performance-based reasons. This past season, we experienced a notable increase in qualified candidates, as compared to previous hiring periods. Baxter State Park remains a highly desirable employer and an attractive destination for employment, offering entry-level opportunities for new college graduates and others entering the job market. With intentional recruitment efforts, the Park has benefited from recruiting retirees for seasonal employment. During this recruiting period, two former employees returned to Baxter after leaving. We continue to identify process improvements for recruitment and retention efforts, including improved and timely communication with candidates and employee feedback.



Reservations:

We officially transitioned to the Winter Season on December 1st, following the Winter Lottery that was held on Monday, November 3rd.

2023-2025 Winter Lottery Data:

Year	Lottery Winter Reservations	In-Person	Received by Mail
2025	197	92	105
2024	141	89	52
2023	174	91	83

Year	Commercial Use Reservations
2025	7
2024	3
2023	13
Revenue [includes commercial]	
2025	\$ 101,289
2024	\$ 77,362
2023	\$ 88,779

2026 Reservation Changes:

After a comprehensive review with the Reservation Subcommittee and in collaboration with the BSP's Information and Education team, updates for the 2026 camping season were announced on December 5th. These updates include enhancements to multi-night camping reservations and a change in the reservation portal opening time, now moving from 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. Until now, when the 4-month rolling window opened for each day of camping, online reservations were limited to a single night, requiring visitors to call the BSP reservation office to extend beyond the 4-month rolling window. Effective for the 2026 season, visitors will be able to use the online reservation portal to reserve their initial night plus three (3) consecutive nights beyond the 4-month rolling window at the same campground.

All software program changes have been completed, and internal testing will continue through January 2026. BSP's website, titled "What's New This Year," provides a comprehensive overview of the changes, including details on what, when, and why these updates are being made. It also includes examples of common reservations and answers to frequently asked questions.

Additionally, a social media campaign has been launched to promote these changes. Efforts to communicate are ongoing, including distributing information to key stakeholders and neighboring agencies and providing updates to both full-time and seasonal staff.

Katahdin Trailhead Pass (KTP):

The 2025 Season process changes were thoroughly reviewed by the Reservation Subcommittee and confirmed to have successfully achieved our desired key objectives, including:

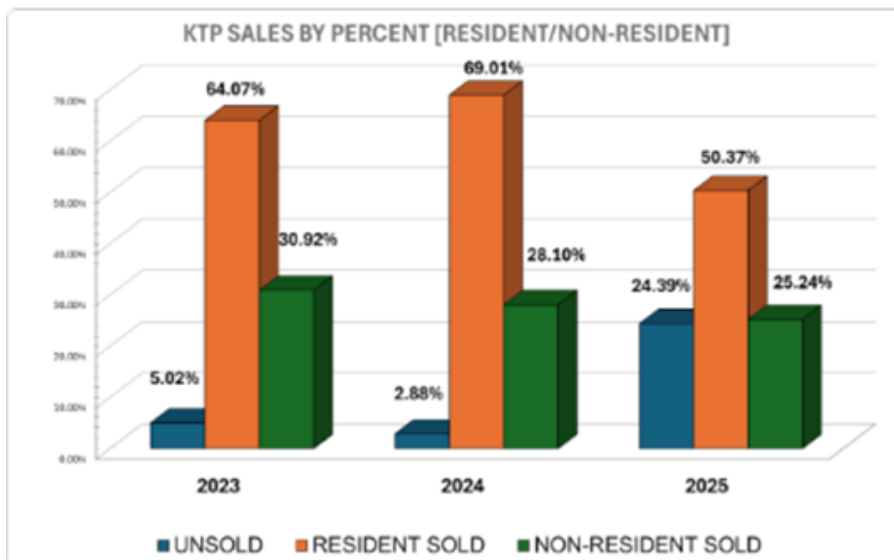
- Management of KTP waste: We reduced the limit of KTPs from three per account per month to two. This change helped curb over-purchasing and lowered no-show rate by 7%.
- Starting April 1st, non-resident visitors were able to buy KTPs along with Maine residents. Non-residents did not purchase more than the set cap of 30%.
- Maine residents did not purchase 70% but they did have the opportunity to purchase 70% or greater on all available hiking days.

We identified that further education is needed to ensure visitors know they must select a vehicle to view KTP availability. This confusion was not realized soon enough in the season, which contributed to the reduction in sales. KTPs intend to help manage and protect the natural resources above revenue generation. It was determined that the fee increase from \$5.00 to \$10.00 per pass was not a factor in the reduction of the overall sales. Although the total number of passes sold was lower than in previous years, the revenue exceeded the previous year's collection due to the price increase per pass.

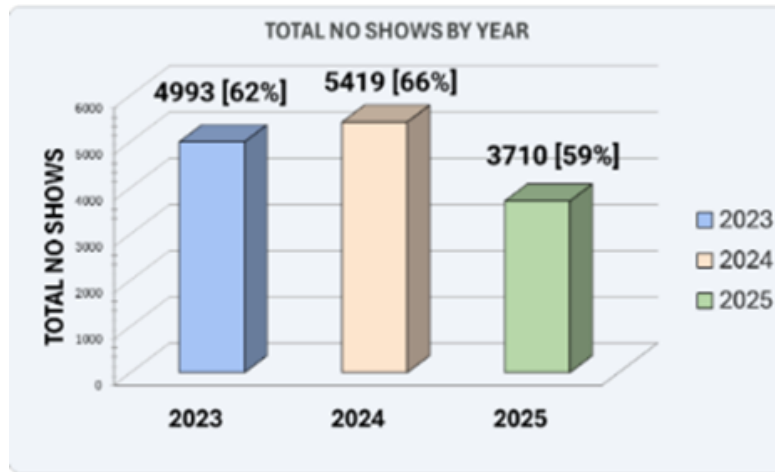
KTP Sales by Year:



KTP Sales - Resident/Non-Resident:

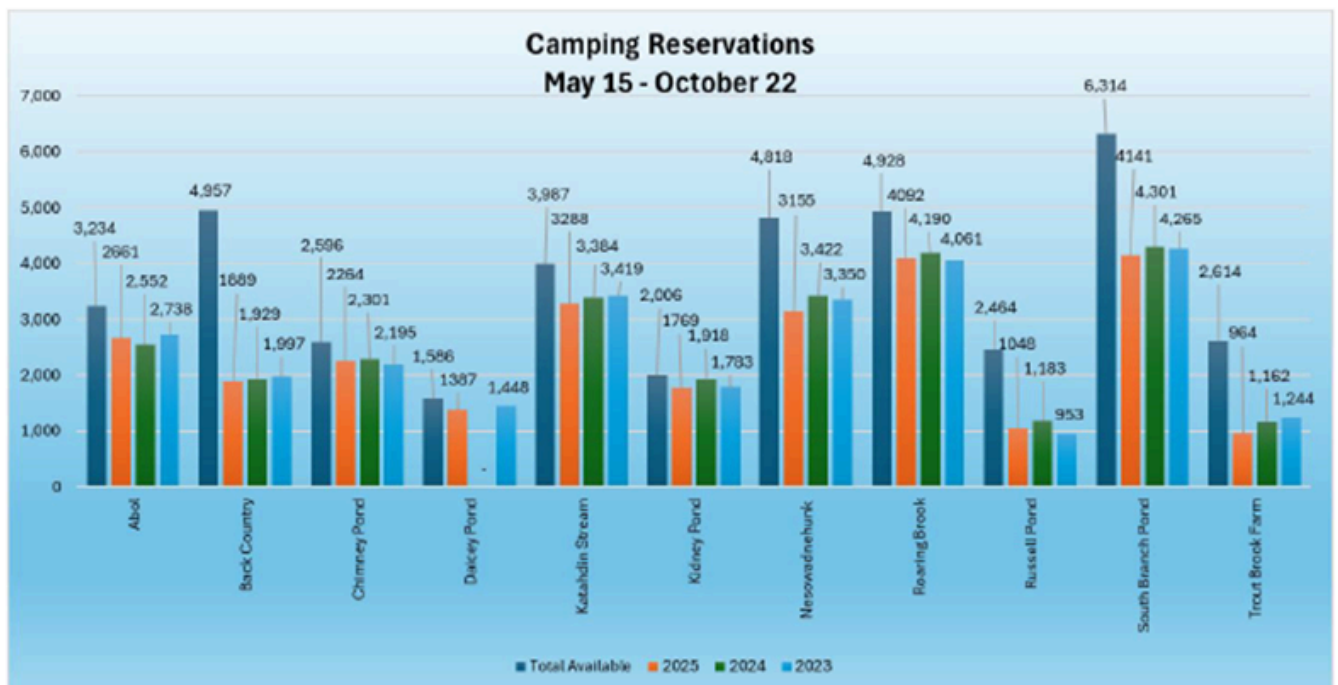


KTP No-Show Volume by Year:



2025 Camping Reservations

There was an overall increase of 316 reserved campsites in 2025 as compared to the same time in 2024. (May 15 – October 22). The overall camping reservations made accounted for 67% of the total nights available.



Information and Technology:

No significant updates to report.

Information & Education (I&E):

The I&E staff and Intern Tzevi Aho produced a final monthly staff newsletter for October, and made presentations for staff at the end-of-season meeting on geology, responding to bat encounters in Park facilities, and summaries of the season's efforts.

Interpretive Specialist Cassandra Knudsen has been working with Friends of BSP on the 2027 park calendar, including photo selection and writing photo captions. She is also collaborating with Friends on planning a monthly educational winter webinar series about various topics related to the Park.

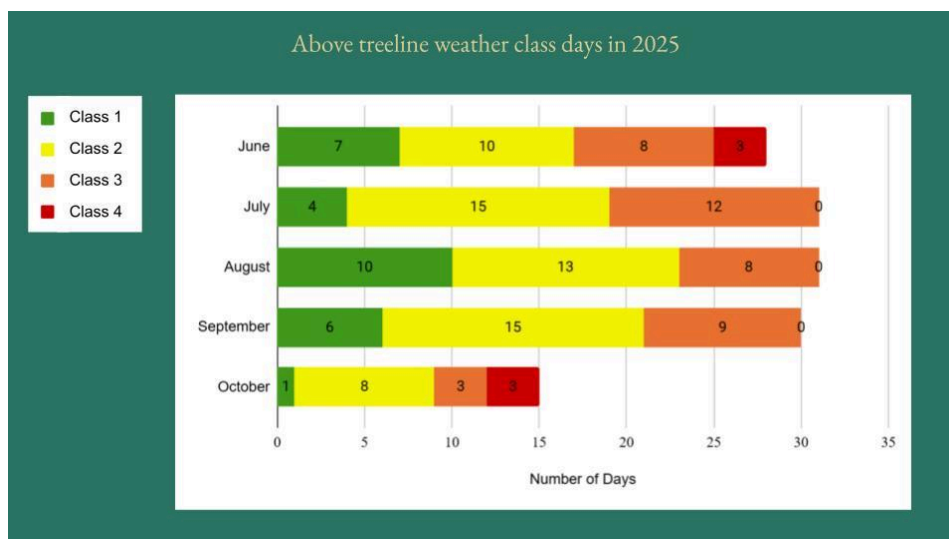
Following up on the Authority's approval of changes for the camping reservation policy, Cassandra and Natural Resource Director Nava Tabak worked with reservations staff to produce communications about the changes for the public, including for the Park's website and social media.

Winter signage has been distributed in the Park, and work is continuing on additional wayside-style kiosk signs for the next summer season. Staff are also collaborating with Lands Manager Shane Miller to update educational materials associated with the forestry interpretive trail, and working with contractor MapAdventures to update the Park's printed map (which was last updated in 2021). I&E staff are also making plans for winter outreach events and to pilot a visiting writer program (as a complement to the visiting artist program) for June 2026.

In addition to the Visiting Artist Program, which centers on a two-week stay at Kidney Pond each September, I&E staff are planning a pilot for a Visiting Writer. In past years, some writers have applied to the Visiting Artist Program, but it was difficult to compare their work with visual art. This winter, staff will put out a call for applications for both artist programs, and the selected Visiting Writer will be based out of Kidney Pond Campground for a week in June.

Natural Resources and Research:

Eleven staff members reported on 81 Katahdin mountain patrol trips from the spring/summer/fall season- a record high in recent years. The Park also instituted a revised weather class system for areas above treeline, which was embraced by many visitors. The drought conditions that developed over the season resulted in a relatively high number of class 1 and 2 days (better hiking weather conditions) and fewer class 4 days than expected in a typical season.



The BSP 2025 iNaturalist project ended Nov 1, with nearly 4,500 observations submitted, representing nearly 900 spp. There were many observations of fungi and insects, and approximately 50% of the observations in this project have attained research grade.

Several research and monitoring projects took place (or continued) into the fall. Staff from the Maine Natural Areas Program completed six ecoreserve monitoring transects in the Park. Researchers with the Roaring Brook mayfly taxonomy project survey (ME IF&W) made a 5th sampling trip, and Maine's DEP completed their 3rd water quality sampling of the season at South Branch Pond. Park staff continued to monitor alpine plant phenology on Katahdin, completing a total of 29 plot surveys over the season.

Following an ongoing effort by staff and a small volunteer work day, Park Advisory Committee members joined staff on October 4th to dig and pull invasive bristly locust plants from the site of an old gravel pit off of Roaring Brook Road. Together, they filled 4 bags with plants, kickstarting the work at this site, which is one of four sites

where staff are undertaking a multi-year effort to eradicate this shrub from the Park.



Past/Present Advisory volunteers holding a bristly locust rhizome

Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA):

SFMA staff have been conducting various stand inventories and updating estimates of forest cover types. Concurrently, Lands Manager Shane Miller and Nava Tabak worked with the SFMA Advisory Committee (particularly committee members John Bryant and Bob Seymour) to prioritize a course of action for managing hardwood and mixedwood stands in the SFMA. A relatively large proportion of such stands in the SFMA require Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) and herbicide treatment to restore desirable regeneration. This, along with depressed

wood markets, present operational challenges for the SFMA. In response, staff have prioritized specific silvicultural investments (pre-commercial thinning and herbicide treatments), cost-cutting measures, and investment in additional inventory and analysis to guide decision making and to optimize operations to meet the SFMA's goals. Staff are also using several criteria to consider the timing and initiation of harvests to ensure that they can achieve silvicultural goals regardless of revenue, and plan to re-invest net revenue in SFMA's priority actions.

Due to persistently poor hardwood pulp markets, a relatively small volume harvest (approximately 2,500 cords, representing about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the Annual Allowable Cut originally expected for this year) was initiated in the north end of the SFMA in November and is ongoing. Staff are making plans for a harvest at the Mount Chase Lot (outside of the Park), which will center on capturing mortality in a mature Norway spruce plantation.

In November, Shane Miller joined foresters and students from the Maine Forest Service and the University of Maine on an educational trip to Germany and Switzerland. The group was led by local forest managers, researchers, and foresters, who shared their approaches to climate adaptation, sustainable operations, and harvest operation techniques.

The SFMA Advisory Committee met in the south end of the SFMA on October 10th. They visited an area where two manual herbicide application methods have been tested by Forester Dee George (with assistance from Shane Miller and the summer SFMA interns). The treatments both appear effective, and staff will continue using a "drill-and-fill" method (which was found to be much more efficient and targeted than a cut stump [or "hack-and-squirt"] method). The Committee discussed the current challenges facing the SFMA and shared

updates on the spruce budworm early intervention strategy being employed in the state, SFMA operations, wood markets, and the Austin Cary Lot. They also visited a block that received a first entry in 2023 following its exchange with another block as an operational unit, and a block with an Irregular Group Shelterwood treatment completed in 2024, to provide their input on the results and future planning for these areas.

The Cooperative Forestry Research Unit (CFRU) advisory committee met in October. A new membership fee schedule is now in place, and CFRU staff will work with a subcommittee to update the RFP process and schedule that will be used for grant reviews and awards in 2026. The advisory committee approved a two-year extension of current Executive Committee members, while the CFRUs' next prospectus is assembled; Nava will continue to serve as vice-chair for two more years.

In October, Clint Morrow, who has been the primary processor operator in the SFMA, was honored with the Certified Logging Professional Mechanical Logger of the Year award. Clint has served continuously in this role for over 20 years, while working for multiple contracted companies (Pelletier Brothers, A&A Brochu, and now Acadian Timber). The award acknowledged his contributions towards the SFMA's goals, as well as the services he has provided to the Park as the owner of the Ruff Cutters business in Millinocket.

Maintenance:

The Maintenance Department spent the early fall preparing for road work. Maintenance Coordinator Matt Martin and Field Heavy Vehicle and Equipment Tech Frank George spent two days hauling gravel from Nesowadnehunk Pit to an area near Windy Pitch on the Roaring Brook Road. Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer and Supervisory Carpenter Jesse Laporte each spent a day providing escorts for the dump trucks.

In early November, Wehmeyer, George, and Martin worked with contractor Acadian Timber to add six cross-drainage culverts on the Roaring Brook Road (intended to further protect stream crossings). In addition, five aging culverts were replaced, three on the Roaring Brook Road and two on the Tote Road. Spot resurfacing and ditching were also done around all the culvert work. All disturbed soil was seeded and stabilized once work was completed.

Laporte spent much of the fall working on repairs at Kidney Pond Campground. Work included the jacking, leveling, post, sill log, and porch replacement on Cabin 9 and jacking, leveling, post, and porch replacement on the Library. A wall of the Library facing the pond with extensive rot damage was removed, and repairs began. Laporte was assisted by Law Enforcement Rangers, Roving Rangers, and Volunteers. Work will continue on the Kidney Pond Library, Cabin 7, and Cabin 6 throughout the winter. Logs for the project were sourced from the Park's Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA) and were milled and peeled locally.

To work with Laporte at Kidney throughout the winter, the Park hired two project-limited Conservation Aides, Nate Cote and Brandt Brownlee. Both hold summer seasonal positions with the Park. They began their project positions on November 1 and will stay in them until May 1.



Martin placed a concrete spill containment basin under an above-ground diesel tank at the North Camps in the SFMA. Laporte assisted him in building a roof over the tank and basin. Additionally, Martin, Laporte, and George replaced the workshop roof at the Hemlock camps in the SFMA. George also serviced both SFMA generators.

In the Maintenance Garage, George and Martin worked together to put away the Park's extensive seasonal vehicle fleet. They also replaced rear springs in favor of a heavier version on four Law Enforcement Ranger trucks. This is in addition to repairing several flat tires and servicing a multitude of small engine equipment, including wood splitters, chainsaws, and generators.

As the seasons have begun changing, George, with assistance from Martin, has been preparing the Park's snowmobile fleet. Two new snowmobiles have been received and are being upfitted for Park use prior to assignment. This brings the total fleet to twenty-seven snowmobiles.

The Park has taken possession of one new half-ton pickup truck, which is currently at Yankee Communication for radio, light, and other installations. An additional half-ton truck is awaiting shipment and will get similar upfitting prior to assignment.

The Park has also received a new Case 890SN backhoe. A 10' snow pusher has also been ordered and will be received in the next few weeks. During the winter months, the backhoe will be stationed at the Abol Bridge winter parking lot. Due to proposed increases in contractor pricing and other logistical factors, the Maintenance Department will be assuming snow plowing responsibilities at Abol in addition to their plowing duties at Park Headquarters. A local contractor will continue to plow the winter lot at Matagamon.

Additional work done by Maintenance during the period included the coordination and delivery of materials for multiple lean-to builds in the campgrounds, service of all the Park's solar power systems and batteries, trim replacement on the Trapper John Camp, winterization of multiple park buildings and water systems, and cleaning and servicing the Headquarters pellet boiler system.

Trails:

The Trail Crew season typically begins to wrap up in mid-October as the crew members end their season in the second week of October. This year was different as the Trail Crew members received an extension until November 1st to assist the Trail Supervisor with the execution of a large volunteer event with the Army National Guard. The volunteer event was ultimately canceled due to the Federal Government shutdown.



The projects that had originally been planned for the Guard to work on involved extensive rockwork and tread repair on the Howe Brook Trail, as well as the installation of a stone staircase and drainage for the South Branch Falls Trail. After the cancellation of the event, the crew took time to combine the South Branch Falls project with a highline rigging training. The crew spent three days learning about working load limits of highline rigging equipment, practicing the setup of highline systems, reviewing and practicing mechanical advantage systems that allow the uphill retrieval of heavy loads through the application of a three-to-one (a.k.a. Z-drag) set-up, progress capture systems, and introducing the concept of compound mechanical advantage systems.

The month of October was also spent accomplishing some final construction projects, sourcing timber supplies for winter hauling, and winterizing Trails Department buildings, including North Branch Camps, Kidney Pond Stream Camp, and Trails End, as well as debriefing the season's success and challenges with the team.

After the seasonal crew's departure at the end of October, Trail Specialist Kris English and Supervisor Brennan Turner turned their attention to planning their winter hauling projects, staging bog bridging at the Daicey Pond day use area, scouting trails for future projects, and planning 2026 sign replacement projects. Kris English began working on the replacement of the Baxter Peak summit sign, as well as a series of other alpine trail signs on Katahdin, and the Daicey Pond Nature Loop trail network signs. In the month of December, Kris continued her work routing and painting trail signs and assisting Brennan with planning the 2026 project season. Brennan also spent this time building the new frame for the Baxter Peak Summit Sign and staging 12' cedar signposts for December's



scheduled flight delivery onto Katahdin, the Owl, North and South Brother, Mt. Coe, and Double Top.

In addition to the canceled volunteer event, the Federal Government shutdown prevented the National Guard from the planned flight to deliver three spruce logs to the Katahdin Stream Falls area of the Hunt Trail. The logs were intended to be used as bridge stringers for the scheduled 2026 bridge replacement. Brennan was able to locate three spruce trees in the vicinity of the project site to be used as alternative stringers. He worked with Kris and Roving Ranger Alex Mangus to drop and prepare the bridge stringers to be dragged uphill to the project site during the coming winter.

Field Operations and Law Enforcement:

The end of the camping season allowed staff to complete a variety of projects prior to conducting seasonal winterization of Park buildings and water systems. These projects included the installation of storm windows at Daicey Pond, Kidney Pond Cabin 9 porch rebuild and Cabin 6 crib work, construction of a replacement lean-to at Nesowadnehunk Field, burning debris and brush piles at Nesowadnehunk Field and Rum Pit, hauling in supplies for construction projects at Kidney, Daicey, Nesowadnehunk Field, Abol, and Trout Brook Farm, staging supplies at Russell Pond, clearing blowdowns along the Park road system, boundary line corridor maintenance, installing winter use signs, trail camera maintenance, roofing projects, equipment relocations, and installing snow fence on the lower Chimney Pond Trail.



A significant amount of firewood was delivered by the Park's firewood vendor to Abol and East Branch pits for the 2026 season. Winter wood for camper use was also delivered to Kidney and Daicey Ponds. Park staff provided escorts to ensure public safety during movement by the vendor's oversized vehicle. Staff and volunteers stacked firewood at Kidney and Daicey as well.

The Park's Type 4 fire engine was moved from Togue Pond Ranger Camp to Park Headquarters for the winter. This vehicle was serviced and winterized, as were all of the Park's fire pumps, backpack tanks, chainsaws, and hand tools. The annual review of fire pump checklists from campgrounds was also conducted. The Park's one-ton dump truck had been set up as a Type 6 engine for the summer and was converted back to a plow truck in November for the winter season.

The Park once again hosted the Mitchell Scholars in late fall, who volunteered help complete a number of projects, including spreading gravel at Daicey Pond, stacking firewood at Kidney Pond, and organizing children's books at Kidney. The event was organized and led by Supervisory Ranger Bruce White and had the participation of several Park staff.

Park Supervisors conducted staff evaluations and continue to learn and work through the State of Maine's new payroll and Human Resources system (PRISM). Resource Administrator Jessica Wheaton has been assisting supervisors with all issues. Law Enforcement Rangers have additionally been conducting motor vehicle crash investigations and patrolling for fishing, hunting, and trapping activities. Staff completed state-mandated law enforcement training in case law, breath testing device recertification, and Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS).

The Park received ten new Glock sidearms. This purchase was made to align with upgrades to firearms being conducted by the Maine Warden Service. In early December, all seven Park Law Enforcement Rangers participated in two



to



10

days of annual firearms qualifications and training in conjunction with the Maine Warden Service. Law Enforcement staff all qualified with the new handguns and 12 12-gauge shotguns; select staff also qualified with long guns.

Law Enforcement Rangers issued seven (7) summons/warnings during the reporting period and continue to investigate vandalism to the Katahdin summit sign:

BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	USAC
BSP Rule 2.2	Fishing without a license	USAC
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	USAC
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	USAC
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	USAC
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	USAC
BSP Rule 5.5	Use of UAVs in the Park	Warning

A number of staff volunteered their time to install a new roof on the house of former Baxter Law Enforcement Ranger Loren Goode, who passed away on August 30th. In addition to BSP staff, various retired and active Law Enforcement officers assisted with this effort to ensure Loren's widow had a new roof needed before winter. This demonstration of support for a retired employee exemplifies the best of the Baxter community. Special thanks are extended to the Maine State Troopers Foundation and the Maine Warden Service Foundation for their funding and labor provided for this project.

Appalachian Trail:

On October 23rd, the Park hosted an end-of-season meeting with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and the Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC). This annual "lessons learned" meeting continues to provide valuable information for all involved parties.

Topics discussed at the meeting included educating hikers regarding "slack-packing" and eligibility to camp at the Birches, educating northbound hikers (NOBOs) about the potential for the mountain to close in October, and considering "flip-flopping" from Monson to Katahdin to reduce the chance that hikers might not finish due to a weather closure on the mountain. "Flip-flopping" may eliminate the pressure to finish in mid-fall adverse conditions, which places motivated hikers at risk. The Park closed the mountain on October 17th for the 2025 summer season. The day prior, October 16th, was designated a Class 4 day, with harsh and potentially dangerous weather conditions above tree line.

Communication was effective this season between Monson Visitor Center Manager Wendy Weiger, ATC Ridgerunner Hailey Lynch, and Baxter AT Ranger Don Bolduc. Through regular emails, Weiger provided the Park with a "summit calendar," suggesting when the Birches might fill. Lynch and Bolduc were able to provide suggestions for alternative arrangements for hikers heading to the Park when the Birches were filled. Weiger kept the Park apprised of large groups headed towards the Park as well.

AT trends noted in 2025 at Baxter State Park and presented by Supervisory Ranger Bruce White included a number of incidents involving hikers over the age of seventy finishing the AT and requiring assistance by Park

staff. A new trend observed this season was southbound (SOBOs) hikers starting their hike at Roaring Brook, going “up and over.” This meant that these hikers were taking on the most physically demanding part of the AT, fully burdened with gear and not in top physical shape. All but one of these six parties were rescued or turned around and directed to Katahdin Stream or to the AT Hostel in Millinocket for a gear “shake down.”

There was a total of 2,012 AT hikers in the Park in 2025, with the majority being Northbound hikers (1,655). The Park continues to see the most AT hikers in August and September annually, averaging 603 and 570 a month, respectively.

Type of Hike		
Thru-hike N	Northbound	857
Thru-hike S	Southbound	199
Section N	Northbound	636
Section S	Southbound	106
Flip Flop N	Northbound	156
Flip Flop S	Southbound	52
IAT	Any Direction	6
	Total Hikers	2012

Search and Rescue:

Two Search and Rescue (SAR) incidents occurred during the reporting period: one incident involving a hiker who suffered from exhaustion and overexceeded his ability on the Chimney Pond Trail, and a second incident involving a welfare check on an individual moving through the Park. As of December 11, 2025, Park staff responded to seventy-five SAR incidents, a 40% increase over the number of SAR incidents in 2024 (forty-five). The preponderance of SAR incidents this season is due to falls, lower extremity injuries, dehydration, exhaustion, and exceeding ability. The Park has seen several older AT section hikers who have needed assistance or have overnighted on the mountain, and this was a topic discussed at length during the Park’s meeting with the ATC and MATC.

Park Rangers and MASAR teams continue to conduct Preventive Search and Rescue (PSAR) talks with hikers at ranger stations, trailheads, campsites, and on the trail. Seven MASAR teams provided a total of 2,409 standby and 463 active SAR hours. A substantial number of the active hours were generated during the Keiderling search and recovery in June. These teams were recognized during the Park’s Annual Volunteer Banquet held on November 2nd. This banquet, organized by Georgia Manzo and Supervisory Ranger Bruce White, with support from District Ranger Rob Tice, and Inventory and Property Associate Deanna Madore, is an opportunity to recognize and thank these SAR teams and our partnering agencies for their continued assistance.

District Ranger Rob Tice has begun generating the winter MASAR coverage calendar, and Tice and Chief Ranger Matt McGuire are in discussions with MASAR teams for joint winter trainings for Park staff, volunteers,

and partnering agencies.