



**MEMORANDUM**

Date: 03-20-2026 to the Authority for the **March 27, 2026, BSPA Meeting**  
 From: Park Director Kevin Adam  
 Subject: **Park Operations Update, January 17, 2026, to the present**

**Finance:**

FY26, Q2 – (October 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025):

**Revenue:**

Revenue: \$1,641,915

- Revenue tracking to budget

**Expenses:**

Personnel expense: \$1,233,588

- Positive variance, position vacancies

All Other expenses: \$351,210

- Positive variance, tracking to budget
- Negative variance in Insurance costs due to an overall rate increase in all SOM Risk Management Insurance Programs
- Negative variance in STA-CAP due to an increase in budget expense

Capital expense: \$218,256

- Includes capital for buildings, equipment, and infrastructure, and the Kidney Pond Project.
- 56% of the capital allocation has been utilized year-to-date through Q2.

**Capital Reserve Account Balance: \$399,777**

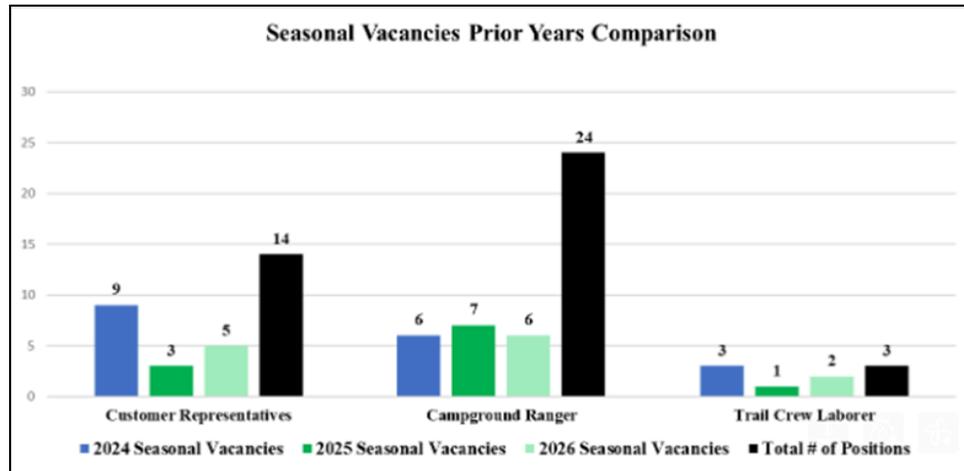
**Kidney Pond Project Budget:**

The Kidney Pond Project for 2025/2026 is self-funded by Baxter State Park. The following financial report shows actual expenses compared to budgeted expenses as of February 28, 2026.

Kidney Pond Project Budget Library, Cabin 6 & 7 As of 2/28/2026		
Revenue	Actual	Project Budget
Revenue BSP Funded	\$ 63,041	\$ 134,915
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 63,041</b>	<b>\$ 134,915</b>
Expense	Actual	Project Budget
*Personnel and Fringe	\$ 40,669	\$ 65,000
All Other and Capital		
Building Materials	\$ 22,372	\$ 60,515
Equipment Rental	\$ -	\$ 5,400
Other Professional Services	\$ -	\$ 4,000
<b>Total All Other and Capital</b>	<b>\$ 22,372</b>	<b>\$ 69,915</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$ 63,041</b>	<b>\$ 134,915</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 63,041</b>	<b>\$ 134,915</b>
<b>Financial Note:</b>		
*Personnel Expense includes Limited Period Positions - 2 Conservation Aids		

## Human Resources:

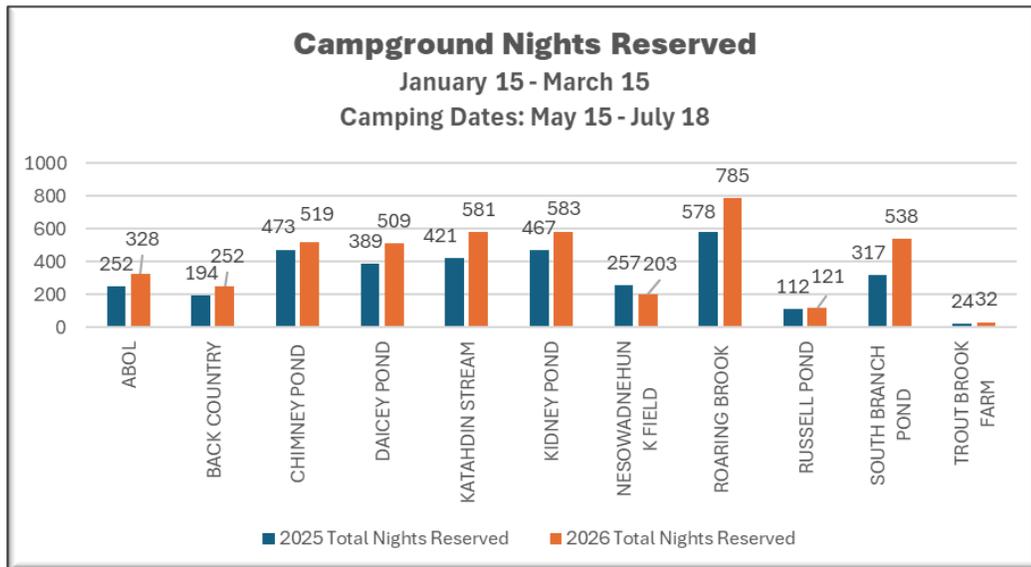
Recruitment is the top priority for Jessica Wheaton, the Business Administrator overseeing the Park's recruitment and retention efforts. As of mid-March, Jessica and the hiring teams, which include various supervisory staff, have conducted 54 interviews for seasonal and intern positions. Of the 13 vacancies for the 2026 season, we have successfully filled 9 positions, with additional employment offers pending. Interviews will continue until all positions are filled. The chart below illustrates the number of vacancies by year compared to the total number of positions by classification. Additionally, eight employees who left their positions have remained with the Park by transitioning to different classifications or roles, offering additional weeks of employment. The reasons for the six vacancies include two retirements, one employer-initiated separation, and three employees relocating outside the area.



## Reservations:

Reservations for 2026 opened on January 15th, generating excitement among visitors. Park Services Manager Bryan Buhler reports that the changes to the reservation extension policy have been well received and are meeting their intended objectives. However, a small number of individuals have raised concerns that the new policy adds complexity to reserving a 7-day stay with extensions.

Changes for 2026 aimed to enhance visitor satisfaction by allowing online extensions and reducing phone congestion and long wait times to reach a customer service representative. Early reports indicate a significant shift in reservation trends: online bookings are increasing, while phone reservations have declined by 17%. It appears that more people are choosing to book their experiences online for convenience. The chart below reflects a 27% increase in overall nights reserved from January 15<sup>th</sup> through March 15<sup>th</sup> for camping dates from May 15<sup>th</sup> through July 18<sup>th</sup>. It is noted that all campgrounds have experienced an increase in reservations, except for Nesowadnehunk Field. The reduction in reservations at Nesowadnehunk in 2026 compared to 2025 is directly related to the elimination of booking extensions of up to 14 days. Typically, reservations for Nesowadnehunk were booked and then canceled while taking advantage of the extension process to secure dates within the four-month rolling window (Leapfrogging).



**Information and Technology:**

Tim Deetz of Buckeye Professional Technology Solutions will begin the transition away from his IT systems and network coverage agreement with Baxter State Park. Since 2024, Tim has delivered exceptional on-site and remote support through his limited liability company. He has held a very important role on the Park’s team. His comprehensive understanding of Baxter State Park’s operations, coupled with his diverse expertise as a network administrator, has had a significant positive impact. While his departure represents a considerable loss, we are grateful for Tim’s willingness to provide transition support until the department has secured coverage to replace the valuable service that he provides.

The Park has maintained a unique IT and network infrastructure that operates independently of the State of Maine’s Office of Information Technology. This infrastructure has been effectively supported through a collaboration between Deetz and S.J. Rollins Technologies, Inc., which offers essential services, including hosted management, network security, software integration, and phone and communication services. Director of Administrative Services Lori Morrison is overseeing this transition and developing a plan to address the long-term needs of the Park’s IT landscape.

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

Interpretive Specialist Cassandra Knudsen once again participated with regional partners to offer educational programming at Winter Camp. The Friends of BSP organized a winter webinar series. Lori Morrison and Bryan Buhler delivered a webinar about changes to the reservations policies and system that were approved by the Authority in 2025. Natural Resource Director Nava Tabak collaborated with Andrea Tirrell, a PhD candidate at the University of Maine, to present on the topic of alpine plants on Katahdin. Both webinars were well attended. The Park also participated (with an information table) at the Patten Winter Festival, and Cassandra will be



Bryan Buhler at the Winter Festival in Patten

visiting 1-2 local schools (in collaboration with Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument) to deliver educational programming about BSP.

I&E staff are reviewing applications for the Visiting Artist and Visiting Writer programs, and have hired an Interpretive Intern (full season) and a Writing & Trails Intern (short season). They have also begun planning for a complete redesign of the Park's website, with the intention to contract with a new website host for maintenance services. Nava Tabak has been working with a contractor to complete an update to BSP's printed trail map.

### **Natural Resources and Research**

The Park's Research Committee met on March 6th to review six research applications and discuss updates from ongoing and recently completed research. The Committee recommended that the Park accept applications for aquatic ecological reserve monitoring (by ME DEP), the long-term preservation of seeds of 5 alpine plant species growing on Katahdin (by Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens), a re-survey of two continuous forest inventory plots in mature forest stands in the SFMA, and participation in winter acoustic bat surveys in talus areas (by the University of Maine and ME IF&W). For the latter, Park staff will work with the researchers to select sites that allow for winter access and minimize the visual impacts of the equipment. The committee recommended declining a proposal to study snow-covered terrain and slope instability in mountainous areas in the park (by the University of Maine). They also recommended declining a proposal, which was first introduced in 2025, to include Katahdin in a regional study of the influence of microclimates on alpine plant diversity (by the Universities of Maine and Vermont), though some committee members felt that if the scope of the work on Katahdin was reduced, the research could be considered.

The Research Committee received an update from Glen Mittelhauser about Maine's breeding bird and winter bird atlases, which included extensive surveys in the Park (and throughout the state). Nava provided an overview of the results of a collaborative effort with IF&W on an angler survey in the Park in 2025, which they plan to continue (and slightly expand) this year. Charlene Donahue has retired from the Research Committee, and Park staff are grateful for her many years of service.

Nava has worked with Dr. Min Kook Kim (of Stockton University) to develop a proposal for a pilot study to detect visitor impacts on the alpine vegetation of Katahdin using a change analysis of remote sensing imagery. Dr. Kim received a Waterman Fund grant for the project (which requires no site work in BSP) and will collaborate with colleagues and Nava to undertake the study.

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

The winter harvest in the north end of the SFMA has been completed, with approximately 2,300 cords of wood trucked to markets and piled down in local yards (there is currently no active market for hardwood pulp). Another approximately 200 cords, primarily softwood sawlogs and studwood, are piled down roadside in the SFMA and will be trucked to markets in the summer.

Lands Manager Shane Miller has been exploring various statistical and modeling tools to provide more accurate information on forest cover types. Shane and Nava are participating in the review of grant applications to the Cooperative Forestry Research Unit (which are currently advancing from statements of intent to full proposals that will be reviewed in April).

### **Maintenance:**

In December, the Maintenance Department focused on preparing the Park's snowmobile fleet for the season. In all, 23 sleds received seasonal service and preventative maintenance. This annual push was a combined effort shared between Maintenance Mechanic Matt Martin and Field Heavy Equipment and Vehicle Technician Frank George.

During this report period, multiple sleds have been brought back into the shop for more extensive repairs related to wear and tear. This has included a major suspension repair, track replacement, windshield repairs, clutch rebuilds, fuel sock replacement, radiator replacement, and cowling repairs.



Frank George working on the 1994 Type 6 fire engine

The department completed major rehabilitation of a 1994 Chevrolet 3500 Type 6 fire engine acquired from the Maine Forest Service. Work completed has included new brake lines and brakes, a new fuel tank with lines and pump, full exhaust system replacement, stripping and painting of the frame, reinforcement of the work body, including rewelding the cross member, cutting and welding of the trailer hitch, new wiring, new master switch, transmission tuneup, and radio installation.

One of the Park's two new half-ton trucks had law enforcement upfitting and rack installation completed by outside contractors, with the Maintenance Department completing the installation of accessories, including rear work lights, decals, seat covers, and toolbox. A second new half-ton truck is at Yankee Communications for radio and light installations. This second truck will receive a rack and other accessories before being ready for service this Spring.

Multiple fleet vehicles have been through the Maintenance garage this period for routine work, including lube, oil, and filter changes. The Park's Clark forklift also received a service, which included its first fluid change since 2009 and replacement of its battery.

Park Carpenter Jesse LaPorte has led repair work at Kidney Pond with Conservation Aides Nate Cote and Brandt Brownlee. Work during this period has focused on Cabin 7 and has included the complete rebuilding of both front and back porches, new roof framing, and the installation of new metal roofing. The new roof structures are framed with tamarack logs harvested in the Park's Scientific Forest Management Area. Additionally, the main roof has been insulated with Timber HP wood fiber insulation board and strapped for proper venting over a second layer of sheathing. Work is continuing on Cabin 7 with interior Permachink, new windows, and doors being installed soon.



Work on Kidney Pond Cabin 7

In February, Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer took a weeklong propane and natural gas tank setter and outside piping course at the MEMA Technical Education Center in Brunswick. Keith passed his final exam and is now qualified to test with the Maine Fuel Board for his tank setting and outside piping license.

In January, Keith coordinated with Katahdin Woods and Waters (KWW) Facility Supervisor Christopher Loft for a collaborative meeting between the two Maintenance Departments. Four members of the BSP Maintenance Department met at Park Headquarters with four members of the KWW Maintenance Team. The group toured the maintenance garage and carpentry shop. Discussion topics included overall responsibilities, road work, solar power and propane, local contractor resources, and more.

In February, Keith brought a technician from Bragdon Energy into Russell Pond via snowmobile to complete a propane connection for a new water heater. Keith and Supervisory Law Enforcement Ranger Russ Porter worked together to carry out the replacement over the course of several months, and ultimately were left with a very narrow window of appropriate weather and conditions to facilitate the transport and replacement of the unit. This installation highlights the logistical difficulties of completing otherwise routine maintenance tasks in the Park's backcountry.

During this period, Keith and Chief Ranger Matt McGuire made the decision to shift the season of the Park's Maintenance Mechanic position to the winter months. This will enable the position to better assist in the seasonal changeover of the snowmobile and vehicle fleets. The department was aided greatly during this period by the hiring of Cameron McIntosh in an acting capacity. During the summer months, Cameron is an Allagash Ranger, stationed at Churchill Dam, working for the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands.

### **Trails:**

This winter has been devoted to the creation of trail signs, staging of trail project supplies, removal of scrap lumber from previously completed projects in the park, planning trail projects, purchasing equipment, conducting Trail Crew interviews, assisting with the planning of our annual Spring Training, providing minor assistance to other staff, and preparing this year's round of chainsaw certification courses.



Katahdin Summit Sign Frame

Trail Specialist Kris English took a vacation during January. Upon her return in early February, she has been assisting Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner with the above-listed tasks and has focused much of her time on the stenciling, routing, and painting of new trail signs. She has crafted a new Baxter Peak sign, as well as all of the alpine signs between Baxter Peak and the top of Saddle Slide, and signs for the junctions of the North Peaks and Northwest Basin Trails near Hamlin Peak. Cedar signpost poles have been staged at Caribou Pit along with a new frame for the Baxter Peak summit sign. The originally scheduled flight operation to deliver these supplies onto the mountain in December 2025 was postponed and will likely occur in the spring of 2026. Trail Department staff will work to

install these new signs and signposts across Katahdin's Tablelands this summer.

This winter's snowmobile hauling projects have included bog bridging delivered to the northwest shore of Foss and Knowlton Pond, scrap bog bridging pieces removed from Sandy Stream Pond, and caching an extensive quantity of tools and rigging equipment at High Bridge on the Chimney Pond Trail. The plan to build a snowmobile trail up "Pick Pole Hill" to the Katahdin Stream Falls bridge site never came to fruition due to the lack of sufficient snow pack.

Baxter State Park contracted with a local non-profit, the Outdoor Sports Institute, to hire its two-person trail crew services to assist with blowdown patrol in the Park. This decision was made in an effort to reduce early-season blowdown patrol demands for the BSP Trail Crew so they can assist Brennan and Kris with the early summer replacement of the bridge over Katahdin Stream Falls. Two new Husqvarna 440s were purchased, and the department's heavier Husqvarna 445s are slated to be dispersed to Campground Rangers as needed.

In addition to typical winter season preparations, Brennan has been attending the Maine Development Foundation's Institute of Civil Leadership course. The class has been meeting on a monthly basis since September 2025, and Brennan will graduate from the course in April. He was also selected to help plan and coordinate this year's Spring Training for new and returning seasonal staff, assisting Inventory and Property Associate II Deanna Madore, who is the lead on this year's training.

Brennan has also been working with the Friends of Baxter State Park to conduct a pilot Trail Deficiency Survey in the Park during the summer of 2026. The Friends are entering into a contract with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) to carry out the survey, which will involve an ATC staff person using ESRI GIS products to survey approximately 25 miles of trails in the Park, including Abol, Helon Taylor, North Double Top, Wassataquoik Lake, and several other trails. The survey will generate an inventory of "deficiencies" or general sustainability issues on Park trails, such as failed or over-filled water bars, water running down the trail, excessive trail braiding, and broken/worn out signs. This inventory and the associated proposed fixes will assist BSP in quantifying future work for the Trails Department. This will be a significant aid in the long-term planning strategies.

Finally, at this time, the 2026 BSP seasonal Trail Crew will be composed of third-year returning staff members, Crew Leader Emily Long, and Crew Member Mia Hayes. They will be joined by Tzevi Aho, who is returning to BSP after their 2025 season as the I&E intern. BSP is still actively recruiting for the final Crew Member position.

### Field Operations and Law Enforcement:



Clearing solar panel at Matagamom Gatehouse

Baxter Law Enforcement, Supervisory, and Winter Rangers' winter tasks included: Installation of winter use signs throughout the Park, clearing road systems of blowdowns, maintaining solar systems by clearing snow from panels and charging batteries with generators, hauling SAR teams and gear, opening the Chimney Pond campground and winter administrative trail, inspecting canoes for hauling out from Foss and Knowlton Pond, maintenance of trail cameras, working on campground operations manuals, assisting with interviews for vacant seasonal positions, hauling firewood, inspecting radio equipment at Webster and



Hauling supplies into Russell Pond

other remote locations, cutting and painting boundary lines, and worked on the recently acquired Type 6 fire engine,

Supervisory Law Enforcement Ranger Russ Porter worked diligently to build the winter hauling trail to Russell Pond. Russ, along with Bruce White, District Ranger Paul Farrington, and Keith Wehmeyer, assisted with hauling supplies throughout the winter to Russell Pond. Supervisory Law Enforcement Ranger Laura Whitney and District Ranger Rob Tice focused on hauling firewood and supplies to Chimney Pond.

Supervisory Law Enforcement Rangers Justine Rumaker and Laura Whitney represented the Park at two local public events. Justine attended the Katahdin Woods and Waters Winter Festival in Patten, and Laura attended the Stearns High School Outdoor Career Day. Laura also completed components of her Maine Basic Search and Rescue (BASAR) certification and completed the MDIF&W Trapper Course.

Baxter Law Enforcement Rangers patrolled for unauthorized camping and unpermitted hiking activity and issued summonses and violations for the following:

- 4 summons for snowmobile operation in closed areas.
- 2 summons for unregistered snowmobiles.
- 2 summons for camping without a permit.
- Numerous warnings for snowmobile registration violations, speed violations, and failure to register upon entering the Park.

Additionally, Law Enforcement Rangers assisted the Maine Warden Service with snowmobile crash investigations, checked ice fishermen, provided coverage for the Millinocket Marathon, assisted stuck motorists on the Park Access Road, and assisted the Millinocket Fire Department with traffic control for trees across public roads. Law Enforcement Rangers conducted a safety and enforcement snowmobile detail that saw 74 snowmobiles checked on a Saturday.

Law Enforcement Ranger Sarah Grebleski is currently attending the Basic Law Enforcement Training Program at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and is expected to complete the 18-week course in early June.

Rob Tice and Matt McGuire participated in a MEMIC podcast that focused on working outdoors in cold weather environments. Rob and Matt provided an awareness snowmobile ride to Maine Forest Service personnel to look at fire caches at Togue Pond Ranger Camp and Roaring Brook. The ride brought the group up to Chimney Pond to show the Forest Rangers the winter trail for emergency response.

Rob attended the Maine Forest Service (MFS) Wildland Fire Assessment Program course. This program discusses the threat that wildfires pose to structures and strategies for safeguarding those structures. Rob will be evaluating the threat posed to buildings in the Park through the Chief Ranger's Maintenance and Safety inspection program to be implemented in 2026. He has also continued to work on the *Baxter State Park Fire Plan* with Sgt. Zach Monroe of the Maine Forest Service.

On March 2, Director Adam, Chief McGuire, and District Rangers Rob Tice and Paul Farrington met with Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument Superintendent Neal Labrie and Chief Ranger Ben Polloni to discuss interagency cooperation. The meeting was productive and acknowledged the challenge of a large boundary shared between agencies with limited resources to protect significant land areas.

On March 5, Kevin Matt Rob, Laura, and Keith escorted a local assessor into Katahdin Lake to evaluate the



Enforcement Rangers stopping snowmobilers illegally entering the Park



Hauling propane tanks  
out of Katahdin Lake

current condition of the former Katahdin Lake Camps. During this trip, Park staff removed 12 propane tanks to mitigate a portion of the hazardous materials that exist at the site.

Rob and Matt attended the NOAA Spring Fire Weather Ops meeting in Old Town with National Weather Service and Maine Forest Service personnel. They also attended the Maine Army National Guard Sync Ops meeting in Bangor. This multi-agency meeting was held to review the 126th Aviation Wing's capabilities and other agency resources and needs.

### **Appalachian Trail:**

The Park hosted the annual 100 Mile Wilderness joint agency meeting on March 2, 2026. This meeting, organized by Bruce White, serves as a 'lessons learned' session for the preceding summer and involves Baxter State Park, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, and partnering agencies. Partners attending included the Maine Warden Service, the Maine Forest Service, The Nature

Conservancy, Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, National Park Service - Katahdin Woods and Water National Monument, and the Piscataquis County Sheriff's Office. Key takeaways from this annual meeting continue to focus on partner communication, information sharing, medical and Search and Rescue capabilities, law enforcement incidents, and trail user/landowner relations. It was noted that the first 2026 northbound through hikers left Georgia in mid-January.

### **Search and Rescue:**

In January, staff assisted a 65-year-old male who had sustained a lower leg injury on the Cathedral Trail. The climber and his party made it back down to Chimney Pond; however, the injury worsened overnight and required medical attention by Chimney Pond Ranger Jen Sinsabaugh. The following day, Jen and the injured climber's party were joined by Russ Porter and Laura Whitney, Rob Tice, Matt Martin, and Matt McGuire to haul the injured climber down to Roaring Brook by toboggan. From Roaring Brook, the injured climber and another member of his party were taken by snowmobile to their vehicle, where they continued to Millinocket Regional Hospital.

A party of six had to be evacuated from Chimney Pond by Rangers due to illness and vomiting, which left the party too weak to get themselves out of the Park.

In mid-March, a 22-year-old male solo skier became disoriented and hypothermic after skiing The Chimney. The skier was located through the efforts of Rob Tice, Chimney Pond Campground Ranger Greg Hammer, and the assistance of a party of climbers and skiers staying at the Chimney Pond Bunkhouse. Sleet, low cloud cover, cold temps, and darkness made locating the missing skier difficult. The following morning, the solo skier and one member of the bunkhouse party had become very ill. A plan was formulated to get the two sick individuals and the remainder of the bunkhouse party down to Roaring Brook. Rob Tice, Laura Whitney, Keith Wehmeyer, and Cameron McIntosh responded and assisted Greg with getting the parties down from Chimney.

Laura Whitney and Jen Sinsabaugh came upon a snowmobile accident on ITS 85/86 (Old State Road) in

early March. The accident involved a 22-year-old male who had hit an icy section of trail, lost control of his snowmobile, and was thrown 60 feet after his sled hit a tree. Bruce White, Matt McGuire, and Millinocket Rescue responded to assist. The patient was Lifeflighted to Bangor, where it was determined he had sustained serious injuries to his pelvis, hip, and lower back.

In early March, the Maine Forest Service (MFS) requested our assistance in conducting a training exercise with one of their newer pilots. Laura Whitney and Greg Hammer ran a scenario that involved locating and packaging a patient, calling in the short-haul helicopter, and then working with the MFS Crew Chief to long-line the patient out to a pick up point. The exercise allowed both MFS and Baxter staff to learn new skills and reinforced the strong partnership between the two agencies.



Short-haul training with the MFS

Abol Winter Ranger Andy Borth attended and completed an AIARE Level I Avalanche Awareness course for Rescue Personnel held in New Hampshire during the period of March 6-8. The skills learned in this course are fundamentals that all Baxter Winter Rangers are required to be competent in.

Teams from the Maine Association for Search and Rescue (MASAR) continue to be a valuable asset for the Park. MDI SAR and Franklin SAR conducted a two-day training on basic winter climbing and mountaineering skills on the Abol Trail. Justine Rumaker and Sarah Grebleski attended the training as Park liaisons. Mahoosuc Mountain Rescue, MDI SAR, and Wilderness Rescue Team provided stand-by coverage at Chimney Pond during busy climbing weekends in February.