



Baxter State Park Authority Meeting Minutes
10:00 am, Friday, March 27, 2026, Burton Cross Building, Augusta, ME

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

Attendees:

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

Office of the Attorney General: Assistant Attorney General Lauren Parker

BSP Staff: Director Kevin Adam, Chief Ranger Matthew McGuire, Director of Administrative Services, Lori Morrison, Natural Resources Director Nava Tabak, Office Specialist Georgia Manzo

BSP Advisory: Chair Brant Miller

BNY Mellon: Investment Manager & BSP Investment Committee Member Jeremy Baker

Baxter Park Wilderness Fund Trust: Trustee Jensen Bissell

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

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

Consideration of the January 16, 2026, BSPA meeting minutes: AG Frey moved to approve the minutes, and Chair Cormier seconded the motion. With no discussion, the motion carried, 2-0. (Commissioner Camuso was not yet present for this decision.)

BSP Portfolio Overview (Jeremy Baker): The conflict in Iran and other geopolitical issues are the focus. How might it affect consumer spending and, therefore, affect the markets? How significant is the impact on energy, oil, and natural gas prices, and how has that affected other parts of the markets? We've seen a dramatic impact on fuel prices, yet the markets have been relatively contained in their reaction. There continues to be uncertainty around the duration of the conflict and the negotiations, and there has been confusing messaging. Unlike during other conflicts, yields are going higher, due in large part to inflation. The energy price increases are inflationary by definition, which means the Federal Reserve will have a delayed reaction, and if anything, may increase rates that affect trade yields.

Typically, oil spikes are short-term, though some of the conflict in Iran has damaged infrastructure, which may affect capacity going forward. However, this is primarily about the ability of oil to pass through the Strait of Hormuz. While WTI (West Texas Intermediate) oil is up more than 30% since the first attack, the S&P 500 is only 1.7% lower, and energy stocks are just 1.0% higher. This suggests markets are signaling a temporary supply shock, not an economic or financial crisis.

The S&P 500 returns (1, 3, 6, & 12 months) following various geopolitical events were provided. Stocks typically recover from these crises. The continued view of BNY Wealth is to be disciplined and not to overreact to these situations, thereby allowing the portfolio and its investments to grow over time.

In terms of the outlook, the consensus is that U.S. growth will pick up, relative to last year. Coming into this year, the market itself (companies and consumers) was, on average, in a very good position, so consumers have been able to absorb some of the elevated costs. It will be important to follow the duration of this conflict and related oil prices.

Unemployment is challenging (with AI, companies are reluctant to hire), but it is balanced, and the unemployment rate is still (historically) relatively low. Substantial wealth effect and fiscal stimulus maintain consumer spending. The markets experienced double-digit growth in the last three years, and though tariffs remain, they are lower. Corporate margins and capital expenditures remain positive and in an uptrend. There is \$150 billion in additional tax refunds this year than in 2024. The portfolio is positioned to weather risks, including higher inflation and yields. Other risks include uneven consumer spending and softer labor markets, weaker-than-expected returns on AI-related capex, and longer-than-anticipated oil shocks.

AG Frey expressed concern regarding the independence of the Fed, in that the appointments seem not to be institutionally focused and instead are more intended to carry the baton for the president, who wants a different direction for the Fed. Jeremy responded that the announcement that Kevin Warsh will be the next Fed chair should help secure its independence, which is critical to the capital markets, not just here in the U.S., but also how we are viewed globally. The Federal Reserve is run by consensus, not by the chair per se. AG Frey added that he is not convinced that the Fed is not susceptible, given the activities happening at the DOJ and DHHS, and it is hoped these discussions are happening at the Investment Committee meetings.

Regarding asset class positioning: the portfolio still has a small overweight to Equities, and we continue to be constructive on the Large-cap (an area where technology companies are benefiting from AI). International Developed equities is an area we are cautious (underweight), as it is susceptible to and impacted by the war in Iran. In Emerging Markets - a small underweight, as they are still subject to what's happening in Europe (trading partners) and are heavily exposed to commodities such as oil. In China, there remain opportunities (technology in particular), and the growth levels tend to be more elevated. In the Fixed Income asset class, the portfolio is neutral. This is a key asset class to withstand the volatility of the current environment, as are Diversifiers - also neutral. (See the Investment Review dated March 27, 2026, for actual allocation percentages and Investment Policy Statement (IPS) ranges by asset class.) BNY Wealth works very closely with the Investment Committee on these ranges.

AG Frey commented that data centers are a significant natural resource consumer and a massive strain on the environment, and asked if there are conversations at the Investment Committee level about whether this is consistent with the Park's outlook (ESG).

The Baxter Portfolio at the end of 2025 was \$132,453,000, growing by just over \$16.7M that year. As of the end of February 2026, the portfolio balance was \$135,972,000, and as of March 25, 2026, it was down 3.9% and is currently at \$130,673,000.

Along with the Blended Benchmarks, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 3% is one of the guideposts that ensures that disbursements are balanced with the growth of the portfolio. The

consolidated (Net) return YTD is 3.1%, 1 year - 15.8%, 3 years - \$13.5%, and 15 years - 8.3%. The 50-year average return for the S&P 500 is approximately 8.5%

Commissioner Camuso joined the meeting at this juncture.

2025 Annual Report: Kevin Adam invited the Authority to review the 2025 BSP annual report in the next few weeks. Following that review, the report will be placed on the BSP Website and shared with the four BSP committees.

Baxter Park Wilderness Fund Update: Trustee Jensen Bissell began by saying that it is an honor to be a member of the board of trustees of the Baxter Park Wilderness Fund Trust (BPWFT), which was founded and organized by longtime Park volunteer and supporter Frank Trautmann. Following Frank's passing in May of 2014, it took a few years to completely dissolve his estate and formally establish the endowment fund (now the Trust), and for the past ten years, it has been fully in place.

Currently, the endowment stands at approximately \$42M. Its mission is to provide stable, quarterly contributions to Baxter Park. At their annual meeting in March, the Trustees discussed the policy for distribution from the fund. In the past, they had adhered to Jim Garland's fecundity formula. Jim was a foundation member of the Park's endowment and developed this formula to help the Park decide how much to distribute. The Park endowment committee used a hybrid model - this formula, along with other considerations.

The minutes of the BPWFT meeting, along with the motions, were sent to Director Adam. The approved motion: To establish a spending policy in which the Trust guarantees a minimum annual distribution equal to the fecundity calculation, with a soft cap of ~2.5% of the trailing average market value; provided that the maximum total spending in any fiscal year shall not exceed the expected long-term nominal return of the portfolio minus the inflation rate (as measured by the Consumer Price Index or a relevant price index). The committed quarterly distribution is \$132,000, but 2.5% of the trailing market value is almost double that amount. Supplemental requests from the Authority will be considered on their merits; any such grants will not result in a reduction of the base distribution in subsequent years. The cap may be adjusted by the trustees with advance notice based on market conditions.

Director Cormier asked what the parameters are for supplemental distributions. Jensen responded that, except for it being for the Park's needs, none are specified, and the Trustees would like the additional amount(s) to follow a regularly planned pattern for the year (i.e., determine the needs and add the supplemental amounts to the quarterly distributions).

Commissioner Camuso asked, considering the Park's financial assets, if the staff has considered infrastructure upgrades and potential changes to the fee structure. Director Adam noted that staff have cataloged 130 capital projects for the next 2, 5, 10, and even 20 years, including within the SFMA. Addressing concerns about staff capacity for these projects, Nava Tabak highlighted the need to balance the Park's wealth against economic uncertainties such as depressed wood markets. She suggested that major capital investments, such as permanent road repairs, could utilize contracted services to reduce long-term maintenance burdens. Lori Morrison and Matt McGuire further emphasized budget pressures, noting that rising personnel and operational costs have brought the Park to a critical point in maintaining its existing infrastructure and equipment.

Aaron Megquier suggested the stewardship index could serve as a benchmark for balancing the needs of current and future generations, especially given the endowment's growth. He asked if the BPWFT trustees have considered the index for their own spending and calculations. Jensen confirmed this was a topic of spirited discussion at their most recent meeting, and is always the crux of the discussion - deciding what is the appropriate amount to disperse today, and in perpetuity.

Brant Miller, BSP Advisory Chair, noted that as the Park prepares to commemorate the centennial of Percival Baxter's initial land acquisition, it is vital to honor the Park's future as much as its past. He emphasized that the ongoing dialogue regarding financial stability is essential to this vision.

SFMA Advisory Member Recommendation: Nava noted that several long-standing members of the SFMA Advisory Committee have opted to transition out of their roles due to retirement or shifting peripheral responsibilities. Some of these members had extended their service beyond their initial plans in order to support the Park during recent transitions, and their decisions to step down now are viewed as a positive reflection of their confidence in the current SFMA management and Advisory Committee.

To address one of the resulting vacancies on the committee, Nava recommended the appointment of Maren Granstrom, a private consulting forester. Maren was mentored by long-time SFMA committee member Barrie Brusila, who has also long been the consulting forester for the Austin Cary lot. Beyond her familiarity with the Austin Cary lot through previous work with Barrie, Maren brings direct experience from assisting with forest inventory within the SFMA during a time when we were without a lands manager. **Commissioner Camuso motioned to accept the appointment of Maren Grandstrom as SFMA Advisory member, seconded by AG Frey. All were in favor, and with no further discussion, the motion passed 3-0.**

Overview of Park Operations: Kevin Adam thanked Aaron Megquier and Friends of Baxter for the generous proceeds (almost \$4,600) from the 2025 BSP sign auction. Aaron added that this fundraiser has been a great collaboration for almost ten years. Some of the Daicey Pond cabin windows were auctioned, and the same will be done with the Kidney Pond windows in the 2026 auction.

Finance (Lori Morrison): FY26, Q2 - Year-to-date revenue is trailing projections slightly. The Park opted not to draw the 2% originally allocated from the SFMA budget, primarily due to underperforming wood markets. Despite this shortfall, total revenue remains sufficient to cover operating expenses. This stability is attributed to increases in Baxter Park Wilderness Fund Trust (BPWFT) disbursements and to higher interest and biannual disbursements from the State of Maine Trust, which exceeded initial budgetary expectations.

Personnel expenses are meeting the budget. All Other expenses are tracking as budgeted. There is a negative variance in insurance costs due to an overall rate increase in all SOM Risk Management insurance policies. There is a negative variance in STACAP due to higher rates and financial orders requested after the budget was submitted. Capital expenses in Q2 include building, infrastructure, and equipment expenses, as well as the Kidney Pond project. This project is staying within budget. Roughly 56% of our capital allocation has been utilized through Q2.

The Capital Reserve Account balance at the end of December 2025 was just under \$400,000.

Human Resources (Lori Morrison): This year, there were 13 vacant positions to fill (some were due to internal transfers). Business Administrator Jessica Wheaton, along with various staff, has conducted 54 interviews, and as of today, all positions have been filled.

Reservations (Lori Morrison): The recent changes to the reservation extension policy and online reservation system have been well-received and are effectively achieving their primary goals. Overall, reservations have climbed by 27% through mid-March, with a notable shift toward online bookings. This transition has led to a 17% decrease in phone reservations, helping to alleviate phone line congestion as users take advantage of the ability to extend their stays online rather than calling the following day.

For cabin rentals scheduled between May 15 and July 18, Maine residents currently account for 69% of bookings. While the policy is performing well, some users have expressed concern regarding the perceived complexity of managing 7-day stays with extensions under the new system.

All campgrounds are experiencing an increase in reservations, except for Nesowadnehunk Field, where the reduction is directly related to the previous practice by some visitors to use it only to gain extensions into other campgrounds (reservations for Nesowadnehunk were booked and then canceled - leapfrogging to secure dates for sites with higher competition within the four-month rolling window).

Information Technology (Lori Morrison): Tim Deetz of Buckeye Professional Technology Solutions has resigned due to an immediate health concern and will begin the transition away from his IT systems and network coverage agreement with BSP. Working in collaboration with S J. Rollins, our major IT network and infrastructure hosting company, Tim has delivered exceptional

on-site and remote support to BSP and, as a former BSP employee, has a comprehensive understanding of the Park's operations. That, coupled with his diverse expertise as a network administrator, has had a significant positive impact on the Park's IT reliability, security, and infrastructure.

Lori's focus these past few weeks has been to ensure stability in the interim and create a plan for a path forward. The Park has maintained a unique IT and network infrastructure that operates independently of the state of Maine's Office of Information Technology (OIT). An FJA for a new, permanent BSP position with a broad range of responsibilities and expertise was created and presented to Director Adam and to the SOM so we can classify this position appropriately. It was expedited, and a financial order was sent to the Governor to be signed by April 16.

In the meantime, we have a coverage plan with S. J. Rollins, Lori is monitoring and directing help desk tickets, and there is no immediate risk to the system. There will be some established redundancy with S. J. Rollins, and, earlier, Tim developed and shared BSP's network topology.

Nava added that Tim has also prepared the IT systems at the gates and visitor center each season and assisted with solar system maintenance and repairs, and Lori has worked very hard to ensure we are ready to start the season in his absence. Tim is consulting with Lori and with S. J. Rollins at this time and is willing to continue to take part in the transition as needed and when able. The Authority wishes Tim well.

Information & Education (Nava Tabak): Winter is the Park's busiest outreach season, and this past weekend, BSP hosted a booth at the Eastern Maine Sportsman Show at the University of ME in Orono. This is always a successful and very interactive event. I&E staff are reviewing applications for the Visiting Artist and Visiting Writer (pilot) programs, and have hired an Interpretive Intern (full season) and a Writing & Trails Intern (short season). We have good retention and cycling from our prior internships. Last year's I&E intern will be on our trail crew, and the other intern held a former staff position two years ago.

Natural Resources and Research (Nava Tabak): The Park's Research Committee held its annual meeting on March 6 to review six research applications. Four were accepted, one was declined, and we are discussing a reduced scope with the researcher on the final one. Three additional projects are continuing from last year. (See the Operations Update dated March 20, 2026, for details of the research projects.)

Nava has worked with Dr. Min Kook Kim (Stockton University) to develop a proposal for a pilot study to detect visitor impacts on the alpine vegetation of Katahdin using remote sensing. 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)(Nava Tabak): The winter harvest in the north end of

the SFMA has been completed, with approximately 2,300 cords of wood trucked to markets. Another 350 cords, primarily softwood sawlogs and studwood, are piled down roadside in the SFMA and will be trucked to markets in the summer. Challenges included Communications with a new harvest contractor (Katahdin Forest Management) and equipment breakdowns. SFMA staff will meet with KFM to review the issues and what can be done differently. Positives included that we have a new buyer - Stratton Lumber (TRG), and one of our larger markets, D&G, is trucking its own wood instead of the Park having to deal with the logistics of getting the wood across the Canadian border with local contractors' trucks. Because of double-shifting, there were new operators working on this harvest, which improved operator redundancy. In one specific area, we had a feller buncher going in ahead of the processor, which was very efficient and worked well for that particular prescription.

The markets continue to be very depressed.

Maintenance (Matt McGuire): The maintenance crew is working on the seasonal truck fleet and is ahead of schedule. The rehabilitation of a 1994 Type 6 fire engine acquired from the Maine Forest Service was completed, and one of the Park's two new half-ton trucks had racks installed and was upfitted by contractors for law enforcement use. Other installations were done by Park staff. A second new half-ton truck is at Yankee Communications for radio and light installations.

The Kidney Pond project is proceeding well, with work this past winter primarily focusing on Cabin 7, including the complete rebuild of the front and back porches, roof framing, and new metal roofing. Timber HP wood fiber insulation board has been installed. The library porch (lakeside) was replaced, and the windows in the library (which were at the point of critical failure) are being replaced (we are currently waiting for the windows from Mercer Window). Wood from the SFMA, fiber insulation, and the windows were all sourced locally. Chair Cormier asked if we were highlighting the local resources for the windows, and Matt responded that it has been documented in the 2025 Annual Report and at these Authority meetings. We could also have information on-site.

A new water heater was installed at Russell Pond over the winter. Currently, we have two maintenance personnel who can run propane lines and set tanks, but are not licensed to make the actual connection to the appliance. In the backcountry sites (Chimney and Russell), it is challenging to transport contracted services personnel in to do the work. We are moving toward having an appliance fitter on staff, with Maintenance and Transportation Coordinator Keith Wehmeyer participating in a weeklong propane and natural gas tank-setter and outside piping course at the MEMA Technical Education Center in Brunswick. Keith is now qualified to test with the Maine Fuel Board for his tank setting and outside license. In relation to discussions about Park improvements and where we can grow, we are including ongoing maintenance needs.

Trails (Matt McGuire): Much of the focus this past winter was on trail signs, staging of the trail project supplies, and interviewing for vacant trail positions.

This winter's snowmobile hauling included bog bridging delivered to the northwest shore of Foss and Knowlton Pond, removing scrap bog bridging pieces from Sandy Stream Pond, and caching tools and equipment at High Bridge on the Chimney Pond Trail.

Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner completed the Maine Development Foundation's Institute for Civil Leadership course and graduated in April. The class has been meeting on a monthly basis since September 2025. Brennan was also selected to help coordinate this year's spring training for new and returning seasonal staff

Field Operations and Law Enforcement (Matt McGuire): Over the winter, law enforcement personnel handled several illegal activities in closed areas, speeding violations, and unregistered snowmobiles. The Tote Road was closed to public snowmobiling on March 16.

Kevin Adam, Matt McGuire, and District Rangers Rob Tice and Paul Farrington met with Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument's Superintendent Neal Labrie and Chief Ranger Ben Peloni to discuss our shared boundary and the importance of communication and a cooperative partnership, particularly in the Katahdin Lake area. A draft agreement is in progress.

Appalachian Trail (Matt McGuire): Supervisor Bruce White coordinated the annual multi-agency AT meeting held on March 2 at BSP Headquarters, focusing on the 100 Mile Wilderness area and BSP. This informative meeting reviews lessons learned from the previous summer season, medical and search and rescue capabilities, law enforcement incidents, and trail user/landowner relations.

Search and Rescue (SAR) (Matt McGuire): A 65-year-old male sustained a lower leg injury on the Cathedral Trail, and he and his party made it down to Chimney Pond. His condition worsened overnight, and he received medical attention from Campground Ranger Jen Sinsabaugh. The following day, he was taken down to Roaring Brook by toboggan and then by snowmobile to their vehicle in order for him to be taken to Millinocket Regional Hospital. A party of six was evacuated from Chimney Pond due to illness. A 22-year-old male solo skier became disoriented and hypothermic. He was ultimately able to make a 911 call, which helped to determine his coordinates, though sleet, low cloud cover, cold temperatures, and darkness made locating him difficult. The following morning, he and one member of another party became very ill, so a plan was formed to transport them and the remainder of the bunkhouse party to Roaring Brook. The Chimney Pond bunkhouse and outhouse were thoroughly disinfected.

In March, BSP staff assisted the MFS with a short-haul training exercise with one of their newer pilots. MASAR teams conducted two days of training on basic winter climbing and mountaineering skills on the Abol Trail.

Executive Session - Katahdin Lake Wilderness Camps: AG Frey moved pursuant to Title 1 Section 405(6)(E) of the Maine Revised Statutes to go into executive session to discuss with counsel the Katahdin Lake matter that was referred to the Attorney General's Office for legal action at the Authority's July 9, 2025 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Camuso. All were in favor, and the motion passed 3-0. Following the executive session, AG Frey stated that no votes

were taken, and discussions were only about what was stated in the motion to go into executive session.

Chair Cormier motioned to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Georgia Manzo, Office Specialist