



MEMORANDUM

Date: 09-25-2026 to the Authority for the **October 3, 2026, BSPA Meeting**

From: Park Director Kevin Adam

Subject: Park Operations Update, May 30, 2026, to the present

Finance:

The preparation of the biennial budget for FY28/FY29 has been a primary focus for Lori Morrison, the Park's Director of Administrative Services. After months of thorough evaluations and budgeting projections, along with meetings involving department leaders and the Park's leadership team, the draft budget was submitted to the State of Maine Bureau of Budget on September 1, 2026.

FY26 (year one of the current biennial budget) closed on June 30, 2026. The year primarily tracked to budget, with the following exceptions noted.

FY26 Year - End Fiscal Report (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026)	
Revenue	
Revenue by Source	FY26 Actual
Park Services	\$ 2,344,958
BNY Wealth	\$ 3,570,000
Baxter Park Wilderness Fund Trust	\$ 425,000
State Trust and Private Donations	\$ 390,764
Total Revenue	\$ 6,730,722
Percent of Revenue by Source	
Percent of Revenue by Source	
Park Services	34.8%
BNY Wealth	53.0%
Baxter Park Wilderness Fund Trust	6.3%
Other Trusts and Donations	5.8%
Expense	
Expense by Category	
Personnel Services	\$ 4,682,897
All Other	\$ 1,537,083
Capital	\$ 510,742
Total Expense	\$ 6,730,722
Percent of Expense by Category	
Personnel Services	69.6%
All Other	22.8%
Capital	7.6%
Capital Reserve	
Total	\$424,777

Revenue Note: State of Maine Trust Distribution for 1/1/26-6/30/26 – Recognized Q1 FY27

All Other Expense Notes: In total, All Other Expense had a positive variance. However, a negative variance was observed in several object codes due to inflation and various contractual adjustments affecting state vehicle operations, training and travel, utility services, insurance, general operations, fuel, clothing, minor equipment technology, and STA-CAP.

Capital Expense: The Kidney Pond project was self-funded through a financial order in addition to the original capital budget.

Human Resources

BSP is actively involved in the State of Maine's Job Classification and Modernization project, overseen by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services. Throughout this initiative, Park representatives have participated in numerous meetings focused on aligning job classifications for Park Staff with those in other State departments, ensuring they meet the needs of a modern workforce. In September 2026, DAFS reported that they would present the study's findings to the legislature, but no further updates have been provided to date. A notable outcome of this effort was the completion of a Functional Job Assessment (FJA), which prompted the reclassification of the Park Services Manager position from Management Analyst II to Business Manager II. This reclassification better captures the role's essential functions and responsibilities, while the working title will remain Park Services Manager.

As the season draws to a close, important dates for human resources are approaching. While most campgrounds will close on October 15th, Kidney Pond, Daisey Pond, and Katahdin Stream will remain open until October 22nd. October 17th, several customer service representatives, trail staff, and some campground rangers will wrap up their work for the year. Following this, additional campground rangers will finish their season on October 24th, with the last group concluding their duties by October 31st. A small group of customer service gate staff and extended rangers will continue to work until November 30th.

Plans are in full swing for the upcoming year-end fall meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, October 20th. The day will kick off with a morning vaccination clinic for staff, followed by an afternoon business meeting. We'll wrap up the day with a celebratory dinner at River Driver's Restaurant to mark the end of the season.

Information and Technology

Earlier this spring, the role of IT System Network Administrator was reassessed to better align with the evolving needs of BSP and was subsequently reclassified as Public Service Coordinator I. Jordan Adams joined the Park's administrative team on July 13th. Although he is new to his position at BSP, he brings valuable hands-on experience with BSP's IT landscape, having previously worked with SJ Rollins (a contracted firm providing IT and Network services to the Park). Jordan has a solid background in Information Technology across a broad range of areas, including endpoints, servers, networks, connected devices, cybersecurity, and cloud infrastructure.

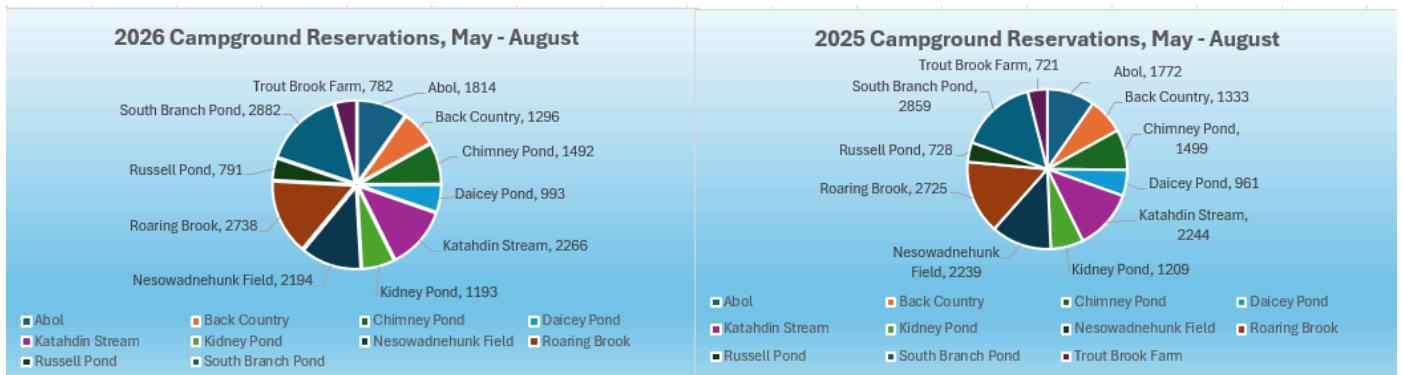
In his new role, he supports staff with technical issues and is focusing on onboarding to understand his key responsibilities and to acclimate to the current hardware and infrastructure. He is working on replacing the outdated Firewall at Headquarters, which has reached end of life. Additionally, he has replaced some outdated wireless endpoints and established an offline local backup system for core BSP data for disaster recovery. To enhance IT operations, he has been working on a new helpdesk solution that improves issue tracking and provides valuable insights into trends related to IT, phone, and other technical challenges.

Reservations

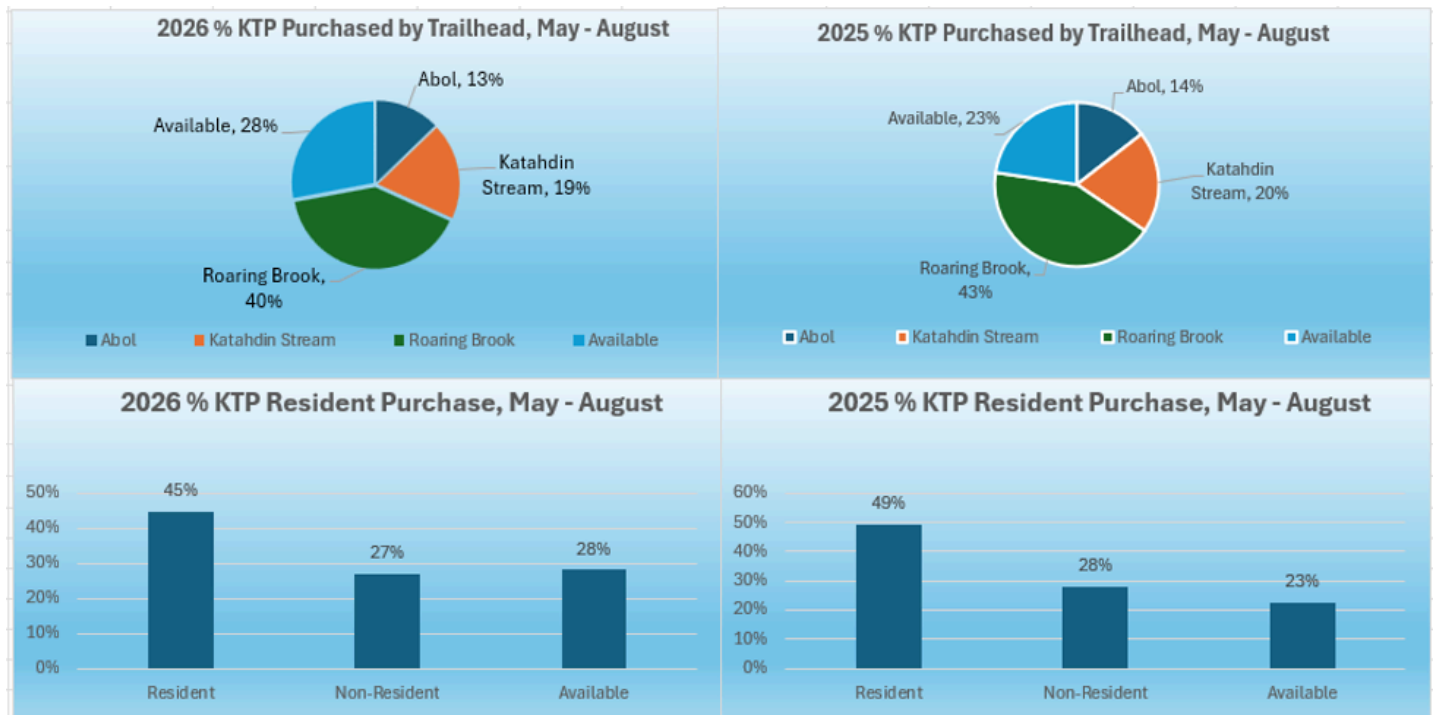
The winter lottery is scheduled for Monday, November 2, 2026. Currently, Bryan Buhler, Park Services Manager, is preparing for the annual event. Communication efforts will kick off in early October to gear up for the October 15th launch of online applications. Starting Saturday, October 17th, the Park Headquarters reservation office will be closed on weekends for the off-season. The office will operate Monday through Friday, from 8 AM to 4 PM. The Togue Pond Visitor Center will close its doors for the season on October 15th. Additionally, the hours for the Togue and Matagamom Gates will be adjusted to 6 AM to 6 PM starting October 23rd, and then to 6 AM to 5 PM from November 1st to 28th.

Camping statistics from early May to August indicate similar reservation patterns; however, it is too early to

predict final reservation numbers until the season concludes. When comparing camping reservations by campground for 2026 to those for the same period in 2025, the numbers are quite comparable: 18,441 nights reserved in 2026 versus 18,290 in 2025. The charts below show the number of reserved sites by campground from opening in May through August. Of the total reservations, 52% were made by Maine residents and 48% by non-residents.



From June to August, KTP statistics indicate steady reservation trends consistent with historical patterns. Data from 2025 and 2026 show that non-Maine residents purchased up to the 30% cap of total available, while Maine residents accounted for 45% to 49% of purchases. Additionally, Maine residents were still able to purchase an additional 23% - 28% of the remaining available capacity.



Information & Education (I&E)

All of the remaining new kiosk signs have been completed and printed. Many are already on display in the Park, while others have been put up as new kiosks are constructed or existing ones repaired.

Two artists have enriched the park and its visitors this season with a focus on Dark Skies. In June, the Park hosted its first Visiting Writer, poet Faith Lane. Faith stayed at Kidney Pond for a week and offered the public a

dark sky poetry workshop and a poetry reading at the end of her stay. In September, Visiting Artist Kaitlyn Metcalf resided in the Park for two weeks. Kaitlyn provided a dark sky drawing workshop and displayed work from her time in the Park through an open house and studio session. We appreciate the celebration of the region's dark skies, sparked by these talented artists.

Park staff, partners, and volunteers have provided many guided nature walks and evening educational programs over the season. Throughout the season, Emmet has been offering weekly walks at the Roaring Brook and Daicey Pond Nature Trails, and volunteers offered a similar walk at the Ledges Trail at South Branch Pond. Other walks focused on geology, tree identification and forest ecology, and lichens. Evening programs covered nocturnal wildlife, bats, loons, forest ecology, stargazing, skulls and tracks, predators, and fossils. Visitors enjoyed an afternoon "freshwater bioblitz", using dip nets to collect and learn about the small inhabitants of Nesowadnehunk stream. Campground Ranger Toby Wright presented a history of the Appalachian Trail (AT) and shared his knowledge and experience of AT ethics. Campground Ranger Corey James, assisted by Rangers Aiden Connor and Nate Cote, provided an immersive journey into the time and experience of the Civilian Conservation Corps, with short talks and an authentic educational display of period tools, clothing, paraphernalia, historic images, and even food.



Corey James (right) and Aiden Connor (left) in the CCC kitchen at Katahdin Stream Campground



I&E Interns Maddy Murnick (left) and Emmet Schmeihling (right) at the Trail's End Festival

On September 11-13, I&E staff and interns and Customer Service Representative Frank Blake staffed a BSP educational table at Millinocket's Trail's End Festival. The festival brought many locals and visitors together, providing opportunities to answer questions, assist in planning visits to the Park, hear stories from past trips, and have fun with some junior Park Rangers, while supporting the local community.

The Park selected Sunderland Weston (SW) as the contractor for designing and maintaining a new BSP website. Following a kickoff meeting in July with several SW and BSP staff, Nava Tabak and Cassandra Knudsen have been meeting with key SW staff and advancing plans for a new site map and design elements. Concurrently, I&E staff and Intern Emmet Schmeihling have been working to gather, write, and edit content for the new website pages. Park and SW staff are aiming for completion and launch of the new website in early 2027.

Cassandra and Intern Madeleine (Maddy) Murnick have been writing updated trail descriptions and collecting photographs for the next edition of Katahdin: A Guide To Baxter State Park. Originally authored by Stephen Clark and printed in 1978, the latest version is the eighth edition, published in 2017. This guide is sold in conjunction with the Park's map, which was updated earlier this year. Staff plans at least one more full season of writing (in 2027) before completing this thorough update to this popular publication.

The I&E team has provided monthly Natural Resources & Education staff Newsletters since June. They have also continued to engage the public with social media posts regarding Park conditions, upcoming programs and walks, and Leave No Trace information in response to observations from Park staff and volunteers.

Natural Resources and Research

The Park, with support from volunteers, continued its efforts to monitor a variety of species in the Park. Cassandra Knudsen coordinated 53 staff and volunteer observers across 29 sites for Maine Audubon's annual Loon Count. Fifty-six adults, 8 chicks, and 2 nests were recorded, which represent a typical (or slightly low) number of adults, a slightly high number of chicks, and low number of nests compared with recent years. Nava and Maddy Murnick encountered good survey conditions for Katahdin Arctic butterflies on June 30, counting 8 butterflies during the survey and several more outside of the survey period. Staff used acoustic bat detectors from Inland Fisheries & Wildlife to collect data at 10 sites across the Park, including two new sites in the north end of the SFMA. Park staff have continued the effort of collecting alpine plant phenology data at long-term plots on Katahdin. The Maine Natural Areas Program completed its annual eco-reserve forest surveys, and the Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative surveyed similarly in the SFMA. Volunteers for Mountain Birdwatch (a regional monitoring effort) completed all 5 established survey transects in the Park for high-elevation breeding birds, and fisheries biologists from ME IF&W completed several pond and stream fish surveys.

Building on last year's effort, staff added two angler survey boxes (at the Katahdin Lake Trailhead and Abol Beach) to accompany others already installed across the Park. The Park's 2026 iNaturalist project has collected approximately 3,000 observations. Each month, Park staff have focused their observations on a different group or taxa, including insects, wetland plants, lichens, and fungi.

Park staff have manually removed knapweed plants from known sites along the Abol Pond, Abol Stream, and Blueberry Ledges trails, as well as a patch in a meadow at Trout Brook Farm. This effort appears to be effective (if gradual) towards the goal of eradicating the species from the Park by preventing seed dispersal and exhausting the seed bank over time. Emmet organized two volunteer work events to manually remove bristly locust from two of four known sites in the park, and staff continues to control this plant at the other sites. Nava Tabak has contributed information about this and other work and priorities to a statewide report on invasive species management efforts that is being drafted in response to L.D. 1661.

Partnering researchers have conducted their work throughout the season. These have included the Maine aquatic ecological reserve monitoring (by ME DEP) in the Russell Pond area, collection and long-term preservation of several alpine plant species growing on Katahdin (by Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens), rock dating by a University of Maine geologist, rare plant surveys by the Native Plant Trust, stonefly surveys, and botanical surveys of alpine snowbank communities on Katahdin. The Park accepted the reduced scope proposed by researchers from the Universities of Maine and Vermont, which modified the methodology of their regional study of the influence of microclimates on alpine plant diversity to minimize the impact on Katahdin; data collection for that study took place over two trips to Katahdin late in the summer.

The Hunt and Abol trails opened on Katahdin on May 26. The Trail Crew (with assistance from Nava and Emmet) re-installed string fencing on Katahdin's south side trails on the same day. Since then, staff and volunteers have been making regular trips to Katahdin's tableland (aka Mountain Patrols) to steward the alpine ecosystem and educate and assist visitors. This year's number of mountain patrols is on track to surpass those of previous years, with a considerable boost coming from both individual volunteers and volunteer Search & Rescue teams who have been trained by staff to educate visitors and provide reports on their summit stewardship trips. Along with their value in real time, the reports from such trips have allowed staff to both plan long-term stewardship needs and respond to seasonal needs (for example, education about drinking water sources on Katahdin and discouraging feeding of ravens at Baxter Peak).

Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA)

The harvest of mature Norway Spruce at the Mount Chase Lot began in earnest in July. Contractor Dave Randall (Verdant Forest



Felled spruce at Mount Chase Lot

Works) has been hand-cutting and using a skidder to yard logs for a roadside sale to Pleasant River Lumber. As of 9/21, approximately 156 cords have been delivered to the mill, and the harvest work will continue into the fall, weather permitting. Softwood sawlogs and studwood and hardwood pulp that were piled down in the SFMA and local yards last winter have been delivered to mills.

Nava Tabak and Assistant Attorney General Lauren Parker have been working with Attorney Avery Day on an agreement to convey the Austin Cary Lot (ACL) to the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (see Authority meeting agenda item). Barrie Brusila, SFMA Advisory Committee member and long-time forester for the ACL, led a tour of the property on September 16th. This tour was part of the Forest Stewards Guild's annual national meeting, which was held in Freeport.

In the SFMA proper, staff have been performing crop tree release in stands harvested in the 1980s. They have focused additional efforts on harvest layout, various types of forest inventories, and infrastructure maintenance work. Forester Dee George was assisted by SFMA Advisors Joe Wiley and Bob Seymour and volunteer Jessica Leahy in completing several Continuous Forest Inventory plots and "drill and fill" herbicide application. The Maine Adaptive Silviculture Network (MASN) conducted additional baseline inventories for a site in the SFMA, including rapid field assessment for late successional and old-growth stands. Lands Manager Shane Miller has reviewed and processed the data and is modeling various silvicultural scenarios that will guide decisions for future work at this network site (which MASN will monitor into the future).

Forester Dee George has been working to chemically treat understories of American Beech and Striped Maple to restore desirable forest regeneration in qualifying stands. She has also performed follow-up treatment of small stands of invasive Phragmites in the SFMA. This year, SFMA foresters have observed an increase in the abundance of common thistle along SFMA roads and are planning for control efforts to prevent this invasive plant's spread into forest stands.

Campground Ranger Brandt Brownlee has completed several critical building repair and maintenance projects, maintained open areas around pavilions, outhouses, and camps, and maintained backcountry camping sites throughout the SFMA. In August, a team of Sierra Club volunteers spent a week in the SFMA, painting multiple buildings at Hemlock Camps and installing new mile-marker signs for wood trucking operations. Field Heavy Vehicle & Equipment Technician Frank George has mowed several SFMA roadsides critical for operations.

Wood markets continue to be poor, and equipment operation costs are very high. SFMA staff continue to monitor the markets and the fuel index in order to schedule commencement of the next harvest operations.

Nava Tabak has been serving on the state's Late Successional and Old-Growth (LSOG) Forest Conservation Strategies Work Group, an entity advising the Maine Forest Service on a report prompted by LD 1529. The Maine Forest Service is currently considering public comments on a draft report about conservation strategies for LSOG in Maine, which expect to submit to the legislature in early November.

Maintenance

In late June, the Maintenance Department, working with TBC Excavation (TBC) and consulting Stream Restoration Specialist Alex Abbott, replaced a failing crossing on the Park Road over a tributary flowing into Tracy Pond.

Planning for the project began in July 2025 when Abbott and Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer surveyed the



Tracy Pond Crossing

they

Tote

tributary and crossing. The existing crossing consisted of a pair of undersized 3-foot-in-diameter culverts that had insufficient capacity, presented a barrier to aquatic organisms, were also too short, and were shored up with rotting timbers around the outlets.

In January of 2026, Abbott provided a restoration plan that included a redesigned crossing. This plan proposed a bottomless steel-reinforced precast concrete box-bridge on concrete footings and abutment blocks designed to handle well beyond HS-25 load standards. The proposed crossing had a clear span of approximately 14 feet and increased the open area capacity from 14.1 square feet to 48 square feet. The increased clear span and capacity exceed the 1.2 times bank full width standard and 1-percent probability peak flow requirements. The structure was designed to contain banks inside that connect to and match the elevation of existing stream banks.

In early June 2026, the Park selected and contracted with TBC to produce and install the new crossing components. TBC has been completing similar restoration projects for the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument for the last few years. Mobilization, installation, and closeout of the project took three days. This was an aggressive schedule that allowed the road between Katahdin Stream Campground and Daicey Pond Road to be closed for less than 24 hours. The project fell under Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 60, which allows for activities to improve passage of fish and other aquatic organisms.

In August, the Maintenance Department, TBC, and Abbott worked together to stabilize the southern inlet bank and abutments of the bridge on the Tote Road over Little Nesowadnehunk Stream. The abutments at this crossing had been rated poor by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) during routine inspections due to scouring under the footings.



Little Nesowadnehunk Bridge

Following these poor ratings, Wehmeyer met with Jim Foster, MDOT's "Bridge Ranger," to consult on a solution. Foster identified the upstream bank failure as the cause and recommended stabilization of the bank with large boulders and shoring of the footings by shimming underneath them with similar material.

Wehmeyer consulted further with Abbott, who agreed with the solution. Abbott, using the Army Corps riprap sizing formula, recommended stabilizing the bank with 3-5' angular rocks with 1-2' rocks used to fill the voids. It was determined that the work could be completed under Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 13 for bank stabilization.

In early August, Maintenance Coordinator Matt Martin worked with TBC to collect suitable rocks and boulders. The boulders were stockpiled near the crossing at Nesowadnehunk Field. On August 24, TBC, along with Wehmeyer and Abbott, completed the stabilization project, including the shimming of the footings under the Southern abutments.

Wehmeyer and Abbott have continued to survey other priority crossings throughout the Park to facilitate planning of restorations that will improve fish passage and the Park's ability to weather extreme weather events.

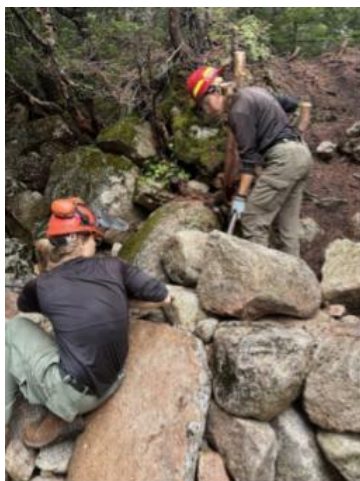
During this report period, the Maintenance Department has worked diligently to support Park operations. Field Heavy Vehicle and Equipment Technician Frank George, with assistance from Martin, has worked tirelessly to keep the Park's vehicle fleet on the road. Work has included routine maintenance, diagnosis, tire changeovers and repairs, electrical troubleshooting and repair, brake jobs, suspension work and much more.

In June, the Park took possession of a new Hardee ditch and bank mower, and an attachment to be used with the Park's New Holland farm tractor. Unfortunately, the mower was not delivered in working order. George worked closely with the manufacturer to diagnose and repair the issues before using the mower in the field. Since then, George has mown from the Old State Road south of the Park entrance along Tote Road to Lynx Road on the Park's North end, including the entirety of Roaring Brook Road. Additionally, he has mown four days in the Park's Scientific Forest Management Area along roads prioritized by SFMA staff.

Martin has kept Park plumbing and propane infrastructure in working order, routinely doing tank swaps, appliance repair and replacement, and a host of other troubleshooting and repairs. Additionally, he moved the steel swinging gate from the Park's Southern boundary to the bottom of Abol Hill and fabricated and installed new swinging gates at the Camp Phoenix Road and Wadleigh Brook.

Supervisory Carpenter Jesse Laporte spent much of the period finishing this winter's repair projects at Kidney Pond. Work included the installation of trim for windows and doors in Cabin 6 and the Kidney Pond Library. Laporte has also led efforts to mitigate bat issues at Kidney Pond by identifying and sealing trouble areas with Permachink in multiple cabins. Laporte has also built new information kiosks at Daicey Pond, Kidney Pond, Trout Brook Farm, and the Five Ponds Trailhead, and a new information board at Nesowadnehunk Group Area 1. He installed a new exterior door, two storm doors, and repairs for rot on the Trails End Camp, and fixed flashing issues behind log siding and replaced rotted railings at the Nesowadnehunk Field ranger office.

Trails

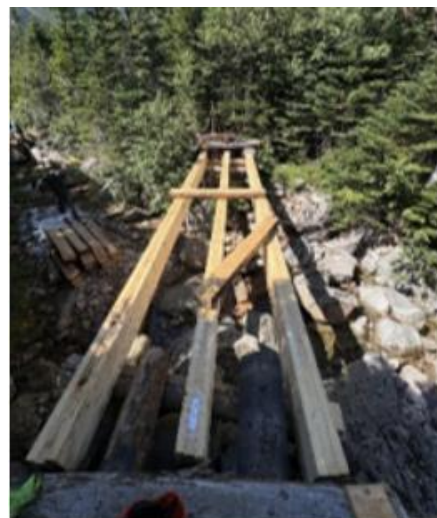


High Bridge Stonework

The Trails Department worked on clearing blowdowns during the early part of the season. Two contracted sawyers from the Outdoor Sports Institute (OSI) were brought on board to allow the Trail Crew to shift from blowdown cleanup to project work. The first project of the season was replacing the long-standing temporary bridge at Katahdin Stream Falls, with appropriately sized stringers and a new abutment. A bypass trail was established allowing hikers to stay on the east side of the stream for safety during the construction. The replacement project was supported by volunteers Jim O' Malley, Ross Ludders, and Grady Ludders.

The first phase of the High Bridge project on the Chimney Pond Trail was the construction of a stone retention wall to support new bridge abutments. During this first phase of the High Bridge

replacement project, Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner located a significant crack that had developed in the downstream stringer of the primary span. With support from Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer and Supervisory Carpenter Jesse Laporte, the trail crew then repaired the cracked stringer, supporting and splinting the structural component with a pair of 4" x 12" beams on each side and a series of 3/4" threaded rod. The second phase of the High Bridge replacement project is now underway with the construction of a stone retaining wall that will support the earthen ramp up to the eastern side of the new bridge crossing location.



Lower Saddle Brook Bridge

Lower Saddle Brook Bridge also had significant repairs, with the replacement of all stringers and decking of the primary span. The Lower Saddle Brook Bridge repairs were completed with volunteers Andy Sheaf, Mark Lena, Zane Dustin, and Kieran Innis.



Maine Forest Service Hauling Flight

The High Bridge and Lower Saddle Brook Bridge projects were accomplished with assistance from the Maine Forest Service (MFS), which flew materials to both bridge sites for two days. Having the materials transported in this manner saved considerable time and effort, and allowed for repairs to be effected prior to the winter season. MFS also flew twelve cedar alpine signposts and a replacement frame for the summit sign to the Tableland, staging them near the Baxter Peak Cut Off/Saddle Trail Junction. Director Kevin Adam, Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner, and Chief Ranger Matt McGuire conducted site visits with engineer Charlie Trautman to look at the feasibility of a bridge over the Nesowadnehunk Stream at Daicey Pond and the condition of the existing foot bridge at Trout Brook Farm leading to the Freezeout Trail.

The Trail Crew performed brush cutting along the Wasstaquoik Lake Trail, blazed the Howe Brook Trail, improved a stone drainage and stone staircase previously constructed on the ongoing Hunt Trail relocation, replaced the “Maine’s Largest

Wilderness Area” signpost on the Abol Trail, and cleared approximately 460 trees and painted blazes on the Wadleigh Brook Trail. The Russell Pond Trail was cleared of blowdowns, the trail corridor opened up, and blazes were repainted. All six Trail Crew staff responded to a litter carry incident on the Appalachian Trail from the Niagaras.

Trail Supervisor Brennan Turner led three B-Level Chainsaw classes for new and recertifying Rangers. Brennan has been collaborating with Supervisors who are seeking to become chainsaw instructors and incorporating them into course instruction.

The Baxter Youth Conservation Corps (BYCC) accomplished several projects this season, including: replacement of the bog bridging on the Appalachian Trail south of the day use lot, numerous stone steps and drainages were improved on the OJI trail, trail corridor brushing was completed around the summit of Sentinel Mountain, the new summit sign was carried up to Chimney Pond and stored for the upcoming replacement, and drainages were maintained on the Abol and Chimney Pond Trails. Additionally, portions of the Foss and Knowlton Trail, Roaring Brook Nature Loop, and around Basin Ponds on the Chimney Pond Trail were brushed out.



Watercraft Training

Field Operations and Law Enforcement

Field Staff and Supervisors continue to provide opportunities to help visitors have safe, enjoyable recreational experiences compatible with Gov. Baxter’s vision for the Park.

Field staff has been carrying out several projects including brushing back roads, assisting with numerous flat tires and disabled vehicles, responding to SAR incidents and “attempt to locates,” educating visitors through preventative search and rescue (PSAR), providing escorts for oversize vehicles and equipment, clearing blowdowns, shingling lean-tos, installing docks, and

repairing the Togue Pond gate. In early May, Park staff once again provided logistical support for The Summit Project. Supervisors received training on the Park's new Rabies Policy and protocols for handling animals to be tested for rabies. They have also assisted with chainsaw and watercraft training for new staff and conducted ongoing monthly trainings.

Baxter State Park has traditionally had zones of limited radio communication, and communication is also affected by equipment that degrades over time. Understanding the importance of communication for emergency and administrative procedures, the Park has undertaken a comprehensive effort to improve its radio infrastructure. District Ranger Rob Tice worked with Yankee Communication and Whitten's Two-way Services to assess existing radio equipment condition, ability to transmit, and potential areas to improve communications. Beginning in early fall of 2026, Togue Pond Gatehouse, the Visitor Center, and five campgrounds will receive new antennas, coaxial cable, new tower sections to increase height, and new radios as necessary. Additionally, we are determining if relocating the Rip Dam repeater to the Togue Pond Gatehouse would be beneficial for west side communications.

Chief Ranger Matt McGuire has been leading maintenance inspections at campgrounds and administrative sites to assist in determining project priorities, health and safety issues, and areas for operational efficiencies. Critical to these inspections are Maintenance and Transportation Supervisor Keith Wehmeyer, Inventory and Property Associate II Deanna Madore, District Rangers Rob Tice and Paul Farrington, Trails Supervisor Brennan Turner, field supervisors, and field staff. Chimney Pond, Roaring Brook, and facilities in the south end and west side of the Park have had inspections conducted this year. Russell Pond and north end facility inspections will occur in 2027.

District Ranger Rob Tice has continued his work on the BSP Fire Plan, working collaboratively with the Maine Forest Service (MFS). The plan was last updated in 2019 and will now include updated water drafting locations, helicopter landing zones, and internal contact information. Lands Manager Shane Miller has created and updated GIS files and collaborated to share them with MFS in support of the Park's work on the Fire Plan.

Tice also participated in and completed the MFS Firewise program, which includes developing protocols for determining the risk that structures face due to fire and strategies to mitigate these risks. Tice will be conducting ongoing assessments at locations throughout the Park over the next year.



Come-along Training

Supervisory Ranger Bruce White and Supervisory Law Enforcement Ranger Russ Porter attended the S-211 Portable Pumps and Water Use course through the Maine Wildfire Academy. Capital purchases allowed each of the Park's eight roadside campgrounds to receive 400' of new fire hose to replace hoses that were damaged and/or could not pass appropriate pressure testing. Three Mark III pumps with high water volume output were put into service. Additionally, multiple fire pumps were rebuilt and serviced.

The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) Light Capital Paving Program top-coated the State Road with new asphalt from the Golden Road Crossing to the Park's Visitor Center in early August. Although the timing of their work was disruptive for visitors, effective communication between the Park and MDOT and good messaging from the Park helped to minimize the disruption.

During the reporting period, Law Enforcement Rangers conducted fishing license checks and a special detail to monitor fishing activity on Wassataquoik Stream. Warnings and summonses were issued for the following violations:

Title 12, Section 903, Park Rule	Overcapacity at Daicey Pond	Warning
BSP Rule 1.2	Camping in unauthorized area	USAC
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	Failure to carry and exhibit license on demand	Verbal Warning
BSP Rule 1.3	Failure to register	Warning
BSP Rule	Littering - disposal of diseased dog	Verbal Warning
BSP Rule	Pulled bark from Birch Tree	Warning
Title 29-A section 2557-A	Operating after HO Revocation	USAC
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	USAC
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	USAC
Title 12, Section 903	Hiking a closed trail	Warning
Title 12, Section 903	Hiking a closed trail	Warning
Title 12, Section 903	BSP Rule - over capacity on trail	USAC
	Possible illegal camping	Warning
Title 12, Section 903	Camping without a reservation	USAC
BSP Rule 1.2	Camping in unauthorized area	USAC
BSP Rule 1.2	Camping in unauthorized area	Warning
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed Trail	USAC
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	Operation of vehicle while suspended, operating a defective vehicle.	USAC
Title 12, Section 903	Use of UAV (drone) in BSP	Warning
	Left site with fire and trash	Warning
Title 29A, Section 2073-3	Speeding	Warning
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	Warning
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	USAC
BSP Rule 1.3	Failure to register	USAC
BSP Rule 1.3	Failure to register	USAC
BSP Rule 2.2	Hiking a closed trail	USAC

Appalachian Trail

During the reporting period, 1,817 Appalachian Trail (AT) hikers registered with the Park. The majority of these hikers were northbound through hikers. The AT hiker numbers to date are comparable to 2025 and reflect a consistent downward trend in annual overall AT numbers since 2020. The Park saw a significant increase in the number of registered commercial groups this year (43) over 2025 (27); however, the total number of 2026 commercial users (285) is comparable to last year (264). This reflects smaller group sizes, perhaps due to not being able to fully fill pre-arranged trips. It should be noted that these are groups that enter the Park on the AT as commercial users and that commercial use is prohibited by the National Park Service on the Appalachian Trail National Scenic Corridor.

The Park saw another record set when Dale Sanders, “Grey Beard,” became the oldest person to complete the 2,197.9-mile trail in twelve months at the age of 91. Following a conversation with Sanders regarding a potential media surge around his summit climb, the hiker finished with a small team and kept his media events away from the mountain and the Park. For a high-profile figure, he was able to “finish well.”

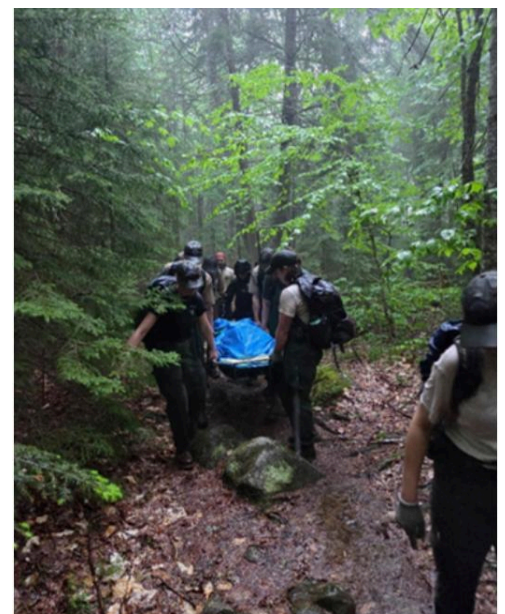
On September 14, the Park responded to a hiker in immediate distress on the Tableland above Thoreau Spring. Park staff and the Maine Army National Guard effected a rescue; however, the individual, Bert Peter Goris, had passed. The initial investigation determined that Goris was an AT hiker, trail name “Froggee,” but travelled as a relative loner. Thanks to our partnership with the National Park Service, and Supervisory Ranger Bruce White’s relationship with AT hostels, the Monson Visitor Center, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and Maine Appalachian Trail Club, we were able to compile information about Goris’s movements in the weeks leading up to his arrival at the Park. This information sharing is critical for investigatory purposes and is one example of the importance of maintaining these partnerships.

Search and Rescue

The Park has had 55 Search and Rescue (SAR) incidents in 2026 to date, down 27% from the 2025 total of 75 incidents. Comparable to past years, incidents occur throughout the Park, both in low-use and high-use areas. Dehydration, hyponatremia, gastrointestinal issues, exhaustion/overextension, lower leg, and ankle injuries are the predominant catalysts for a call for assistance. Park staff are the primary responders for the majority of these incidents and have exemplified professionalism, positivity, and patience during rescue and medical events.

The Maine Forest Service (MFS) and Maine Army National Guard (MEARNG) continue to support the Park through helicopter operations. The ability for rapid rescue by helicopter is a critical asset for the Park, and we are fortunate to have these capable partners.

- MEARNG has flown two missions for the Park, both in inclement weather: the rescue of two technical climbers stuck on The Flat Iron (two flights) and the search and rescue of Bert Goris on the Tableland.
- MFS has flown four missions for the Park: 2 short hauls for lower leg injuries (Chimney/Knife Edge and South Turner), 1 pickup of a dehydrated patient on the Tableland, and 1 pickup of an



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individual experiencing a psychotic episode at Russell Pond.

Seven teams from MASAR once again have been providing volunteer SAR coverage on weekends at the Park. These teams include NorthSAR, Pine Tree SAR, MDISAR, Coastal Mountain SAR, Franklin SAR, Wilderness Rescue Team, and Mahoosuc Mountain Rescue. We have positioned teams at both Togue Point and Chimney Pond to provide response capability for the west side of the Park and the Katahdin massif via Chimney. Additionally, Teams have been participating in the Mountain Patrol program, providing valuable resource data for the Park and opportunities to be on the mountain, familiarizing themselves with trails, varying mountain weather conditions, and on-trail PSAR.