

***Friends of Baxter State Park***  
**Position Statement on the**  
**Proposed Maine Woods National Monument**  
**adjoining Baxter State Park**  
**APPROVED MAY 9, 2016**

**Issue**

The mission of Friends of Baxter State Park (FBSP) is to preserve, support, and enhance the wilderness character of Baxter State Park (BSP). Since the founding of the organization, FBSP has been monitoring changes in land use and proposals to conserve lands bordering Baxter State Park.

Elliotsville Plantation Inc. (EPI) is proposing to donate lands abutting BSP along the East Branch of the Penobscot River to the National Park Service (NPS) as a Maine Woods National Monument, along with stewardship funds.

In 2011, FBSP was the first conservation organization in Maine to expressly support a feasibility study for a national park on the EPI lands. We sent letters to Maine's congressional delegation and to the Secretary of Interior stating support for a park study.

In 2014, FBSP sent letters to the Maine congressional delegation reaffirming our support for a conservation buffer bordering BSP. FBSP has continued to closely follow the public debate about creating a national park, recreation area and/or monument near BSP.

In recent years, major shifts have occurred in the economy of the Katahdin region, including the closing of several paper mills, resulting in large-scale job losses. Studies suggest that a National Park System unit could significantly benefit the economy of the Katahdin region and the state of Maine without adversely affecting the state's forest products industry.

**Position**

- 1. Friends of Baxter State Park reaffirms its support for permanent conservation of lands bordering Baxter State Park** as one action that can help preserve the wilderness character of Baxter State Park.
- 2. Friends of Baxter State Park, a member of the Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce, stands with the chamber** to affirm the importance of this area in ensuring a sustainable environmental and economic future for the Katahdin region.
- 3. Friends of Baxter State Park endorses the establishment of a Maine Woods National Monument on lands owned by EPI bordering Baxter State Park** with the understanding that the impacts on BSP will be carefully considered. We recognize there are many positive impacts, including providing a buffer of natural lands, a sanctuary for wildlife that is compatible with the abutting lands in BSP, and economic opportunities for nearby communities. Potential negative impacts on BSP need to be ameliorated or minimized by working closely with BSP. When available, resources should be provided by the NPS to support land use planning by gateway communities to ensure that the benefits of economic development are optimized to preserve the quality of life and rural character of the region.
- 4. Friends of Baxter State Park supports a planning process that addresses particular concerns**, including protecting viewsheds from BSP and ensuring that lands surrounding Katahdin Lake are adequately buffered from inappropriate public access from roads and trails on the Maine Woods National Monument. Communication and coordination among BSP, NPS, FBSP and others throughout the planning, development and ongoing management of the national monument will be crucial, both to maintain the integrity of Gov. Baxter's vision for BSP as a wilderness park and to be attentive to land use changes in the surrounding communities that might accompany creation of a new national monument.