



Friends of Baxter State Park

President's Column

By Holly Dominie, President

I'm not one to dwell on bad news so I'll give you that first. Only one gubernatorial candidate took the time to respond to Friends of Baxter's query about how he would approach the issue of long-range planning and the kind of candidates they would see in filling Authority positions.

Granted, our questions arrived just a month before the end of the race, but still. . .

The good news is that the one candidate who responded, in writing and with a personal phone call no less, John Baldacci, promises to be a champion for the Park. As Governor, he is now in a position to make good on his pledge to make sure that Baxter's legacy is passed along "undiminished and, in fact, enhanced."

Baldacci told us that he "appreciates the problems and pressures that result from the Park being 'loved too much,' and will work diligently with the members and staff of the Authority to find creative and effective solutions to them."

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Forever Wild

Newsletter of the Friends of Baxter State Park

Winter 2003 Vol. 2 No. 1



Wilderness Retreat. The ranger's cabin, located on a bluff about midway along the north shore, overlooks lovely Webster Lake in the northwest corner of the Park. Under Buzz Caverly's "wilder within" concept, the lake would be closed to aircraft and motorboats. Reader comments can be found on page 2.

Huge Tract Goes on Sale East of Park

By Phyllis Austin

Irving Woodlands LLC is looking for a buyer for its lands on the eastern border of Baxter State Park, according to Chuck Gadzik, the Canadian-based company's operations manager for Maine. The possibility that the Park will acquire the land appears virtually nil because of the cost and concern that expanding the preserve would stir a hornet's nest of opposition similar to that over the West Branch lands acquisition.

Irving wants to sell its land in Township 5, Range 8; T4, R8; T3, R8; and T2, R8. The company owns all of T5, R8 and T3, R 8 and half of the other two townships.

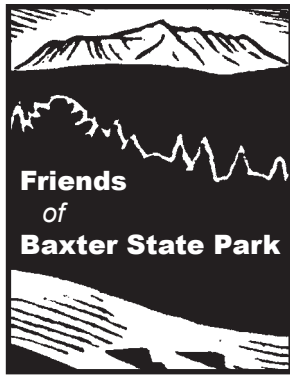
Mead/Westvaco is the owner of the other half of T4, R8, and Prentiss & Carlisle Inc. manages the other half of T2, R8 for various owners. Irving's ownership totals approximately

Gadzik declined to talk price. But parent company J. D. Irving Ltd. bought one million acres, including the land bordering the Park, from Bowater Inc. in 1998 for \$220 million, or \$220 an acre. Baxter Park paid approximately \$200 an acre for the 3,315 acres it purchased on its southern border in 1998 and 1992.

The Irving lands for sale include extensive frontage along the East Branch of the Penobscot River, including popular Grand Pitch and whitewater sections, as well as the lower section of Wassataquoik Stream. It also contains remote Katahdin Lake, which to some people is Maine's most beautiful lake, and several mountain peaks.

Lee Perry, chairman of the Baxter Park Authority and commissioner of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, acknowledged contact

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of
Baxter State Park**

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The Friends of Baxter State Park is an independent citizen's group working to preserve, support, and enhance the wilderness character of Baxter State Park, in the spirit of its founder, Governor Percival Baxter.

**Friends of Baxter State
Park
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Readers Respond to 'Wilder Within'

In our last issue, we wrote about Park Director Buzz Caverly's proposals for making the Park "wilder within" and asked readers to comment. Response was heavy; excerpts from some of the letters are printed below; more will follow in our Spring issue.

With the pressure of heavy use, I believe the primary focus should be on promoting a reservations policy for day use rather than decreasing accessibility by car to Kidney Pond, Roaring Brook, or movement around the park via the Tote Road. At present, there seems to be a reasonable balance between "back country" and campgrounds. Indeed, for many families and older hikers (myself age 62 and arthritic knees), the ability to drive to the above trailheads for a day or hiking or canoeing is much appreciated and would be a significant loss. —Hal Busch, Gilford NH.

The "Wilder Within" thoughts expressed by Buzz are a welcome concept and should be given strong and serious consideration. Baxter State Park is very, very fortunate to have a director who strives to be a steward of Governor Baxter's Forever Wild theme rather than to simply yield to public pressure. I support fully the adoption of each of these ideas which will reduce motorized use and address other overuse situations. —Bob Richardson, Walpole NH.

Chimney Pond is very dear to my heart. Making the road to Roaring Brook three miles shorter is a smart idea...Chimney Pond would become a base camp (because of the 16-mile round trip hike) for those hiking to the top...My only concern with this plan...is how would reservations be parcelled out? ...You would need to develop a system that is fair to all. —Joanie Rhoda, Washington ME

I feel BSP is "wild" enough—please do not back proposals to make things more difficult than they already are. I have gone at least once each year since 1988 and am now 56 years old and do not want any additional burden of getting to trailheads. Close the park gates when the maximum number is reached but please keep open the campgrounds and cabins to car access. This is very, very important to the older and younger lovers of BSP. Please do not restrict access to the youthful, fit 20- and 30-year-olds. —Megan Hack, Gordonsville VA

—In addition to reducing the number of day hikers, introduce a system whereby they are "inspected" for footwear, water, and adequate clothing at the new Roaring Brook start. —Add Daicey Pond to the access restrictions visualized for Kidney Pond (even ten years ago it had become a Toys R Us suburban experience). —Stuart Hardy & Wanda Carlisle

—Webster Lake is a major historical

treasure of the Park. In the last 75 years it has been allowed to naturally restore itself to pre-industrial times. The lake and its buffer zone in the SFMA abound with abandoned trails, relics of civilization dating for 200 years. I have often wondered what the place looked like prior to 1840. This place and the entire SFMA should be managed with the same care as the lower Park. The wildlife we've seen here is amazing. —Paul & Joanne Woodward

—My sense of Percival Baxter's desire for this land was that it be "forever wild", which means that it may require visitors to invest a little personal work in order to appreciate it. Reduce foot traffic on Abol and Hunt Trails: Yes. Many visitors resent rules, period, and will refuse to visit the park or comply with increased restrictions. I think that's part of natural selection. In most cases, the hikers who agree to comply probably have an intuitive understanding of the need for limits and already regulate their own behavior on the trail. I do agree that the numbers have to be reduced. —Tim Vrelab, Bath ME.

I'm Joseph LaFrance who has volunteered at Webster Lake and is very concerned about the Park long term. It really is a beautiful place and needs to be maintained as it is today. After reading "wilder within" and Paul Woodward's thoughts regarding the article, my views are significantly similar to his, with just a couple of other remarks. 1. A trail from Windey Pitch to South Peak would alleviate Chimney Pond even if road was left open to Roaring Brook. 2. Closing the road to Kidney Pond might reduce "handicap" accessibility within the Park. —Joseph LaFrance

All of the proposals would, in my opinion, enhance the wilderness character of the Park. Admittedly, the proposals would likely reduce the ability of some visitors to "conveniently" hike to Katahdin or ride through the Park. However, convenience and ease of access are not what BSP is all about. Some visitors might feel that they would be losing opportunities to enjoy the Park. This loss would be small...when compared to a wilder BSP. I think it is important to consider the regional role of BSP. BSP offers a unique opportunity to experience a sublime, wild land. When considering recreational opportunities in the Eastern U.S., you begin to see that a wilder BSP is a great enhancement of opportunities for wilderness enthusiasts all across the eastern U.S. —Rex Turner, Augusta ME



Kozy Kidney. Winter visitors come in out of the cold in one of the Kidney Pond cabins. Some campers such as these like the "luxury" of a hot stove and a roof over their heads when the temperature hovers around the zero mark. Under the "wilder within" concept, the cabins would eventually be removed.

Photo by Steve Cartwright

President's Column

(Continued from page 1)

In a recent letter thanking the Governor for his response, the Friends Board applauded and offered our full support for his intention "to engage the public in meaningful conversations about the future of the Park . . . and to work collaboratively toward a plan for managing the entirety of the resources of the West and East branches of the Penobscot watershed in a manner that will sustain those resources for future generations."

We also let Governor Baldacci know that the future disposition of the East Branch lands is of paramount importance to Friends. Members who attended our 2002 annual meeting may recall that panelists identified this area as of crucial and resource value. In the letter, we urged the Governor and his administration to make ensuring the conservation of these lands, if not their addition to the Park, among their immediate and highest priorities.

Tour Reveals Changes as Buildings Are Removed

By Charlie Jacobi

On Oct. 4, 2002, Board members Pat Murtaugh, Bill and Barbara Bentley, and this writer spent a long, entertaining, and fruitful day touring the north end of the Park with Director Buzz Caverly.

The most striking aspect of our trip was the progress the Park has made removing unnecessary and inappropriate structures. Maybe some Friends of long acquaintance with the Park have noticed this. At every turn, by boat or car, Buzz pointed out sites where buildings once stood. These areas are now at various stages of returning to nature, making Baxter Park a little more "wilder within."

On our spray-filled, bottom-dragging boat trip to the far reaches of Grand Lake Matagamon, we discovered that no more structures exist on Park lands bordering the lake. This is great news for wilderness enthusiasts. Along the Tote Road,

the Park removed game warden and Dept. of Transportation facilities. Similarly, Park facilities that became obsolete or were in bad repair have vanished.

Before entering the north end, we visited the Grand Lake Matagamon dam, whose condition is deteriorating. This dam is now owned by lake homeowners, and it is possible they may be unable to maintain it. Should this happen, the removal of the dam would have significant implications for the Park. The lake would surely be less "Grand." First and Second Lakes would reappear. The size of Baxter State Park would increase (at no cost!), and the natural recovery of once-flooded lands would begin. Trail and campsite management in this area would no doubt be reconsidered!

But don't hold your breath. None of this is imminent, and it may never happen. But Park staff are prepared for the possibility of change.

East Branch Lands

(Continued from page 1)

by Irving about the Park's potential interest in buying the lands. He indicated to Gadzik that the Park was not in a position to act now on a purchase opportunity.

Perry explained that the 204,733-acre wilderness park is not pursuing a potential purchase at this time because of finances and potential political issues. The Park depends on various trust fund interest earnings to support operations, and there is only \$42,000 left in the land acquisition fund following two purchases in the last decade.

The 2,269 acres on the West Branch of the Penobscot River were acquired in 1998 from Bowater Inc. for \$480,000. In 1992, the Park purchased from Georgia Pacific 1,046 acres around Togue Pond at the southern entrance to the Park for \$200,000.

Visit our website at
www.friendsofbaxter.org

Calendar of Events 2003

April 12, Annual Meeting. Friends of Baxter State Park. Place and time to be announced.

June 7, Work Day at the Park for Friends. National Trails Day. Meeting place and time to be announced.

July 11-12, Walk in the Park for Friends. Contact Barbara Bentley at our address.

August 1-2, Walk in the Park for Friends. Contact Barbara Bentley at our address.

Membership Matters!

The growing membership of the Friends of Baxter State Park—we are now 373 strong—is taking a more active part in the organization. Thanks to all who responded to the call for input on Buzz's "wilder within" concept and to those who helped with a recent mailing. Because there is no annual appeal for funds, members can contribute to the Friends by renewing memberships at higher levels. The Governor Baxter Society and Knife Edger welcomed new members this year! And special

thanks to all of you who have given gift memberships to outdoor enthusiasts. What a nice gift!

We have lost contact with a few members because of change of addresses. Please help us locate the following members: Wendy Walsh and Jerielle Young (mail returned from Monhegan ME); Charlie Laurie and Helice Parker (Boulder CO); and Christopher Pratt (Pittsburgh PA). Friends or relatives recognize these folk? Sending your telephone numbers and email addresses helps us find you if the Post Office fails to do so.

Thanks for your help!

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We're looking for New Friends!

Do you know someone who might be interested in the Friends of Baxter State Park? Their membership will add another voice supporting Governor Baxter's wilderness.

I'd like to be a Friend. Sign me up!

Name

Street

City, State and Zip Code

_____ \$1,000	Gov. Baxter Society
_____ \$500	Katahdin Club
_____ \$250	Knife Edger
_____ \$100	Hamlin Peaker
_____ \$50	Sponsor
_____ \$30	Family
_____ \$25	Individual

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