

Forever Wild

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BAXTER STATE PARK
WINTER 2006 VOL. 5 No. 1

Bissell Will Stay the Course, Follow Caverly's Path

Friends of Baxter State Park can breathe a sigh of relief. "There's no need to reverse our direction. It may sound mundane, but let's keep the Park the way it is," stated Jensen Bissell in a recent telephone interview. The Baxter State Park Authority named Bissell to the top spot in late December.

But after 20 years with the Scientific Forestry Management Area, is the nationally acclaimed forester ready for wilderness management? "Absolutely," he replies. "It's really not a new role. If you think of the Park organizationally, I've always been involved in park work as part of the team that includes the Park director, chief ranger, business manager, Park naturalist, and the SFMA director. We've worked together on wilderness policy, fee policy, capacity, access, trails, park operation, and other things."

After graduation in forestry and stints in New York and Oregon, Bissell couldn't have been more excited to come to Maine in 1985. He says it was a forester's dream. "I could practice forestry, and it couldn't be undone. The parcel couldn't be sold, merged, or taken over, and

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President's Column

by Charlie Jacobi

The Natural Choice: Completing Percival Baxter's Vision

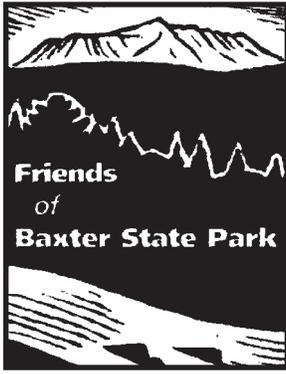
Last week the Maine Department of Conservation, the Trust for Public Land, and the Baxter State Park Authority announced an unprecedented deal to add 6,015 acres of prime and largely primeval real estate to Baxter State Park, including spectacular Katahdin Lake. This is fantastic news for Baxter State Park fans and outdoor recreation lovers across the state.

When you climb Katahdin and first emerge above the treeline (and stop to catch your breath), you'll inevitably turn around and look east. Gazing past the smaller ponds and rolling terrain, your eye immediately zeroes in on Katahdin Lake as the primary landscape feature, glistening in the distance. The view from Katahdin Lake toward the mountain is equally compelling, though relatively few visitors have seen it. Under this proposed agreement both views will be preserved.

It is not hard to justify adding the Katahdin Lake parcel to the
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Sheilah and Jensen Bissell with their sons Peter and Noah (r) at BSP Headquarters at announcement of new director. — Photo by Bill Bentley



Bissell - *Continued from p. 1*

the mission couldn't be changed. That's about as permanent an edifice as we can make in our society," he marveled.

He likes his new role as Director for many of the same reasons. "It's hard for us to keep our hands out of natural processes. We need to just stand back — changes don't happen all at once." If Bissell is comfortable with letting nature take its course in the wilderness park, he knows that the ongoing challenge is to articulate and explain "wilderness" to the public. He's eager to continue former director Buzz Caverly's commitment to speaking to groups around the state — fish and game groups, abutting landowners, town neighbors, environmental organizations, and

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President's Column - *Continued from p. 1*

Park. As a State Senator, Percival Baxter identified these lands in maps and speeches as part of his vision for a wilderness state park and wildlife sanctuary as early as 1921! Unfortunately, their acquisition eluded him over the thirty-two years he toiled to piece together the Park. Let's make history, make history come alive, and finish the job for him.

Baxter State Park is one of the few recreation areas where you can escape the noise, smell, and disturbance of motors for a little peace and quiet, solitude, and contemplation. Katahdin Lake would be a small, but priceless, wilderness addition to the Park, another haven from the frenetic pace of our modern, mechanized society.

And finally, the Gardner family keeps its forest workers employed and their families secure. That's because they will receive for this deal forest land, not cash. Over 7,000 acres of unconsolidated public lots will be bought by the Trust for Public Land. The Trust has already purchased other private lands. All of these lands will be swapped with the Gardner's for the Katahdin Lake parcel. These new Gardner acquisitions will continue to supply fiber to the mills in the Penobscot Valley and be open, as the Gardner's have always done with their lands, to traditional uses such as hunting. The State will use the funds from the sale of the public lots to acquire new lands (in the same counties as those sold) to benefit sportsmen. This deal is a win-win-win proposition.

Governor Baxter was a visionary. He worked a lifetime to acquire the lands around Katahdin for the people

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

Website has a new face!

Our website at www.friendsofbaxter.org has been completely overhauled, updated, and enlarged. Stay informed about the latest developments in the Katahdin Lake Campaign, check out links to background materials, and find out how you can help make this plan a reality. Read about Hikes Beyond Katahdin, see the schedule for the Friends' Annual Meeting on April 29, enjoy many new photos, and much, much more!

See website for *Hikes Beyond Katahdin* by Rex Turner for details on hikes in other parts of the Park – the Owl, the Marston Trail, plus hikes in the north.

of Maine, and left us an incredible 204,000 acre legacy. His original dream included Katahdin Lake as a wilderness and wildlife sanctuary. We now have the opportunity to honor his vision. We may never get this chance again. Let's complete Percy's park. It's the natural choice.

A longer version of this column appeared on the Op-Ed page in the Bangor Daily News on February 4, 2006.

Support the Katahdin Lake Campaign

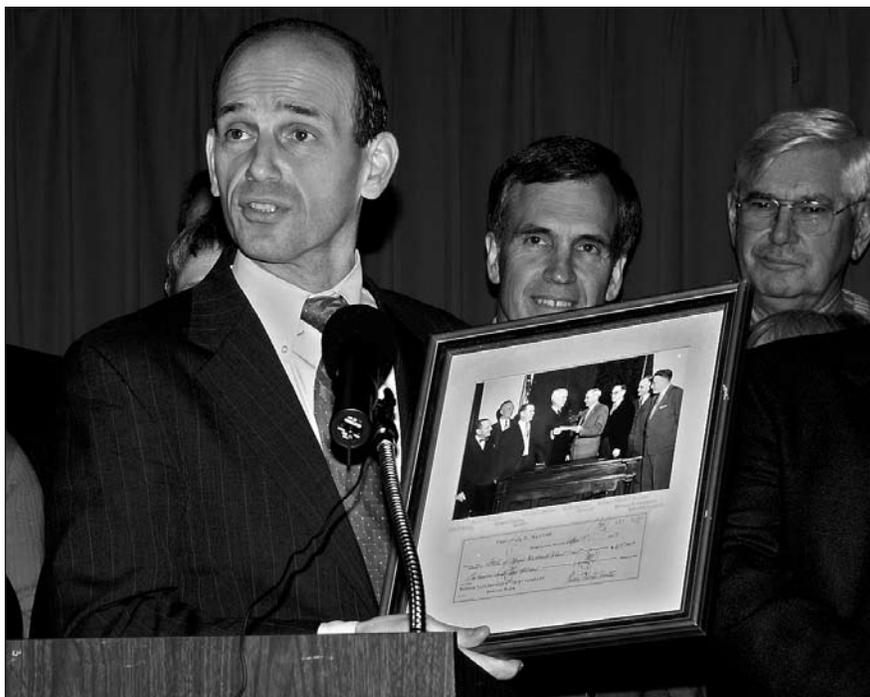
1. Tell your state representative you support this deal to add the Katahdin Lake parcel to Baxter State Park as wilderness and wildlife sanctuary.
2. Send a copy of your letter to Commissioner Patrick McGowan at the Department of Conservation, State House Station 22, Augusta, ME 04333-0022.
3. Donate generously to the Katahdin Lake Campaign. We've got a mountain to climb together and it's 14 million dollars high. Getting to the top is not optional.

Katahdin Lake Campaign Announced at State Capitol on January 25th

Conservation Commissioner Patrick McGowan introduced the Katahdin Lake Campaign as the way to complete Governor Baxter's vision of the Park. As a conservation project, it ranks with jewels like Acadia National Park. Three years ago, when Governor Baldacci visited the Park on the 100th anniversary of Baxter's first visit to the region, he asked why Katahdin Lake wasn't in the Park. Today, lots of people, including the Gardner family, are working to make this conservation project possible.

Baldacci says that Baxter left a high standard for all future Governors and that Baxter is his role model in terms of conservation. Baldacci said, "We owe it to Governor Baxter, we owe it to future generations – it is our responsibility to roll up our sleeves and make Katahdin Lake part of Baxter State Park." In 1953, Baxter gave the State \$675,000, saying, "My heart and soul belong to Maine; this is my way of saying thank you to future generations."

Several others involved in the project spoke during the ceremony. Land owners Tom and Bill Gardner, Whitney Hatch of the Trust for Public Land, State Reps. Joshua Hardy and Rod Carr, Friends' President Charlie Jacobi, former BSP Director Buzz Caverly, and Congressman Tom Allen all spoke to the many benefits of adding the



Gov. Baldacci, Rep. Tom Allen, and Tom Gardner in Hall of Flags at the Capitol on January 25th holding a photo of Baxter himself making his gift to the people of Maine —*Photo by Bill Bentley*

Katahdin Lake parcel to Baxter State Park and urged all to work to make it so.

The Maine Legislature must pass a bill by a 2/3 vote to accept this addition to Baxter State Park. Rep. Rod Carr (R-Lincoln) is co-sponsor of the bill. Carr urged people to keep an open mind, look at the big picture, and pass the bill. He had reservations about hunting, access, and snowmobiling, but he thinks that most issues have been resolved. This is both an economic AND a conservation project. Carr said, "This deal is a win-win situation. And you don't have many of those in Augusta." — *Editor*

Land Swap Hailed as Win-win

There will be no bridge over the Wassataquoik Stream! Conservation activist Roxanne Quimby, through her foundation Elliotsville Plantation, Inc., has acquired 10,400 acres north of the stream in T4R8 through a land swap with the logger William T. Gardner. The logging businesses get 14,000 acres of Quimby's T5R8, which will be available for hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and skiing. Deputy Commissioner Karin Tilberg of the Dept. of Conservation calls this a win-win situation.

Friends is very thankful that this critical area will be conserved and thanks those members who wrote to the LURC about this issue.

Looking Back *by John Neff*

Dodging Burros on the Trail

Starting with forest ranger Jack Grant in the mid- to late-1930s, horses and burros were utilized to transport clients' gear from Avalanche Field to Chimney Pond and sometimes even to Russell Pond. After a few practice runs, the animals knew the way so well that Jack just followed along behind them and let them do their thing. After a brief wartime interruption, the business was started up again in 1947, first to serve Park personnel and later, by Park ranger Ed Werler, to serve the public once again. The fee in 1956 was \$6 per hundred pounds. One burro, Nancy, came to be known far and wide for her unusual strength and endurance. The operation apparently closed down in 1960 or shortly thereafter. Did any of our older members share the trail with Nancy or the other burros?

Friends Meets with New Director Bissell

The selection of a new Park Director was one of the most important decisions faced by the Authority in recent years. We have heard that more than seventy applicants from all over the world, some of them surely with outstanding credentials, sought this position. An exhaustive search was needed and conducted, but we are not surprised the most qualified applicant was found close to home. We congratulate Jensen Bissell of Milo, Maine, long-time Park Resource Manager, on his appointment to succeed Buzz Caverly. We have seen Jensen at work. Jensen is passionate about the Park, knows its wilderness and SFMA issues inside and out, is an articulate communicator, and understands all the challenges ahead.

Jensen says one challenge the Park faces is that visitor expectations are changing, but the Park's mission is not. That stable mission is a good thing in this dynamic world. Maybe it's also a sure thing, right up there with death and taxes. We agree with Jensen that there is no need for a major course change. Fifty years of steady progress towards improved and enhanced wilderness will continue.

Several members of our Board met with Jensen recently to explore how the Friends can help the Park achieve its mission. We discussed the Park's long-term financial health and the Friends' role in grant-making and fund raising. We also discussed increasing in-park volunteer opportunities without overly burdening Park staff with supervision. Both of these priorities evolved from a recent all-day retreat where Friends' Board re-evaluated our mission, goals, and objectives, and developed an action plan for 2006.

We also agreed that the Friends could play a role in communicating to our members and the broader public about Park operations. For example, the past several years of decreased visitation is a management concern because about one third of the Park budget is derived from visitor fees. Yet the perception still lingers that it is difficult to get into Baxter State Park or get the chance to day hike Katahdin. For example, Jensen told us that day-use parking reservations, made available to Maine residents several years ago, are only 20% booked.

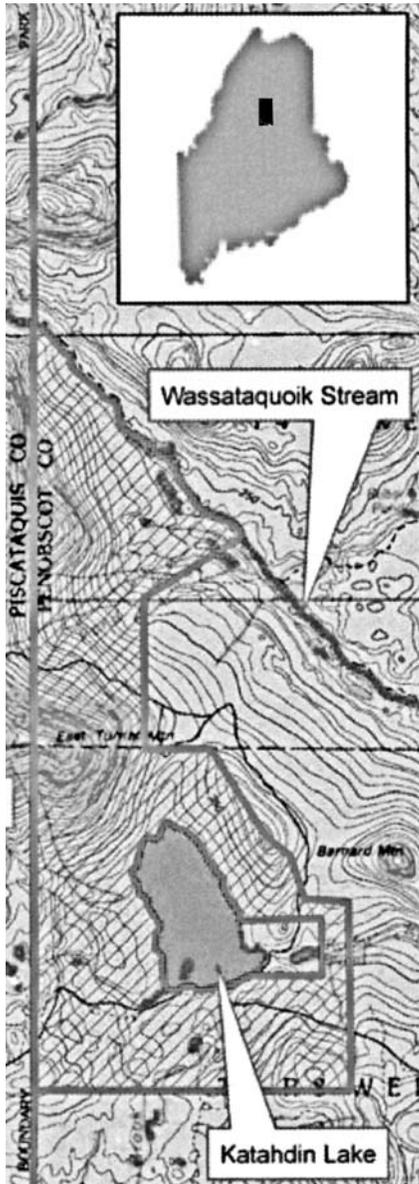
We also talked about the Friends' participation in the decision-making process for Park issues as an interested party. The Friends is one of many groups with an interest in the Park, and as such, we should be treated no differently than anyone else. We will continue to provide (what we hope are) constructive comments on these issues on members' behalf as we have before on the Daicey Pond cabins, the reservations system, and others.

We look forward to working with the Authority, the new Director, and Park staff on these and other matters, and offer Jensen our best wishes for success in his new position.

— *Charlie Jacobi, President of Friends*

Excerpts from Katahdin Lake Project FAQ

Prepared by Baxter State Park, Department of Conservation, and The Trust for Public Land



The above map shows the Katahdin Lake parcel as it abuts the eastern boundary of Baxter State Park on the Piscataquis/Penobscot county line with Wassataquoik Stream as the northern boundary of the Katahdin Lake parcel.

- **What activities will be allowed on or near Katahdin Lake?**

The Baxter State Park Authority will make the final decision on what will be allowed on the Katahdin Lake property. In managing the land according to Baxter's wishes and consistently with the majority of the Park, hunting and motorized access will be prohibited.

- **Why will hunting be prohibited on this parcel?**

In his initial deed of gift, Percival Baxter intended that the lands in "Mt. Katahdin State Park"... "forever be kept as a sanctuary for wild beasts and birds" and kept in their natural state. Since this parcel was identified in Baxter's original plan for the Park, his wish will be honored.

- **Does Katahdin Lake offer good hunting?**

According to the Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, from 2000-2004, an average of 2 deer per year were taken in T3R8, a 24,000-acre township which includes the 6,015-acre Katahdin Lake tract; an average of 5 bears per year were taken, primarily at bait stations.

- **Why is a land swap necessary to this project?**

The Gardner Companies employ nearly 200 families in the Penobscot River valley, and their logging operations supply paper mills up and down the river. The Gardners did not want to sell for cash; they wanted land to keep their employees working and their business prosperous (and have) identified 7,400 acres of unconsolidated public lots that would be suitable for timber harvesting for years to come. TPL must buy the public lots from the State (as well as additional private land that has already been acquired by TPL) to then trade with the Gardners for Katahdin Lake.

- **What will the State do with the money from selling the unconsolidated public lots?**

The State must use the funds to buy other public lands. ...in the same counties as the lands sold. The State has committed to acquiring lands that provide benefits to sportsmen with high quality wildlife habitat, water access points, and lands available for hunting and other traditional uses.

- **What will happen to this project if the Legislature fails to approve the land swap?**

Failure to approve the land swap bill will terminate TPL'S contract with the Gardners. The landowners will continue their harvest plan through the late and successional reserve and old growth forests of the property and, subsequently, put the property on the market for sale.

- **Why should the Legislature support the land swap bill?**

The project has been structured so that in conserving Katahdin Lake, we are investing in our forest economy, we are investing in better hunting areas, and we are completing Baxter State Park, the vision of Maine's greatest conservationist, Percival P. Baxter.

— Full text is available at Friends of Baxter website www.friendsobaxter.org.

others.

Bissell cites four challenges: attracting and keeping park employees despite a dwindling pool of trained applicants; meeting public and social expectations of wilderness — “They want more amenities and have greater expectations”; reconciling the public’s safety issues — “They want you to protect them” — with costs associated with rescue efforts; and funding Park operations in a time of ever-increasing costs.

Right now, he’s very interested in exploring the steady decrease in Park use that has occurred over the past 10 years, looking at demographic data, travel restrictions, the economy, and “connectivity.” This latter term, he says, relates to society’s seeming movement away from camping and outdoor adventures.

On a brighter note, he is looking forward to getting to know Friends a lot better. “I’ve looked over the FBSP materials, and only one thing is missing — there’s nothing about support of the SFMA.” He’d like to talk to us about that. “I see a lot about ‘wilderness values’, and that’s great.” He says he’d like to see FBSP support the entire Park.

Thank you, John Loyd

Board member John Loyd recently resigned due to time constraints. He was a valuable member of the Policy Committee and represented Friends and the Park’s resources with high enthusiasm and strong conviction. He also served on the BSP Advisory Committee for many years, and we have greatly valued his insights and long Park experience. We will miss him and his contributions greatly. We give him our hearty thanks and best wishes.

Check Out the CHANGING FACE of the Katahdin Neighborhood Matt Polstein’s Hammond Ridge Development on Millinocket Lake

Describing the Hammond Ridge project proposed for the shores of Millinocket Lake, Matt Polstein noted that almost a million acres in the neighborhood have been set aside to be managed for sustainable forest with public access. “It is because of the significant conservation work done in this area that we are willing to undertake this project.”

Jensen Bissell, Director of Baxter State, appreciated the way Polstein clearly stated that without the stability and permanence of lands like the Park and the West Branch and Katahdin Forest Projects in the vicinity, he would not have been able to attract funding for the project. Bissell said, “Matt publicly recognized the importance of conservation lands from a local economic perspective. I don’t hear that much and it was nice, and honest, of Matt to express it.”

The Hammond Ridge Development is located on part of the 80,000 acres of Great Northern land not included in the easement area because it already has some development on it, is on the side of the lake closer to town, and is appropriate for more development. Polstein will apply for the necessary zone changes in January and for permits after that. He hopes to be able to begin site work in the fall of 2006.

The Hammond Ridge project will begin with expansion of the Twin Pines Camps, adding fifteen cabins. A subdivision on the side of Black Cap Mountain will provide land and building packages for private individuals. Three quarters of a mile up the shore of Millinocket Lake from Twin Pines will be an Adventure Lodge of 60-80 rooms, a restaurant, and meeting space with seven clusters of family compounds nearby, each with a main house and two smaller sleeping units for extended family. Up on the side of Hammond Ridge will be a cluster of twenty condo houses and a twenty-room high-end inn with spa and food service. Also envisioned are an agricultural area and an educational center. Polstein’s rafting operation and River Drivers Restaurant will also move to the site.

Canopy Development and William Maclay Architects and Planners are working with Polstein on this development. In a statement of the philosophy of the project, sustainability is a key concept. “The beauty of an untouched environment is regarded as an asset at our resorts and we go to great lengths to preserve, maintain and even restore the surrounding ecosystem.” Health not only of the guest but also of the environment and the community is also emphasized – healthy buildings, organic food, and clean energy.

SAVE THE DATE

ANNUAL MEETING 2006

Saturday, April 29

Oakland Grange

on Lake Messalonskee

8:30 am – Gather

9:00 am – 12 noon Meeting

Noon – Lunch at Grange

1:15 pm – Hike on Kennebec

Highland Trails

There will be a short business meeting, a keynote speaker, a report from new Park Director Jensen Bissell, and time for open forum discussion on issues facing the Park. The hike will be organized by Board Member Al Howlett. Members and non-members alike should put this date on their calendars and plan to participate. Sign-up information will be available in March.

Friends' WALK IN THE PARK

July 27, 28, 29, 30, 2006

There's room for twelve – two nights at Roaring Brook and two at Chimney Pond. You could take a hike to Katahdin Lake and see for yourself! Or view it from atop Hamlin Ridge. Reserve a space NOW with Barbara Bentley at 207-763-3014 or barbarabentley@tidewater.net

FREE LUNCH for VOUNTEERS

5th Annual BSP Roadside Litter Patrol

Earth Day is April 22, but the snow doesn't melt in Baxter until May. Each year, Baxter State Park invites the public to join Park staff and volunteers for a roadside litter clean-up along the road to the Park. Last year, the Litter Patrol Clean-up on the North End brought out over 60 people covering 10 miles of road. We had tons of fun and a great barbecue lunch. This year, our "5th Annual BSP Roadside Litter Patrol" will be from Togue Pond Gate to Millinocket.

After April 1st, check the BSP website under "Volunteers" for more information or send your email to Heather Haskell now and she'll add you to the contact list for a reminder. Contact Heather Haskell, Interpretive Specialist, Baxter State Park, at 207-723-8537 or heather.haskell@maine.gov

Come celebrate books on Baxter & Katahdin!

Glickman Library at the University of Southern Maine

April 20th from 7-9 p.m

The gathering at Glickman Library will feature the authors and editors and will provide the public an opportunity to learn about these new books and to socialize and share Park stories. The books include:

North To Katahdin by Eric Pinder, published by Milkweed Editions of Minneapolis (2005)

Ktaadn Trails: Lucius Merrill and the Paths to Katahdin, published by Bangor Public Library (2005)

Katahdin in History and Story by John Neff, published by AMC forthcoming in 2006

Percival P. Baxter's Vision for Baxter State Park: An Annotated Compilation of Original Sources, Vols. 1-4, compiled and edited by Howard Whitcomb for Friends of Baxter State Park (2005)

Opening Day for Reservations at Baxter State Park a Warm Affair!

About 20 folks camped out, some for days, to be first in line; "second wavers" like me joined the line during the night for a total of 40 or so waiting to get some of the 20% of reservations made available that day! It was a warm 16 degrees with no wind. Everything went smoothly. By the end of the day, there had been 90 visitors – 81% of whom were from Maine – who made 110 reservations. The Park took in \$24K. Advisory Member Peter Pray thought the Park would stick with this traditional opening day. He said, "Where else are you going to get 50 people who are ALL friendly?" I was out of there by noon! — Editor



Lou Mucci's original watercolor of *Katahdin From Near Foster Field* was commissioned by FBSP for the frontispiece of *Baxter's Vision: An Annotated Compilation of Original Sources*. A limited quantity of color prints — some signed and numbered — are available as membership premiums. Watch for details in the membership renewal mailing in March. A full color image can be viewed in the membership renewal section of the Friends' website at www.friendsofbaxter.org

Friends of Baxter State Park
P.O. Box 1442
Bangor, ME 04402-1442

Visit our website!
www.friendsofbaxter.org

We're looking for New Friends

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

Please make checks payable to Friends of Baxter State Park. Dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. Send to **Friends of Baxter State Park, P.O. Box 1442, Bangor, ME 04402-1442**. Thank you!

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Address

City, State, Zip

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