

April 6, 2007

Mr. Bart Harvey, Chair
Maine Land Use Regulation Commission

Subject: Comments on zoning petition for Hammond Ridge Development Corp, LLC,
Zoning Petition #710

Dear Mr. Harvey and members of the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission,

The mission of the Friends of Baxter State Park is to preserve, support, and enhance the wilderness values of Baxter State Park in the spirit of its founder, Governor Percival Baxter.

Baxter State Park is a unique wilderness and recreation resource of state and national significance. There is no equivalent resource in LURC's jurisdiction or in Maine. The closest comparable resources are the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and the National Appalachian Scenic Trail (A.T.), neither of which come close to the size and natural integrity of Baxter State Park. The park hosts the northern terminus of the A.T., an internationally significant unit of the National Park Service. The centerpiece of Baxter State Park is the highest mountain in Maine, Katahdin. The summit of Katahdin is also the end of the Appalachian Trail. The area proposed for rezoning is clearly visible from many of the peaks of Katahdin, including the highest, Baxter Peak.

Katahdin and Baxter State Park would appear to be a critical element in the viability of "Ktaadn Resorts: in harmony with nature." The very name is a good clue to the significance of the mountain to the proposed resort. Katahdin dominates the view from the area of the proposed resort. The developer, owners of house lots, and guests will all have an interest in maximizing the view of Katahdin from the resort. The more of a view of Katahdin from the resort, the greater potential for the resort affecting the view from the park. Large clearings, large structures above the forest canopy, colors that don't blend with the surroundings and reflective surfaces such as windows all have the potential to adversely impact the park.

Attached to this letter is a recent photo taken of Millinocket Lake and the area of the proposed rezoning. This photo was taken with a lens that accurately shows the view as it would be seen by the naked eye. The photo of Millinocket Lake from Katahdin that was submitted with the application materials appears to have been taken at a wide angle, which gives the appearance of the lake being further away than it appears to the naked eye. Please also keep in mind that when we reduce a life size view to a hand-held image or a portion of a computer screen, the visibility of objects is diminished.

The Friends of Baxter State Park request that the Land Use Regulation Commission ensure that Ktaadn Resorts, and any other development within the viewshed of Baxter State Park, have no adverse impact on the wilderness character and scenic view from

points in the Park including trails and summits on Katahdin. We request that all of the potential impacts be carefully considered by the applicant and the results of the studies be submitted to LURC for consideration in its review of the application. Presumably this would mean that at the rezoning stage, it can be proven that development can physically be accomplished with no adverse impact, that it is the intent of the applicant to do it, and that it is economically feasible to do it.

Guests at the proposed resort will increase the amount of day use of the Park. Evidence of this is substantial. The clientele identified as the market for the resort is one that enjoys a wilderness experience by day and a return to comfortable accommodations at night. Katahdin and Baxter State Park will undoubtedly play a prominent role in marketing for the resort. The applicant has indicated that motorized use of Millinocket Lake will be discouraged, thereby attracting summer guests who appreciate non-motorized recreation. Katahdin will be a dominating presence at the resort. The proposed resort is very close to the park. The park has recreational opportunities of a scope and type not otherwise available, and has an extraordinary natural character. The resort will bring overnight tourists in close proximity to the park at a scale never experienced before.

At the hearing, the applicant or an intervener presented evidence that the number of visitors to Baxter State Park has declined significantly over the years, until last year. The change in day use compared to camping use was not differentiated. There is the potential for an increase in use being a benefit to the park in some ways. There is also the potential for an increase in use being detrimental to the park and its users. An increase in use could provide additional revenue for operations of the park without straining capacity. An increase in use may also increase the number of days that the day use carrying capacity is met and visitors are directed away from their intended destinations in the park. The Friends of Baxter suggests that an analysis of this impact should be conducted by the applicant and presented to the Commission.

The Friends of Baxter State Park is not opposing this rezoning application, nor are we supporting it. The applicant was readily willing to present the rezoning and development plans to the Friends of Baxter well before submission of the application and we appreciate his openness and receptiveness to suggestions.

We are asking for the support of the Land Use Regulation Commission in protecting the wilderness and special qualities of Baxter State Park, a unique and extraordinary gift from Governor Percival Baxter to the people of the State of Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this rezoning application.

Sincerely,

Charles Jacobi
President
Friends of Baxter State Park