

Forever Wild

Newsletter of the Friends of Baxter State Park

Autumn 2003

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Friends
of
Baxter State Park

President's Column

By Holly Dominie
President

It was with great pleasure that I and board members Dave Getchell, Ken Spalding, and Clint Dyer represented Friends at a ceremony on September 12 to honor Governor Baxter's first visit to the Katahdin area 100 years ago last May. We joined Governor John Baldacci, Authority members Alec Giffen and Dan Martin, Park Director Buzz Caverly and his staff, Baxter family member Connie Baxter Marlow, and others in marking the occasion.

The ceremony, which was the inspiration of Friends board member John Neff, who unfortunately could not be present, was held at Daicey Pond camps in perfect late summer weather. Missing also was the third Authority member, Attorney General Stephen Rowe.

Governor Baldacci proclaimed September 12 as "Governor Baxter Day," and spoke of the Katahdin high bar that his predecessor set for succeeding generations. He said that his administration would try to live up to the standards that Baxter represented.

On behalf of Friends, I presented
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Governor John Baldacci receives a framed picture commemorating Governor Baxter's first visit to the Katahdin area 100 years ago from Friends' President Holly Dominie. The scene is Daicey Pond camp with the great mountain in the background.

Authority Takes On Challenge

By Phyllis Austin

The waterside cabin known as *The Lookout* at Daicey Pond is the most popular shelter in Baxter State Park for one good reason: it has a large picture window that looks out squarely at majestic Mount Katahdin. But the cabin's days are numbered.

The newly reconstituted Baxter Park Authority has approved the removal of *The Lookout*, also known as #10, and its sister cabin, #11. In their place, a single cabin will be built with room for six people—the same total capacity as the two cabins to be torn down.

The reasons for removing the two cabins are, in the case of #10, environmental, and, in the case of #11, deterioration. In fact, sill rot is easily seen at both. However, their demise will change the historic ambiance on Daicey Pond's north shore and the memories of generations of visitors.

That "historic" element caused some members of the Authority's Advisory Committee to question the cabins' removal. But the Authority

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The Friends of Baxter State Park is an independent citizens' 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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Cabin Talk. Half the fun of a Walk in the Park is sitting in camp and eating. Here, Bill and Barbara Bentley, left, compare notes with David Alexander, front right, and Lars Howlett. The pie shows just how hard they rough it.

—Photo by Al Howlett

Recruits Sought for '04 Walks in the Park

By Barbara Bentley

For the last two years, in icy January, a Friend has stood in line at Park Headquarters to make reservations for 12 at a campground in the Park so that members can have a chance to meet other Friends and to take a walk together in the Park. This year, by popular request, we scheduled two Walks in the Park.

Al Howlett reports on the July outing: "A group of Friends explored the western part of the Park from our base at lean-tos in Nesowadnehunk Campground the second weekend in July. The Bentley, Alexander, and Howlett families made up the group, some of the same three families that met for the first organized Walk the year before. Some of us climbed Doubletop, a great hike with outstanding views of many peaks including O-J-I, Coe, and the Brothers".

In August, another group of Friends—including members of the Bentley, Mirick, Doubleday, and Seimer families—spent two nights at

Chimney Pond. We hiked in and out in fine weather, but climbed to the summit in limited visibility. Some went up the Dudley Trail and down Hamlin Ridge; others up the Cathedral Trail and down the Dudley; and some even enjoyed a day at Chimney Pond with the moose and a good book.

Any requests for next year? How about South Branch Pond? We could climb the Traveler, canoe on the pond, and explore the northern part of the Park. Let us hear from you before the line forms at headquarters.

Contact Barbara Bentley at the Friends' address (see left column).

President's Column

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Governor Baldacci, Dan, Alec, and Buzz each with a framed photograph of the view of Mount Katahdin from Kidney Pond. The inscription declared Friend's "strong commitment to the highest level of wilderness preservation for Baxter's extraordinary gift."

New Authority

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unanimously agreed to support the recommendation of its staff that the buildings be replaced, and quickly ended a potential controversy in-house that might have encouraged outside public protest.

The three-member Authority is the Park's policymaking board created by Park donor Percival P. Baxter in 1939. It includes the attorney general, the commissioner of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the director of the Maine Forest Service. Although it's early in their tenures on the Authority, the current members seem thoughtful and not prone to stumbling unwittingly into controversy.

Steve Rowe, the state's attorney general and chairman of the Authority, said the decision about the cabins was made "for logical reasons, and we're trying to improve conditions there."

Rowe took a leadership role in the Dacey Pond cabins matter by his support for Park Director Buzz Caverly's recommendation and the manner in which he, as chairman, steered discussion at the Park's July meeting. By virtue of his two-and-a-half-year experience on the Authority and his knowledge of the Park as a long-time camper, the other trustees look to Rowe for guidance at the moment. Giffen, and Dan Martin, the commissioner of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, said they want to be well-informed about the Park and will visit as much as they can manage.

Rowe believes that trustees "have a responsibility to go to the Park from time to time. We can't sit in Augusta all the time. It's incumbent to visit and meet with Park staff, and we need to do more [as trustees] than we do," he said.

When asked if the Authority anticipated taking "bold steps" to enhance the Park's wilderness

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Heavy loads are part of winter travel in the Park.

Tips on Visiting Baxter Park in Winter

By Jon Tierney

When snowfall blankets Baxter State Park, a whole new world of opportunity opens up for winter adventuring.

Winter travel in the Park requires greater self reliance than journeys to similar peaks in the White Mountains. Deep snow, unpacked trails, cold temperatures, and fewer people make winter travel particularly challenging and inviting. In some areas, avalanches are a common occurrence and should be taken seriously.

For many, winter travel into the Park starts at Abol Bridge. From here, a quick trek on a well maintained trail brings you to the Park boundary and in a few more minutes the trail links to the Perimeter Road. If you are quick to get there after a new storm, classic skiers may find untracked snow on the roadbed before it is packed out by snowmobilers. Excellent cruising along the snowmobile track then awaits the skate ski enthusiasts. Abol Bridge is also the starting point for those seeking to climb Katahdin from the south or to push into Chimney Pond.

The south facing Abol Trail is a straightforward summit route best done as a two-day trip. If you are going into Chimney, the Park requires that you stop at Roaring Brook on day one. Using ski skins from Roaring Brook to Chimney will make your life a whole lot easier and leave

you with enough energy to do something when you get there.

Tips:

—Familiarize yourself with the current use regulations regarding open areas, above treeline travel, and camping.

—Allow more time than you think.

—Go with an open mind and an open itinerary.

—Prepare adequately. A booklet containing many useful tips on winter use of Park is available from Park Headquarters, 64 Balsam Drive, Millinocket ME 04462.

New Site for AT Hikers

In response to a growing number of problems centered around the Appalachian Trail (AT) through-hiker lean-tos near Dacey Pond, a number of changes have been made.

These include the cutting of a new blue-blazed side trail from Abol Bridge Campground. It has been named the Blueberry Ledges Trail.

In addition, a new two-lean-to campsite called The Birches has been built along the Tote Road just east of Katahdin Stream Campground for through-hikers only. The lean-tos at Dacey Pond have been removed.

The new setup seems to be working well, although most through-hikers appear to prefer being "purist" and take the longer and traditional AT path along the West Branch and Nesowadnahunk Stream.

—John Neff

New Authority

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character, the trustees were not aware of pressing new opportunities to do that.

Expansion of the Park might qualify as a courageous move, given the West Branch furor over whether the lands would be designated as sanctuary for wildlife or open to hunting, trapping, and vehicle access. Martin and Rowe said they would be open to discussing expansion— with caveats.

"If the opportunity were right and the price were right," Martin said he would be interested. However, he

pointed to current budget constraints. Rowe added that Katahdin Lake and surrounding land "was at one time included in [Percival] Baxter's vision" as part of the Park. Giffen had no position on expansion per se. "Every circumstance is based on its own merits," he said.

Snowmobiles is another issue that would meet the boldness test. It has been the Park's most contentious issue ever. At this point, the Authority is not interested in digging up that argument.

Director Caverly has put forth a "wilder from within" concept that, if implemented, would allow this

Authority to make their mark in Park history. It would reduce motor vehicle access by closing major road segments and increase hiking and backpacking opportunities. Rowe pointed out that no action has been taken on the concept.

The Authority members recognized that their tenure as trustees will be short in the life of the Park and agreed they should act foremost as stewards. Rowe said trustees need to keep their eye on the long-term impact of policymaking to "two, three, or five generations from now." The challenge, he said, "is to leave the Park at least as good as we found it."

Friends of Baxter State Park
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We're looking for New Friends!

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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
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