

Friends of Baxter State Park

President's Column

by Barbara Bentley

In those years when the month of April has only four Saturdays, the calendar conspires against FBSP. School vacation and our Annual Meeting both fall on the last Saturday of the month. Park Director Jensen Bissell's family vacation takes him to warmer climes, and he is unable to deliver the State of the Park Address in person at our Annual Meeting.

This year, however, we are in luck! Jensen has been kind enough to provide us a written address, and we are delighted to be able to publish it in this special supplement to the Spring edition of *Forever Wild*. Thank you very much, Jensen.

While many of us visit the Park just a couple of times a year, and often at the same time each year, the Park is the focus of BSP staff's attention twelve months of the year. The Park is open all four seasons of the year – in deep snow, mud, black flies and mosquitos, as well as autumn colors. By hearing directly from the Park Director, we get a better idea of what it takes to manage the Park and have it ready for our enjoyment. And knowing this, we can be better Friends to the Park, supporting its management and protection all year long.

Forever Wild

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BAXTER STATE PARK
SPRING 2009 SUPPLEMENT



BSP Authority welcomes new member, Janet Mills. L to R: Alec Giffen, Director of Maine Forest Service; Janet Mills, Attorney General; Roland D. Martin, Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Authority Chair; and Jensen Bissell, BSP Director – Photo © BSP Staff

State of the Park Address

by Jensen Bissell, Director, Baxter State Park

Executive decision-making is not a series of single, linear acts like baking a pie. It is a process, a sequence of behavior, that stretches back into a murky past and forward into a murkier future.

– *Leadership*, James MacGregor Burns, Harper and Row, 1978

Let's get to the bad news first.

It is unlikely that any Director of any organization will write a summary paper in 2009 that doesn't include some difficult text regarding the economy. It may be more accurate to describe the recent events in our economy not as a downturn, but as a disconnect. The changes in credit availability and market function since September of 2008 are much more than the typical swings

of the business cycle. Much depends on the ability of our nation to make the necessary repairs to structure, provide adequate fuel to restart the engines and, perhaps most importantly, find the confidence we will need to make any recovery successful. The effects on our Park have the potential to be substantial and long-term, but much depends on the coming months. Without a significant recovery, our current operating structure is unsustainable and we will have to make some difficult changes in how we manage and operate the Park.

I remain optimistic that our country will find the confidence to move forward. In the meantime, we have worked hard at paring back any discretionary funding in our FY 2010 annual budget that will start in July of 2009.

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of
Baxter State Park**

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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.

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The present Baxter Park Authority provides the kind of governing body I believe is best fitted to continue Baxter Park as I want it to be.

—Percival P. Baxter in an open letter regarding proposed legislation in 1967 to change to membership of the Baxter State Park Authority

A Baxter State Park Authority member and chairman, Steve Rowe completed the maximum allowable terms as a Maine Attorney General and left public service, and the Authority, in January of 2009. The remaining Authority members, IF&W Commissioner Danny Martin and Maine Forest Service Director Alec Giffen, have continued their effective and active involvement with the management of the Park. Early in January, the legislature elected Janet Mills as Maine Attorney General. Janet has worked quickly to get up to speed on Park history and issues and has expressed her excitement and interest in serving the Park she has known all her life. Percival Baxter made many wise and intuitive decisions in the

creation and gifting of the Park, and his designation of the Baxter State Park Authority through statute in 1939 has proven to be one of his wisest.

With Buzz Caverly's retirement on June 30, 2005, the Park began a series of transitions in senior management. In an active organization, staffing transitions are never really over, but with the hiring of Christine Theriault as Park Business Manager on Christmas Day of 2008 and the start of Ben Woodard as Chief Ranger, we entered what I hope will be an extended period of productive stability in Park management.

The importance of this quiet transition cannot be overemphasized.

The implementation of selection plans for high-level positions is a long and time-consuming process, and many tasks on our agenda were deferred while we worked to complete our team. The wide-ranging knowledge, skills, and experience on our current management team is not accidental, and I believe this diversity will serve the Park very well in the years to come. A strong work ethic and dedication helps, too, and this group has plenty of that.



BSP Advisory Members visit West Martin Pond on an exploratory trip to find possible sites for future leantos. — Photo © BSP Staff

~ Printed by Lakeside Printing, Rockland, ME ~



Trails crews do technical work and heavy lifting to harden much-used trails above treeline.

— Photos © BSP staff

We have also seen a significant transition on the Baxter State Park Advisory Committee. This dedicated group, now chaired by Steve Hutnak, has a long tradition of volunteer service in providing a sounding board to staff as we work to develop project or policy proposals for consideration by the Baxter State Park Authority. The Advisory Committee includes a strong core of diverse and experienced Park users — hikers and campers in both front- and backcountry settings. Their advice has been helpful in improving and refining staff work on a number of issues, and the Advisory should continue to provide insight and feedback to Park staff in the years ahead.

We continue to see strong stability in the Park's year-round and seasonal staff. The essence of the Park and its mission continue to help us attract and retain capable, dedicated, and professional staff. In 2006 and 2007, we doubled the Park's training budget, providing more and broader training to Park year-round staff, including training in management and supervision. In 2009-10, we hope to increase further our training budget, even though doing so will run counter to the strongly prevailing economic pressures. The increased funding will allow us to provide additional units of quality medical and technical training to our seasonal and year-round staff. The Park's staff has always been dedicated; increasing the skills and abilities of a dedicated staff provides them the tools to apply their dedication to better serve and manage the Park's resources and the public who enjoy them.



We continue to make headway in a variety of operational initiatives in our Park. We will be completing the long process of restructuring the campground at Nesowadnehunk Field with the closing of the Nesowadnehunk Stream bridge to vehicular traffic. We will continue to work on replacing sill logs and the porch on the Kidney Pond library, and we hope to establish a perpetual regime of cabin upkeep work on the structures at Kidney and Daicey. We hope to complete the Togue Pond gatehouse renovations this fall, and we will also begin the work on the restructuring of Foster Field. The Foster Field project is a phased process that will be completed in 2011 and will move this popular group campground to one side of the Park Tote Road. We also hope to establish a small gravel pit at the Rum Service Area. This pit will supply repair gravel for the Roaring Brook Road and the Park Tote Road to the base of Abol Hill. We have been purchasing gravel from sources outside the Park for this work on the Roaring Brook Road, and this practice has become more difficult in recent years as the owners of nearby pits have become more reluctant to sell their gravel and commercial pits are far away and very expensive. We are also planning to close the outlying sites at McCarty

Field. The two log leantos and the vault toilet will be moved to other locations and the access road converted to a hiking trail (culverts removed). Work has progressed steadily on the Katahdin Lake parcel. We expect to open the Martin Ponds Trail and two new 6-person leantos (one on West Martin Pond and one on Katahdin Lake) sometime in the summer of 2009. Our next step in the planning process is to locate and clear a trail from the Martin Ponds trail to a lean-to site on the northwest corner of Katahdin Lake. Work on this project will begin as soon as the snow leaves the area this May. We hope to open this new trail segment and the lean to during the summer of 2010. Regarding trails, we also plan to continue our effort towards catching up on deferred trail maintenance, especially above treeline. Our recent efforts at augmenting our trail work with Maine Conservation Corps crews has been very successful, and this is one spending item that we have held fast to during these difficult economic times. The cost-share contributions of the Friends of Baxter State Park have been instrumental in allowing us to schedule the amount of work we have with the MCC crews. We hope the FBSP can continue to provide this most fundamental element of support that is the hallmark of "Friends of" groups everywhere.

Snowed and blown all night – had to climb out the bedroom window this morning to shovel out the doors – worked in office in early morning – letters, reports & accounts – shoveled snow & worked on equipment most of day – constructed new shelves in camp. Many callers.

–From Helon Taylor’s *Weekly Work Report*, entry for Tuesday, July 19, 1966.

Park. Many people have specific opinions and expectations on the shape and format of the Park’s management document, but I will work closely with the Baxter Park Authority to determine the appropriate shape and form of the final document and a thorough and inclusive path to complete the Management Plan revision.

Worked in office – bills, letters, accounts and reports – to Millinocket – time there & returned home – more work in office. Many callers. Tonight we had an even 800 paying guests camping on the Park. That is the most we have ever had at one time up to now. Besides that we had 14 tents and one trailer at Rum Brook...

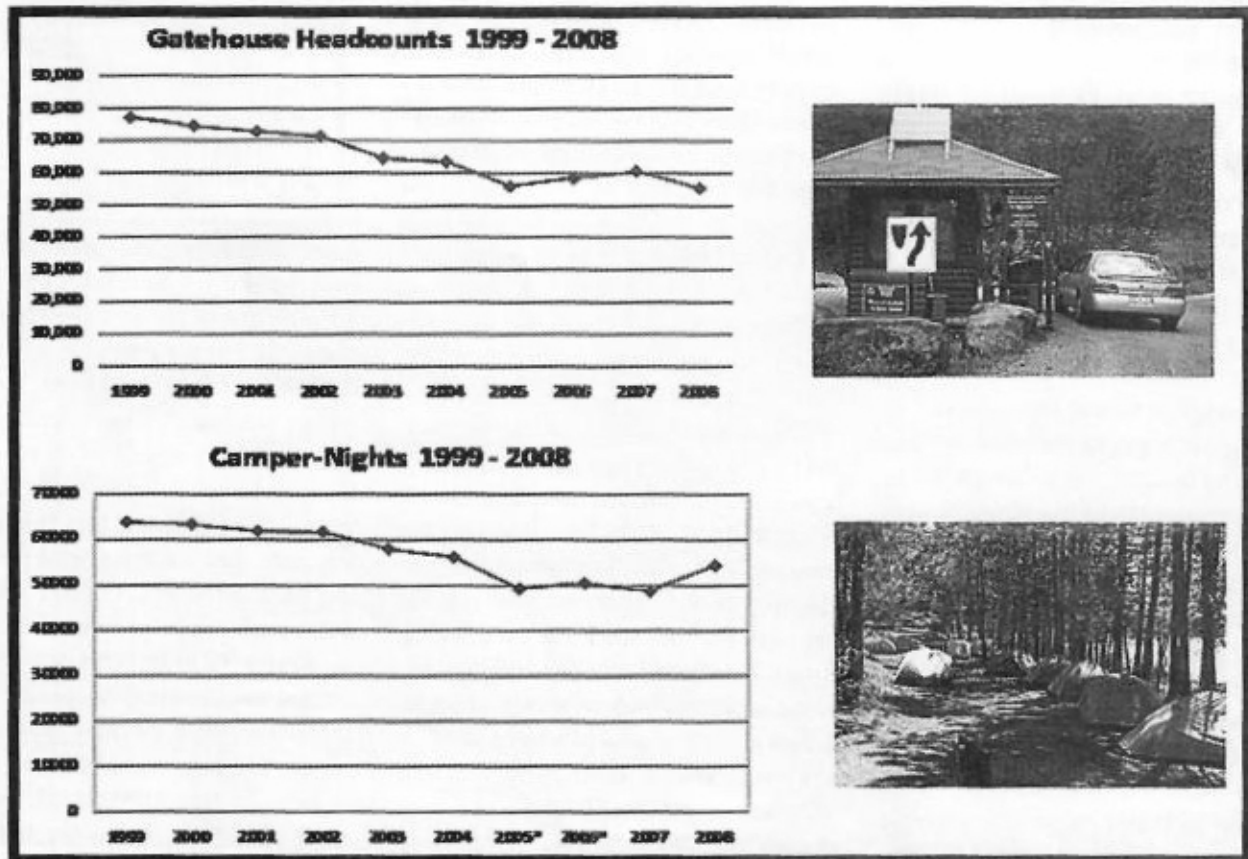
– From Helon Taylor’s *Weekly Work Report*, entry for Tuesday, July 19, 1966.

We will be working over the next few months to review and revise our policies regarding winter use of the Park. We will also be completing a lengthy and significant revision of the Park’s Standard Operating Procedures Manual. This work will set the stage for the initiation of a comprehensive review and revision of the Park’s Management Plan or Primary Management Summary document. The specific process for this work has not been defined yet, but I expect that the it will reflect the size, tradition, and needs of the

Visitor use numbers for our Park continue to remain relatively stable, although significantly lower than the peak use period of the mid-1990’s.

While lower use numbers do have a negative effect on our revenue stream, I continue to maintain that there is a positive side to more manageable use of the Park. Visitors to the Park find more opportunities for truly wild experiences, and the natural and man-made resources of the Park have less pressure from human use. After trending upwards since 2005, our total gatehouse headcounts dropped in 2008 below the 2005 levels, but our camper-nights statistic rose during the same period. This may be indicative of the effects of one of the rainiest summers in recent memory – day users are more likely to change their plans to visit the Park than campers with a reservation. Currently, we are actively reviewing the Park’s policies and procedures regarding public access to Katahdin trailheads. This discussion, initiated by a directive from the Baxter State Park Authority, has been informative and productive, and we expect to provide the Authority a summary of our work and the resulting proposals in the coming months.

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Statistics show recent trends in Park use.

– Graphs and photos © BSP staff

Scientific Forest Management Area staff, led by Resource Manager Carol Redelsheimer, has continued to quietly and effectively manage the Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA). Carol continues to modify and evolve the thinking of harvest practices and stand structure management in the SFMA as she initiates the second harvest of many SFMA operating blocks first harvested in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Carol will be working on the review and revision of the SFMA Management Plan later this year after completion of the first 10-year re-measurement of the SFMA's 114 continuous forest inventory plots. The re-measurement of these plots, scattered across the landscape of the SFMA, will provide us important data regarding the growth harvest and mortality of our managed stands in the SFMA. Based on the current economy, we will be facing some serious challenges in the pricing for wood products from the SFMA in the coming fiscal year. Carol is doing everything she can to mitigate the effects of current markets on the Park's revenue stream, but only time will tell how successful we can be at maintaining adequate markets and pricing while adhering to our commitment to long-term sustainable forest management. Carol also worked as the lead on the development of the Visiting Artist Program for Baxter State Park. This program is designed to place a working artist at a campground in the Park and provide opportunities, both

formal and informal, for Park visitors to interact with the artist and to understand how the Park is seen through the eyes of an artist. We hope to seat our first visiting artist at Daicey Pond this summer.

Park Naturalist Jean Hoekwater and her staff continue to wear a hundred hats. Jean will continue to develop and schedule a variety of summer campground programs in the Park as well as do the continuous work of providing efficient and effective information to visitors entering the Park at the Park Visitor Center at Togue Pond, including the first-time visitor as well as the hardened veteran. Jean continues to work to implement our successful Alpine Steward program to reach, inform, and educate visitors on the fragile habitats above treeline on Katahdin and the Traveler Loop. Jean has also been quietly working to develop a permanent and ongoing process to archive and preserve the Park's rich and extensive collection of photographs. We have recently completed a facelift of our auditorium, and Jean has been working to revamp the presentation of information and educational materials in both our Headquarters lobby and auditorium. As we head into the Park's active season, Jean will be working closely with the Baxter Park Research Committee to review and consider a number of proposals for research in the Park.

Along with many other resource managers in Maine, we are concerned about the threat of invasive species, both plant and animal, that may gain a foothold in the Park. These are complicated issues involving pressures from very strong and continuous natural systems. In combination with climate change predictions, it is likely that we will face many challenges in the coming years regarding the alteration of our natural systems as we have known them.

Regardless of the challenges that lie ahead, we will stay rooted in our core mission – to protect the Park's resources and to manage the Park as effectively as we can for the varied uses and intents as specified by the Percival Baxter in the Deeds of Trust.

Worked in office – bills, accounts, letters & reports – talked with Junior York about leases – to Rum Brook & lectured a group of boys for disturbing other campers – they promised to do better – inspected the area – worked on water system – more work in office in evening.

– From Helon Taylor's *Weekly Work Report*; entry for Tuesday, July 19, 1966.



As we send this address to you, snow still blankets Katahdin as shown here in the Great Basin.

– Photo © Bill Bentley

Friends of Baxter State Park
P.O. Box 1442
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We're looking for new Friends!

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_____ \$ 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.
Friends Website: www.friendsofbaxter.org
Thank you!



Russell Pond Boardwalk -Photo © Bill Bentley

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Join us and bring a new Friend to the Friends of Baxter State Park Annual Meeting

at
The Pine Tree State Arboretum
Augusta, Maine
on
Saturday, April 25, 2009

8:30 AM – Gather

9:00 AM – 12:15 PM – Meeting

Complimentary lunch and walk in the Arboretum after the meeting

Directions to the meeting and the full agenda are available on the FBSP website.

We'll hear former Attorney General Steven Rowe talk about his tenure on the BSP Authority and learn about the Park's Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA) from BSP Resource Director Carol Redelsheimer in the Key-note Address. You'll meet artists and authors who focus on the Park and get to view their work. Please come join in discussions about the Park and our mission to support its wilderness nature. We look forward to seeing you!