

Forever Wild

Newsletter of the Friends of Baxter State Park

Winter 2005

Vol. 4 No. 1

Friends
of
Baxter State Park

President's Column

By Charles Jacobi
President

"You could look it up."

I think the above quote might be Yogi Berra's, in reference to baseball statistics. An authoritative source of information easily found all in one place is always a good idea. You'll see elsewhere in this newsletter that member Howard Whitcomb is nearing completion of this task for the "Baxter materials." I'll bet Howard would tell you the project was largely tedious with occasional flashes of fascinating historical insight. It's not a very sexy project, but it will be very useful for the Park, the Authority, the Friends, and others. One stop shopping in the original sources of Governor Baxter's vision for the Park. A place where now, indeed, "You could look it up." Thank you, Howard!

Earlier this year the Friends of Baxter donated \$3,000 to Baxter Park. We recently learned this money was used to support, among other things, a Student Conservation Assistant to help manage visitor-moose interactions at Sandy Stream Pond, volunteer lake monitoring, and an invasive plants workshop.

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Snowmobiles have been using the Perimeter (Tote) Road along the west side of the Park for several years with most of the users following Park rules. But there are enough violations to cause the Park to revisit this contentious subject.

Snowmobile Violations in the Park Spark Review of Current Regulations

By Howard Lake

Excessive speed. Violations of Park closure rules. Littering. Vandalism. These were all problems reported by Chief Ranger Chris Drew at a meeting of a newly formed Snowmobile Subcommittee held this fall at Park Headquarters.

The Subcommittee, made up of snowmobile users, skiers, and other interested members of the public, was formed to assist Park staff in managing snowmobile use.

The Park does not know the extent of snowmobile use since few register at the gates. Despite obvious heavy use of the Tote Road, especially early in the season and on weekends, only 20 snowmobilers bothered to stop and register during the 2003-4 season.

Snowmobiles have long been a controversial issue at the Park. In the 1960's, they were allowed

but were restricted to the Tote Road and a few other trails in the 1970's. In 1976, they were banned except for administrative and emergency use; but in 1981, under a new Authority, they were allowed again on the Tote Road by a 2-1 vote. Since that time, the Park has not allowed any trail grooming; and although the machines are subject to a 20 m.p.h. speed limit, that rule is rarely enforced.

At the Subcommittee meeting, Park staff suggested ways to monitor snowmobile use by manning the gates or by electronic counts. Suggestions by others included: stepped up enforcement by the Warden Service, increased fines for violations, and better education of users through the rental outfitters and the Maine Snowmobile Association.

Friends will continue to monitor this issue.



Friends
of
Baxter State Park

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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.

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Attendance Drops Over 20% in Ten Years; Some of the Pressures on Park Are Eased

Is Baxter State Park becoming so popular—and crowded—that it soon may be loved to death?

The answer appears to be a resounding No.

That is what attendance figures indicate over the past 10 years—an average 20%-plus decline in the number of visitors since 1995.

The Park staff is still trying to pin down the causes, but the general feeling seems to be that the decline is a positive rather than a negative factor. By the mid-'90's traffic on the narrow roads, full parking lots, and heavy use of mountain trails were becoming increasingly worrisome to Park managers.

But these problems may have been self-controlling because from 1995 to the present, there has been a

Year	Visitors	Visitor Days	Camper Nights
1995	83144	153941	69463
1996	77583	145468	68096
1997	74690	137674	63147
1998	77063	141719	64245
1999	77283	143084	63777
2000	74721	138011	63273
2001	72915	134838	61703
2002	71654	133090	61573
2003	64715	122630	57915
2004	63540	119597	56057

downward trend in the number of visitors, camper nights, and visitor days (the three main statistical indices). There was one brief break in this trend in 1998-99 when all three rose a bit, but this was followed by a steady drop, particularly steep in 2003 and 2004.

"There may be several causes," says Park Director Buzz Caverly, "such as crowding on the mountain, long waiting lines at the entrance gates, and the early planning process needed to be assured of reservations at the choice times of the year. And then, there is always the weather." Weeks of rain or very hot spells can lead to cancellations of camping plans and sharp drops in one-day visits.

Whether or not the decline is short or long term remains to be seen. "We don't want to over react," says Caverly. "We still need to monitor the trends."

Does this easing of attendance pressures affect his proposals to make the Park "wilder within?" "Not a bit," says the Director. "My thinking is for long-term protection, and I will continue to proceed with enthusiasm." He does see the wilder-within subject still at the discussion stage, and he welcomes continued comment from the public.

—Dave Getchell, Sr.

President's Column

(Continued from page 1)

These are two great examples of your membership and gift dollars at work. *Thank you for your support. There is more to come. Stay with us!*

Speaking of membership, we are transitioning to a new part-time staff person to manage our membership and countless other administrative tasks. We welcome Mary Cooke of Hope to this position and know she will make great strides for us over the coming years. We thank dedicated Friend Barb Bentley for her three years at the helm of membership. Barb has put her heart and soul and more into the Friends.

Finally, I would be remiss not to note of the recent accomplishment of board member John Loyd. At our recent meeting with Park staff, John was awarded his *Junior Ranger Badge* by Director Buzz Caverly. We congratulate John and expect great things from him in his new role.

Major Friends Project to Archive All Baxter Materials Nearly Done

By John Neff

The Friends of BSP has recently undertaken an ambitious research project to identify, annotate, and make readily accessible all the source material pertinent to understanding Gov. Baxter's vision and intent for Baxter State Park and the wilderness values being protected there.

An Emeritus Professor of Political Science, Howard R. Whitcomb has been at work compiling the collection. The four-volume, nearly 1400-page collection will include the Deeds of Trust, appellate court decisions, Attorney General opinions, and the relevant correspondence and speeches of Governor Baxter.

There has been excellent cooperation by the Office of the Attorney General, Baxter State Park, the Maine State Library, and the State Law Library. The 12 hard-bound copies of the collection will soon be provided without cost to a number of key offices and libraries throughout the state.

These materials should prove invaluable to those who wish to weigh in on the issues facing the Park and to researchers who need to examine original source materials regarding Baxter's vision for the Park. A small grant from the Davis Foundation has helped to make this project possible, and contributions from our members to help further defray the costs will be most appreciated.

Easy on the Moose!

Over the past year, the Park has implemented our ideas for Sandy Stream Pond, including signage, patrols, and restricting numbers to Moose Pass holders once parking lots close for the whole day.

Additional work was done to record and map the habitual use by both humans and moose at Stump and Dwelley ponds.

—Jean Hoekwater, Park Naturalist



New #10 Cabin at Dacey Pond, shown under construction, above in a Bill Bentley photo, is larger than the old one and will hold six persons. At right, the Howard Lake photo shows a rotted base log, a prime reason for the replacement.



Barb Bentley Steps Down; Mary Cooke Takes Over

Friends has a new Administrative Manager, and she arrived in Maine from California on a bicycle!

Toward the end of a cross-country bicycle trip, she spent a night in Hope and shortly thereafter decided to move East. In addition to her professional skills, Mary brings to the job her avid interest in the out-of-doors.

A New Englander from the start, Mary first managed a bicycle and ski shop in central Massachusetts before pursuing a graduate degree in accounting. She received a gold medal for her score on the CPA exam. After positions at Price Waterhouse, Rhode Gear, and Holliston Mills, Mary spent ten years of her professional career in San Francisco as Assistant Controller for Williams-Sonoma. Currently, she is putting her skills to work for the towns of Hope

and Rockport.

As she takes the reins in 2005 from Barbara Bentley, who has done a superb job in developing the position from the beginning of Friends, Mary will enhance the database system to keep up with the organization's growth.

Having explored some of Maine on her bicycle and other areas on her cross-country skis, Mary already appreciates the wilds of Maine and looks forward to getting to know Baxter State Park. Mary welcomes suggestions and feedback from members and can be reached by phone at 207-763-4535 or by email at <macooke01@yahoo.com>

Visit our Website!
www.friendsofbaxter.org
Courtesy of GWI.net



A graceful lenticular cloud arches over Mt. Katahdin. — Photo by Bill Bentley

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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
_____ \$50	Sponsor
_____ \$30	Family
_____ \$25	Individual

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