



Baxter State Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes - March 21, 2017

Google Hangouts

BSP Advisory Attendees: Steve Hutnak's office in Cumberland Foreside: Steve Hutnak, Darrell Morrow; Mike White's office in Bangor: Mike White, Laurie Nale, Steve West; BSP Headquarters: Mike Perry, Dave Wilson; Jeff Dubis' office: Jeff Dubis, Tom Goetz

BSP Advisory Absentees: Tom Bradbury, Anne Huntington, Rosemary Hastings, Erica Kaufmann, Bob Baribeau, Doug Callnan

BSP Staff Attendees: Mike White's office in Bangor: Jensen Bissell. BSP Headquarters: Stewart Guay, Georgia Manzo

Chair Laurie Nale called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. following technical difficulties. After introductions, Nale asked that the minutes of the February 2, 2017 BSP Advisory meeting minutes be accepted. **A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes, all in favor, no discussion. Motion passed.**

Guay apprised the group of recent Search and Rescue training exercises, saying that the last few years, they've been working toward multiple teams training together, though there were weather restrictions at times. In the first week of March, six teams along with NPS rangers from Acadia National Park trained with the intent of honing the skills of the newer trainees in alpine zone conditions prior to an actual rescue. Nineteen students, three instructors and two BSP staff participated. The arctic blast changed their plans somewhat, and on Saturday they found steep enough terrain on the Hunt Trail (challenging but sheltered) so they could work on self-arrest techniques and building anchors among other exercises. They were on the Abol Trail on Sunday. The Trail Crew Facility was a good location and food preparation by Georgia Manzo was very much appreciated at the end of the training days. Post-training feedback was positive.

With the Trail Specialists away at the annual MCC chainsaw training, Guay provided the trails report, saying that the Adopt-a-Trail program (10 trails) is receiving volunteers. Volunteers are expected to help three times over the course of the season, providing a two year commitment to their trail for the sake of planning. Work will include corridor blazing and waterbar cleaning. Closely monitored chainsaw use may be allowed if the adopter already has recognized certification and provides proof of same. Nale asked which trails were involved. Guay will provide the list to the Advisory.

Major trail relocations include Abol with the completion goal for that trail being the Fall of 2017. The Dudley Trail has been cut, hardening structures are flagged, three temporary platforms are being built, and stabilization will begin this season. The Hunt Trail sections will be cleared and stabilized by MCC and MATC and won't be opened up to the public until the fall of 2019. Relocation options are being scoped out at North Brother beginning this summer. Bissell will send the maps highlighting relocation sites to the Advisory. The MCC will have four summer crews and three fall crews, focusing on blowdowns, major relocation efforts and major bridge replacements.

Volunteer groups in 2017 will include Overland Summers with three trips planned with groups of 12-15 with one college-aged leader and they will be paired with MCC crews. Unity College is planning two trips, each one week long. MATC has multiple work trips planned (3-5 participants) and all work done will be on the relocation section south of the current Hunt Trail. Friends of Baxter Youth Conservation Group will consist of 13-15 local teens (hopefully) with college-aged leaders and they will focus on two weeks of trail maintenance on the Katahdin Lake area trails, with the last day being a hike up Katahdin.

Bridge work includes the service bridge on the A.T. at Katahdin Stream, and the bridge at Roaring Brook Campground.

Bissell mentioned that the hike through the boulder field on Dudley is not very difficult but the first time someone comes off that trail in a litter there will be a preference to go straight across (north) and out through the Chimney Pond Trail, and eventually that may be where that trail ends. Eventually BSP may also relocate the O-J-I trail. It was asked if there are plans to relocate the Mt. Coe Trail. Bissell replied that the slide there is walkable, all bare, hard rock. Ice can be a problem, but it is stable and not terribly steep and there are no plans to relocate it.

Bissell expressed concern with released media as it relates to search and rescue efforts when BSP staff or SAR teams are not the first on the scene. The climbers who were the first to attend to the fatality in February may well have taken photos of the deceased and the scene and they were not part of the deceased's party. This is sensitive information for many reasons including that family members may see it inappropriately and BSP is powerless in that regard. It is a sign of the times and it is hoped that discretion would be used and respect for the situation and the family would be realized. Some of the Park's challenges in this regard are reduced by the lack of conductivity in areas, but not in all cases. Guay mentioned that the SAR groups have their own confidentiality agreements and protocol. A message on the website with related sensitivity, communicating the damage that released media can have and to use discretion, may put a dent in the occurrence of misuse of photos but it will not take care of the problem entirely. The upside is that witnesses can provide BSP with good information. White asked if there is anything in State laws that speak to this (privacy). Bissell will check. Morrow asked if there is a liability to the Park with such accidents and Bissell responded that generally, the Maine Tort laws say that the state is held harmless by visitor actions. We are responsible for the care and maintenance of the facilities but otherwise, there is no liability and that winter conditions cannot be alleviated. It will always be a wilderness experience.

Bissell reported on spring hirings that include one vacancy at the Visitor Center, two seasonal campground ranger positions, two gatehouse positions, and one interim Naturalist position. Overall the staff is strong, these openings are typical, and there are strong applicants.

North Branch Camps are up for rental and there have been inquiries but as yet, no reservations. Maintenance is working hard at the Kidney Pond Ranger Camp and a contract is all set for repair of the Trout Brook Bridge so that the east abutment is no longer an issue (removing old grader blades).

With regard to the A.T. Hiker plan, a date stamp will be added to the card and A.T. hikers will have one week from the date on the card to complete their hike. The Park has received many calls from camp groups concerned about the system but since they are making reservations in the Park this won't be an issue for them.

Eben Sypitkowski is working on the website and it should be live in April. The next Advisory meeting is May 6 following the Earth Day Litter Patrol and Advisory is welcomed to help prior to the meeting.

Discussion turned to the two BSP Rules 3.1 and 4.1 and the possible revisions to allow hunting with dogs for ruffed grouse and woodcock and to allow pets north of Trout Brook and Wadleigh Brook in T6 R9 and T6 R10. Bissell stated that in discussions with this Advisory Group and with BSP Staff, it has become apparent that there is not adequate support for revisions to these rules at this time and it is being taken off the table.

Bissell was pleased to announce that with regard to the Baxter Park Wilderness Fund, the latest news from the Fund Commissioners is that as the last portion of Mr. Trautmann's estate is added to the trust, the donation to Baxter State Park will be increased from the current \$264,000 to \$322,000 per year. This comes at a perfect time to provide work that strengthens the Park's trail systems and culvert replacements among other projects and we can continue with confidence into perpetuity with this generous gift and vision from Frank Trautmann. "We can't overstate the importance of his generosity", said Bissell.

It was asked if there was any news from the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. Bissell stated that other than hiring a new planner (borrowed from another park), there was no news, but that there is a good line of communication with Monument Supervisor Tim Hudson. A mention was made of plans for national monument signage coming off the interstate this spring.

There were no meeting guests. Chair Nale adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Georgia Manzo, Park Secretary