

**ALLAGASH WILDERNESS WATERWAY ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

March 16, 2018, 9:00 am – 11:30
Cross State Office Building, RM 214, Augusta, Maine

Council Members Present: Josie Allen, Dave Basley, Peter Bourque, Brent Hardy, Chair, and Melford Pelletier.

Others Present: Tom Desjardin, Ron Hunt, Jocelyn Hubbell & Cindy Bastey (Bureau of Parks & Lands [BPL]); Matt LaRoche, (BPL/Allagash Waterway); Jim MacCartney (National Park Service); Jay Clement (Army Corps of Engineers); Paul Johnson (AWW Foundation); Bruce Jacobson (AWW Foundation consultant); Camille Denico (Haymock Lake & Vassalboro); Cathy Johnson (NRCM); Ed Cullivan (Lock Dam Preservation)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Brent Hardy opened the meeting at 9:00 am and asked Council members and attendees to introduce themselves.

Review of Minutes of the December 15, 2017 meeting

Brent asked if Council members were satisfied with the minutes of the last meeting. Melford Pelletier moved that the minutes be approved as printed, and Peter Bourque seconded the motion. Council approval was unanimous.

Operations and Maintenance Update – Matt LaRoche

Water levels:

- Telos Dam is currently at 6.4 feet above the sill.
 - 9/10 of a foot above the October togue spawning level.
 - Releasing 185 cfs
- Churchill Dam elevation is 927.8 above sea level.
 - 1 foot above the October togue spawning level.
 - Releasing 244 cfs

Public use:

We have 42 of the 48 available sites at Chamberlain Bridge and Kellogg Brook sold for the winter season. More detail under the 2017 Annual Report.

Projects since our December meeting:

- Crew hauled several loads of superhumus to 13- different Campsites.
 - Trevor spent two full days hauling superhumus to Allagash Falls when the going was good.
 - 8- loads of superhumus were hauled to Breezy Point Campsite on Eagle Lake.
- Summer supplies (firewood, propane, gasoline “AL”) have been hauled to:
 - Allagash Lake
 - Eagle Lake
 - Round Pond
- Big pile of brush has been burned at Breezy Point Campsite.
- Three picnic tables have been built and hauled to campsites.

Grants Applied for/received:

- \$10,000 K applied for from MOHF for an AWW visitor survey.
 - Last visitor survey was completed in 2003.
 - AWWF has pledged at least \$2,000 towards the visitor survey.
- \$8,000 applied for from MOHF for a new snowmobile.
- \$300,000 applied for from LWCF for 50% funding of the Lock Dam project.
- \$20,000 received from RTP for ADA improvements
- \$8,000 received from RTP for reconstruction of 180 feet of boardwalk at Allagash Falls.
- \$8,000 received form MOHF for a new snowmobile.

Special activity permits: CanAm sled dog race – crossing the AWW at Round Pond

Review of AWW 2017 Annual Report

Matt reviewed the 2017 AWW Annual Report noting the following items.

- The report is required by law to be submitted to the Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry Committee (ACF) by March 1st of each year and must address topics listed in the law. It is sent to the Committee prior to general release.
- It includes a report by the Council Chair (p 3) and the Waterway Superintendent (p 12).
- Budget figures reported for FY 2017 (pp 4 & 5) indicate that the Waterway spent almost \$122,000 from the General Fund and had nearly \$166,500 available in the AWW Account. (Not all money in the AWW Account was spent and will carry over.) Revenues from camping fees increased substantially over those reported for FY 2016 because 2017 was the first full fiscal year for which a recent fee increase was in effect. The balance in the AWW Endowment Fund, a trust account at Treasury, was \$7,790; and the balance in the AWW Donations Account was \$9,745. Major Expenditures from the AWW Account were for capital improvements on the Lock Dam Road, at the Churchill Dam shop, replacement guardrails on Churchill Dam.

The big-ticket expenses (> \$20,000) for the fiscal year included salaries and benefits (\$517,733); capital infrastructure and improvements (\$31,395); state vehicle rentals (\$30,000), and building repairs (\$20,498).

Melford Pelletier asked about revenue from the sporting camps. Matt estimated the revenues from Nugent's lease to be \$16,000 and Jalbert's to be between \$1,000 and \$2,000 per year. Sporting camp revenues are a percentage of gross camp income as stated in the leases.

Brent inquired about revenue gained from logging truck tolls at Churchill Dam, which Matt estimated at +/- \$6,000 for last year.

- Overall public use of the Waterway increased only slightly from 2016 to 2017, with day use numbers increasing and camping numbers falling (p6). 2017 was the first full year that North Maine Woods tracked the trains as a visitor destination, and 1866 visitors named the trains as their target. This was the highest visitor count at a single AWW destination.

Brent asked Matt why camping had fallen off. Matt said the Waterway had unusually low water from mid-August to the end of the 2017 season.

Melford asked how large are the groups that are exempt from size limits. Matt indicated that Massachusetts Baptist Church and Camp Kieve are the largest with 18 and 16 trip members respectively. Melford asked how long these groups have been grandfathered. Matt said generally since the 1970's. Melford reported that the Ft. Kent Boy Scouts no longer come to the Waterway because they must split up into two or more groups of 12 or fewer. Matt said the group size is set by rule, and he doesn't have the authority to waive the requirement.

- Under Historic Preservation (p 7), Matt noted that the original boiler door and smoke stack had been restored to the locomotives, and thanked Ed Cullivan for securing the return of these pieces to the Waterway.
- Matt referred to the list of projects accomplished in 2017 (p 9), and highlighted improvements to Lock Dam camp by volunteers and slowing the leak at Telos dam as important.

Melford commented that the stone work designed to harden the shore and slow erosion was not a wild look in keeping with the wilderness character goal. Josie and Brent agreed. Matt and Ron indicated that these sites will look more natural as vegetation takes over. (Ron suggests taking a comparison photo in 2-3 years). Matt said this issue was addressed in the management plan, and it is better to harden existing sites than create new ones. There will be a lot less damage over time as people are using hardened sites. Pete added that the State would get after the Waterway to control erosion if it weren't already doing it. Dave supported the use of stone v. timbers for long term maintenance.

- Matt reported that there is still no movement in the retaining wall at Churchill Dam.

- Melford congratulated Matt and Brent for their preparation of the Annual Report. Well done.

Lock Dam Update – Matt LaRoche

The LURC permit is pending delivery of our final plan revision, which should happen any day now. We have \$300,000 from the AWW Capital Improvement Account identified for the State's share (50%) of the project cost, and anticipate a June 1st approval of an equivalent amount of Land and Water Conservation funds (LWCF) by the National Park service (NPS).

We have also applied for a waiver from NPS that would allow us to start incurring costs against the grant before formal approval, so that we can order the precast concrete sections of the outlet structure. We need to order these sections at least three months prior to the delivery date. We should hear something from NPS soon regarding that waiver. If we do not receive the waiver, we may have to push the project back a year, to the fall of 2019.

Matt distributed site views and plans (13 pp) by Soil Metrics and Pinnacle Engineering of the proposed Lock Dam improvements and summarized them for the Council.

Brent asked if the trash rack would be above or below the water line. Matt indicated the rack would be +/- 1 ft. above the water line and timber-faced. There should be little or no suction there at normal water flows. Brent said it was better looking than he had expected.

Discussion of Indian Pond Road Gate - Brent

Brent reported receiving copies of letters from the Maine Wilderness Guides Assn. and the Natural Resources Council (NRCM) opposing a proposed move the Public Lands gate on Indian Pond Road 1,000 feet west of its present location near an existing parking lot. The move would enable visitors to unload canoes and gear at the head of the foot trail (boardwalk) to Eagle Lake, which is now behind the locked gate. Vehicles would have to be returned to the existing parking area. (Illustration attached.) The proposal was made as public input to a management plan update for Public Lands adjacent to the Allagash Waterway.

Brent asked for the Council's thoughts on the proposal. His thoughts: Indian Pond Road is a substantial existing logging road that more-or-less parallels the Restricted Zone boundary. The proposal uses the existing road and does not move anything physically closer to the Restricted Zone. A turn-around at the unloading site would not be too much. Matt felt that this should not adversely affect the wilderness character of the Waterway.

Josie Allen asked if the Council had to take a position, unless asked. As a Council member, she does not see an effect from the proposal. Melford concurred. Dave Basely does not see a problem, and finds a benefit for older or impaired visitors. Peter Bourque reminded the Council that discussion at their last meeting seemed to support moving the gate.

Tom Desjardin offered a contrasting view of the impact of the gate move: by reducing the distance/time to walk to the trailhead, we make access more convenient, thereby encouraging greater use of this access point. Increasing use is contrary to maintaining wild and scenic character. A related issue is a potential increase in the demand for canoe storage on the shore of Eagle Lake, which is allowed by rule. Demand for storage here is not currently high, but could increase along with increased use. Parks staff have discussed the potential impacts of the gate move with Jim Vogel of Public Lands. The decision is now with Public Lands as part of their planning effort. There will be a draft management plan soon, and we can comment again at that time.

Brent said he is reluctant to support something the public doesn't endorse. Tom noted that the AWW Council could express an opinion, if it chooses to. If it doesn't, Public Lands will not know where they stand.

Camille Denico asked how many canoes are in this area in the summer months. She feels it is only busy during spring fishing. Matt said most canoeists walk their canoes down the stream and onto the lake. She noted that the boardwalk

trail is not visible and not signed, and she is aware of one person who turned back at the gate for lack of information or permission to move forward.

Peter asked Matt how many canoe storage permits he issued a year and at what points on the river. Matt said he had not analyzed the permits, kept at Churchill Dam, but estimated six at Indian Stream for the whole year. Are there high impact canoe storage points on the Waterway? Other authorized storage sites (Chamberlain Thorofare, Churchill Dam, Umsaskis Thorofare, Henderson Brook Bridge and Michaud Farm) are used primarily by outfitters. Indian Stream is unique in that it is a primary access point to the south end of Eagle Lake. Otherwise travelers would have to go to Churchill Dam.

Cathy Johnson said the proposal to move the gate is inconsistent with statute and could present a legal problem. The statute when last changed in 2005 said the access points are where they are on the date the law went into effect. This proposal would be a change and is therefore inconsistent. There are a couple of rules that implement the statute that have the Indian Stream parking where its currently located. [Unclear.]

In terms of impact on Waterway, she has heard from others who use this access at other times in the season, including guides, and they don't want people to be able to drive the additional 1000 feet beyond the gate. If finding the trail is a problem, add a small sign. Allowing people to drive to the trailhead could result in people parking or camping there and require additional policing by staff. She has seen 6-8 canoes stored there in the summer. She refers to increased use at the trains and says the easier we make it for people [to reach the Waterway], the more use it gets. Indian Stream is the most used put-in for people doing long distance, commercial trips. She thinks the proposal would have an impact on wilderness character for people beginning their trip there and doesn't support the proposal to move the gate.

Brent said the proposal wasn't changing an access as he understands the statute. He understands the input from Cathy and Tom, but this isn't a "barnburner" issue for him. It would make it easier for people to get their dunnage to the shore, and it would advantage some older people and the disabled, but he doesn't think it would create a big influx of people.

Ed Cullivan said the proposed gate location is consistent with the place where gear is unloaded. Do we not want people to go to the Allagash? He referred to his experience of being charged for overnight use of his ice shack. What should Maine people expect of the Allagash? To see the trains or not? To go fishing or not? What negative impact has there been from the increase in train visitors? Brent noted that Ed made some valid points.

Cathy said the Allagash is a wilderness waterway, a nationally protected wild and scenic river, and open to residents and visitors who want a wilderness experience. Half a dozen people have commented to her on the number of people visiting the trains as being in the hundreds, or 80, or 50. Encountering so many people is not a wilderness experience.

Tom Desjardin indicated that he asked Lands staff to consult with the Atty. General to consider the legal aspects of the gate proposal. He encouraged the Council to send comments to Public Lands so that the Council's interests are considered in their planning deliberations.

Brent noted that the Council walks a fine line between managing for maximum wilderness area and managing a park for Maine people to visit.

Melford feels deprived of being able to go to the Waterway. Isn't an objective to have people visit and enjoy the Waterway? Things done over the years in the name of wilderness are not working. As a Council member, he feels his obligation is to take care of the pleasures of the Waterway within 500 feet of the river. Outside of that area, he has no authority, and what happens there is up to the landowners.

Josie asked if the Council could draft a letter at another time, not during the meeting. Other members agreed with this idea.

Jim MacCartney (NPS) reported that the federal land management agencies have developed a visitor use management guide to help determine the carrying capacity of a place, which might be useful in making decisions like those under discussion. He will forward references.

Report Storied Lands and Waters Project – Bruce Jacobson

Cindy introduced Bruce Jacobson, consultant to the AWW Foundation, who is finishing the Storied Lands & Waters project with the completion of the Interpretive Plan and educational materials. She reported that Allagash and Bureau staff had met with members of the Foundation Board to discuss next steps. The group agreed that everyone would need time to review the full text of Bruce's work and consider his recommendations and priorities. The group agreed to meet again soon.

Bruce provided a brief history of the project, noting the many people who had contributed. Parts I and II, the Background and Historic Resource Assessment, were completed last year. Part III, the Interpretive Plan with educational component is now completed. The three parts have been consolidated into one volume, Storied Lands & Waters of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway: Interpretive Plan and Heritage Resource Assessment, with appendices and references – currently totaling 358 pages. The report will be available online as a pdf file or in hard copy. Sample Lesson Plans and an Annotated Bibliography will be available separately online as pdfs. Bruce will provide the pdf files to both the Bureau of Parks and Lands and the AWW Foundation. (The report is not copywrited.) Hard copies will be available from Amazon at an estimated price of \$9 -\$10. The Bureau will provide hard copies to the Advisory Council. The report represents Bruce's recommendations to the Foundation and to the Bureau to implement as they see appropriate.

Melford complimented Bruce on the description of the forest, the messages in the lesson plans and the chronology of events near the end. He still disagrees with Bruce about the PS Chesterton paddle steamer, and he has 15-25 items to discuss further with Bruce and/or Amanda Barker. Bruce reminded people that this was not a definitive history of the Allagash, but reflection of the information he collected.

Brent appreciated the recommendation to have the Boarding House available for public use.

Brief Discussion of AWW History Video #5 – Melford Pelletier

Melford received a note from Greg Jalbert asking to have this video removed from public view because of inaccurate information, and Melford agreed to bring it to the Council.

Mr. Jalbert's concerns:

- The photo of Willard Jalbert was not of Willard Sr. (the "old Guide"), but of Willard Jr. (This has been corrected.)
- Narrator Jim Marquis suggests the Windy Point site was "discovered" by the Jalberts, but it had been used for years by trappers, and the trapper camps came to be used by guides. The trapper camp on Windy Point burned in 1938, and the first Jalbert camp on Windy Point was built in 1948, not in 1941 as possibly implied by Mr. Marquis.

Brent questioned whether this was a Council issue. Tom Desjardin added that BPL does not have funds to have the video edited or redone. Rather, BPL will accept the tape as recollections provided to the narrator.

Ed Cullivan reported that Dave Flanagan is planning to redo the lower courses of siding on the Boarding House sometime between mud and black fly seasons this year. Tom noted that some of the lower pieces are gone and have let moisture in, so sistering of new timbers to old will be required. This is allowable in historic structures. Someone suggested Dave would want to survey the structure for non-siding supplies that may be needed before beginning work.

Brent asked for a motion to adjourn. Peter so moved and Melford seconded. Council members voted unanimously to adjourn at 11:30 am.