

**ALLAGASH WILDERNESS WATERWAY ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

June 14, 2019 9:00 am – 11:20
Cross State Office Building, RM 214, Augusta, Maine

Council Members Present: Josie Allen, Haymock Lake; Dave Basley, Ashland; Brent Hardy, Dedham, Chair; Toby Pineo, Hampden. Unable to attend: Melford Pelletier, Jamie Fosburgh and Peter Bourque (12-13-19 edit).

Others Present: Andy Cutko, Ron Hunt, Cindy Bastey (Bureau of Parks & Lands); Matt LaRoche (Allagash Waterway); Bob McIntosh, Dick Barringer, Paul Johnson (AWW Foundation); Albro Cowperthwaite (North Maine Woods); Greg Shute (Chewonki); Camille Denico (Vassalboro); Carly Peruccio (NRCM); Chip Cochrane, Lani Love (Allagash Canoe Trips); Jym St. Pierre (Restore);

Introduction of Andy Cutko, new Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands

Chair Brent Hardy opened the meeting by introducing the new Director of Parks & Lands. Before joining BPL, Andy worked for nearly 20 years as an ecologist for the Maine Natural Areas Program, and most recently was Director of Science for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. He holds a bachelor's degree in biology and environmental studies and a master's degree in forestry and is a licensed Maine forester. He claims that his proudest accomplishment is doing field work on every one of the DeLorme Atlas's 70 pages! Andy said he looks forward to working with the Council and spending time in the Waterway.

National Register Certificate Presentation by Andy Cutko

Andy Cutko presented a certificate from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to AWW Superintendent Matt LaRoche acknowledging the listing of the Boarding House and Storehouse at Churchill Depot to the National Register of Historic Places. This is the second National Register property in the Waterway. Andy noted he is a huge fan of the AWW and has visited many sites there.

Room Introductions and Review of Minutes of September 14, 2018 meeting

Brent asked Council members and attendees to introduce themselves. He then asked if the Council wished to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2018 meeting. Dave Basley moved, and Toby Pineo seconded that the March minutes be approved. Council members approved unanimously.

Operations and Maintenance Review - Matt LaRoche

Water levels:

- Telos Dam is currently 8.2 feet above the sill, releasing 275 cfs.
- Churchill Dam elevation is 930.0 above sea level, releasing a base flow of 296 cfs and canoe flow of 516 cfs from 8:00 am until noon daily.
- The river is running at spring levels – 1450 cfs
- Allagash Stream is running at 320 cfs.

Ice out:

- Ice cleared the Allagash River on April 14th; most of the headwater lakes by May 7th; and Allagash Lake on May 9th.

Winter/Spring Projects:

- Crew has been spreading the superhumus hauled to the campsites last winter. We hauled 30 tow sled loads to 9-different remote campsites
- Delivered 20- tanks of propane to remote ranger camps
- Prefabricated 11- picnic tables, and delivered 5 tables to remote campsites
- Delivered lumber, insulation, steel roofing and new cabinets to the Eagle Lake ranger station
- Delivered 8- tanks of gasoline to Allagash Lake

- Burned the debris pile left from floor removal at the Eagle Lake ranger station.
- Replaced the flag pole at Michaud Farm ranger station
- New “soft start” water pump was installed at Chamberlain Bridge. This pump provides water to the ranger station and public drinking water supply.
- Installed a game camera on Churchill Dam to monitor traffic over the dam. The dam was hit during the winter of 2018 by some type of logging equipment. No one reported the damage to us. The deep gate was hit and bent but is still operable.
- Replaced the PVC water lines at the Chamberlain Bridge ranger station with PEX tubing
- Built a new set of bunk beds for the Round Pond Camp (T6 R11)
- The crew has been busy this spring clearing blowdowns from campsites and portage trails and making campsites fire safe and clean.

Operations:

- Kevin and Matt attended the 2-day Park Manager meeting at Camden Hills State Park. Commissioner Beal spoke to the group and answered questions. Matt was very encouraged by her talk and impressed with her sincerity about her love for the outdoors.
- We held a two-day staff meeting at Churchill Depot this spring and covered the following topics:
 - Emergency operations plan update and review
 - Standard operating procedures
 - Expectations
 - Review of the 2018 annual report
 - The upcoming ranger academy
 - IFW-Warden Service: Drownings, unattended deaths, fish and wildlife rule violations, interagency communications.
 - MFS- Forest Protection Division: Fire size-up, pumps, tank truck, interagency communications.
 - MFS- Forest Management & Policy Division: Water quality rules and BMPs
 - UMO: Visitor survey
 - North Maine Woods: Updates
 - IFW- Fisheries Division: Update and Whitefish study
 - IFW- Wildlife Division: Moose study review; Trends in areas used for deer winter areas

Situations:

- Answered MFS request to check out a heat signature alert near Allagash Lake
- Injury/evacuation in Chase Rapids
- In April a snowmobile went through the ice on the river above West Twin Brook and was retrieved.
- Capsized canoes (illegally lashed together) on Long Lake: a very serious situation with potential fatalities from hypothermia. Scout group, Steve Day and others saved lives – in the dark.

Grants:

Received another 100K from LWCF for the Lock Dam project. The project was estimated to cost \$600K, but the actual cost was \$800K. 50% of the total cost was reimbursed by the LWCF.

2019 Staff

- We only have one new employee this season. Alissa Lutz was hired as Assistant Ranger at Churchill Dam. She spent last season with us as the UMaine Fort Kent Intern. She is going through new employee training and US Coast Guard boating course.
- I am very pleased with our crew for 2019. After the incident with the capsized fishermen and one in the water for over 3hours, I told my wife I’m glad I have competent rangers. Everyone is working well together.
- Have improved radio communications among IF&W, Forestry and AWW with all operating over the same channel.

Brent asked if anything was being done to recognize the Scout troop. Matt said Jim Britt [DACF Public Relations] had been in touch and something was in the works

Visitor Survey Update – Matt LaRoche

A visitor survey was last done in 2003 (on paper) and had a respectable 87% response rate. The 2019 survey is web-based. The 2019 survey content replicates that of 2003 and includes additional questions re. economic impact. Participation is voluntary. At contact points, i.e., North Maine Woods checkpoints and AWW staff encounters, visitors are asked if they want to take the survey. If so, they are given a card on which to provide their contact information. Every 2 weeks AWW staff sends visitor contact info to UMO, whence the survey link is sent to the visitor. Contact cards are stored in a safe and destroyed after the survey. New survey techniques include “skip logic,” which skips over irrelevant questions, and required responses, which halt survey progress until essential answers are given. [Matt distributed sample cards, instructions and surveys to Council members.]

- Initial Eligibility Questions to a person in party:
 1. Determining if going to AWW
 2. Age – must be 18+ years of age to take the survey
 3. Length of visit – must be at least a 4- hour visit.
- If the answers to these 3 questions are affirmative:
 1. They are given a card and asked if they would like to participate in the survey.
 2. Attendant/Ranger explains that BPL is working with UMaine to conduct a study on AWW trip activities.
 3. Attendant/Ranger explains that the purpose of the study is to assess their satisfaction while on this trip.
- Once the card is filled out Attendant/Ranger is asked to:
 1. Check the accuracy/readability of their name and email address.
 2. Thank them for their willingness to participate.
 3. Inform the visitor that an email with link to the visitor survey will be sent to them in about 2- weeks.

Questions:

- Does the survey ask how much the respondent would be willing to pay for an AWW visit? Answers could be an indicator of value. Matt said the survey doesn’t include this question.
- Were the 2003 survey results published, and if so, were any of the recommendations followed? Matt indicated that the survey was before his time and he doesn’t know its recommendations. The 2003 survey provided a baseline against which to compare this year’s results.
- Most visitors in guided youth parties include people under age 18. Are there any exceptions to the age limit? Matt indicated there are no exceptions as a matter of UMO requirements for research participant protection.
- How will spam filters affect the response rate? There should be an alert to watch for “.edu” email. Matt indicated this is addressed in the survey instructions.

Plans for the 2019 Season

Complete upgrades at the Eagle Lake Ranger Station:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish decking on porch • Remove shingles and boards on roof • Salvage the boards • Haul old shingles to John’s Bridge by boat then to Ashland transfer station • Polyurethane new 1 ½” V-match roof boards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install V-match on the roof • Install 1 ½” Styrofoam insulation over roof boards • Install strapping over insulation over insulation • Install steel roofing • Apply Permachink to exterior wall, between logs • Stain the cabin |
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Chamberlain Bridge Boat Launch [photo distributed]:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for Army Corps and LUPC permit • Grade boat launch area with bulldozer • Apply approximately 250 yards of crushed ledge to the area and level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a feathered layer of clean ledge to the edges of concrete ramp. • Expect to use some Boating Facility funds |
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Chamberlain Bridge District:

- Stain shop and ranger station at CTB
- Install new roof on generator building
- Relocate middle campsite cell to turn around used for Lock Dam project

Allagash Lake District:

- Clear Allagash Mountain Hiking trail
- Assist Public with installation of fire tower cab*

Churchill Dam District:

- Apply battens and finish trim on new pole barn
- Stain pole barn
- Clean ditches on Jaws Road
- Replace sill on south end of boarding house and install siding. [Also looking for cost estimates for window replacements.]
- Reinstall NWSR designation plaque on rock near dam
- Campsite improvements at Churchill Ridge Campsite
- Rebuild steps that are built into rip-rap at High Bank Campsite
- Level the porch and repair the screens at Camp Pleasant
- Do a make-over to History Center
- Rebuild actuator on dam and reinstall

Umsaskis District:

- Campsite improvements

Michaud Farm District:

- Clear Round Pond Mountain hiking trail
- Assist Public Lands with installation of new cab on fire tower*
- Install new flooring in ranger station
- Clear brush on access road to Ramsay Ledge Campsite (only vehicle access campsite)
- Campsite improvements

AWW:

- Replace tables and tarp poles as needed
- Administer visitor survey- promote results
- Provide chainsaw training to untrained staff
- Coordinate a NM Woods day trip on AWW headwater lakes
- Research/adopt new public use data base

*Public Lands will install cabs on Allagash, Round Pond and Deboullie Mtns by air. Parks will supply manpower and logistics.

Questions/Comments

Brent talked with Jamie Fosburgh about possible funding for Boarding House projects. Grants for Wild and Scenic River projects had been discussed but haven't materialized. Jamie will watch for other funding prospects. Brent suggested that we be ready for funding opportunities by having cost estimates for specific Boarding House projects in hand. Repairing the roof would be priority number one. Matt agreed that we could bring some contractors up to look at the roof and provide estimates.

Lock Dam Update – Matt LaRoche

Matt and Ranger Jay Young visited Lock Dam on April 26, 2019, when the flow was 310 cfs and the lake at full pond. It appeared that some material was lost on the left side of the outflow, but there were no leaks or other obvious signs of problems. On May 10th, Ranger Young noticed a slight disturbance to the water flow on the right side of the outlet where the timber crib meets the concrete. This situation was corrected on June 5th by shaving some height off the timber. Fisheries staff are pleased with flow and habitat changes and there is additional water for canoeists at the outfall.

Matt read portions of a report by Jeremiah Wood, Fisheries Biologist in the Ashland Office:

The upper 100-150 yards of Martin Stream experienced a vast improvement in habitat quality and quantity. The high flows scoured out several deep pools around a couple of large boulders

and a nice undercut bank. A large quantity of freshly cleaned and deposited gravel was evident at several tail outs. Without quantifying it, I would say the amount of brook trout spawning habitat is now at least three times what it was in prior years. There is also much higher quality holding habitat for adult fish. I did not expect any whitefish spawning habitat in this upper reach, but in the deeper water at the bottom of the upper 2-3 pools, there now appears to be habitat that whitefish may use to spawn. In addition, the higher streamflow is enhancing the habitat a great deal by providing more suitable water depth for larger fish.

Unfortunately, the lower half of the stream did not experience the scouring and stream channel change that the upper half did. It appears that this portion of stream was backwatered from Big Eagle (as well as a large abandoned beaver dam), so the high flows were not effective here. I would recommend we try pulling the beaver dam and attempt a high flow event when the lake level at Big Eagle is much lower (perhaps prior to this fall's spawning period?).

Discussion followed on the many ways to remove a beaver dam (!). Matt said he hoped to work with IF&W to remove the dam this fall. Much depends on water flows. Some suggested the beaver dam removal might be a good Boy Scout or Junior Rangers project.

Matt circulated several spring photos of the dam outlet. The May photo shows flows at 51 cfs, which is the flow they will try to maintain for canoeing. Matt would like feedback on how this works. Prior flow was approx. 30 cfs at full pond.

Discussion of More Comprehensive Public Use Measures – Josie, Matt, Al Cowperthwaite

Al Cowperthwaite distributed copies of North Maine Woods (NMW) public use forms and data (“North Maine Woods, Inc. Visitor Use Registration Program and Public Use Reports Generated from that Program”) and the current NMW brochure. Al explained how data is collected and how it is used.

Until 2005 data was collected and reported on paper. Three years ago, they shifted to a web database program that allows them to gather data on the driver, vehicle, travel plans, permit/pass type, and fees paid and to report out the data in a variety of ways. (The extra data collected for Waterway visitors is still collected on paper, and Al would like to talk to the Bureau about integrating AWW info into the electronic database.) NMW currently sends reports of the info it collects for AWW visitors to Matt LaRoche. NMW has converted 7 formerly staffed gates to automated gates, through which visitors can register by telephone. This, together with electronic data management, has allowed NMW to keep costs and fees down.

Questions and Comments

Is the Tramway a destination? Al said it was not a listed destination until the new trail was built. He estimates a 50% increase in use at the Tramway the first year after the new trail was publicized. Tramway visitors are not necessarily AWW visitors. Allagash visitors would have to indicate the Tramway as a destination for it to show up on AWW registrations.

Did NMW change their age limit because of data gathered? Al said yes, but 16-year olds were not visiting, anyway. NMW joined the effort to encourage youth to be outdoors by adjusting the age-related fee.

Josie indicated that Al’s material demonstrates the value of having data available. In making changes to data gathered for the AWW, it is important to identify how it will be used. Data gathered today will be more valuable in future as a benchmark for change. She emphasized that her focus is on spring, summer, fall use - the same period that NMW data covers. This could be supplemented with data from other sources.

Al encouraged BPL to make use of the data NMW already collects and add new data only where necessary, e.g., for winter use. Dave encouraged getting day use data by type of use. Paul Johnson felt NMW data is useful for three

seasons, and fisheries biologists and rangers could supplement with winter counts. Al said he could provide a comprehensive year-end readout of the NMW data for the Waterway probably at a modest cost for the programmer's time, and he is willing to meet with a subcommittee.

Ron Hunt suggested we look at the NMW existing data, decide what questions need to be answered, then focus efforts on reports that the Bureau and the Council would find useful, i.e., build on the NMW system.

Andy added we should know what we want to do with the data so that we don't spend time on data that won't be used. Brent and Josie agreed. We should indicate the management purposes served by data.

After he discussed the public use effort with Peter Bourque, Brent suggested that a Council subcommittee be created to develop a proposal. Subcommittee members would include Pete, Dave, Toby, Paul Johnson, Ron Hunt and Matt Laroche. Josie will take a stab at identifying what it is we want to know for the next meeting.

Greg Shute suggested identifying what youth groups and other guided groups are using the AWW.

Brent asked Matt for his thoughts. Matt felt the baseline data would be useful to gauge change over time, but his staff are committed to active operations and would not have time gather data. Having both NMW and the AWW collect data and fees for the same user population seems wasteful. It might be useful to explore some consolidation. Al commented the near-future goal for NMW is to increase the efficiency of their rec. management through increased automation and digital transactions.

Andy commented that there is also a public survey vehicle available online that is associated with current SCORP effort (State Comprehensive Outdoor Rec Plan). Google <https://mescorpssurvey.com/>

Toby asked Al to whom he releases NMW data. Al indicated it depends on a variety of factors. Their data is not released automatically or to everyone.

Report from the AWW Foundation – Bob McIntosh

Foundation President Bob McIntosh summarized the Foundation's projects and accomplishments over the past fiscal year (FY 19).

- The log books from Jalbert's Sporting Camps have been digitized, and copies are available from the Acadian Archives at UMFK. Original items in archival storage will returned to the camps.
- AWWF received a \$20,000 MOHF grant to match equivalent Foundation-raised funds to develop Allagash Explorer, the new communication platform for Waterway visitors. The preparation of interpretive text is about to be contracted. AWWF hopes the Explorer printed pocket guide will be ready for the 50th Anniversary of the Wild and Scenic River designation.
- AWWF received a \$5,000 grant from the Maine Community Foundation to work with school districts in AWW gateway communities to incorporate lesson plans *Storied Lands and Waters* into local school programs.
- The Foundation also received a \$10,000 grant from the Davis Conservation Fund to do a natural resources assessment of the Waterway, like that done for historic and cultural resources, and prepare natural resource interpretive messages for visitors. AWWF also wants to consider ways to monitor changes in resources along the Waterway over time.
- AWWF funded 4 Youth on the Allagash Trips: 2 trips for youth from the Valley and 2 trips for youth from the Katahdin region. Trips are contracted through Chewonki. Lesson plans may be used with these groups, as well.
- The Foundation has hired a well-qualified, part-time AWWF coordinator, Denise St. Peter from Bangor.
- The Foundation is looking for ideas on celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the WSR designation with BPL.

Toby moved, and Dave seconded that the meeting adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.