

**ALLAGASH WILDERNESS WATERWAY ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

March 22, 2019 9:00 am – 11:45
Cross State Office Building, RM 214, Augusta, Maine

Council Members Present: Josie Allen; Dave Basley; Peter Bourque; Brent Hardy, Chair; Melford Pelletier; Toby Pineo, Jamie Fosburgh

Others Present: Tom Desjardin, Ron Hunt, Cindy Bastey (Bureau of Parks & Lands); Matt LaRoche, Bob Johnston (Allagash Waterway); Paul Johnson (AWW Foundation); Greg Shute (Chewonki); Camille Denico (Haymock Lake); Cathy Johnson (NRCM).

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 September 14, 2018 meeting

Brent asked if the Council wished to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2018 meeting. Toby Pineo moved, and Dave Basley seconded that the December minutes be approved as presented. Council approved unanimously.

Operations and Maintenance Review 3-22-2019 - Matt LaRoche

Water levels:

- Telos Dam is currently at 4.7 feet above the sill: 8/10 of a foot above the October togue spawning level, releasing 295 cfs
- Churchill Dam elevation is 926.2 above sea level: 2/10 foot above the October togue spawning level, releasing 261 cfs
- Lock Dam: releasing 29 cfs (1 gate open 1.2 feet)

Snow levels/water content, as of 3/18/19:

- Chamberlain Bridge: average snow depth = 31.3 inches; water content = 8.7 inches
- Churchill Dam: average snow depth = 31.6 inches; water content = 9.0 inches

Public use:

- We have 34 of the 48 available sites at Chamberlain Bridge and Kellogg Brook sold for the winter season (8 less than last year).

Fishing:

- The fishing has been slower than normal most of the season.

Projects since our December meeting:

- All snowmobile trails were cleared of blowdowns. Crew estimated there were about 50 trees across the tramway trail.
- Crew hauled several loads of superhumus to 9 different campsites.
- Supplies (firewood, propane and/or gasoline) have been hauled to our remote camps: Allagash Lake, Eagle Lake, Round Pond, Camp Pleasant.
- Hauled materials for a new roof at the Eagle Lake Ranger Station: boards, insulation, strapping, metal roofing.
- Hauled new cabinets built at Cobscook Bay S.P.
- Five picnic tables have been built and hauled to campsites.
- 20 bog bridge planks have been hauled to Crow's Nest Campsite on Chamberlain Lake.
- Sight tubes over the threaded rods on the Lock Dam lifting mechanisms have been bolted down. They were unsecured and subject to loss.

Training:

- Kevin Brown took an online Power Point course.
- Trevor O’Leary took an online Excel course and a Managing in State Government course.

Miscellaneous:

- We are moving ahead with a visitor survey for the coming season. Survey is being done in cooperation with the University of Maine, using an online rather than a mail-back questionnaire this year. Funded by AWWF and U Maine, the survey will replicate the 2003 survey. (The 2003 survey had an 87% response rate.)

Special activity permits:

- CanAm sled dog race – crossing the AWW at Round Pond

Usage statistics and breakdown discussion – Josie Allen

Josie Allen opened a discussion of Waterway use as reflected in current data gathering and reporting. She referred to the recommendations of the 2012 AWW Management Plan under Policy 4 and its goal, objective and strategies, and as a starting point, asked Matt to indicate progress made on each item. Thinking of traffic at the Tramway, she is especially interested in efforts toward a monitoring system. [Policy 4 recommendations summarized below.]

Policy 4:	Monitor and Evaluate Resource Conditions and Visitor Experiences to Sustain Ecological Integrity and Wilderness Recreation Quality.
Goal:	Continue to improve the Methods of Evaluating Resource Conditions and Visitor Use and Satisfaction.
Objective 4.1:	Monitor the impact of use levels on the wilderness character and ecological integrity of the Restricted Zone.
Strategy 4.1.A:	Review methods of counting and surveying spring, summer, and fall day users. Coordinate data collection with the DIFW. Consider the use of unobtrusive monitoring tools (e.g., infrared counters, etc.) to sample use patterns at specific locations.
Strategy 4.1.B:	Work with the DIFW to coordinate and enhance winter use estimates, including counts of ice shack and authorized campsite use, use at Jalbert’s and Nugent’s Sporting Camps, and day use, to determine the extent and type of use occurring in the Restricted Zone and on the watercourse.
Strategy 4.1.C:	Tabulate the Allagash summer registration cards annually in a database to allow for the tracking of trends.
Strategy 4.1.D:	Undertake survey work building off past efforts to update information on visitor satisfaction and preferences. Partner with University/College staff to perform such work.
Strategy 4.1.E:	Develop standards defining desired resource conditions and the acceptable level(s) of recreation impacts. Strongly consider partnering with University/College staff to develop/apply a Limits of Acceptable Change model for the Restricted Zone.
Strategy 4.1.F:	Further analyze existing visitor use data as well as the campsite and visitor survey findings reported by Daigle. Develop and prioritize, based on management plan objectives, visitor data to be further investigated for future management and planning efforts.

Source: AWW Management Plan, 2012, pp133-135

Matt indicated that staff had tried a counter device at the Tramway, which didn’t work out and was not tried again. They have not coordinated with DIFW, which does actual counts, including from aircraft, and uses a formula to extrapolate from these to a seasonal total. The Waterway uses data collected by North Maine Woods (NMW), but they reflect only primary destinations, not intervening visits to other sites. He notes there are a several counting devices available at reasonable prices. Matt concluded, noting that Strategy 4.1.-D (update past surveys with University assistance) will be undertaken this summer.

Brent cited the relative lack of data for winter use that might identify where snowmobiles are going and what routes are they travelling. There was general agreement that winter use was down this year because of timber harvesting road closures east of the Waterway and the loss of a fueling station in the west when the Chesuncook House burned. Matt reminded people of the small winter staff of 3 people. Staff does collect use data from the winter camping/parking lots. Ron suggested testing a “guestbook” at the trains; the staff usually checks there once a week. Matt observed that in good snow, there can be 100s visiting the trains, but they don’t stay long. It is the trip rather than this attraction that counts. Toby reported seeing a range of 10 to 40 winter visitors at the Tramway. Dave Basley said DIFW has good ice

fishing data for Big Eagle and Churchill Lakes. He suggested census boxes, like those DIFW uses, might be used at the trains and other places. Rangers would have to collect the cards regularly, as full boxes discourage participation. Dave said he thought DIFW would share their data and methods if asked.

Josie pointed to Strategy 4.1.C [annual entry of AWW registration information into a database] as the type of data she would like to see. This would eventually enable identifying not just Waterway-wide patterns and trends, but sub-district ones as well. Such data could have made it easier to identify times when access at John's Bridge would least conflict with other uses. Matt suggested that such data might not be needed annually. Given his small staff, less frequent data entry and analysis might be more realistic. Josie concluded that regardless of the staff challenges, good data should inform management decisions. Ron reminded everyone that some management practices are already defined in statute and would require Legislation to alter. Pete added there would need to be several sampling points from which data is collected over a period of years. Tom Desjardin added that the Waterway is like a historic site in that it is managed for what it is – a special resource, not for how many visitors there are. (Recorder died.)

Dave felt conflict between trippers and day users should be monitored, and objective numbers could help accurately define the conflict. North Maine Woods registration data is useful but is incomplete for our purposes. People may not reveal their true plans or destinations, and destination info isn't specific. Perhaps specific Waterway destinations could be listed on registration forms, e.g., Allagash Stream and Lake, Trans, etc. Documentation of patterns of access and egress could be helpful in dispersing use.

The use of onsite registration cards at key locations was discussed. These were tried at John's Bridge. The card sites need to have onsite deposit boxes from which Rangers regular collect completed cards. Cami suggested collecting data from Indian Stream canoe rentals. Matt noted that staff try to minimize nonessential contact with visitors, so direct contact to with visitors to collect data would not be the best option. Matt will consider using cards again, perhaps including Indian Stream. Bob Johnson noted that he checks people in at Churchill but keeps no record of day use-only visits. Josie noted that access at John's Bridge and Henderson Brook Bridge require registration but no fee. Ron added that outfitters and sporting camps could distribute cards to their clients, and that day use entry points would be logical card distribution points. Melford suggested that Albro Cowperthwaite be invited to the next meeting to discuss North Maine Woods data collection. Brent agreed to contact Al.

Gregg suggested considering after-the-fact questionnaires for group members and others (e.g., leaseholders) who register. Contact points, where Waterway staff interface with visitors are logical sites for cards.

Pete suggested engaging people with sampling experience to help develop the project. He cited creel censuses as an example of selecting contact points. Perhaps college students could provide inexpensive field labor. The Council could appoint a subcommittee to work on data collecting after Al's presentation.

Review Annual Report – Matt LaRoche

Matt reviewed the 2018 AWW Annual Report, which was distributed prior to the meeting and is posted on the Council's website https://www1.maine.gov/dacf/parks/get_involved/advisory_councils/allagash_wilderness_waterway.shtml.

Under Revenues (P 4), Brent questioned why revenues declined so much between 2017 and 2018, from \$194,000 to 137,000. Matt explained that checks were probably deposited in FY 17 (7/1/2016-6/30/2017) rather the FY 18 (7/1/2017-6/30/2018). Ron reminded members that budget information is reported for a fiscal year (July-June), while public use is reported by calendar year (Jan-Dec).

For Public Use (p 6), Matt felt that the summer drought and lower water levels kept visitation down. He noted one exception was at the Tramway, which had 1600 visitors over the summer.

Commenting on a proposal to preserve Jalbert's Camps logbooks (p 7), Brent asked if there were similar records for Nugent's Camps. He thought the stories told by the are Nugent's important. Paul Johnson noted that the AWW Foundation will help to preserve the Jalbert material. Melford offered that Liese Pelletier at the Acadian Heritage Center may have access to some of these materials.

Matt pointed to the list of projects recommended by the Storied Lands and Waters effort (p 7) that would be the focus of attention by the Bureau and the AWW Foundation in the near term. The "Allagash Explorer" will be one early focus. He also summarized outreach efforts (p 7), staff training (p 8), Forest Operation Notifications (p 8), and numerous projects accomplished by staff, volunteers and contractors in 2018 (p 9). Pete sked what herbicides being used in forest operations. Matt answered Garlon. He highlighted the efforts of volunteer Roger Morneau in restoring the trains and staff member Trevor O'Leary for securing cedar for bog bridging. Brent commented that the Allagash is fortunate to have many individuals who commit their time, energy, equipment and personal funds to protecting the Waterway's resources.

Matt reported that the Annual Report did not mention that Churchill Dam had been hit by a vehicle in 2018, resulting in damage to the deep gate. No one has claimed responsibility. The dam is still operational to an opening of 8 feet. Ron expects to have the repairs done under contract in the fall. If needed, bridge tolls can be increased to cover costs.

Ron explained that expenses associated with the Lock Dam project do not show up in this annual report because the funds were paid out after June 30, 2018, in the next Fiscal Year (FY 19).

Dave reported visiting the Lock Dam outlet and finding it functioning as intended. It will have to be watched as the lakes open. Matt added that Telos Dam was damaged last spring: the tainter gate moved. Staff replaced a timber and refilled the crib. The intent is to keep patching the dam until the money is available to rebuild it.

Finally, Matt reported what he believes to be the fewest incidents in a year ever: 2 attempts to locate and one boating assist.

Boarding House and Storehouse update – Tom Desjardin

Tom Desjardin announced that the Boarding House and Storehouse have finally been placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the Department of the Interior and identifying plaques can be ordered.

Brent noted that the building end toward the dam still needs a replacement sill, which would be the final repair needed on the under-structure. Matt acknowledged the need to complete that work.

Tom noted that funding a dam rebuild involves a significant effort to accumulate the funds and make sure they are available when needed. While the Land and Water Fund pays for 50% of the project cost, that money comes as a reimbursement, and other funds must cover up-front costs.

Recognition of the Lock Dam Preservation Assoc. for their efforts and contribution to the AWW – Tom Desjardin

Tom presented a letter of thanks to past officers of the Lock Dam Preservation Assn., Ed Cullivan (absent) and Camille Denico, for the recent gift of \$2,638.41 to the Bureau of Parks and Lands, to be used for repairing the Boarding House at Churchill Dam. The Association was dissolved in October 2018, after helping to preserve Lock Dam.

Recent happenings at the Bureau – Tom Desjardin

Tom reported that the Bureau was reviewing a lot of legislation. Of particular interest to the Advisory Committee may be a proposed bond package for \$95 million that includes \$75 million for the Land for Maine's Future Program and \$20

million for to State Parks for capital projects. The backlog of Parks' capital needs now totals \$50 million. He said it is likely that the figure of \$95 million would shrink. One likely AWW candidate for these would be the repair of Telos Dam.

Pete asked if there had been additional political turnover at the Department. Tom indicated that Amanda Beal was chosen to be the new DACF Commissioner

Returning to the Boarding House:

Josie asked if there is anything in statute, or a set protocol, that makes clear the state's obligation to maintain its resources, or is maintenance largely based on need? She visited the Boarding House last summer and was appalled that clapboard replacements had been removed, sheathing hadn't been reapplied and the interior was exposed to the elements.

Matt said maintenance of structures, especially roofs and foundations, is critical. Other repairs are done as needed and as funds are available. We have procrastinated with the Boarding House until we knew the plan for the Interior. Brent said the Boarding House hasn't been maintained as the plan requires, and we need to get in and do major work. We had a cost estimate of \$83,000 from Mr. Chillicothe. We have a long way to go.

With respect to the roof, Dave Flanagan did a temporary fix, and permanent repairs need to be made. We could use the Dollar Account, bond funds and LWCF funds on a major capital project. Ideally it would not take longer than 1-2 years. A next step would be an RFQ and contract with an engineer capable of historically appropriate work. Tom noted the roof sheathing appears to be original (1920s).

Brent felt that use of the interior of the Boarding House would follow the recommendations of Storied Lands and Waters for historic interpretation. Dollar Account funds could be applied here as soon as the account is replenished.

Josie said failing to take care of work performed by volunteers is not okay.

Discussion of proposed fishing rules - Dave Basley

Dave Basley informed the group of fishing rule changes designed to benefit brook trout. In the 1950s, the IFW Fisheries Division began protecting the wild brook trout fishery in the north. In 1995, IFW elevated the fish to special species status. Regulations were adopted to control wild bait and the introduction of invasive species. Wild brook trout then became a Maine Heritage Fish, for which preventing loss of habitat is paramount. Regulation changes released in March of 2019 propose to prohibit the possession or use of live fish as bait in the IFW Northern Region, except by special rule. In the Allagash Waterway, use of fish as live bait would be prohibited in the River from Churchill Dam to Allagash Falls, and *in the tributaries of* Telos Round Pond and Chamberlain, Webster, Big Eagle, Churchill, Umsaskis and Long Lakes. Live fish can be used as bait on these lakes. From Allagash Falls to the St. John River, live fish may also be used as bait.

Pete noted that the Legislature had extended by 2 weeks ice fishing in the Northern Region this year, because of the extended winter in that area.

Update on the "Allagash Explorer" – Cindy Bastey

Cindy reported that the AWW Foundation had applied to the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund (MOHF) for funds to create the basic elements of the Allagash Explorer – the AWW pocket guide and new web portal. She added that the Foundation was also searching for ways to produce an update natural resource inventory for use in the Explorer project. Melford offered that a Waterway guide already created by Don Lajoie [[Allagash Origins](#), 2013] met many of the objectives of the proposed pocket guide.

Melford moved and Pete 2nded that the meeting adjourn at 11:45 am. Next meeting is June 14, 2019.