

A18(ACAD)

Acadia National Park Advisory Commission Meeting
Park Headquarters, Monday, June 3, 2013

Present: Steve Katona, Chair
Jackie L. Johnston, Vice Chair
Dexter Lee, Member
Alice Long, Member
Fred Ehrlenbach, Member
Carolyn K. Gothard, Member
Matt Horton, Member
Steven Shea, Member
Lee Worcester, Member
Paul Richardson, Member
Bruce Wiersma, Member
Sheridan Steele, Superintendent, ANP
Len Bobinchock, Deputy Superintendent, ANP
David Manski, Chief of Resource Mgmt., ANP
Pauline Blanchard, Program Assistant, ANP
John T. Kelly, Planner, ANP
Charlie Jacobi, Natural Resource Specialist, ANP
Emily Seger Pagan, Land Resource Specialist, ANP
Keith Johnston, Chief of Maintenance, ANP
Stuart West, Chief Ranger, ANP
Abe Miller-Rushing, Science Coordinator, ANP
Andy Mitchell, Fire Management Officer, ANP
Marie Yarborough, Writer/Editor, Interp., ANP
Ryan McKelvey, Revenue & Fee Business Mgr., ANP
Flo Smith, Chief of Admin., ANP
Kevin Langley, Deputy Chief of Admin., ANP
Mike Soukup, Executive Director, SERCI
Stephanie Clement, Friends of Acadia
David MacDonald, Friends of Acadia
News Media
Chris Fogg, Executive Director, Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce
Julius Wilson, Atlantic Oceanside Hotel and Event Center
Public

Steve Katona called the meeting to order at Acadia National Park Headquarters at 1:00PM.
There was a quorum.

The minutes for the February 4, 2013, meeting were accepted and unanimously approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Land Conservation Committee:

There are four conservation easements which have been approved by the committee.

1. Schoodic Woods, Winter Harbor: This proposed conservation easement is for 1,400 acres on the Schoodic Peninsula. It is a protection for the Schoodic portion of Acadia National Park. The Land Conservation Committee (LCC) was in full agreement to recommend acceptance of this conservation easement.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously voted to recommend acceptance of this conservation easement.

2. Earl property, Bass Harbor Marsh: This proposed easement is 5.75 acres. It would further protect the wetlands. The park has other conservation easements in that area. The LCC was in full agreement to recommend acceptance of this conservation easement.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously voted to recommend acceptance of this conservation easement.

3. Lower Hadlock Pond: The park currently holds easements on other property in this area. The Maine Coast Heritage Trust currently holds the conservation easement on this 2.01 acres parcel, and they would like to transfer it to Acadia National Park.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously voted to recommend acceptance of this conservation easement.

Park Use Committee:

The Park Use Committee met prior to the Commission meeting.

CONSTRUCTION: Keith Johnston reported on the upcoming construction in the park.

-The Loop Road will be repaved with a surface coat as well as the Schoodic and Schooner Head roads.

-A portion of the carriage road system will be resurfaced.

-The bridges on the Stanley Brook Road will be repaired, and the road will be closed July 15th until the end of the work, which should be the end of August.

-The Bus Stop project was just released for bid solicitations. That work will start after Labor Day. There will be closures to some areas on the Loop Road. There will be restricted access at Echo Lake. There will be no closures at Sand Beach or Thunder Hole.

-Making a safe place for buses to pull over at Acadia Mountain on Rt. 102; no closures there. All work will start after Labor Day.

At the superintendent's request, Keith explained where construction funding comes from. The funding for these improvements comes from special accounts that aren't allowed to be used for anything else; only for specified construction projects.

ISLAND EXPLORER: Len Bobinchock gave an update on the bus system.

-The Jordan Pond Express bus that was initiated in 2012 had a number of riders, but it was not as successful as hoped. This past winter the park looked at redesigning that route to serve more markets. The route will now start at the Village Green in Bar Harbor, go to the Hulls Cove Visitor Center, then to the Jordan Pond House, on to Seal Harbor and Northeast Harbor, and then reverse. Last year the Jordan Pond House Express did not start until midday and went through the afternoon. The Jordan Pond route will now be full-day service well into the evening.

-The Schoodic route is designed to coincide with arrivals of the Bar Harbor Ferry. This bus schedule will run June 23 through September 14, 2013. Last year it ended on August 31st.

GREAT HEAD PARKING: There is a parking problem at Great Head. There were lengthy discussions about this issue at both the Public Use Committee meeting and at the full Commission meeting. Issues include: Visitors parking at Great Head who didn't have a park pass; people parking in areas where parking was not allowed; resource damage from parking on the shoulders; and the NPS's lack of ability to manage this congestion because of staff shortages. The park asked the Advisory Commission for their views about keeping this area closed to vehicles to address these problems. After discussion, it was moved, seconded and voted to recommend the park open the Great Head parking lot with appropriate signage related to enforcement. One Commission member, Alice Long, voted against the motion; no reason stated. The motion carried.

Science and Education Committee:

The Science and Education Committee did not meet prior to the full Commission meeting.

SERC: Mike Soukup gave an update on SERC and the Strategic Plan for SERC. (See attached Report on SERC Institute Education Research Programs) The Board is discussing a name change for marketing purposes. The alternate name is Schoodic Institute. No decision has been made at this time.

Dedication of Rockefeller Hall: The dedication of the Rockefeller Hall is scheduled for July 3, 2013. The building has been fully restored.

Historic Committee:

ISLESFORD MUSEUM: Marie Yarborough gave a presentation on the status and condition of the Islesford Museum and an overview of the new exhibits there.

JORDAN POND: Marie is working with the Acadia Corporation (concessioner at Jordan Pond House) on exhibits and other information for visitors.

New Business:

None

Old Business:

None

Superintendent's Report:

SEQUESTRATION: Congress did not act until early in March 2013. No action was taken by Congress, and the sequestration went into effect. Congress mandated that the 5% cut required by the legislation be made across the board, meaning that every federal account had to be cut by 5%. This is on top of other budget reductions and cost increases that have affected the National Park Service budget. Acadia's fiscal year 2013 budget is \$1.4 million less than it was in fiscal year 2010. In the past the park has protected the seasonal program. Decisions had to be made on whether to hire lifeguards or not, open the park Loop Road later or not. (See attached, "Sequestration – the context")

As a result, the park made a decision to open the roads four weeks later than normal. Twelve seasonal positions were cut from the staff, and the hiring period for thirty-one other seasonals was reduced. This created a serious problem for seasonal employees when told that their seasonal position was cut from twenty weeks to fifteen. This resulted in many returning employees taking jobs elsewhere because they couldn't count on a full summer season with the park as they had in the past. This may also continue next year.

The 5% cut is permanent; it is not a one-time cut for the current fiscal year only. The park has been questioned about increasing fees. Fees are authorized by Congress. The park must follow policy and regulations related to fees. The park does not have the authority to raise the fees.

After a very lengthy discussion with the public regarding this issue, representatives from area businesses, the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce and the Friends of Acadia agreed to work with National Park Service officials to raise funds to help ensure that the entire park Loop Road opens at the usual time next spring. Details still need to be worked out, and the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce is spearheading discussions with their members.

Cost-cutting measures suggested at the meeting by Advisory Commission members and the public included outsourcing cleaning of restrooms, have volunteers clean restrooms, eliminate lifeguards at Echo Lake or Sand Beach, or surcharging each motel guest \$1 (which would have to be voluntary).

Public Comments about Sequestration: Chris Fogg, President of the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce addressed the Commission. 1) The Chamber of Commerce would like to know how much it costs to open the park on time (Len is working on that for them). 2) The Chamber wants the park to identify ways to work together to sell park passes. 3) The local businesses were particularly upset and frustrated because there was no advance communication between the park and the town businesses about the park's late opening this year.

Julius Wilson, representing Witham Properties, also addressed the Commission on this issue. (See attached comments.)

David MacDonald also addressed the Commission and park officials about the importance of contacts with the Congressional Delegation. He noted that everyone is asking a lot more of the park than they did a few years ago. The message is the central importance of the park to the economic foundation of the region.

Commission members and the public discussed this at length. The strict limitation on use of fee revenue was also addressed. It was noted that the current fee legislation terminates in 2014, and the park would like to see that legislation continued. After further discussion, the superintendent stated that if \$400,000 could be replaced, the park could commit to opening the road on April 15, 2014. Steve Katona will draft a letter from the Commission to the Congressional Delegation addressing funding concerns and the fee legislation. Once all members approve it, it will be sent out.

VISITATION: Charlie discussed visitation figures (see handout).

ACADIA GATEWAY CENTER: Planning design discussions continue, and they are at approximately 90% at this time. The final design should be ready by mid-summer. There is no construction funding at this time.

HEADQUARTERS: Headquarters planning has been tabled for now. The project is still unfunded. The intent was to have planning for headquarters and tackle it over time.

BAKER ISLAND LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT: This is high on the Director's list this year, and this should start next week.

Chairman's Report:

Steve Katona received a letter from Amy Sidman, proprietor of the Argosy Gallery in Bar Harbor, alerting the Commission and the public of an event on July 27th. In June a printing for fine arts from New Mexico is publishing a 400-page book on fine arts in the national parks, and it is featuring seven of the national parks, of which Acadia is one. The Argosy Gallery is hosting an exhibition of the art from the Acadia section from June 15 through October. The exhibit will move to the Bar Harbor Inn on July 27 and 28. Everyone is invited to attend.

Steve thanked the public for their participation in a very productive discussion on sequestration.

Public Comments:

None

Next Commission Meeting:

Please remember to send any suggestions for agenda items to Steve.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 9, 2013, 1:00PM, at Schoodic Institute (SERC), Schoodic Peninsula, Acadia National Park, Winter Harbor, Maine, as was published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously voted to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 3:00PM.

Note: Folder B, #1, on DVR memory chip.