

A18(ACAD)

Acadia National Park Advisory Commission Meeting
Monday, September 9, 2013

Present: Steve Katona, Chair
Jackie Johnston, Vice Chair
Fred Ehrlenbach, Member
Katherine Heidinger, Member
Dexter Lee, Member
Madeleine Leach, Member
Alice Long, Member
Carolyn Gothard, Member
Paul Richardson, Member
Steven Shea, Member
Lee Worcester, Member
Sheridan Steele, Superintendent ANP
Len Bobinchock, Deputy Superintendent ANP
David Manski, Chief of Resource Management, ANP
Keith Johnston, Chief of Maintenance, ANP
Stuart West, Chief of Visitor and Resource Protection, ANP
Abe Miller-Rushing, Science Coordinator, ANP
Andy Mitchell, Fire Management Officer, ANP
Ryan McKelvey, Fee Program Manager, ANP
Betty Lyle, Supervisory Park Ranger- Interpretation, ANP
Mike Soukup, Schoodic Institute
David McDonald, Friends of Acadia
Jeff Killion, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation
Eliot Foulds, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation
Courtney Wigdahl, University of Maine Orono

Steve Katona called the meeting to order at Schoodic District of Acadia National Park at 1:00 p.m.

The Chairman read three letters of appreciation to:

- Pauline Blanchard, for her 34 years of great service to the park and the Advisory Commission;
- Dave Manski, who is heading to India on a lengthy assignment as a Fulbright Fellow, for his work in resource management at the park;
- Mike Soukup as he leaves his current position as Executive Director of SERCI to assume a scientific role with the institute.

Paul Richardson requested that the minutes of the June 3, 2013 meeting be amended to include his name. The minutes were accepted and unanimously approved as amended.

Chairman's Report:

There was no report other than he restated that letters of support for bolstering park funding following sequestration had been sent to the delegation.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Land Conservation Committee

The committee had no new business to report.

Park Use Committee

Park Use Committee did not meet and had no new business to report.

CONSTRUCTION: Keith Johnston gave a re-summary of construction and gave a handout to each member. In 2013, five miles of carriage road in the Day Mountain area were resurfaced with about 4,900 tons of aggregate to restore the surface of the roads. The park loop roads on MDI and Schoodic were repaved. Much of the construction on the roads happened during busiest season in July, due to the poor weather early in the summer. The work on Stanley Brook Road ended on August 23. Six bridges were rehabilitated. The work on the Rockefeller Building at Schoodic was completed.

Bus stop improvements were started at several parking areas Bubble Rock, Bubble Pond, and Parkman Mountain. Final paving and landscaping will be completed in the spring. Work began at Wildwood Stables this fall to add a new porch, a pavilion, and horse wash stations. Following a partial collapse of the roof, the Jordan Pond House roof was fully rehabbed before opening in the spring.

A member expressed concern over the roadside drop offs due to the new layer of pavement laid this summer. Keith said areas will be worked on in-house to lessen safety concerns by park roads crew. This issue will also be addressed in the next paving contract. Keith also explained the reason behind laying the coat of preservation asphalt. Future contracts may also address recycling of asphalt.

In 2014, Echo Lake will be a big project, and seven motor road bridges will be worked on. The Jordan Pond boat ramp has been funded for rehabilitation. How visitors access this area during the work period from March to July is yet to be decided.

The Stanley Brook Road and Hulls Cove VC parking area will be paved in 2014. Keith explained the Federal Highways funding for these projects and that the funds cannot be put toward park operations.

A member asked about Duck Brook Road. Keith reported that a funding request has been submitted for the repairs. It will take about \$50,000 to repair the spot where a large section of dry stone wall sloughed off. Keeping the road closed while waiting for funding will allow discussions with officials in Bar Harbor to take place. A town water line runs along this section of road. The road will remain closed at least another year. Sheridan mentioned that the park has not received many calls about the closure to vehicles, but bikers and walkers love it.

FEE COMPLIANCE: Stuart West gave a power point presentation about the lack of fee compliance and how much fee money the park is losing. He recapped how collected fees are used and what percentage is retained by the park. Entrance fees fund visitor services projects and certain positions. The park is increasingly dependent on fees collected, which makes it more important to gain compliance.

Stuart and Ryan McKelvey talked about various options for making it easier for visitors to obtain park passes. A discussion took place on ways to increase compliance (more entrance stations, making the loop road one way its entire length, more sales locations, use of "Iron Rangers"). Stuart and Ryan talked about pros and cons of the options. Stuart also relayed some of the definite changes that will be

implemented in the next couple of years, including the window sticker being replaced by a credit card-like pass, which is what many other national parks use.

Science and Education Committee:

Mike Soukup discussed the SEA program at Schoodic with about 600-700 students attending this fall. He recapped the summer season including the dedication of Rockefeller Hall. He talked about the 35 member advisory council, who will be ambassadors for SI, and the need to increase the donor base. A marketing firm is under contract to help with that. It was a successful summer.

Abe Miller-Rushing talked about science and education programs. He stressed that with changes to the environment and tight budgets, there is a need to educate the public to help parks carry out our mandate. It is critical to support science and research to help inform decisions. The challenges are to understand how to adapt and manage in a rapidly changing environment, and to improve science, environmental education and environmental literacy throughout the region and encourage civic engagement.

Abe also talked about Bill Zoelick's work with science teachers on using science data in New England and citizen science, and how knowledge is transferred from teachers to other teachers. We need to adapt our methods - use citizen science, the bio blitz, teacher workshops.

Dave Manski distributed a handout on research projects going on in the park. He introduced Dr. Courtney Wigdahl, who has been studying the water quality of Jordan Pond. The project was funded by Canon USA, with support from FOA and UMaine Orono. Jordan Pond is one of the clearest lakes in Maine, but clarity has been declining the last decade. She discussed the buoy that was placed in the lake which takes 1,400 readings a day. These readings, plus those from the weather station on JP House, provide good side by side data.

A short video on the park's vegetation was shown, and there was a discussion of invasive plant species.

Historic Committee:

Dave introduced Jeff Killion and Eliot Foulds who are historical landscape architects with the NPS Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. They discussed their report which documents historic vistas on the park loop road and the plan to return vistas to the way they were when the road was first built. The loop road is the primary visitor infrastructure and was built between 1922 and 1958 to provide access to park scenery. It is nationally significant for many reasons. They said many of the 71 vistas are blocked by vegetation, which means there is a growing scarcity of scenic views.

Superintendent's Report:

Sheridan gave a power point on Schoodic Woods. The plan includes a 100 site campground, day use parking lot, and proposed bike trail across the peninsula. They have a contractor in place, have state and local permits, and expect construction to begin this year. Sheridan discussed the proposed bike trail, how it would connect with the park's existing trails, and the compliance and routing of the bike trail across Frazer Creek causeway. Compliance is underway, agreements are in place, and all will be funded by the donor.

Len Bobinchock reviewed the current status of the Gateway Center project. Hopefully funding will come through in order to award the contract this fall or early in 2014. It will be state of Maine facility, not NPS.

Dave Manski provided visitation figures which are 1.5 percent over last year; August visitation was up 7.5 percent. Commercial bus numbers are up significantly, and six more cruise ships will stop in Bar Harbor this year than in 2012.

Sheridan talked about the park's budget and how Schoodic Woods will factor into a tighter budget. The donor wants the NPS to operate the facilities. We will have an operating agreement with owners. Income from the campground will cover operating expenses, and the donors are planning to set up an endowment for the park. About 15 to 20 million dollars in construction costs are expected, and all will come from the donors.

Sequestration posed significant challenges. The budget is at about the 2008 level at just over 7 million dollars, which is low for a park with this amount of visitation. We had to reduce the number of seasonal employees and cut length of seasons. The park loop road opened late. Fixed costs are 92 percent of the budget.

Betty Lyle talked about the risk to the Division of Interpretation's seasonal program. Interpretative programs were cut by 30 percent. She described the negative impacts on both visitors and staff that resulted from having to cut back the hours of Hulls Cove Visitor Center.

A member commented on the tremendous job done at Baker Island to open up the area around the lighthouse, thereby making it more visible. The project has received good public comment.

Public Comment:

None

It was, moved, seconded, and unanimously voted to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at about 3:20 p.m.

Next Advisory Commission meeting:

Monday, February 3, 2014; 1 p.m. at Park Headquarters, McFarland Hill, Bar Harbor, Maine

Please remember to submit agenda items to Steve.