

Acadia National Park Advisory Commission Meeting
Acadia National Park Headquarters
Monday, June 2, 2014

Present: Steve Katona, Chair
Jackie L. Johnston, Vice Chair
Alice Long, Member
Fred Ehrlenbach, Member
Carolyn K. Gothard, Member
Paul Richardson, Member
Jeannine Ross, Member
Stephen Shea, Member
Lee Worcester, Member
Bruce Wiersma, Member

James Woolsey, acting Deputy Superintendent, ANP
Stuart West, Chief Ranger, ANP
Kevin Langley, Deputy Chief of Admin., ANP
Keith Johnston, Chief of Maintenance, ANP
David Manski, Chief of Resource Mgmt., ANP
Melissa Lynne Dominy, Chief of Interpretation, ANP
John T. Kelly, Planner, ANP
Ryan McKelvey, Revenue & Fee Business Mgr., ANP
Charlie Jacobi, Natural Resource Specialist, ANP
June Devisfruto, Commercial Services, ANP
Elizabeth Tinker, acting Concession Specialist, NER
Abe Miller-Rushing, Science Coordinator, ANP
Stephanie Clement, Friends of Acadia
News Media
Public

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

A quorum of the Advisory Commission (Commission) was present for today's meeting. Steve Katona called the meeting to order and stated that the proposed agenda was the longest in recent memory. The Commission members approved the agenda.

Some members stated that they had not received the minutes from the February 3, 2014, meeting; thus they were not adopted. Steve will re-circulate the minutes to the Commission for review after today's meeting, but asked members to review them prior to the next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 2, 2014.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Superintendent Steele was not present at today's meeting. James Woolsey, Acting Deputy Superintendent, served as his representative. James is the Superintendent at Springfield Armory National Historic Site, but is on detail as Acadia's Deputy Superintendent (a position formerly held by Len Bobinchock, who recently retired) until July 2014.

James reported that Madeleine Leach, a current Commission member passed away on May 6, 2014, following her battle with cancer. A moment of silence was observed in her memory. Steve reported that Mrs. Leech was a State of Maine appointee to the Commission. James stated that the NPS would request a new Commission nominee from the governor's office.

Dexter Lee was also not able to attend today's meeting, as he had missed the ferry from Swan's Island.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

James Woolsey reported that a number of park staff will be presenting the Superintendent's report at today's meeting.

New Acadia NP Concessioner – Presented by Kevin Langley (Chief of Administration) and Elizabeth Tinker (Acting Concession Specialist)

The new Concessioner, Dawnland LLC, has begun operation with the opening of its three gift shops on May 18, 2014. The Jordan Pond House restaurant opened on June 1, for lunch as well as tea and popovers and they plan to open for dinner June 5. The NPS has been working closely with them to ensure a smooth opening and compliance with the terms of their contract.

Jordan Pond Area Parking Lot Update – Presented by Clay Gilley (Park Engineer)

The Jordan Pond House north lot was paved, restriped and reconstructed to be more efficient. This added 20-30 parking spaces and removed parking from one side of the Park Loop Road. This has dramatically improved traffic flow and pedestrian/vehicle safety. The NPS is in the process of completing construction at the north lot boat ramp area. This lot has been reconfigured to establish a few oversized vehicle (e.g., RVs and trucks pulling boat trailers) parking spaces and to add additional car parking along the entrance road shoulder. These actions will result in a safer parking area and protect road shoulder vegetation and soils. After the construction is completed at the end of June 2014, the NPS estimates that a net of 36 additional parking spaces will have been gained, even after removing vehicle parking along the road shoulders on the Park Loop Road adjacent to the Jordan Pond House.

Position Management Presented by Kevin Langley

Acadia National Park has experienced a number of retirements and personnel changes.

Liz Weston has retired from the concessions specialist position. As already mentioned, Liz Tinker is acting in this position for another month. At that time, park employee June Devisfruto, who manages our commercial use permitting system, will temporarily serve in this role. We are hoping to advertise the job announcement for the permanent position within the next month.

We have in hand a list of candidates who applied for David Manski's former position, the Chief of Resources Management. We hope to make a decision on this position within the next couple of weeks.

We also have a list of candidates who applied for the vacant Deputy Superintendent position. We will be reviewing those applicants once we finalize our decision on the Chief of Resources Management position.

Other key vacant park positions that we have filled since our winter meeting include, a plumber, woodcrafter position, and the assistant fee program manager.

Fee Collection –Presented by Stuart West (Chief Ranger)

We have installed new signs to more effectively communicate that all park visitors are required to have an entrance pass. We have been receiving a number of questions about whether a park pass is required for traveling the Seal Cove Road. The answer is no. If people are using the road as a commuter route, then no entry pass is needed. However, if they stop along the route to hike or enjoy the park, then they would be required to have purchased an entrance pass. We have transitioned to a "hang tag" entrance pass, and are asking visitors to display them on their rear view mirrors. You may remember that last year, we estimated that only 68% of park visitors had purchased park passes. Our goal for this year is to increase that compliance to 75%. We are hoping that the newly installed signs and other educational efforts we are making (including putting a reminder notice on vehicles not displaying a hang tag) will help us achieve this goal. Over the winter, we have increased the shoulder season 7-day entry fee so that it is the same year round – \$20. We are expecting this to result in approximately \$250,000 in new fee revenue which will be used to support the operation of the Island Explorer bus system. As a reminder, 80% of our collected entry fees stay in the park to be used for improvements to visitor services and facilities.

Acadia Centennial – Lynne Dominy (Chief of Interpretation)

We held a national design contest to create a logo to celebrate the park's upcoming centennial in 2016 (she passed around a copy of the logo to Commission members). A committee comprised of staff from the park and Friends of Acadia selected the winning design. We have issued a press release about the new logo. Planning continues among park staff, Friends of Acadia, and the public to generate ideas for how we can celebrate the park's centennial. For example, we recently held a public discussion about this in Ellsworth and over 70 people from different organizations attended.

Schoodic Woods – Clay Gilly

Clay provided the Commission with an update on the campground construction taking place on the Schoodic Wood property abutting the park on the Schoodic Peninsula. This is part of a larger development project at Schoodic Woods to create NPS compatible recreation (hiking, biking, and camping) facilities and experiences for visitors. The campground will have 100 sites including RV, tent, and group areas as well as employee housing, a visitor center, an amphitheater, and day parking. . All the roads have been completed and construction of the buildings and camping sites are underway. The campground is intended to be completed by the end of June (2015). NPS staff will operate the campground once it is opened.

Construction is also taking place along Moore Road from Route 186 south to the park boundary to place all electrical lines underground.

In addition, efforts are underway to construct hiking and bicycle trails on the Schoodic Woods property, including a new cross peninsula bicycle route. This latter bike path will enable riders to make a complete loop of the Schoodic Peninsula without ever having to ride along State Route 186. The hiking trails are being built to NPS standards and the bicycle trails will resemble the Mount Desert Island carriage roads. We are also hoping that a new bicycle path across Frazer Creek will be constructed. This will be attached to the east side of the existing causeway bridge at the entrance to the park.

Other Construction

Starting the first of August (2014), we will be rehabilitating the Park Loop Road bridges. About 10 years ago, we did similar work to the granite bridges on the carriage roads. We expect this new project to continue for about a year.

Stanley Brook Erosion – Presented by Keith Johnston (Chief of Maintenance)

For many years, storm water draining off the Jordan Pond Road and Route 3 in Seal Harbor has been discharging onto park land below the vacant lot adjacent to the fire station in Seal Harbor. This storm water has caused substantial erosion, tree felling, and gulying of a steep forested area on the east side of Stanley Brook. The NPS has been very concerned about these natural resource impacts and the potential for serious water quality degradation in the stream. We have been working with the Maine Departments of Transportation, Environmental Protection and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and Town of Mount Desert to develop short and longer-term solutions to these ongoing environmental problems. We are looking at strategies to relocate the outlet of the storm water drainage outside of the park. Once a final design alternative has been agreed upon by the stakeholders, we will collectively seek funding (estimated to be \$1.2) to move the storm water outfall and to restore the disturbed park lands.

National Park Visitor Spending 2012 – Presented by John Kelly (Park Planner)

In March 2014, the NPS released its latest Economic Benefits Report nationwide. This is an annual evaluation to document national park related visitor spending. Nationally, the NPS provides about a 27 billion boost to the US economy creating about 4million jobs. Locally at Acadia, it was estimated that visitors spending contributed approximately \$200 million and nearly 3100 jobs to the local economy (this was based on ~2.5 million visitors to the park in 2012). These figures include visitor spending on lodging, food, supplies, services, etc. The NPS has been doing these annual economic analyses for over 13 years.

Otter Creek Cell Phone Tower – Presented by John Kelly

The NPS is participating in the siting of a cell tower in Otter Creek. The federal FCC is currently reviewing the tower application to ensure compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. We are working with the Maine State Historic Preservation Office to coordinate what visual impacts the tower might have on the Park Loop Road, Carriage Roads and Hiking Trails. These are all properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and could be adversely impacted by the visual intrusion of the tower. We are also participating locally at the planning board level within the local ordinance to convey our NPS concerns. As part of the review process, the applicant is required to complete a regional impact assessment. As part of that

review, we asked that the applicant conduct a visual impact analysis to see how visible the tower would be from 11 different locations in the park (e.g., Park Loop Road, Blackwoods Campground, hiking trails, and Cadillac, Dorr and Gorham mountains). We are waiting for the analysis to be completed. Our goal is to work with the Town and applicant to minimize any negative impacts on NPS scenic values in Acadia.

Bus Management – Presented by John Kelly who showed slides of some of the problems

John provided an overview of some of the challenging park management issues associated with the numerous large coach buses now common in the park on any given day during summer and fall. The number, timing and location of these bus visits can at times exceed the physical capacity of park facilities. Particular problems are occurring at Cadillac Mountain, Thunder Hole, and the Jordan Pond House. Acadia has always had tour buses in the park, but with the rapid increase in cruise ship visits to MDI, there has been a parallel increase in the number of tour buses in the park on cruise ship days. For example, in 2000 there were only 36 cruise ship visits; in 2014, there will be 130-140.

Acadia's parking lots cannot accommodate the many buses and passenger vehicles vying for limited parking spaces. When buses can't park in appropriate locations and need to off load or pick up passengers, they often block other vehicles, causing serious congestion. Off-loading 60+ passengers from multiple buses at one iconic visitor destination can also overwhelm other visitors touring the park on their own. Portions of the Park Loop Road, especially the road up and down Cadillac Mountain were not designed for vehicles over 30 feet in length. A recent NPS sponsored engineering study confirmed that large vehicles physically cannot stay completely within their lane of travel when traversing some of the hairpin turns on the Cadillac Mountain road.

These and other issues pose safety concerns and result in degraded visitor experiences. While we believe that large buses are appropriate in the park and provide many visitors with an efficient way to experience Acadia, we have started to take steps to address these problems.

We have stepped up our oversight of the permit conditions under which all bus tours operate in the park. For example, we are enforcing requirements about where buses must load and off-load their passengers. We are also trying to hold each bus company to no more than two buses at Jordan Pond and Thunder Hole. In addition, we have been working with Intercruises, the company organizing the bus tours for the cruise ship industry, to limit the number of coach buses to four that can be parked on the Cadillac Summit at any one time (this leaves two additional spaces for our two concessionaire bus operators, Oli's Trolley and Acadia National Park Tours). We are also working on these issues with the Town of Bar Harbor Cruise Ship Committee and apprising the Congressional Delegation of this situation. We are also beginning a major transportation planning effort to identify alternatives for resolving the congestion and vehicle conflicts on the park Loop Road.

John answered questions from the Commission about bus tours, such as the fees they pay, the number of coach tour buses visiting in the fall, and plans for the Island Explorer to offer service to Cadillac Mountain.

Interpretive Waysides – Presented by Lynne Dominy (Chief of Interpretation)

Lynne showed examples of the updated wayside exhibits being installed around the park. This is an ongoing effort to replace outdated exhibits around the park by the 2016 park centennial.

Islesford Museum– Presented by Rebecca Cole-Will (Cultural Resource Program Manager)

Becky described the new community exhibit that will be open to the public at Islesford Museum this summer celebrating the art of Ashley Bryan. She handed out a copy of a Bangor Daily News article about him and his work. This is a very exciting event for the NPS because it is one of our first collaborations with a locally community based organization to develop an exhibit at the museum. We hope that this project can stimulate additional community exhibits within the museum in the future.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Land Conservation Committee:

No report

Park Use Committee:

Jackie Johnston– the Park Use Committee met with park staff before the Commission meeting and covered four basic topics.

Stuart West (park Chief Ranger) presented a summary of the discussion topics:

1. Great Head Parking

The NPS is attempting to increase visitor compliance with purchasing a park entrance pass (described above). The Great Head parking lot historically had the lowest percentage of visitors that paid the entrance fee. Many visitors parked there because they could access Sand Beach and various popular trails while bypassing the fee station. Signs have been installed at this and other parking lots to inform visitors that they need to purchase a park entrance fee and display their hang tags in their vehicles.

2. Transportation Plan. We have received NPS funding to conduct a transportation plan at Acadia. While we are now scoping out the focus of the plan, there are many traffic and transportation issues that we hope the plan will address. For example, at present righthand lane parking is permitted on sections of the Park Loop Road; should this continue in the future? Should large coach buses be allowed on the road to Cadillac Mountain given the narrow and meandering nature of the roadway? What kind of public transportation system is acceptable and safe for taking visitors to Cadillac? Planning will get started later in 2014.

3. Drones. Unmanned aerial vehicles are very popular now and we are anticipating that the NPS in the near future will be developing policy guidelines for their use or prohibition in national parks. The NPS is working with the FAA to formulate Federal regulations appropriate for drone use in national park areas. We have received a request to use drones in Acadia as part of a University of Maine research project; our staff are evaluating that request with NPS colleagues in our Washington office.

4. Duck Brook Road – Presented by Keith Johnston

The Duck Brook Road from the carriage road entrance to West Street extension has been under an emergency closure to motor vehicles for the last couple of years due to poor road conditions. The road is still open to pedestrians and bicycle riders. We are contemplating making this a permanent closure to motor vehicles because of the high repair and annual maintenance costs. In the next months, we will be consulting with the Town of Bar Harbor and the public before making a final decision about this closure to cars and trucks

Science and Education Committee Report:

There was no prior meeting of the committee, but Abe Miller-Rushing (Science Coordinator for Acadia and Schoodic Education and Research Center presented some science updates for the Commission.

The Schoodic Institute has a new President and CEO, Mark Berry. Mark has a strong academic background in ecology and conservation and for the last eight years was the Executive Director of the Downeast Lakes Land Trust in Washington County,

The Schoodic Institute also just launched a new six passenger research vessel, *s/v Schoodic* (a 30' Presto), which was generously donated to the organization. The boat will be used for research projects in the Frenchman's Bay and around the Schoodic Peninsula.

Acadia's Resource Management staff members in partnership with Friends of Acadia are working on a watershed restoration program. Called "Wild Acadia", the goal of this effort is to improve and maintain resilience of park watersheds in the face of rapid environmental change, such as climate change, pollution or invasive species. This initiative will be multi-disciplinary and initial restoration and science work will be focused in the Cromwell Brook Watershed.

The park has established a centennial science working group that has engaged many different partners, including the Jackson Lab, MDI Bio-Lab, College of the Atlantic, MDI Historical Society and others

Park staff have digitized our science archives to make these reports, publications, and data accessible to the public. We have over three thousand (3,000) records accessible now on-line, representing most of the past research that has been conducted

In collaboration with the Schoodic Institute, Maine Entomological Society, Maine Forest Service, University of Maine and University of New Hampshire, we will be hosting our 13th annual bioblitz at SERC on July 18-20, 2014. This year's event will be focused on beetles.

Bat Management - Presented by Bruce Connery (Park wildlife biologist)

At the January Commission meeting park we mentioned that many bat species around the park were in serious decline and we were asked to give an update on the status of bats in Acadia National Park at today's meeting.

The declines seen around the country are also in evidence here at Acadia. Bat populations have so drastically declined that one or more species are likely to be Federally listed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a threatened or endangered species. The park has five species of bats that

hibernate in caves during the winter. Bruce showed slides of and talked about some natural history characteristics of these species. The population of one of these species, the little brown bat, has declined about 95% across its range in the last five years. The cause of all bat population declines is a fungal disease called “white nose syndrome”, which originated in Europe. It invades caves and prospers well in cold, damp cave environments which are where these bats live during the winter. Bruce provided additional details about the disease and talked about data indicating that bat declines have also been found in Acadia.

Emerald Ash Borer – Presented by Judy Hazen-Connery (Park Vegetation Program Manager)

Judy distributed a handout about this invasive and non-native insect and provided the Commission with an update on the status of this species in New England. There’s been another population of emerald ash borer recorded in a second county in New Hampshire. Emerald Ash Borer causes 100% mortality of ash trees and it has been moving very rapidly across the US since being discovered in 2002 in Detroit, MI. This rapid dispersal has unfortunately been caused by people unknowingly transporting the insect on firewood they are taking with them while vacationing. With fourteen private or public campgrounds on MDI, Acadia is very vulnerable to the insect showing up here. We have increased our outreach efforts to inform park visitors as well as owners of second homes to not bring firewood to MDI and the park. We have been working cooperatively with the State of Maine and the US Forest Service this spring on educating homeowners and tourists about this issue. We organized and hosted public workshops about emerald ash borer and have updated our web site about the issue. In addition, at Sieur de Monts Springs and Blackwoods Campground, we have tied purple ribbons around selected ash trees and posted educational signs to increase public awareness about emerald ash borers.

The Emerald Ash Borer is native to Asia and Siberia and there was some hope that last year’s cold winter could help regulate the outbreak in New England. However, entomologists are skeptical that our winter weather would have had any significant impact on their population or spread northward given that the species naturally evolved in cold climates.

Historic Committee:

No report

Old Business:

The only old business still unfinished is to ensure that members receive the minutes from the last meeting.

New Business:

None.

Public Comments:

An unidentified member of the public inquired why the NPS wasn’t involved in discussions regarding Emera’s plans to build an electrical substation in a residential neighborhood in Bar Harbor, especially since the development might be visible from some of the park mountain summits or park loop road.

John Kelly, Park Planner responded.

The NPS has been following this situation, but didn't feel that the substation would be as visible from the park, as say a cell phone tower. For that development, town ordinances are in place to evaluate the visual impacts. But for the substation development, there is no such ordinance in Bar Harbor. The transmission lines may be of concern to the NPS, since there is a potential that part of the route could be adjacent to or through park lands. Although Emera has a right-of-way along Route 3 and other roads, we are concerned about the impacts of the poles, anchor points, etc. on park resources. Also, Route 3 is designated as an "All American Road". This status gives additional protection from impacts like this. We will continue to be in contact with Emera to discuss these issues.

Jeannine Ross of the Commission asked whether the NPS has concerns about any noise from this proposed facility. John Kelly indicated that this was not an issue for us, but recognized that it might be for adjacent landowners. Steve Katona remarked that the substation development was more an issue for residents than for the NPS.

Stephanie Clement – FOA

Stephanie informed the Commission that National Trails Day will take place on Saturday June 7, 2014. FOA and the National Park Service will celebrate the event by inaugurating two new park trails, the Otter Cove Trail and the Quarry Trail. She also mentioned that FOA is again funding salaries of many young people working at Acadia this summer as part of the Ridge Runner, Youth Conservation Corp, Tech Team, and Wild Gardens programs.

Don Lenahan – A retired year-round resident and also FOA volunteer.

Don expressed concerns that the vistas along the park loop road and carriage roads are disappearing. He asked what the park was doing to address this serious problem. Don offered his help and knows that other park volunteers would be willing to assist in opening up the vistas as well.

Keith Johnston, Park Chief of Maintenance responded.

Last year the NPS Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation completed a long term study of the historic motor road to document among other things, the locations and condition of the vistas. We needed that information before we could start rehabilitating them to ensure that we weren't damaging the very landscapes we were trying to protect. Tree cutting is a very sensitive issue in this park and we only want to cut down vegetation that is negatively effecting the historic vistas. We now have documented where these vistas are located, to what level they should be maintained, and which ones are at greatest risk from being lost. We are now seeking funding to implement the rehabilitation recommendations identified in this Olmstead report. Using volunteers to rehabilitate some of the motor road vistas may not be appropriate as there are some areas that are very steep and located on busy sections of the road. The situation in many places is quite different than the vista work volunteers are helping us manage on the carriage roads. We hope to start some pilot motor road vista work in the coming year. Keith offered to provide Don with a copy of the Olmstead report if he was interested in seeing their recommendations and vista documentation.

Next Commission Meeting:

The chairman requested that Commission members send him suggested agenda items for the coming meeting, which is scheduled for Tuesday, September 2, 2014, 1:00PM, at the Schoodic Education and Research Center.

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

Audio recording of minutes transcribed by June Devisfruto and edited by David Manski of Acadia National Park.