

Facts about a Feasibility Study for a New National Park in Maine's North Woods

What does federal law say about feasibility studies?

Congress likes to have a study before land is included in the National Park Service system, but it is not required. However, if a study is completed, the law describes how it is to be conducted. There are two types of studies:

- ◆ **A reconnaissance study** – This is a preliminary resource assessment that can be ordered by the Secretary of the Interior, but cannot cost more than \$25,000. No congressional authorization is required. This study can consider multiple alternative administrative designations (e.g. national park, other federal designations such as national preserve, national wildlife refuge, or national recreation area, non-profit ownership, state ownership, continued private ownership, etc.). During an August 2011 visit to Maine, Interior Secretary Salazar suggested that this type of study could be completed in a matter of months.
- ◆ **A special resources study** – This is what people in Maine generally are referring to as a “feasibility” study. It usually takes multiple years and requires congressional authorization. There are three major criteria that the study evaluates:

National significance – Is the proposed area outstanding, does it offer superlative opportunities for recreation, is it a relatively unspoiled example of the resource, etc.?

Suitability – Does it represent a natural area or recreational resource not already represented in the national park system?

Feasibility – Is it of sufficient size, does it have willing landowners, is it logistically possible to manage, etc.?

Sec. Salazar noted when he was in Millinocket in August 2011 that 50% of all feasibility studies do not result in a recommendation for a national park.

What is the current opportunity for a new National Park in Maine?

Proposed land donation: Conservationist Roxanne Quimby currently owns 70,000 acres of land bordered by Baxter State Park on the west and the East Branch of the Penobscot River on the east. She owns another 21,000 acres on the eastern side of the East Branch. She also owns about 30,000 acres in townships just south of Greenville, adjacent to land owned by the Appalachian Mountain Club.

Quimby has proposed to donate the 70,000 acres adjacent to Baxter to the National Park Service for a national park. She has also proposed to donate an additional 70,000 acres east of the East Branch (much of which she has not yet purchased) for multiple recreational uses including hunting and snowmobiling (neither of which are typically permitted in national parks). Finally, she has proposed to donate to the State of Maine the 30,000 acres south of Greenville for multiple uses, including motorized recreation and timber harvesting. This 30,000 acres could end up being a portion of the 70,000 acres of multiple use land.

Proposed cash endowment donation: Quimby also has offered to donate an endowment of \$20 million to be used to manage the park, and has pledged to raise an additional \$20 million for a total endowment of \$40 million. A feasibility study likely would give some indication of whether this proposed endowment would be sufficient to run a park.

Who supports the proposal for a feasibility study on these lands?

- * Katahdin Chamber of Commerce
- * Millinocket Downtown Revitalization Committee
- * East Millinocket School Board
- * Medway School Board
- * Medway Selectmen
- * The residents of Medway at a special town meeting (46-6 vote, August 2011)
- * The National Park Citizens Committee, a new citizen's group started by residents of Medway

Who opposes the proposal for a feasibility study on these lands?

- * Millinocket Town Council
- * Don't Fence ME In, a group started by Mary Adams from Garland

What does Maine's Congressional Delegation think?

Sen. Collins, Sen. Snowe, and Rep. Michaud have all made statements saying they are skeptical of a feasibility study, but they appear open-minded. Rep. Pingree has said she supports a feasibility study.

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Wassataquiok Stream: a beautiful feature of the proposed Park region

