

Conservation Values of the Proposed National Park and Recreation Area

A proposed new National Park located east of Baxter State Park (BSP), along the East Branch of the Penobscot River (East Branch), would provide many conservation benefits.

General Description of the Lands Proposed to be Donated:

- **Up to 150,000 acres** of primarily spruce-northern hardwoods forest, beech-birch-maple forest and spruce-fir-broom moss forest would be protected from future residential, commercial and industrial development. The only development allowed would be that associated with recreation and conservation.
- More than **30 miles of rivers and streams** would be protected including portions of:
 - The **East Branch of the Penobscot River**. This stretch of the river has six significant named rapids and waterfalls;
 - The **Sebois River**;
 - **Wassataquoik Stream** which flows out of BSP and through two existing public land parcels.
- **At least seven ponds** including Messer and Little Messer would be protected.
- **More than seven mountains**, several with spectacular views of the Katahdin range to the west, and the eastern slopes of other mountains located mostly within BSP, would be protected.
- **Important plant and wildlife habitat** including wetlands, unusual plants and natural communities, and habitat for iconic and rare animals including moose, black bear, lynx and pine marten would be protected.

Important Conservation Role in the Landscape

- The land is **connected to other public and private conservation lands**, including Baxter State Park, the Appalachian Trail, the Debsconeag Wilderness, the 100 Mile Wilderness, and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, and to lands protected from development by conservation easements south and west of BSP.
- The western portion of the land is part of the Beginning with Habitat “**Baxter Region Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance**.” This focus area was identified by federal, state and private conservation entities using data from a variety of sources.
- The elevation diversity on the land combined with the general north-south orientation of the East Branch provide opportunities for plants and wildlife **adapting to climate change** to migrate up to higher elevations or further north.
- The East Branch watershed is **important salmon habitat** and will be even more important now that the Veazie dam on the main stem of the Penobscot River has been removed.

Uncommon and Iconic Ecological Features

- **Nine natural communities** on the property are rare in Maine. These include silver maple floodplain forest, spruce-heath barren, bluejoint meadow, and maple-basswood-ash forest.
- **Five plant species** are rare in Maine; one of them, Squirrel corn, is one of five or fewer known occurrences in the state.
- Patches of **mature forest**, including some that have never been cut, are found in several areas of the property.
- High value **salmon and native brook trout habitat** is found in this watershed.
- The area is **critical habitat for the federally listed threatened Canada lynx**.
- **Moose, black bear, fisher, deer and river otter** live in the area.
- At least **75 species of birds** have been identified on the property, including spruce grouse and 14 types of warblers.

Quiet Recreation Opportunities

The land provides many recreation opportunities associated with Maine's North Woods, including:

- **Hiking** – Trails along the East Branch and Wassataquoik would provide easy, day hiking opportunities to spectacular rapids. Several of the mountains have trails to their summits providing extensive views. And for the long distance hiker, approximately 35 miles of the International Appalachian Trail are located on the property, and back country, multi-day hiking loops could be developed.
- **White water paddling** – The upper stretches of the East Branch include multiple rapids for experienced white water paddlers.
- **Flat water paddling** – The lower reaches of the East Branch and the Sebois River provide quiet water paddling opportunities.
- **Fishing** - All the rivers and streams on the property provide great trout fishing.
- **Biking** – Former logging roads on the property provide extensive opportunities for biking.
- **Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing** – Excellent trails for cross country skiing and snowshoeing could be developed.
- **Wildlife watching** – Opportunities to find and watch moose and other wildlife abound on the land. Bird watching, particularly for northern forest species, could be a very popular activity.

Above information based on written materials by Bart DeWolf, PhD., Maine Natural Areas Program, Dave Publicover, Ph.D., and Beginning with Habitat.

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