



March 4, 2014

The Honorable Angus S. King, c/o Kay Rand, Chief of Staff (Kay_Rand@king.senate.gov)

RE: Letter of Support, Katahdin Woods & Waters National Park & National Recreation Area

Dear Senator King:

The Board of Directors of the Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce (KACC) is writing to ask that you support the creation of the above referenced National Park and National Recreation Area. We believe that this substantial investment in our region will strengthen the local economy, create new jobs and help to turn the tide on the declining population in the Katahdin Region.

The KACC currently serves 140 members in the communities of Millinocket, East Millinocket, Medway, Lincoln, Patten, Sherman, Brownville and surrounding unorganized townships, as well as member businesses and organizations in Greenville, Skowhegan, Augusta, Ashland, Mt. Chase, Springfield, Hampden and Presque Isle. Our mission includes, but is not limited to, assisting in the development of recreation and tourism businesses and opportunities related to our local natural resources to provide jobs for people in the Katahdin Region; and, encouraging and assisting with community developments that result in improvements to the business and community infrastructure in the Katahdin Region.

Elliotsville Plantation, a privately owned, Maine-based foundation, would like to donate up to 150,000 acres of land to create a National Park and National Recreation Area (NRA) (75,000 acres respectively) east of Baxter State Park along the East Branch of the Penobscot River. In addition, Elliotsville Plantation would create a substantial endowment for the permanent maintenance and operation of the park and recreation area.

The National Park would provide hiking, bicycling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, camping, paddling, fishing, wildlife watching, horseback riding and scenic drives as well as the preservation of natural, historic and cultural resources. The National Recreation Area (NRA) would allow hunting and snowmobiling as well as the aforementioned recreational activities.

Headwaters Economics, an independent nonprofit research group that assists the public and elected officials in making informed land management and community development decisions, outlines the economic benefits of a new National Park and NRA for Penobscot and Piscataquis counties in two comprehensive studies as well as a summary report of the two studies' findings, all available at <http://headwaterseconomics.org/land/reports/katahdin>. The reports were created using independent data and conservative methodology, and have been peer reviewed by leading Maine economists, including Charles Colgan, David Vail and Rob Lillieholm, who verified that the studies' approach and findings were sound.

The KACC encourages you to review this information. It provides compelling evidence of the value of National Parks and National Recreation Areas to 16 communities similar to the two-county region in Maine.

The economic performance, diversifying economies, and potential job creation findings were positive and telling, especially in peer regions with National Parks alone or with National Parks with nearby National Recreation Areas; but were not as consistent in peer regions with NRAs alone.

The reports also found that the impact on the timber industry on 150,000 acres of private land would be extremely small. The land is 80 percent forested and could produce, at most, 120,000 tons of green fiber per year, representing less than one percent of Maine's annual fiber utilization. Sustainable forestry on this amount of acreage would employ 21 people to bring the wood to the mills, and it is unlikely that this would produce more mill jobs. At most, with indirect jobs in mind, annual overall timber operations could potentially yield a total of 50 local jobs. It is understood by the Board of Directors of KACC that this is irrelevant in that the current owners of this property do not plan to harvest the timber in the absence of a National Park, except for minimal harvesting for wildlife habitat maintenance.

For those concerned about its impact on industry, since the establishment of the Clean Air Act in 1977, there are no examples where air quality standards of a region have been made more stringent due to the establishment of a new National Park.

With the declining population and loss of a great part of our primary industry in the Katahdin Region, the KACC Board of Directors views the possibility of this National Park and NRA, with its abundant and unique forestland, rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, wetlands, spectacular falls, rare plant species and interesting geological features (such as Haskell Rock and Grand Pitch), as a potential avenue for viable, long-term employment. The economic reports predict a National Park and National Recreation Area would create approximately 1,000 jobs in both the private and public sectors, and would strengthen tourism and recreation in the region.

It is also reasonable when considering a broader economic strategy that the communities surrounding the National Park and NRA would optimize the potential benefits with improved educational facilities, services and municipal infrastructure, thereby creating even more jobs.

The proud heritage of the Katahdin Region will be sustained if we are able to include conscientious tourism and recreation in the economic equation. The region's awe-inspiring natural resources are a gift to be cherished and shared. Elliotsville Plantation is offering a piece of this gift, preserved for generations to come in the form of this National Park and NRA. It is important to our communities that our native sons and daughters, as well as others with love for this area, have a reason and a means to live and thrive here, growing their families and bringing businesses, industries and prosperity to the Katahdin Region.

It is with all of this in mind as well as our mission components stated above and the thoughtful consideration of this proposal, that the Board of Directors of the Katahdin Region Chamber of Commerce hereby offers its enthusiastic support for the 150,000-acre Katahdin Woods & Waters

National Park and National Recreation Area, and we encourage you, our forward-thinking delegation, to review the reports mentioned above and to lend your support to this endeavor.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter of support.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors, Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce

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Signature:












