

PROTECTING AND MANAGING TRADITIONAL ALLAGASH WILDERNESS WATERWAY RECREATION ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: The statute creating the Allagash Wilderness Waterway in 1966 specified several outdoor activities traditionally participated in along the watercourse. Additionally, there are other outdoor activities traditional to the watercourse. The identification and provision of opportunities for these activities, consistent with maintaining wilderness character, is central to long-term protection and management of the Waterway. An Advisory Committee has been created by the Bureau of Parks and Lands to assist the Bureau in identification of suitable opportunities for traditional outdoor activities and preparation of a plan to guide management of the Allagash into the 21st Century.

Introduction

The Allagash Wilderness Waterway is located within 24 unorganized townships and one organized town in northwestern Maine, in an area referred to in Maine as the "North Maine Woods."

It is almost entirely surrounded by privately owned land managed exclusively for forest products. The major private landowners include Bowater, International Paper Company, Seven Islands Land Company, Prentiss and Carlisle, and Irving Pulp and Paper.

Since 1990, the average annual summer use of the Allagash has been 43,540 visitor days. Summer day use has increased approximately 17% annually, while camping use has declined approximately 7% annually.

In the same time period, the average annual winter use was 11,000 visitor days. Winter use has increased an average of 9% annually. Winter use fluctuates widely based upon how early there is sufficient snow cover for snowmobiling and ice for ice fishing.

The Allagash Waterway was created by state acquisition of 22,840 acres of land between 1966 and 1970. The state-owned land is contained within a 500 foot strip of land, known as the Restricted Zone, along either side of the 92-mile long watercourse.

The "Waterway" however, is not just this state-owned strip of land; it also encompasses a New Construction Area, the One-Mile Area, and "Visible Areas."

The **New Construction Area** extends one-quarter mile from the outer boundary of the Restricted Zone. Within this area all development must be approved by the Bureau of Parks and Lands. The Bureau has approved 26 development projects in the New Construction Area,

primarily for road construction for timber harvesting. In addition, three state camps were constructed for administration purposes by other state agencies.

The **One-Mile Area** extends one mile from the high water mark of the shoreline of the watercourse. The Bureau of Parks and Lands must be notified of all timber harvesting operations and herbicide applications within this area. In addition, the Bureau must approve harvest operations and herbicide applications within **Visible Areas** in the One-Mile Area north of Churchill Dam.

In addition, there are several Public Reserved Land units located within the One-Mile Area totaling 34,155 acres, which are managed for remote recreation, wildlife habitat, natural features, and forest products. Many of these Public Reserved Lands are adjacent to the state-owned Restricted Zone.

These Public Reserved Lands are managed by the Bureau of Parks and Lands, the same agency that manages the Allagash Waterway.

The Allagash was dedicated as the first state-administered component of the national wild and scenic river system in 1970. A management plan for the Waterway was prepared by the Bureau in 1973. The Bureau is in the midst of updating that plan with the assistance of a 22-member Advisory Committee. In addition to three Advisory Committee meetings, there have been two field trips to the Waterway and an additional winter trip by staff. Two major tasks of the planning effort are to determine and provide for the recreation activities that were traditional at the time the Waterway was created, and to identify the policies, objectives, and strategies necessary to maintain or enhance opportunities for these traditional activities.

Traditional activities

Activities traditional at the time of creation of the Allagash Waterway in 1966 include:

- Canoeing and river fishing with and without the use of outboard motors;
- The use of watercraft with outboard motors on the larger lakes of the watercourse, primarily for fishing;
- Remote camping along the watercourse;
- Hunting along and on the watercourse;
- Hiking from the shoreline to several fire towers on nearby mountain summits;
- The use of float and ski planes to bring "sports" to favorite places on the watercourse; and
- Snowmobiling.

Overnight stays in rustic cabins at several sporting camps was also traditional. The Bureau was required by statute to purchase and remove most of the sporting camp cabins. Two however, were allowed by statute to remain; Nugent's on Chamberlain Lake and Jalbert's on Round Pond. These two sporting camps were acquired by the state and are leased for management. Major use periods for the camps are May through October and January through March. Use of these camps accounts for approximately 8% of the total Allagash use.

Non-traditional uses

Over the years, several activities that did not exist or were not common prior to 1966, have become common in the north woods of northern Maine. These include:

- The use of all terrain vehicles on trails, plowed roads, and frozen lakes in the winter;
- Camping overnight in recreational vehicles;
- Camping overnight in ice shacks;
- Moose hunting in October; and
- Day use of the watercourse from non-traditional access points or routes.

ATV summer use is prohibited by North Maine Woods, Inc., A landowner consortium which manages road access control gates to the north Maine woods area from May through November. The Bureau is a member of this consortium.

Management planning

To protect and manage traditional Allagash Wilderness Waterway recreation activities the Bureau and the Advisory Committee first had to define "wilderness," which was not defined in the Allagash statute.

Wilderness Character Concept

- Opportunities Are Provided For Traditional Recreational Activities Including Canoeing, Primitive Camping, Stream And Lake Fishing From Canoes And Small Boats, Shoreline Fishing, The Use Of Small Motors On Canoes And Boats, Hunting, Hiking To Mountain Summits, Day Use, Limited Float Plane Access For Canoeing And Fishing Parties, Snowmobiling, And Ice Fishing.
- Limitations Are Placed On The Number Of Motor Vehicle, Float Plane, Boat, And Snowmobile Watercourse Access Points.
- Water Quality And Quantity Are Maintained At Sufficient Levels For Traditional Recreation Activities And Water Dependent Resources.
- Historical Structures And Cultural Artifacts Are Protected And Interpreted.
- Rare, Unusual, Or Special Natural And Geological Features Are Protected.
- Opportunities Are Provided For Secluded Watercourse Travel And Camping.
- Limitations Are Placed On The Amount And Impact Of Recreation Use.
- Administrative Structures Are Unobtrusive From The Watercourse.

Seven policies will provide direction for management of the state-owned Restricted Zone, the natural setting of the New Construction Area, and the land and waters of the One

Mile Area. These policies will be pursued by the Bureau, landowners, and other resource management agencies.

Allagash Management Policies

1. Enhance The Wilderness Character Of The Restricted Zone.
2. Prevent Development In The New Construction Area That Is Incompatible With The Wilderness Character Of The Restricted Zone.
3. Protect And Manage Areas Visible From The Watercourse, In The Restricted Zone And The One Mile Area, To Maintain The Appearance From The Watercourse Of A Largely Undisturbed Forest Cover.
4. Identify And Manage Important Natural, Historical, Cultural, Wildlife, And Fishery Resources Within The Restricted Zone.
5. Identify And Manage Natural, Historical, Cultural, Wildlife, And Fishery Resources Located In The One Mile Area, Outside Of The Restricted Zone, That Are Visited By Waterway Users Or That Contribute To Waterway Character.
6. Provide A High Quality Recreation Experience For Traditional Uses Of The Watercourse.
7. Maintain Watercourse Water Quality And Ensure Sufficient Quantity For Wildlife And Recreation Uses.

With the wilderness concept and seven policies in mind, here is how we are addressing the traditional and non-traditional activities that currently occur in the Allagash.

Primitive camping:

- * Is allowed only at 80 authorized campsites (142 camping cells).
- * We will sample campsite use to determine which campsites are often filled to capacity or "crowded."
- * We will determine the physical condition of campsites and the degree of solitude available at each campsite cell.
- * We will develop a plan for creating new campsites and/or replacing or renovating existing campsites based upon daily use and physical condition findings.

Winter camping

- * Is allowed in two parking lots located outside of the Restricted Zone near Chamberlain Bridge, at authorized campsites, and in ice shacks.
- * We will continue to allow winter camping at the Chamberlain Thoroughfare and Kellogg Brook parking areas, but will not increase capacity beyond what it is today.
- * We will not allow overnight camping in ice shacks located either on the ice or in the Restricted Zone.

Sporting camp use

- * We will allow continued use of Nugent's and Jalbert's Sporting Camps. However, the number of cabins and

capacity at those camps cannot be increased beyond the number existing in 1966.

- * The repair, improvement, and replacement of existing camps and structures will be allowed using design and materials that are as consistent as possible with the original housing.
- * No motor vehicle access will be allowed except for administrative or emergency purposes.

Watercraft outboard motors and watercraft

- * Use of outboards will not be allowed on Allagash Lake and Stream. Use of outboards of 10 horsepower or less allowed on Eagle Lake north. In all likelihood unlimited horsepower will continue to be allowed on Chamberlain and Telos Lakes.
- * Personal watercraft, racing boats, and party boats will not be allowed in the Waterway.

Hiking

- * Authorized land trails to the watercourse will be listed in the Allagash rules.
- * Trails to nearby mountain summits will be maintained by the Bureau.
- * Traditional foot access routes to the watercourse will be maintained and promoted. No other walking trails in the Restricted Zone will be allowed by the Bureau.

Snowmobiling

- * Currently allowed on all lakes and ponds except Allagash Lake and Stream.
- * Authorized snowmobile routes to the watercourse will be listed in the rules. These will include several existing trails.

All terrain vehicles

- * All terrain vehicles will continue to be prohibited in the Waterway from April 1 through December 31, except for emergency and administrative purposes.
- * All terrain vehicles will be prohibited within one mile of Allagash Lake and Stream.

Float plane and ski plane landings

- * There will be 7 authorized float plane landing sites.
- * Lakes and ponds within the One-Mile Area where float planes may land will be listed in the rules.
- * Ski planes will continue to be allowed on frozen lakes and ponds within the One-Mile Area, except for Allagash Lake.

Canoeing

- * Only canoes will be allowed on Allagash Lake and Stream, and on the watercourse north of Lock Dam.
- * The size of canoeing/camping parties will continue to be restricted to 12 or less.

Day use

- * Day use has increased over the years while camping overnight has decreased. We will study the amount and impact of summer and winter day use to help determine if a day use fee system should be implemented, and we will consider other methods to manage day use, such as limiting the number of users in certain areas.

Hunting

- * Moose hunting in the Restricted Zone and on the watercourse will continue to be prohibited.
- * Other types of hunting will be allowed between October 1st. and April 31st.

Fishing access

- * Motor vehicle access to the watercourse will continue to be available at seven locations. Other motor vehicle access locations will be considered.

Historical structures

- * The tramway/locomotives and boarding house will be restored and educational displays will be provided at these locations.
- * Other important structures and features will be identified, protected, and managed according to interpretive plans for each.
- * Educational displays will be provided at the boarding house.

Enhancing the wilderness character of the Restricted Zone and the watercourse

In addition, there are many additional proposed strategies that will maintain or enhance the wilderness character of the Restricted Zone and the watercourse. These include the following.

- * Motor use of any kind, including powered ice augers, will continue to be prohibited on Allagash Lake and Stream, except for administrative purposes.
- * Power saws will continue to be prohibited in the Restricted Zone and on the watercourse, except for administrative purposes and at sporting camps.
- * Generators for winter camping will be allowed only at the Chamberlain Thoroughfare and Kellogg Brook parking areas and at sporting camps.
- * The discharge of wastes, including soaps and detergents, into the watercourse will continue to be prohibited.
- * The harvesting of live trees within the Restricted Zone will be allowed only for the construction of new or replacement administrative structures and associated roads.
- * Insect infestations will be allowed to occur in the Restricted Zone without suppression or control.
- * All wildfires will be suppressed immediately.

Conclusions

Providing suitable opportunities for the traditional recreation activities of the Allagash will be a difficult task. Even more difficult will be the task of limiting or prohibiting non-traditional activities. The Bureau is up to the challenge, but limited funding, reduced staffing, priorities elsewhere within the State Park and Historic Site system, and the demands of a society becoming more accustomed to utilizing new technology and new recreation equipment will be formidable obstacles to achieving the strategies identified for the Allagash. The Bureau will rely more and more on friend's groups, other volunteers, donations, and dedicated revenue to achieve our Allagash strategies.