



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

April 22, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to convey to you and your Administration my strong opposition to creating a National Park in the Katahdin region.

There is currently a proposal under discussion that would involve establishing both a National Park and a National Recreation Area in Northern Maine. While this "proposal" is constantly shifting as new objections to this concept arise, recent discussions involve transferring roughly 150,000 acres of land to the federal government for management by the National Park Service. While I appreciate the interest in land conservation, I cannot support ceding control of this land to the federal government and I will do everything within our power to ensure that this ill-conceived scheme is unsuccessful. I am joined by the Maine Legislature, which last spoke on this issue by adopting the enclosed Joint Resolution in opposition to the creation of a National Park, a Joint Resolution that received only 3 dissenting votes from the 186 members of the Maine Legislature.

Mainers have a long tradition of outdoor recreation, including hunting, trapping, fishing, snowmobiling and using ATVs. Unfortunately, the National Park Service largely deems these land uses incompatible with a National Park. The creation of another National Park in Maine will only diminish the ability of Mainers to access land and Great Ponds in Northern Maine for traditional activities. Of particular concern are the potential effects of a National Park on the continuity of the snowmobile trail system in Maine, a system that the State and private individuals have invested heavily in for years.

Proponents of another National Park in Maine have tried touting the economic benefits of this scheme by discussing studies performed by a pro-National Park consultancy. These economic promises, based on loose comparisons to other regions of the United States, provide only false hope to those who live in this region. The Katahdin region is certainly in need of economic development, but it will not be achieved through a National Park. This region's assets include access to important private infrastructure and Maine's forestry resources. These strengths, which will lead to economic recovery, are exactly what are put in danger by a National Park that seeks to prevent the use of Maine's natural resources. This proposal would have negative



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ramifications for the immediate area and the rest of the State by placing additional limits on Maine's wood supply.

I also have strong concerns regarding the loss of local and state control of this area. This land is successfully and actively managed now under existing state and local regulation. It will only be more susceptible to the dangers of forest fire than it is at present due to the National Park Service's prohibition on timber harvesting. Subjecting this land to federal oversight has the potential not only to take this land off of the tax rolls but also to shift the center of decision-making for this property out of Maine and to Washington D.C. When there are problems with Maine's State Parks, Mainers know whom to call to get these issues resolved. Federal oversight, however, means Mainers would be dependent on a largely unaccountable and faceless bureaucracy hundreds of miles away to resolve their problems. Is the federal government the best steward and best manager of this land? Is the National Park Service that is dependent on annual appropriations and is the subject of occasional government shutdowns the proper entity to oversee more land in Maine? Clearly, this is not government closest to the people.

I am also gravely concerned about this proposal's impact on what would be neighboring Baxter State Park. This Park, which was established in the 1930s, is one of Maine's greatest achievements and was a gift of former Governor Percival Baxter to the people of Maine. Proponents of this proposal, which would border Baxter State Park, have been silent as to the impact on our existing Park. If the proposed National Park would really result in the number of visitors projected, how could this proposal not forever change the face of Baxter State Park, which contains the only land of true significance in this area? Governor Baxter himself in 1936 recognized that the State Park land was the only land of significance, stating "All the land outside is just more wild land, such land as can be found in countless places within our state."

You see, Mr. President, this is not the first time a National Park has been proposed in this area. In the mid-1930's, there was serious thought given to making the Katahdin region a National Park. Legislation to this effect was even introduced in Congress. At that point, then former Governor Baxter recognized the folly in this idea and he successfully waged a personal battle for years to stop a National Park from being established in this exact area of Maine. In a letter to Dr. Earle A. Pritchard, who worked for the National Park Service, Governor Baxter stated "I certainly hope the Federal Government will not come into this region and as to the second suggestion that Baxter State Park be merged into a National Park it just cannot be done . . ."


Governor Baxter, during the height of the Great Depression, did not think that the benefits of a National Park in the Katahdin region outweighed what would be lost by the people of Maine. I'm afraid that same calculus still holds true.

Maine is no stranger to the cause of conservation, with Baxter State Park being the prime example of this ethic. Currently, more than 3.5 million acres of our State are protected by conservation easements. This includes over 2.1 million acres of productive, working forestland. If additional land needs to be protected in the Katahdin region to spur economic development, I welcome that discussion with proponents of a National Park, and I would gladly consider expanding Baxter State Park to make that a reality. Federal control of this area, however, is completely unnecessary and counterproductive to growing the economy of this region.

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I want to be perfectly clear, I, as Maine's Chief Executive, oppose the establishment of a second National Park in Maine. While I remain Governor, a National Park is not welcome in this State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul R. LePage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the word "Page".

Paul R. LePage
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell
Senator Susan M. Collins
Senator Angus S. King
Senator Lisa A. Murkowski
Congresswoman Rochelle M. Pingree
Congressman Bruce L. Poliquin
Congressman Robert W. Bishop

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND ELEVEN

**JOINT RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING THE PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES, THE UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF
THE INTERIOR AND THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO
OPPOSE THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL PARK IN MAINE'S
NORTH WOODS**

WE, your Memorialists, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Maine now assembled in the First Regular Session, most respectfully present and petition the President of the United States, the United States Secretary of the Interior and the United States Congress as follows:

WHEREAS, Maine residents and visitors enjoy the privilege of using large tracts of private land in the north woods for recreational uses such as snowmobiling, hunting, hiking, fishing, bird watching and other activities; and

WHEREAS, the future of that private land is of great importance to the people of Maine and their outdoor heritage; and

WHEREAS, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and many of the large landowners have entered or are entering into cooperative wildlife management agreements that ensure the future of deer yards and other critical wildlife habitat in the north woods; and

WHEREAS, state agencies, private landowners and nonprofit organizations are cooperating in an unprecedented effort to secure permanent rights of access to the north woods and keep valuable recreational property and natural habitat undeveloped through conservation easements; and

WHEREAS, federal ownership or control of the north woods would create many problems including limitations on timber supply to the forest products industry, reduced recreational access and loss of local and state control of these areas; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, your Memorialists, oppose the creation of a national park in Maine's north woods and request that the President of the United States and Secretary of the Interior Kenneth Salazar deny requests to conduct a feasibility study concerning establishing a national park in Maine's north woods; and be it further

RESOLVED: That suitable copies of this resolution, duly authenticated by the Secretary of State, be transmitted to the Honorable Barack H. Obama, President of the United States, to the Secretary of the Interior, Kenneth Salazar, to the President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and to each Member of the Maine Congressional Delegation.