

# Bangor Daily News

Founded in 1889

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## A NATIONAL PARK MAKES SENSE FOR MAINE'S NORTH WOODS

A Maine North Woods national park has been the subject of debate for more than two decades. In that time, the economic landscape of the Katahdin region has shifted dramatically — for the worse — and the ownership of much of the timberland stretching from Millinocket to the Canadian border has changed hands. A long tradition of mill jobs available to area residents right out of high school and open access to mill-owned land has gradually eroded, leaving an uncertain future.

The park plan, too, has changed. The oversized 3 million-acre plan from RESTORE: The North Woods has given way to a more reasonable proposal for a national park and national recreation area, which could be up to 150,000 acres in size. Elliottsville Plantation, the nonprofit foundation started by Roxanne Quimby, will donate the land and a \$40 million endowment to help with the management of the park and recreation area. Hunting and snowmobiling would be allowed in the recreation area.

What hasn't changed in 20 years is the underlying debate over the prospect of a national park in Maine's North Woods. Park supporters tout the area's natural beauty and the economic benefits the national park marquee could draw to the region. Opponents worry about federal control in the region and the loss of timber supply and jobs. They say park proponents are overselling the park's promise.

Skepticism of a national park is understandable in a region with an ever-present legacy of two mills producing tons of paper along with plentiful associated jobs. But with those jobs now gone, the Katahdin region needs new life.

The proposed national park and recreation area will not cure the Katahdin region's economic woes, but it can be a focal point of its re-making with benefits spreading to Bangor and beyond.

The reality in the area is stark. Employment in the paper and forest products industries has dropped by more than half in the last two decades. In early 2015, about 5,500 people were employed by all of Maine's paper mills, according to the Maine Department of Labor. That's about the number of people who worked in the Great Northern Paper Co. mills in Millinocket and East Millinocket alone in the GNP heyday. Mill operators have put the future of more Maine mills in doubt since the Department of Labor's last count, which is bound to further depress employment.

The proposed national park and recreation area won't replace these jobs, nor will it stifle the timber harvesting happening in the region right now. The land owned by Elliottsville Plantation is already, and will remain, off-

limits to harvesting regardless of the national park proposal's fate. Plus, national parks coexist with timber harvesting across the country.

What the park offers is the prospect of needed investment that can play a part in ending the region's economic stagnation.

National parks not only draw visitors, they attract residents. Nationally, areas surrounding national parks saw larger population gains between 1970 and 2010 than the United States as a whole — and certainly much more than rural Maine. These areas also outpaced the U.S. in income growth and employment gains.

Numerous studies show that people want to live in scenic places with ample recreational opportunities. This idea of amenity migration is not new. Arizona successfully marketed itself as a scenic and liveable destination in the 1950s. Florida and Southern California have done the same.

Rural Maine can make a similar bid, but people well beyond Maine must know these amenities exist. Including these lands in a national park will immediately increase their visibility and grow their appeal.

And, as history shows, the valleys and waterways east of Baxter State Park have significant appeal. The landscape inspired early conservationists including Henry David Thoreau and President Theodore Roosevelt. After visiting the area in 1846, and climbing Mount Katahdin, Thoreau called for the creation of "national preserves."

"Why should not we, who have renounced the king's authority, have our national preserves ... for inspiration and our own true recreation?" he wrote in "The Maine Woods."

The landscape isn't much different today from when Thoreau, Roosevelt and the Penobscot Indians first found themselves in awe because of its beauty and power. The rivers are still untamed, the vistas vast and old trees plentiful.

We, and the majority of Mainers, believe the time has come for a national park and recreation area. That also means it's time for congressional action to move the proposal forward. Rep. Chellie Pingree, long a park supporter, could introduce the needed legislation in the House; Rep. Bruce Poliquin should support it. In the Senate, a bill sponsored by Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King would provide a strong endorsement of this worthy proposal. If no legislation is forthcoming, President Barack Obama can designate the area a national monument through an executive order.

Next year marks the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. This would be an ideal time to add a small part of Maine's famed North Woods to a system with a globally unprecedented legacy of preservation.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Good for the spirit

In response to Lance Boucher's Nov. 4 Bangor Daily News letter to the editor in support of a U.S. Senate bill to reduce air pollution from dirty stoves and wood fires, I would like to say that, personally, nothing rejuvenates the soul and relieves the stress of the day like sitting in front of a fire, hearing it crack, feeling its warmth and watching its glow.

Ann Grange  
Northfield

### All life is precious

The BDN in a Sept. 19 editorial criticized an effort in Congress to defund Planned Parenthood after the Center for Medical Progress released videos showing officials from the organization discussing the handling of organs from aborted fetuses.

Sadly, the "fetal tissue donation program" is a shameful practice that has the support of many.

It is quite consistent with a respect of life philosophy to believe that society has a clear obligation to provide health care for all, particularly the poor and the helpless among us. If defunding Planned Parenthood would make it more difficult for poor women to access other needed health services, then it is a strategy that should not be supported. But I wonder if this is so.

I pray that our state and nation will embrace a more loving option that all life is precious from conception to the grave. That would have made for a

much better editorial, in my opinion.

Charles M. Plourde  
Van Buren

### WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. OpEds may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

### Sports a positive

A high school friend of mine who lives in York shared the Nov. 3 BDN article about the Maine Principals' Association decision to put high school basketball tournament TV coverage out to bid. Today's kids need more positive role models and public display of their good actions, mostly sports.

Sports for most kids is not about winning or losing but is a way for them to take up time that may otherwise be spent playing video games or doing drugs. There is a huge heroin problem that is killing kids. In 1981, we didn't have to deal with this terrible problem. Since I moved back to the area from southern California in 2012, this is all that I have heard about and it is across New England.

Being able to have TV cover-

age of high school sports helps kids deal with the everyday issues and also to enjoy the sports arena in the presence of parents and friends at a very important age.

Aaron Snowden Jr.  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

### Gun rights matter

A very large and growing number of Americans believe the Second Amendment is the glue that holds the rest of the U.S. Constitution together and, as a result, protects their basic freedom. But gun control advocates fail to appreciate that Americans' desire to have guns in their home or on their person is not just to defend themselves against would-be assailants but also from overreach from the government.

Gun ownership creates a sense of confidence in a person's ability to defend his or her freedom and liberty. Guns may be legally and safely stored or carried, but they are always there as a last resort. Losing their guns would essentially emasculate their rights. Gun owners are not just rural, country folk; they are just as often suburban and urban Americans. They own guns not just for hunting and self-defense but for an overall sense of security.

Gun control advocates must realize that after 235-plus years of legal gun ownership that America is now a heavily armed camp. The gun control train has long since left the station.

Richard de Grasse  
Islesboro

## .COMMENTS

OpEd contributor, Heather Denkmire, "Yes, that \$5 latte was the right choice for me":

I agree that people should make decisions on what makes them happy and what works for them. Just make sure these decisions don't include taking money from others because of these decisions. If not, great for you and your decisions.

— *Iamright*

"Latte frigg'in' da," comes to mind.

— *Dolbylandfill*

Sometimes a \$5 coffee prevents much more costly mistakes. Being able to sit and think while you enjoy it can be quite priceless.

— *Dianne Peaslee*

I suppose it's actually a good thing that that BDN gives Heather Denkmire a forum in which she can try to work out her angst and self-pity in pub-

lic. Everyone has ups and downs in life, some more than others, but few choose to wear their troubles as a badge. I'm grateful that the BDN limits these pity party blogs to just one or two contributors, and that they include the Homestead section where we can read about people working hard, getting their hands dirty and growing happy food in the garden.

— *Breakneck*

Sometimes people who are struggling choose to give up paying for cable TV and instead take the time and relaxation to have coffee out a few times a week. So what? We all have different preferences and choices. Some things are of more benefit and value to one person than they are to another.

— *Mary Lawson*

No one will critique the coffee purchase. The typical "bashing" comments come when the

OpEds are about your experience with poverty, as if you were an anthropologist "going native."

— *hophead3*

OpEd contributor, Becky DeKeuster, "Marijuana legalization can build on Maine's medical cannabis model":

I hope we can have the sense to avoid the mess that Ohio nearly stepped in.

— *hood0shink*

I'm all for legal marijuana as long as crops and sales are controlled, with a limited exception for growing it privately for personal use. Let's stop the waste of law enforcement time and dollars in policing individual use.

— *pizanos*

What fun is it to do something that is legal? The rules were made to be broken.

— *Kaliss*

## OTHER VOICES

### WILL FEMA NEVER IMPROVE?

The litany of post-Hurricane Sandy compensation problems seems endless. Did we learn nothing from the aftermath of Katrina?

A federal watchdog found more than 29,000 Sandy victims awarded \$250 million by the Federal Emergency Management Agency might have gotten duplicate private insurance payouts for the same losses, which is against federal law. Among the unsurprising things exposed here: Some people will cheat; some people legitimately don't know the law; and FEMA, by relying on vic-

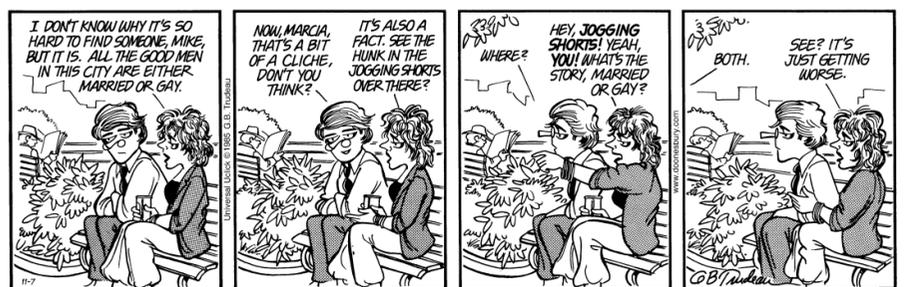
tims' self-reporting, can't catch either.

FEMA is also woefully behind in reviewing flood insurance claims thought to be underpaid because of such factors as faulty engineering reports. This despite the agency's explicit promise of a streamlined process when it started the work in May. Now, twice as many adjusters are working seven days a week to speed things up.

FEMA must learn from experience once and for all, so we stop following natural disasters with man-made ones.

Newsday (Nov. 3)

## DOONESBURY



## GARRY TRUDEAU