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March 16, 2012

#### Greetings From Baxter State Park:

Though this letter reaches you in late winter, we are already thinking about the upcoming summer and the adventures it will bring! We are also well aware many of you plan your annual excursions to the Park months and even years in advance. We are reaching out at this time to alert you to a change we expect will be implemented beginning with the 2013 Summer Camping season so that you might adjust your plans accordingly.

As you know, the Park is charged with protecting both the natural resources and the recreational experience of visitors. We join many other agencies and organizations in New England and the U.S. in promoting Leave No Trace principles to help us meet our mission in this regard. A growing body of research on social and environmental impacts indicates that large groups have a disproportionately greater impact than smaller groups. Many parks and agencies have already established limits recognizing this issue, including Acadia National Park, White Mountain National Forest, Green Mountain National Forest and the Adirondack Park Agency.

Since 1994, Baxter State Park has had a group registration requirement for groups of over 12 people hiking in the Park. For instance, in 2011, 38 hiking groups registered with the Park, with an average group size of 19 people. The maximum group size registered was 50. Approximately 60% of these hiking groups registered to hike out of Roaring Brook.

While this registration process has given us some opportunity to communicate with groups and their associated organizations, it does not include groups that did not register or identify themselves as groups nor does it include groups already camping in the Park at Group Camping Areas. In fact, Park employees report that some of the largest hiking groups emanate from group campgrounds. So while registration has offered some opportunity to educate and request cooperation of those leading large

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groups, we have continued to see many groups larger than ideal, with all the associated impacts

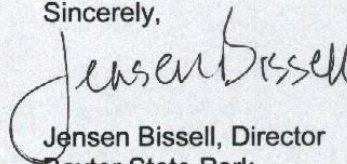
Since 2010, all parking spaces at Katahdin trailheads have been made available for advance reservation through the Day Use Parking Reservation system. This has proven to be a great planning tool for hikers and especially for hiking groups. However, in order to prevent the day use reservation system from resulting in an ever growing proportion of use from large groups, it has also become time for us to introduce group day hiking limits that will both protect natural resources and visitor experiences in the years to come.

Beginning with the 2013 camping season, the Park will limit hiking groups to a maximum of 12 persons. This acknowledges our long standing regulation requiring 1 person at least 18 years of age for every 5 individuals under 16 years of age, allowing 10 youth + two leaders to hike together. Groups applying for a parking reservation will be alerted to change their plans if they reserve for more than 12 people. If hiking groups consisting of over 12 people are encountered in the Park, Park staff will inform them of the regulation and the group will be expected to comply with all subsequent hikes, whether they occur during the same season or following years.

The Park is working to communicate this change to as many concerned parties as possible between now and May 15, 2013. If you know of anyone who should receive notice of this regulation, please share this letter and have them contact us for more complete information if they wish to know more.

We appreciate the role each of you plays in connecting others to the outdoors in a safe and respectful manner as you visit Baxter State Park. We hope your future trips are many and welcome any questions you have on this or any other issues concerning the Park. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jensen Bissell, Director  
Baxter State Park