

**Testimony of Lori Morrison, Director of Administrative Services
Baxter State Park**

**Before the Joint Standing Committees on
Appropriations and Financial Affairs
and Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

Hearing Date: February 27, 2025

**LD 210 "An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund
and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain
Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the
Fiscal Years Ending
June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027"**

Good morning Senators Rotundo and Talbot Ross, Representatives Gattine and Pluecker, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. My name is Lori Morrison; I am the Director of Administrative Services for Baxter State Park. I am here today to testify in support of LD 210, the Governor's Biennial Budget proposal for State fiscal years 2026 and 2027. This testimony addresses each item and proceeds in order from pages A-126 through A-127.

Baxter State Park is a 209,644-acre forested wilderness park established by former Governor Percival Baxter.¹ The Governor gave 28 gifts of land, which were accepted by acts of the legislature and included in the Private and Special Laws of the State of Maine, to collectively form what we know today as Baxter State Park. Governor Baxter prioritized protecting natural resources over recreational opportunities, ensuring the landscape remains in a "Forever Wild" condition. Uniquely, Baxter State Park is also a charitable trust. As a trustee, the State must hold Baxter State Park in perpetuity for the benefit of the people of Maine.²

The Authority is the governing body of Baxter State Park, composed of the state's principal officers in the professions of law, forestry, and fish and wildlife management, specifically the Maine Attorney General, the Director of the Maine Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, and the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.³

Governor Baxter intended for the Park to be financially independent, and indeed, Baxter State Park is entirely self-funded. He created a trust for this purpose in 1927 and donated a large portion of his estate upon his death, which grew into an endowment capable of funding one-half to two-thirds of our annual operating budget.

The budget reflects this revenue as coming from Other Special Revenue Funds. Other revenue streams for the Park include camping and visitor fees, the Baxter Park Wilderness Fund Trust, trust interest, income generated from sustainable forest management in the Scientific Forest Management Area in the northwest corner of the Park, and various private donations. The Park uses no General Fund dollars therefore, approving the Park's proposed initiatives would not financially impact the General Fund.

¹12 M.R.S. § 900; <https://baxterstatepark.org>.

² Whitcomb, Howard R. and Friends of Baxter State Park, "Percival P. Baxter's Vision for Baxter State Park: An Annotated Compilation of Original Sources in Four Volumes. Vol 1" (2005). Governor Percival Proctor Baxter Documents. Part 1, Pages 1-13. http://digitalmaine.com/baxter_docs/3

³12 M.R.S. § 901.

The three proposed initiatives in this budget aim to enhance the existing resources of the Park while ensuring the preservation of the "Forever Wild" landscape, in accordance with Governor Baxter's wishes as the trust's donor.

The first initiative, on page A-127, provides funding for replacements, upgrades, and improvements to infrastructure throughout Baxter State Park.

The second initiative on page A-127 allocates one-time funding to replace four pickup trucks. The older pickups will be reassigned for primarily in-park use and will be utilized until they are no longer safely operable.

The third initiative, on **page A-127**, provides one-time funding to purchase four snowmobiles to support park operations and winter maintenance projects.

This concludes my testimony on our 2026-2027 biennial budget. I would be glad to respond to any questions you may have.