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Allagash Lake Ranger Alissa Lutz atop Allagash Mountain

Allagash Wilderness Waterway 2023 Annual Report



Bureau of Parks and Lands

March 1, 2024



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Report Required

The Allagash Wilderness Waterway (AWW) is administered by the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL) within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF). A seven-member Advisory Council works with the Waterway Superintendent in developing and maintaining a strategic plan for the Waterway and advancing its mission and goals. The Council is required to report annually to the Director of BPL on the state of the Waterway. Similarly, the Commissioner of the Department is required to report annually to the Legislature's joint standing committee on conservation matters regarding the state of the Waterway, including its mission and goals, administration, education and interpretive programs, historic preservation efforts, visitor use and evaluation, ecological conditions and any natural character enhancements, general finances, income, expenditures and balance of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway Permanent Endowment Fund, the Department's annual budget request for the Waterway operation in the coming fiscal year, and current challenges and prospects for the Waterway (12 MRSA §1890 A-C). This report is submitted to meet both reporting requirements.

MISSION AND GOALS

Mission Statement: Preserve, protect, and develop the maximum wilderness character of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway by ensuring its ecological integrity and optimum public use through careful management as a wilderness area in the historic and modern context of a working forest. (AWW Strategic Plan, 2010)

In support of this mission, the following documents provide principal guidance for managing the Waterway:

- Maine Statutes: 12 MRSA Chapter 220, Subchapter 6 Allagash Wilderness Waterway, §1871-§1891-B
- Rules and Regulations for the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, 01-670 CMR ch. 2 (2017)
- Memorandum of Agreement between the Maine Department of Conservation (now DACF) and the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, February 2002
- Allagash Wilderness Waterway Strategic Plan, AWW Advisory Council, October 2010
- Allagash Wilderness Waterway Management Plan, Bureau of Parks and Lands, December 2012

The 2010 Strategic Plan and the 2012 AWW Management Plan include several goals, objectives, guiding principles, policies, and strategies to accomplish the mission. The plans are available online under the "Featured Links" at www.maine.gov/allagash. For the Strategic Plan, click on [AWW Advisory Council](#). For the Management Plan, click on [AWW Management Plan](#).

AWW Advisory Council Report

February 21, 2024

To: Andy Cutko, Director of Parks and Lands

The Allagash Waterway Advisory Council (AWWAC) routinely schedules quarterly meetings and is required by statute to meet twice annually. In 2023, the Council met in March, June, and September. All of these meetings are accessible to the public at a physical location, if conducted in that manner, but always digitally via the TEAMS platform.

We have had ongoing reports on how some of the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) monies could potentially be directed to capital projects on the Waterway. Both the Barn and Boarding House and historic structures will need a "Scope of Work" developed by an engineering firm prior to the stabilization, weatherization and any abatement needs. When these upgrades are completed, these structures will be protected for many years.

We are happy to announce the AWWAC reappointment of Josie Allen, representing wilderness recreation, and the new appointment of Amanda Barker, Ashland, as the new public member. Amanda worked for the Maine Forest Service in the Clayton Lake-AWW District and has a great knowledge of the Allagash River and the surrounding forests. She is now a biology teacher in the Ashland School District. These appointments will provide us with a full Council again.

We applaud the Allagash Wilderness Waterway Foundation (AWWF) for their continued fundraising and the initiation of important projects dealing with the natural values of the river and its surrounding lands. Janet McMahon has completed two field seasons of a Natural Resource Inventory and will present the data along with a written report to the Council in the coming year. An Allagash Ecology Guide will also be published. With the support of the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, the AWWF and others, a second year of the water temperature monitoring was conducted in the same nineteen tributaries and three mainstem locations as was done in 2022. Results from the past year's work will be presented at our first meeting in 2024.

The AWWF also sponsors several educational opportunities for schools in the St. John Valley by making students aware of the natural, cultural and historical values of the AWW. They

also sponsor 3-5 day trips on the Allagash River for junior high and high school students. All of these projects address unmet needs identified by the Advisory Council and AWW staff in either the Strategic or Management Plans. Their efforts are much appreciated by the AWW Advisory Council.

It is important to note that Superintendent Mark Deroche has coordinated a full campsite assessment with Noah Pollock, Stewardship Director for the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. These comprehensive inspections involved all AWW campsites, access points, and several abutting trails. The assessment will include recommendations for upgrades on a wide range of needs from erosion control to trail improvements to privy modifications and other site-specific features to increase the longevity of these already established locations. All shoreline erosion control efforts and campsite upgrades and repairs will include important wilderness character enhancements.

The AWWAC appreciates the regular activity reports from the Superintendent and the Chief Ranger Kevin Brown. The addition of pictures has greatly enhanced this report. The focus on staff training for a variety of reasons, including a wealth of safety training, is of utmost importance and continues to build a great team that is much appreciated by the users as well as this Council. We applaud the great work that they do.

Submitted per Maine Statutes

Peter M. Bourque, Chair AWW Advisory Council



Close-up of a Native AWW brook trout.

FY 2023 Allagash Wilderness Waterway Budget

Allotment Source	FY-23 Q1	FY-23 Q2	FY-23 Q3	FY-23 Q4	Total
General Fund (All Other)	\$88,000	\$20,000	\$12,593	\$13,401	\$133,994
AWW Account (All Other)	\$52,998	\$24.00	\$24.00	\$21.00	\$53,067
AWW Account (Capital)	\$40,000	\$30,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$100,000
Total	\$180,998	\$50,024	\$22,617	\$33,422	\$287,061

Revenue From Fees

BPL collects fees for the following activities in the Waterway: camping, portage services, sporting camp leases, and tolls to cross Churchill Dam. Fiscal year reporting is July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. Revenue from fees for FY23 totaled \$169,468.06.

Fiscal Year	Revenues from Fees
2018	\$137,062.31
2019	\$180,914.32
2020	\$140,739.12
2021	\$106,968.15
2022	\$190,773.27
2023	\$ 169,468.06

Revenue to AWW Capital Improvement Fund

Maine law requires that a portion of revenues received from camping fees be set aside in a non-lapsing account to be used for capital improvements in the AWW. The calculated revenue to this account for FY23 was \$115,484.85.

Fiscal Year	Revenue to AWW Account
2018	\$108,604.34
2019	\$121,804.61
2020	\$91,315.01
2021	\$58,234.45
2022	\$133,096.60
2023	115,484.85



AWW Umsaskis Lake Ranger Bob Johnston towing a canoe as part of staff training.

AWW Endowment Fund: \$23,974.50 is in the Allagash Wilderness Waterway endowment fund as of December 31, 2023. This is an interest-bearing trust account at the Department of Treasury.

AWW Donations Account: \$8,899.67 was in the Allagash Wilderness Waterway donations account as of June 30, 2023.



Allagash Lake Ranger Alissa Lutz providing transport for staff conducting the campsite assessment inventory.

Allagash Wilderness Waterway Fiscal Year 23 Expenditure Report (July 1, 2022—June 30, 2023)

Expenses - FY23	AWW Account (dedicated revenue)	General Fund (general operations)	Poland Spring Account (dedicated revenue)	Loon Account (dedicated revenue)	Enterprise (W) Account (dedicated revenue)	Donations Account (dedicated revenue)	ARPA Account (federal funds)	TOTAL
Salary and Benefits		621,827.22						621,827.22
Professional Services		1,957.70						1,957.70
Water tests		125.00						125.00
Gas (for equipment)		3,253.20		2,195.13				5,448.33
Lodging, Meals, Mileage		1,181.34		154.56				1,335.90
Electric								0.00
Other utilities								0.00
Misc. Rents								0.00
Rent - Buildings and Office		2,100.00						2,100.00
Rental of State Vehicle		55,218.46						55,218.46
State Vehicle Operations								0.00
Rental of Private Equipment								0.00
Repair - Equipment		14,143.38		197.64				14,341.02
Repair - Boats		832.06						832.06
Repair - Roads and Grounds		4,393.58						4,393.58
Repair - Buildings		2,122.52				85.90	3,329.01	5,537.43
Repair - Misc.								0.00
Trash Removal								0.00
Snow plowing								0.00
General Operations		809.93						809.93
Non-Employee Settlement								0.00
Occupational Health/Rehab								0.00
Employee Training		69.90		34.95				104.85
Food		1,983.16						1,983.16
L.P. Gas		7,731.73						7,731.73
Natural Gas								0.00
Fuel Oil								0.00
Firewood								0.00
Misc. Supplies (Industrial, etc.)		14,398.66		779.33	2,183.59	1,532.09		18,893.67
Technology (Radios, etc.)		8,802.36		4,292.58	3,978.31			17,073.25
Clothing		2,608.27						2,608.27
Printing and Publishing								0.00
Equipment		11,465.21	369.99			245.00	3,414.95	15,495.15
Grants to Public/Private organizations.								0.00
Administrative Charges*			2,389.47	1,381.77	1,083.84	78.11		4,933.19
Material Purchases for Resale					2,959.45			2,959.45
CAP Land								0.00
CAP Equipment								0.00
CAP Buildings & Improvements							3,512.60	3,512.60
CAP Structures & Improvements	91,539.99						25,500.00	117,039.99
CAP Infrastructures & Improvements	23,696.17			37,500.00			11,130.00	72,326.17
TOTAL EXPENSES	115,236.16	755,023.68	2,759.46	46,535.96	10,205.19	1,941.10	46,886.56	978,588.11

*Includes total of STA-CAP and DI-CAP on all expenditures and late fees. CASH BALANCE IN AWW ACCT AS OF 7/01/23 was \$308,087.75

Recreation & Visitor Use

Total public use for the Waterway was down 12.6% in calendar year 2023; total camping nights were down 18.6%, while day use was down 4%. Sporting camp use decreased by 5% in the 2023 season.

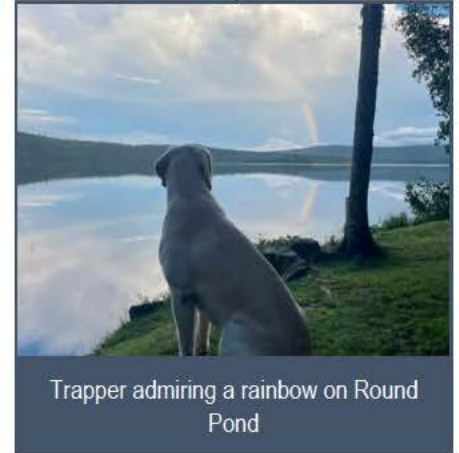
The Tramway Historic District was the 'Waterway's most visited day-use destination for 2023. A trail counter (DataNet) was used for the third summer season to help give more accurate data on the Locomotive Trail. The counter was placed near the trail parking area from May 12, 2023, to October 31, 2023. The total day use for that period was 2,714 visitors. This number represents a 26% decrease from the previous summer. Data collected showed that most visitors came to the Trail around mid-day, and Saturday and Sunday were the most popular days, respectively. Identifying future trends in this District is very important. Therefore, the trail counter will be placed in the same location during the same period and will have the same calibrations in the coming seasons.

During the winter, the trail counter was used from January 24, 2023, to March 26, 2023, and placed on the snowmobile trail between Chamberlain and Eagle Lake. Data collected showed that during that period, 2,585 people visited the Locomotives; this is up 11% from last winter season. Saturday and Sunday remain the busiest days, respectively. The busiest Saturday during that period showed 169 visitors. The trail counter will continue to be placed in the same location along the snowmobile trail in the coming years to help track visitor use trends.

All AWW lakes were free of ice on May 1, 2023. This date represents earlier-than-average ice-out for the Allagash Wilderness Waterway Lakes. Anglers reported good spring fishing through mid-June.

The Allagash River had higher-than-normal water levels the entire 2023 season, making for excellent canoeing in summer and fall. 2023 water levels were described as unique and rare, with the Allagash River flow in the Town of Allagash never falls below 860 cubic feet per second (cfs).

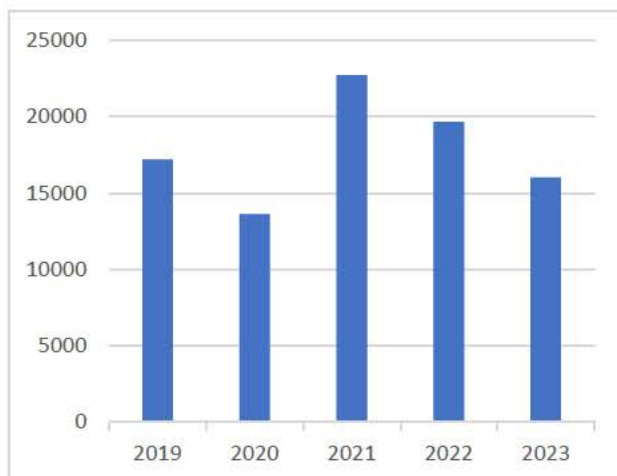
The 2022 season was also considered a rare high-water season, with the Allagash River never getting below 600 cfs. For comparison, during a typical year, water levels in late summer are often between 300 & 400 cfs, making the journey for some paddlers much more challenging as they seek the deeper channels to avoid hitting rocks and dragging their canoes.



Trapper admiring a rainbow on Round Pond

Year	Parties	Persons	Camping Nights	Sporting Camp Days	Day Use	Total Visitor Days
2019	946	3,869	17,207	3,562	11,865	32,634
2020	950	3,163	13,613	3,314	14,151	31,078
2021	1,195	4,969	22,711	3,295	13,137	39,143
2022	1,030	4,420	19,684	3,546	11,144	34,374
2023	1,098	4,065	16,024	3,364	10,669	30,057

Five-Year Camping Use Comparison



Oversize Group Permits

Group camping on the AWW is limited to twelve people. In the past, several organizations were allowed an exemption to this limit. These groups have been grandfathered and are given a permit to allow more than twelve people. In 2023, only two exempt organizations requested to use an oversized group permit. Eight oversized group permits were issued to two exempt organizations.

Year	Exempt Organizations	Permits Issued
2020	1	2
2021	1	2
2022	2	8
2023	2	8

Education, Interpretation & Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation

AWW staff continue to support and promote the historical preservation aspects of the Waterway by collecting, interpreting, and displaying artifacts found by rangers and park visitors. The artifacts found are displayed at the Churchill Depot History Center. The History Center is a popular stop for all Waterway users and many others who visit the North Maine Woods. Our Churchill Depot rangers do a tremendous job providing interpretive tours at the History Center. The tours occur daily during our peak season and are much appreciated by everyone who visits. A self-guided interpretive resource was developed in 2022 and remains posted in the History Center.

Outreach and Education

AWW Superintendent Mark Deroche spent a day touring the Wavus (girls) campus last spring, meeting with the Kieve/Wavus senior management team to continue discussing camper experiences, Waterway expectations, and safety topics. AWW Rangers Alissa Lutz and Keith Turdo participated in the two-day Camp Kieve & Wavus trip leader training in June 2023. The AWW ranger-led safety training highlighted a variety of "what-if" scenarios and provided Q&A opportunities to over one hundred youth trip leaders. AWW rangers will continue to attend the Kieve/Wavus training every spring. The AWW team will attempt to schedule similar meetings with the Chewonki Foundation, Maine High Adventure, and other similar organizations that lead youth trips on the Waterway every season. These meetings aim to provide an opportunity for the senior management teams and trip leaders to ask Waterway staff questions about rules and regulations, safety issues, emergency operating procedures, and various other topics to help prepare their campers for quality adventures on the AWW.

Chief Ranger Kevin Brown provides water and ice conditions and other pertinent seasonal and site-specific updates to interested people who have signed up for the AWW "Conditions and Alerts" page, which is linked to BPL's website. These "Conditions and Alerts" currently go out to 5,061 subscribers.

The AWW video series, originally launched in May 2014, continues to be a valuable tool for educating potential visitors about various aspects of the Waterway.

AWW Rangers Trevor O'Leary and Alissa Lutz gave presentations to a group of educators who were on an AWW trip sponsored by the Allagash Wilderness Waterway Foundation (AWWF) as part of their Youth on the Allagash—Classroom to River Program.

The AWW staff spend time every day informing and educating many Waterway visitors on a variety of topics, such as important safety tips, canoe/camping skills, rules and regulations, the history and culture of the AWW, recreational and sightseeing opportunities, and information about AWW flora and fauna.



AWW Ranger Trevor O'Leary provides chainsaw training to AWW staff and regional fishery biologists.



AWW Rangers demonstrating the power of teamwork during swift water rescue training.



New staff in 2023 included (left to right) Dalton Kelly, Cameron McIntosh, Chase Guerrette

2023 AWW Crew



The 2023 AWW staff surrounding the 1970 AWW Dedication Plaque at Churchill Dam (from left to right):
 Back row: Bob Johnston, Dalton Kelly, Chase Guerrette, Kevin Brown – the Chief, Caryl O'Leary, Trevor O'Leary, Mark Deroche, Cameron McIntosh
 Front row: Justin Buck, Ed Palys, Alissa Lutz, Trapper – the hound, Keith Turdo, Ryan Neal

Staff Training

The remote and rugged nature of the AWW requires that our Allagash Rangers be well-trained and prepared for a variety of incidents. They are often the first responders to emergencies in this vast wilderness, and visitors depend on them to provide the help they need. The AWW team meets in the early spring for two days of in-house training focused on Emergency Operation Procedures. The ranger team reviews many possible scenarios, and all staff are encouraged to practice these procedures regularly throughout the season. Below are some of the other required and specialized training Allagash Rangers completed during the 2023 season:

- Two-day Bureau of Labor Standards annual training – All staff
- Two-week Operations & Maintenance Ranger Academy – Ed Palys, Alissa Lutz, and Trevor O'Leary
- Two-day Chainsaw Safety – Cameron McIntosh, Dalton Kelly, Chase Guerrette, and Justin Buck
- In-House Swiftwater Rescue – All staff
- U.S. Power Squadron Boating Training – Cameron McIntosh, Dalton Kelly, Chase Guerrette
- Cyber Security Training – Mark Deroche, Kevin Brown, Jay Young and Trevor O'Leary
- National State Park Leadership School – Mark Deroche
- Two-day Wilderness 1st Aid Training – All Staff
- Two-day/overnight EOP Role-Play Training – All Staff
- Two-day Swift Water Training – Keith Turdo

Forest Harvest Notifications

In 2023, there were 24 active Forest Harvest Notifications (FONS) within the Allagash Wilderness Waterway (AWW) mile zone.

Two of the FONS were within the mapped visual area of the AWW. The visual area harvest applications were granted using the original conditions to minimize the visual impact of the harvest area, associated skid trails, harvest roads, and log landings. These sites were inspected and approved before any harvest activity. AWW Superintendent Mark Deroche, Allagash Ranger Cameron McIntosh, Public Lands Regional Manager Jacob Guimond, and Maine Forest Service (MFS) Forester Dan Jacobs inspected the harvest sites in August 2023. Five FONS were received for road construction within the AWW mile zone. All roads were in areas not visible from the watercourse. All roads were associated with timber harvests adjacent to the AWW. After harvest activities have ended, most roads are blocked at or beyond the mile zone.

There were four applications for road construction within the ¼ mile new construction zone. These applications were approved with the condition that the roads be blocked at or beyond the mile zone after harvest. These roads will not be visible from the watercourse or provide access to sensitive areas of the Waterway. There were seven applications for herbicide use within the AWW mile zone. The approved applications were for roadside brush control and forest management.

Projects Accomplished by Staff, Volunteers, and Contractors in 2023

Chamberlain Lake District:

- Installed a new table and tarp poles at Donnelly Point Campsite.
- Installed new tarp poles at High Bank and Boy Scout Campsites.
- Mowed the field at Telos Dam.
- Made repairs to outhouse at Crow's Nest Campsite.
- Plumbed and installed a new water heater at the Round pond Camp.
- Installed new boundary line corner posts on the Arm.

Eagle Lake District:

- Installed new tables and tarp poles at Farm Island and Smith Brook Campsites.
- Repaired table seats at four campsites.
- Repaired the outhouse roof at Pump Handle Campsite.
- Rebuilt the fireplaces at three campsites.
- Made repairs to the Eagle Lake Ranger Station.

Churchill Dam District:

- Stained the shop.
- Rebuilt the canoe slips.
- Leveled the foot bridge near the History Center.
- Installed a new table and tarp poles at Jaws Campsite.
- Made repairs to the canoe trailer.
- Road Maintenance.
- Installed new door on generator room.

Umsaskis District:

- Built three new tables and tarp poles.
- Built a new canoe rack in the parking lot for public use.
- Six new windows and trim in Camp Drake.
- Painted the interior of Camp Drake.



AWW Rangers Keith Turdo (left) and Bob Johnston building a new picnic table at Jaws Campsite on Churchill Lake.

Michaud Farm District:

- Installed new solar system at Farm Brook Camp.
- Built new table and tarp poles at Allagash Falls and Croque Brook Campsites.
- Installed new solar battery bank at Michaud Farm Ranger Station.



Cow and calf on the Michaud Farm lawn

Allagash Lake:

- Installed new tables and tarp poles at Little Allagash Falls and Carry Trail Campsites.
- Trail maintenance on the Carry Trail.

Allagash Wilderness Waterway:

- Replaced several tarp poles, leveled outhouses and repaired table benches.
- Stained, painted, and replaced several campsite signs.
- Cleared the following trails:
 - Churchill Dam to Big Eddy
 - Round Pond Mountain Trail
 - Allagash Mountain Trail
 - Lookout Trail (Eagle Lake)
 - Indian Stream Trail
 - Tramway Portage Trail
 - 19-designated snowmobile trails



AWW Ranger Bob Johnston assisting Moose Point Park Manager Ericka Baker in making blanks for our iconic waterway signs.

Dam Reports

Churchill Dam – Rebuilt in 1997, the dam is a 24 ft. high by 460 ft. long earthen and concrete structure. It stores water to provide recreational flows in the Allagash River. It is also managed to provide optimal fisheries habitat for the native fishes of the Waterway. The dam has significant cracks in the right upstream retaining wall and a discernable deflection in that same wall. AWW staff placed elevation monitoring pins in the retaining wall to monitor movement in 2012. There has been no movement in the retaining wall since the monitoring pins were placed. The deep gate supporting structure suffered significant damage from a passing logging truck or similar equipment in 2018. The dam was hit again in the fall of 2020, damaging the galvanized railing on the downstream side of the deep gate that had been previously marred. No one reported hitting the dam. An engineer was hired to draft plans to repair that damage in 2020. Those repair plans are projected to be put out to bid sometime in 2024. A 2022 inspection of the dam's fishway system revealed a need to replace six attached concrete baffles that have deteriorated over time. The baffles remain functional for now but are also projected to go out to bid for replacement in 2024. Churchill Dam was inspected by John Skelly from the Maine Emergency Management Agency on September 4, 2020. AWW staff should continue to adhere to the following inspection recommendations:

1. Continue to monitor and record any cracking and bowing in the fishway wall abutting the road. In the event of new cracking, please let MEMA know before repairing the damage.
2. All vegetation on the dam and 10-20 feet beyond the footprint should be removed and/or managed to prevent any embankment seepage.
3. Any operation and maintenance procedures for the dam, including but not limited to vegetation removal and gate mechanism operation, and exercising should be drafted and incorporated into everyday operations.
4. Review operations to prevent potential overtopping of the dam, and when practicable, consider dewatering upstream and downstream faces of the dam to inspect for any signs of seepage and degradation.

Lock Dam – This historic dam changed the course of water that originally flowed down the Allagash and into the St. John River. The water now flows south down the East Branch of the Penobscot. The structure is 179 years old and began as an earthen dam that remains roughly 15 ft. high and 280 ft. long. The timber facing on the dam was replaced with riprap during the winter of 2008–2009. The three-foot diameter spillway gate and outlet pipe installed in 1961 were replaced with a new outlet structure in 2018. The new outlet structure was constructed using precast concrete sections. Exposed sections were faced with wood timbers. The dam has a timber crib spillway with a three-foot drop to protect against the upstream migration of invasive fish species. This dam was inspected by John Skelly from the Maine Emergency Management Agency on September 4, 2020. AWW staff continue to adhere to the following inspection recommendations:

1. All vegetation on the dam and 10-20 feet beyond the footprint should be removed and/or managed to prevent any further embankment seepage.

Telos Dam – This is a remnant of the timber crib dams that were once common in Maine's Northwoods. During the log driving days, these dams were used to move logs and pulpwood to downstream mills. The structure is a 20 ft. high by 240 ft. long rock-filled timber crib dam. The entire structure above the sill was replaced in 1982 using the original plans. There is some documented movement of the rock-filled piers and misalignment of the dam's upstream and downstream surfaces. There is significant leakage under the north end of the dam. The wooden timbers are weathered and show some signs of rot. The Bureau has been monitoring pier movement since 2012. In the past, significant movement has been documented in the piers on the north end of the dam (piers #4 and #5). AWW staff have continued to monitor pier movement every year since, with no visible movement observed since 2012. The four primary gates were replaced, lifting mechanisms were rebuilt over five years, and the last gate was replaced in 2012. In 2017, Waterway staff applied a layer of rock to the upstream face and below the dam's spillways. This effort was a stop-gap repair to reduce leakage under the dam. BPL contracted Baker Design Consultants in 2015 for condition assessment and repair recommendations for Telos Dam. The report recommended reconstructing the upstream face and channel aprons to correct leaks associated with structural deterioration or to rebuild the dam altogether. The Bureau does not presently have funds to cover the substantial estimates necessary for either effort. Waterway management is committed to seeking the funds required to repair or replace Telos Dam in the future. Telos Dam was inspected by John Skelly from the Maine Emergency Management Agency on September 4, 2020. AWW staff continue to adhere, as much as possible, to the following inspection recommendations:

1. Continue to monitor and record any settlement, leakage, and boils in the gate channels and piers.
2. All vegetation on the dam and 10-20 feet beyond the footprint should be removed and/or managed to prevent any embankment seepage.
3. Consider dewatering upstream and downstream faces of the dam to inspect for signs of seepage and degradation.
4. Consider replacing damaged timbers and following guidance on repairs outlined in the 2016 independent consultant report.

AWW management was supported by Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife (DIFW) fishery biologists from the Greenville region in conducting the first Telos Dam flow studies of Webster Stream since 2005. This four-part study was performed to provide valuable data related to a 2022 leakage mitigation exercise performed by AWW rangers and volunteers. The 2022 flow studies were done before and after 98 burlap bags of organic matter were placed on the upstream side of Telos Dam at the two easternmost gates. The study done before mitigation efforts revealed that the leakage at Telos Dam had increased by approximately 55 cubic feet per second (cfs) since 2002. The flow study done following the stop-gap measures indicated the exercise was effective, slowing leakage by approximately 40 cfs. The AWW and DIFW teams could not conduct flow studies in 2023 due to high water levels that existed the entire season. Flow studies will resume next season, as will mitigation strategies to help preserve the dam until replacement funding is raised.

Volunteers

During 2023, 25 individuals donated 305 hours to the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. Volunteers helped Waterway staff accomplish the following tasks during 2023:

- Repaired and leveled outhouses.
- Performed campsite maintenance.
- Cleared existing trails.
- Installed new windows at Camp Drake.
- Removed damaged pine trees at Jalbert Sporting Camps.
- Replaced outhouse.
- Built new tables and tarp poles.
- Tramway restoration.

The value of volunteered hours is over \$4,994.

Incidents

Many of the incidents listed below were handled by AWW staff with assistance from the Maine Warden Service or the Maine Forest Service. AWW rangers have benefitted from the ongoing good relationship established with both these agencies. The rapid response of the MWS and MFS to requests for assistance is sincerely appreciated by AWW staff and Waterway visitors.

2023 Incidents

- Rescued dog at Bissonette Bridge.
- Recovered several capsized canoes in Chase's Carry Rapids.
- Provided First Aid related to a dislocated finger.
- Provided First Aid related to a fish hook in hand.
- Enforcement concerning trip leader permit.
- Contacted base camp concerning severe sunburn.
- Contacted MWS concerning overturned canoe.
- Assisted MWS with a loon entrapped by fishing line.
- Dislodged and retrieved pinned canoe in Webster Stream.
- Assisted hypothermic camper.
- Assisted camper needing 1st Aid and urgent evacuation.
- Located missing paddlers.
- Located, performed 1st Aid and evacuated an injured camper on the Mud Pond Carry.
- Enforced rules related to a pontoon boat.

Special Activity Permits Issued

- One permit issued for the Can-Am Sled Dog Race to cross the Waterway at Round Pond.
- One permit issued limited use of a snowmobile on the north shore of Allagash Lake to help blaze the restricted zone boundary line.
- One permit issued to USEPA for sampling with electro-fishing equipment.



AWW Rangers role-playing a remote victim extraction and life-flight scenario.



Keith Turdo providing swift water rescue training to the team.

Superintendent's Report

The AWW staff started the 2023 season by choosing the word “legacy” to help guide their decision-making throughout the year. Our collective goal, no matter how small the task, or how short the interaction, was to leave a lasting positive impact on our guests and the natural resource we serve. We built on the momentum from last season, staying focused on our goals to enrich the Waterway by expanding safety/operations training, assessing campsites, access points and trails, identifying capital equipment and buildings that promote public and staff safety, and collaborating with all our dedicated partners and volunteers on many meaningful projects. The highlights and achievements identified in this report are the result of the unwavering passion and commitment of our staff and many invested colleagues.

The AWW rangers participated in several specialized trainings this year. Rangers Ed Palys, Alissa Lutz, and Trevor O’Leary spent two weeks at the BPL Maine State Parks’ Operations and Maintenance Academy. Churchill Dam Ranger Keith Turdo attended a swift water rescue course, after which he spent time training other AWW rangers various water rescue techniques. Keith also led our team on its first visitor extraction role-play exercise on Chase Rapids. We also continued our two-day camping trip training, running Chase Rapids and making our way to a campsite on Umsaskis Lake. Our curriculum included recognizing and addressing camping and canoeing safety issues, addressing common rule violations and best practice enforcement methods, learning camping skills, and participating in campsite maintenance. The entire Waterway team also participated in a two-day wilderness first aid course. This course also included training on our new Garmin SOS/GPS inReach devices donated by AWW user Mark Hemmingway. His gift to our staff significantly aids in our ability to communicate effectively, especially in emergency situations.

The AWW experienced historic high water during the entire 2023 canoe season. Water levels on the Allagash River never went below 860 cfs, making for a fast, smooth ride. High water at Telos Dam and Webster Stream also made it impossible to continue our flow study and leakage mitigation efforts. We also discouraged many parties exiting the AWW from canoeing Webster Stream due to the dangerously high water.

The AWW Management Plan encourages the historical and cultural interpretive development in certain locations along the Waterway, and the Historic Tramway District is one of those special sites. This year AWW volunteer Roger Morneault and nearly a dozen others completed the final section of the tramway reconstruction project. They spent a week bringing back to life an abbreviated version of the tramway log discharge system, originally constructed in the early 1900s. The volunteers removed flywheels, large rollers, gears, chains and tracks from the mud and muck; pieces of the Waterway’s history that were nearly lost. Visitors can now view how sawlogs were moved from Eagle Lake to Chamberlain Lake on their journey to mills as far away as Bangor. The AWW is fortunate to have dedicated masterful volunteers to help our team complete unique projects like this and so many other AWW tasks.

This year the AWW became eligible to receive Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Bureau staff have been exploring ways to most efficiently use this funding for high-priority capital improvements and equipment purchases.

The AWW team collaborated with the Allagash Wilderness Waterway Foundation (AWWF), continuing the Coldwater Fisheries Habitat Water Temperature Monitoring Project in 2023. AWWF representative and retired Fisheries Biologist Paul Johnson has requested to extend this important research by continuing to monitor fourteen of the tributaries through 2026 to obtain a more accurate representation of the baseline thermal conditions currently provided by these tributaries for brook trout. The AWWF will also obtain temperature/oxygen profiles in the headwater lakes during their late summer period of stratification. This will provide a look at the amount of cold, well-oxygenated water available for the cold-water fish species. Findings will be compared with historical records to determine if changes have occurred over the years since the lakes were first surveyed, beginning in the mid-1950s. Waterway staff will continue to provide logistical support for this essential data collection.

We hosted the AWW Advisory Council meeting at the Churchill Dam headquarters this September. We had a productive, well-attended meeting with some of the Council and AWWF members spending a few nights at HQ. Additionally, the AWW team hosted another appreciation luncheon in September for DIFW, MFS, and the North Maine Woods (NMW).



AWW Rangers participated in the Maine State Parks Ranger Academy.

Superintendent's Report

Ecologist Janet McMahon completed a comprehensive report of all the data collected during the Natural Resources Inventory Project. This 'first of its kind' report will be condensed and developed into an AWW Natural Resources Companion Guide, sponsored by the AWWF. Janet plans to provide the AWW Council with a report presentation in June 2024.

Overall public use on the AWW was down slightly in 2023. Most notable was the decline in public use on the Locomotive Trail, with summer visitation reduced by nearly a thousand people.

The AWW has partnered with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail Organization (NFCT) to complete a comprehensive campsite assessment/inventory. Noah Pollock, NFCT Stewardship Director, spent nearly four weeks during 2023 visiting every campsite, access points and trail from Telos Dam to the official end of the AWW. A full report will include recommendations on shoreline erosion control and wilderness enhancements, level tent pad locations, mobility modifications at select sites, campsite cell location modifications, trail upgrades, privy assessments, and launch site adaptations. The report will be used to guide work and secure funding from federal grant programs. Data collected this past year has already been used to procure \$243,000 for an NFCT four-person work crew, various organic material, equipment/tools, and supplies to be deployed in the Churchill Lake/Depot District.

AWW Artist-in-Residence Peter Yesis and his wife Kim, of Searsport, Maine, spent two weeks at Lock Dam on Chamberlain Lake. Peter and Kim had the opportunity to explore, and be inspired by, many of the headwater lakes and surrounding landscapes. They also provided the AWW staff and members of the public with an instructive program on the process Peter employs to develop his paintings. Kim, who is an accomplished writer, penned a detailed summary of their experience on the AWW. Both Kim's story and Peter's art will be shared in the coming year.

Lastly, I want to thank our AWW rangers for leaving a lasting legacy by taking such good care of our guests and our amazing natural resources. We place great value on ensuring the well-being and proper conduct of everyone who recreates along our vast water trail. Our rangers responded professionally and effectively to a variety of visitor challenges this past year, including guests being lost, injured, evacuated, and hypothermic. I received many encouraging comments and letters celebrating the attitude, efforts, and expertise of our team as they went above and beyond, assuring that our guests had an enjoyable wilderness adventure. I also want to thank our supportive partners and friends from DIFW, MFS, NMW, BPL, AWWF, AWW Council, volunteers, and our neighboring landowners.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Deroche
 Superintendent
 Allagash Wilderness
 Waterway



The AWW team holding up our donated Garmin inReach devices during our Wilderness First Aid Training.



NFCT's, Noah Pollock, taking notes on what's needed to address the eroded shoreline at Smith Brook Campsite.



Visiting artist Peter Yesis working from atop Lock Dam on Chamberlain Lake.

To plan a trip or learn about the Allagash Wilderness Waterway:

Visit www.Maine.gov/Allagash for the following:



See 9-part Allagash video
Also on YouTube



See campsites on Google Earth



Receive Conditions and Alerts

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www.maine.gov/allagash
www.parksandlands.com



The AWW team with representatives from DIFW and the North Maine Woods during our partner appreciation luncheon at Churchill Dam HQ. We are holding up gift bags of Wicked Joe's Allagash Blend Organic Coffee. Wicked Joe helps sponsor the AWWF's Youth on the Allagash initiative. We may be remote, but we are surrounded by great partners – Thank you!

Additional Credits:

- A hearty thank you to all the staff in Bangor and Augusta who help with many administrative projects and providing information to the public inquiries regarding the AWW.
- **AWW Logo Credit:** Jocelyn Hubbell at Parks & Lands adapted the AWW logo to reflect its status as a National Wild and Scenic River.



Allagash Rangers after a day of training, getting ready for supper at Ferry Landing Campsite on Umsaskis Lake.

THE Allagash WILDERNESS WATERWAY

Allagash Wilderness Waterway Administration 2023

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Amanda E. Beal, Commissioner

Bureau of Parks and Lands:

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