



PEER

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY • PACIFIC

March 11, 2024

Director Andy Cutko
Bureau of Parks and Lands
Department of Conservation
22 State House Station
18 Elkins Lane (AMHI Campus)
Augusta, ME 04333-0022

Dear Director Cutko:

I am writing on behalf of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) to protest the Bureau of Parks' plans to build six structures within the most protected part of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway (AWW) corridor. This \$1.2 million in construction projects not only diminishes the wilderness character for the Allagash that Maine voters have overwhelmingly declared as law but is unnecessary as far less intrusive options are available.

For more than 50 years, the Allagash has been classified as a wild river under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. That Act defines wild rivers as "generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive... These are vestiges of primitive America."

Plans are now in the works to build six buildings in the wilderness corridor: three new offices and three new storage facilities at Chamberlain, Churchill, and Michaud Farm, respectively. The new offices are justified by the pretext that the current offices are not accessible as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Yet, the Bureau did not consider building access ramps or other rehabilitation to the already existing offices.

The proposed storage facility at Chamberlain could be built on public lands outside the AWW one-mile zone. Former AWW superintendents and concerned citizens feel that the current storage facility at Churchill, which was built in 1999, is adequate for use, as are the available historic barn and boarding house.

PEER is also concerned that the decision to purchase a 200-horsepower 23-foot landing craft capable of excessive speeds denotes that the Bureau leadership does not understand or care about preserving the wilderness character of the Allagash corridor. Having rangers going full throttle on Chamberlain Lake is the opposite of "primitive America" that the Allagash is supposed to preserve. The Allagash rangers have managed the river corridor quite well for many decades without speed boats.



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It is further troubling that despite objections from the National Park Service and two members of its own seven member Allagash Advisor Council, the Bureau is greenlighting its plans. In addition, the Bureau ignored protests from past Allagash Wilderness Waterway superintendents and rangers. These objections reflected, in our view, the correct belief that the Bureau should be protecting and enhancing the wilderness character of the restricted zone rather than detract from it.

PEER urges the Bureau to reconsider its plans and refrain from subjecting the wilderness character of the Allagash to a future death by a thousand cuts.

Sincerely,

Tim Whitehouse
Executive Director

cc: Jim MacCartney, National Park Service