

The Case for Maine State Parks

January 2021

State Parks and their Value to Maine

The Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL) manages 48 State Parks and historic sites, including some of the most popular and iconic places in Maine, such as Sebago Lake State Park, Reid State Park, West Quoddy Head, Lily Bay State Park, and Grafton Notch State Park. Through careful long-term stewardship, BPL is committed to:

- Providing quality recreational and educational opportunities
- Preserving natural, historical, and cultural resources
- Contributing to Maine's growing outdoor economy



Maine's State Park system set an all-time record in attendance in 2020, topping the 3 million visitor mark. State Parks connect people to nature, introduce families to the outdoors, and safeguard our natural assets. State Park employees are dedicated ambassadors for the state, and for many visitors, Park staff are the 'face of Maine.' State Park visitors and their associated activities contribute an estimated **\$100 million in revenue to the state's economy**. In fact, one study indicated that **for every dollar spent on a state park, \$40 are delivered back into the economy**. In addition, a [recent analysis](#) by the Department of Commerce indicated that Maine ranks third nationally in percentage of Gross Domestic Product generated through outdoor recreation.

Decades of Funding Backlog

Our State Parks are at great risk. Despite the commitment of staff to work with limited resources, roads and water lines are in disrepair, State Park offices and housing require long overdue renovation, historic sites need structural support, bath houses need replacement or upgrades, and campsites and trails need funding to become compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

It has been more than a decade since significant funds were directed to State Park infrastructure, and many Park roads have not been resurfaced in 30 years, creating a major safety concern. **In total, BPL has developed a maintenance backlog of costs up to \$50 million.** The Maine Land Conservation Task Force identified the need for Parks funding in its January 7, 2019 report, stating, '*The State Park System, like any business, must continue to invest in its physical structure in order to be successful over the long-term.*' Every dollar invested in Park infrastructure has cascading economic impacts, and failure to invest now risks continued deterioration, reduced visitation, and long-term erosion of Park benefits.

Immediate Funding Needs

Staff of the Bureau of Parks and Lands have categorized the most pressing needs as follows:

- Road and parking lot infrastructure for ten State Parks in most need
- ADA accommodations
- Restroom facilities/infrastructure upgrades
- Playgrounds (upgrades for safety and ADA)

Examples of Specific Funding Needs

- Acquired in 1946, **Reid State Park** is the first state-owned ocean beach in Maine. At 770 acres, Reid is now one of Maine's most treasured State Parks, but the poor condition of the bridge to Griffith Head currently requires us to restrict larger vehicles, including school buses, because of safety concerns.



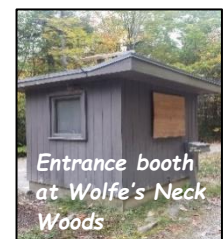
- Located on Route 1, **Camden Hills State Park** offers year-round outdoor activities, outstanding hiking trails, and camping. It is renowned for the panoramic views of Camden Harbor and Penobscot Bay from the top of Mt. Battie. However, the summit road is badly in need of grading and surfacing. Because of its many trails and proximity to Camden, the Park is very popular with families, but the outdated Park playground requires major renovations.



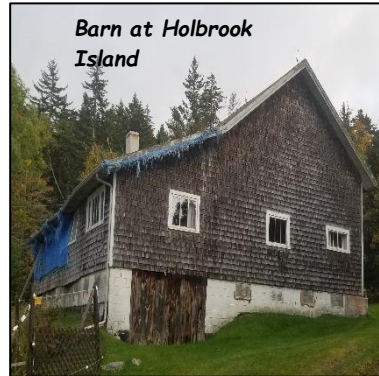
- **Bradbury Mountain State Park** is easily accessed off Interstate 95, just a few miles from Freeport. With a short hike to the summit and trails that connect to the Pinelands Public Lands, the Park is popular with hikers and mountain bikers. However, campground facilities are extremely outdated, with no running water for toilets or sinks. Other State Parks in need of bath house upgrades include **Range Pond**, **Peaks-Kenney**, and **Aroostook State Park**.



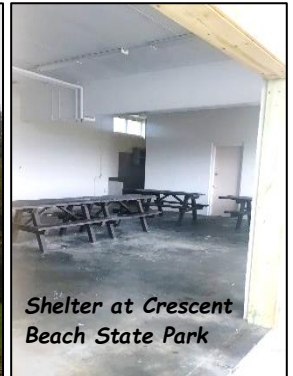
- On the shore of Casco Bay, **Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park** is known for its gentle coastal trails and outstanding guided nature programs. The entrance booth at the Park is representative of many undersized and non-ADA compliant booths across the State Park system (**Sebago Lake**, **Two Lights**, **Crescent Beach**, **Damariscotta Lake**). Major structural work is also needed at **Holbrook Island Sanctuary**.



- The cinder-block shelter at **Crescent Beach State Park** is in a beautiful location and has a high potential as a popular gathering place, with room for a commercial kitchen that could be used to generate event-related income. However, the roof is leaking, electrical and plumbing improvements are needed, and the installation of glass doors and windows would safeguard the interior while still providing a view of the ocean. Many other Parks have old buildings in need of structural improvements, including **Holbrook Island Sanctuary**.



Barn at Holbrook Island



Shelter at Crescent Beach State Park