

## TRENDS IN ALLAGASH WILDERNESS WATERWAY USES

IN THE 1970's<sup>1</sup>

Thomas J. Cieslinski, Supervisor  
Planning and Research  
Bureau of Parks and Recreation  
Augusta, Maine

The Allagash Wilderness Waterway is a 92-mile long river and lake corridor through the forests of northern Maine. It begins at Telos Dam at the eastern end of Telos Lake, extends westward to Allagash Stream and Allagash Lake in T8 R14, and northward through Chamberlain Lake, Eagle Lake, and Churchill Lake to the beginning of the river itself at Churchill Dam. The northern half of the Waterway, which is essentially river, includes a fine stretch of whitewater at Chase Rapids and forty foot Allagash Falls.

Passage of the Allagash Waterway Act in 1966 established the framework for protection of the river corridor by the State Bureau of Parks and Recreation. Companion legislation led to the approval by the people of Maine in referendum, of monies for the acquisition of a land corridor in average 500 feet wide from the high water mark; the State-owned area contains 22,760 acres of shore land and approximately 30,000 acres of submerged land. The Waterway legislation also gave to the State the power to approve timber harvesting operations on all private land within one-mile from the river's edge.

Road access to the Waterway is largely over private lumber company roads; primary access routes are from Millinocket, Greenville, Ashland, and Allagash Village. The visitor can also gain access by water; most commonly into Eagle Lake via Indian Stream from Indian Pond, Allagash Lake by Johnson Pond and Stream, and Mud Pond by portage trail from the West Branch Penobscot watershed. Access by float plane is allowed at designated sites.

The Allagash has a rich and diverse history from the use of the land by native Indians, to logging operations, to the visits of Henry David Thoreau in the mid-1800's, to

<sup>1</sup>Paper presented at the National Outdoor Recreation Trends Symposium, Durham, NH, April 20-23, 1980.

use of the river for sport fishing, thru the early protection efforts of the United States government and the State of Maine. In July, 1970, the Allagash was designated as the first State administered component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968.

The Allagash is now staffed by a supervisor with assistance from several year-round and seasonal rangers, who are responsible for maintaining approximately 72 campsites for summer use. The area also receives increasing snowmobiling and ice fishing use in the winter, but exact visitor counts are not available as such users are not required to register.

### VISITOR USE IN THE 1970's

Presented in Table 1 is a history of public use of the Allagash from 1966 through 1977. Total use fluctuated from a low of just under 26,000 visitor days<sup>2</sup> in 1968 to a high of over 50,000 visitor days in 1973. However, the number of parties and number of persons has generally increased annually since 1966 with highs of over 2,600 parties and 9,700 persons in 1978. A decreasing average length of stay and a decreasing party size are the primary reasons for less total visitor days than might be expected. Persons per party peaked in 1972 at 5.23 while average length of stay was highest in 1968 and 1970 at 6.85 and 6.83 days respectively.

### Factors Influencing Use

Though the Allagash became State administered in 1966, annual visitor use remained about the same through the 1969 season. In July, 1970, the Allagash was officially designated, in a ceremony at Churchill Dam, as the

<sup>2</sup>Defined here as 24 visitor hours, which may be aggregated continuously, intermittently, or simultaneously by one or more persons. Total visitor days is the product of number of visitor times average length of stay.

first State administered federal wild and scenic river. This designation, with subsequent national publicity, appeared to generate a steady increase in use from 1970 through 1973. In 1974, the first gasoline shortages were felt in the United States. Subsequent spot shortages and a major shortage again in 1979, may have been factors in decreasing use from 1974 through 1976 and maintenance of a fairly constant level of use from 1977 through 1979.

Table 1  
Allagash Visitation Data Summary<sup>a</sup>

Calendar Year	Number Parties	Number Persons	Persons Per Party	Average Length Stay (days)	Total Visitor Days
1966	1,011	4,141	4.10	6.52	27,008
1967	1,065	4,539	4.26	5.91	26,831
1968	884	3,786	4.28	6.85	25,921
1969	1,134	4,820	4.25	6.17	29,720
1970	1,251	5,460	4.36	6.83	37,303
1971	1,492	6,345	4.25	5.72	36,274
1972	1,579	8,260	5.23	5.20	42,952
1973	1,877	8,337	4.44	6.04	50,361
1974	1,684	7,477	4.44	6.06	45,294
1975	2,400	9,447	3.94	4.60	43,503
1976	2,356	8,619	3.66	4.74	40,834
1977	2,489	9,278	3.73	5.04	46,766
1978	2,664	9,734	3.65	4.82	46,882
1979	2,392	8,932	3.73	4.97	44,357

<sup>a</sup>No data available prior to 1966. Does not include winter use data.

Gasoline availability is not the only factor influencing use. Summer weather patterns can cause a fluctuation in use from year to year as can the publication of feature articles in national magazines. In an effort to maintain or reduce use levels, the Bureau of Parks and Recreation requested, in the early 1970's, that use of the Allagash Waterway not be promoted by State agencies. This request has been honored, but some publicity still occurs through private sector promotion.

The Bureau has instituted two other measures that help control use. A group size restriction of no more than 12 persons per party was instituted in 1974 and a fee system of \$1.00 a night for residents and \$2.00 a night for non-residents (children under 15 free) was instituted in 1975. The fee system was also instituted to help defray operation and maintenance costs.

By instituting these measures, the Bureau hopes to avoid the necessity of a reservation system to keep visitation at acceptable levels during the peak months of July and August. Efforts will continue to spread use equally among designated sites and throughout the visitation season. Oversized groups of 13 persons or more (commercial guides utilizing the Waterway for three consecutive years before the 1974 regulation went into effect are still allowed to guide oversized parties) are generally

required to utilize certain designated group campsites (which are off the general route of travel) to lessen impact on smaller parties.

### Results of Visitor Surveys

Three surveys of visitors have been conducted in the Allagash:

- a 1966 survey by the Bureau of Forestry;
- a 1973 survey of all 1,877 parties using the Waterway in that year by the Bureau of Parks and Recreation; and
- a 1978 survey of 1,309 parties (about 50 percent of those using the Waterway) by the Bureau of Parks and Recreation.

A summary of major trends is presented in Table 2. 1966 results are not directly comparable because the questions were asked and worded differently.

Table 2  
Allagash Use Trends

	1966 <sup>a</sup>	1973	1978
Maine Parties - percent of total parties	63	48	51
Fishing Parties - percent of total parties	72	33	30
Canoe Parties - percent of total parties	25	23	27
Parties taking thru trip (to Allagash Village) - percent of total parties	18	30	39
Fishing Parties - percent Maine led	-	78	81
Canoe Parties - percent Maine led	-	20	28
Visitor day impact of parties of 12 or more persons - percent of total visitor days	-	30	15
Percent of parties visiting Allagash Lake	4	5	5

<sup>a</sup>1966 questions were phrased and administered differently than those asked in 1973 and in 1978.

Parties originating in Maine constitute about 50 percent of all parties visiting the Allagash. There appears to be a trend towards increasing visitation by Maine residents, despite a slight decrease in fishing and a slight increase in canoeing (canoeing parties tend to be led by out-of-state residents). However, the percent of Maine led canoeing and fishing parties are both increasing.

The primary purpose of visitation is closely correlated to the month of visitation. Fishing is by far the primary purpose of parties visiting the Allagash in May while canoeing is the primary purpose of August visitors. The majority of July visitors are there for the combined purpose of fishing and canoeing.

Parties of 13 or more accounted for 30

percent of the total visitor day impact in 1973. Today, primarily because of the group size restriction imposed, they account for only 15 percent of the impact. This percentage should decline over the years as commercial guides, excepted when the 1974 restriction was imposed, eventually cease to guide parties in the Allagash.

The primary destination of the majority of Allagash parties is Allagash Village. Fishing parties seek the large lakes, however, especially Eagle Lake, while day use parties frequent the Michaud Farm area. Canoeing parties are most likely to pursue the through trip to the Allagash Village area.

The major entry point of Waterway parties is Chamberlain Bridge, followed by Telos Landing and Indian Stream. In 1978, 2.4 percent of all parties entered the Waterway from the West Branch Penobscot watershed; the majority of these entered via the Mud Pond portage to Mud Pond. In 1973, about 1.9 percent of the parties entered from the West Branch Penobscot watershed.

#### THE ALLAGASH IN THE 1980's

Will concern with the potential of overuse of the Allagash continue into the 1980's? The answer to this question will probably be very dependent upon the continued availability of an adequate supply of gasoline for automobile travel, the continued popularity of wilderness oriented canoeing, and whether or not the Dickey-Lincoln reservoir is constructed. Gasoline shortage and rising prices are predicted to continue. That in itself may be enough to forstall the need for additional considerations, such as a reservation system, to control use in the Allagash.

Can the opportunities and experiences offered the Allagash user be enhanced? A general concept plan was completed for the Allagash in 1973. That document addressed and presented recommendations relating to routes of access, the control of bridges, use and location of control stations, user regulations, the location and maintenance of campsites, historical interpretation, the management of sporting camps in the Waterway, safety and rules enforcement, information and publications, staffing, and forest resource management. The 1978 user survey found, for instance, that the tramway was one of the most popular points of interest in the Waterway. The 1973 plan recommended that the tramway area and the locomotives in the area be restored, maintained, and interpreted for increased user enjoyment. The Bureau has investigated this possibility and will pursue greater interpretation. Restoration and maintenance appear to be un-

economical.

Other recommendations from the 1973 plan, and from the 1973 and 1978 surveys, which might enhance user enjoyment include continuing to limit the number of bridge crossings to no more than are now present and to locate them in such a manner as to reduce the visual impact of logging traffic; continuing to encourage the use of biodegradable containers and packaging by visitors and a carry-in, carry-out policy; continuing group size restrictions to protect both the wilderness character of the Waterway and the social impact on smaller parties; rotation of overused campsites to allow ground vegetation to recover; continued restrictions on size and use of outboard motors; continued management of Nugents Sporting Camp on Chamberlain Lake as long as it maintains its present character; management of the land bordering the Waterway in a natural state except as otherwise specified in the Waterway Act; the provision of a few additional campsites in certain overused areas to meet present demand ( primarily the Churchill Lake/Dam area and Allagash Falls area); and the provision of a central camping/staging facility in the Telos Lake/Chamberlain Bridge area if present overnight use demands continue or increase.

Some of these recommendations can be implemented without increased staffing or budgeting. Others will require additional monies which are difficult to obtain at this time. If needs are pressing, these monies will be sought. It is likely, however, that in the 1980's emphasis will be on implementation of management recommendations to increase use enjoyment, rather than recommendations requiring additional funding.

A continued concern in the 1980's will be the management of Allagash Lake as a remote wilderness area. Allagash Lake has primarily been used for fishing. A special 1979 survey of Allagash Lake users indicated that almost 82 percent of the visitor days incurred at the Lake were by fishing parties. Over 52 percent of the users entered the Lake via Johnson Pond/Stream while almost 25 percent came up by Allagash Stream and almost 14 percent entered using the Allagash Carry Trail.

The Bureau of Parks and Recreation is cooperating with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to determine fishing pressures on the Lake. These studies will continue until Fish and Wildlife can determine what measures need to be taken, if any, to maintain or enhance the fisheries of Allagash Lake. Continuation of the remote, wilderness characteristics of Allagash Lake will be a major objective in the 1980's.