Welcome to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument Loop Road, situated west of Wassataquoik Stream in the south section of the monument. The route takes visitors through a diverse range of environments, from open meadows and forested ridges to wetlands and lakes, providing a unique and dynamic experience.

Officially declared a national monument by Presidential Proclamation on August 24, 2016, the 87,500-acre landscape was donated to the National Park Service and the American people by conservationist Roxanne Quimby, co-founder of Burt’s Bees personal care products. The monument lands, known to Native peoples for thousands of years, have supported extensive logging operations from the time of early Maine Anabans on. In addition, arrest, arrests, scientific research, and recreationists, and others have shared knowledge and inspiration from this landscape for nearly 200 years. Friends of Katahdin Woods and Waters, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to supporting the monument, hopes you will be one of many to follow in their footsteps.

Directions:

From I-95 Exit 244 (Medway): Travel west towards Medway approximately 0.8 miles, turning right onto Route 11 (also called Grindemede Road). Follow Route 11, also known as the Katahdin Woods and Waters Scenic Byway for approximately 20 miles and then turn left onto the Swift Brook Road. Please use caution when making the left onto Swift Brook Road as there is limited distance; please be considerate of your speed as you pass the residential area near the junction.

From I-95 Exit 264 (Sherman): Travel west approximately 0.25 miles, turning left onto Route 11. Travel approximately 5 miles, turning right on Swift Brook Road.

Travel the Swift Brook Road approximately 9.5 miles following the signs to the Loop Road. Sandwash Stream Camping and Picnic Area will be on your left.

Sandwash Stream Picnic and Camping Area: The Loop road begins at a 90°-swept sand and gravel pit. Its materials were once used for building logging roads along Sandwash Stream, where a series of dams have created “dead waters” or side-stream meandering stretches along the stream’s path. Walking the short trail to the left you will arrive at the dam site. Beaver dam modifies the natural environment and the overall ecosystem builds upon the change, making beavers a keystone species – a species on which other species in an ecosystem largely depend. Leaping over the parking area, the first half-mile of thick forest provides habitat for the protected spruce grouse and other northern bird species including brook-banded and blackpoll warbler, boreal chickadee, as well as both pines and spruce and red-crowned kinglet.

Loop Road Gate: The entrance gate is situated between a section of glimmer oaks and a mixed stand near the Monument. Combined with the spruce forest you just passed through, this area is particularly rich in biological diversity. To explore this area further another 0.3 mile past the gate in the first area on your right where you will find an abandoned gravel pit and a rustic unpaved parking area. To begin Loop Road Interpretive Tour, exit to the right.

Mile 0.3 - ESker Trail: From the parking area, a one-mile round-trip hike along the edge of the oaks to a mixed stand large meadow. Combined with the spruce forest you just passed through, this area is particularly rich in biological diversity. To explore this area further another 0.3 mile past the gate in the first area on your right where you will find an abandoned gravel pit and a rustic unpaved parking area. To begin Loop Road Interpretive Tour, exit to the right.

Mile 1 - FIRST VIEW: Just past Mile Marker 1 a small pullout on the left provides a view of almost 360°. Katahdin at 5,267 feet above sea level in nearby Baxter State Park. The name of this rugged mountain (pronounced “katah-deen”) can be translated into “great mountain.” You will be on your left. This is the peak of a winding road that begins at mile 18 on the Loop Road.

Mile 1.5 - WASSATAQUOIK ROAD & ORIN FALLS: Turn off the Loop Road onto the Road to Orin Falls. Travel approximately 2.5 miles to the parking area. Here stands the only historic feature on the road – a series of falls on the Draper Stream. The falls are on a recently built, narrow trail. The trail begins following a glacial esker above Wassataquoik Stream before dropping to create a bridge over the Orin Falls Waterfall. Continue on the trail, passing trees along the path, until you reach the bridge. Just beyond the bridge there is a large campsite as well as a tee-pee shelter. The trail passes through a section of Hardwood River Forest Terrace where the bed of the river here has cut the rock and exposed the bedrock sands and gravels. They are particularly rich in biological diversity. To explore this area further another 0.3 mile past the gate in the first area on your right where you will find an abandoned gravel pit and a rustic unpaved parking area. To begin Loop Road Interpretive Tour, exit to the right.

Mile 2.2 - LYNN POND: Drive 0.2 miles past Mile Marker 2 to parking for the short walk to Lynn Pond along an ADA accessible trail. The trail is on the opposite side of the road just past the parking area. This small pond, surrounded by a narrow, leafy-leaved bog, is home to a resident black bear that balances on its nose as it dives for aquatic vegetation above the edge of the pond. When insects visit the pitcher-shaped structure that holds water, they meet a watery demise. The plant veins disperse the insect and set it free. Upon many times as stop to stand and watch a bird or two take flight from each side of the road. Lynns and watch for older flycatchers, Canada, magnolia and pale warblers, hornet thistles, swamp sparrows and sparrow-throated sparrows.

Mile 3 - BLACK SPRUCE BOG: Walk a short distance along the road where to a spruce for cinnamon fern, swamp candles, skunk cabbage and swamp mums as well as a variety of other shrubs and bog plants. Please be considerate of your speed as you pass the residential area near the junction.

Mile 4.5 - High Point: Travel west towards Medway approximately 5 miles. The {High point on the Loop Road} is near mile 4.5. View from Overlook - Mark Picard

Mile 5.9 - MILL POND: The hike begins on a brief section of the IAT for about 0.5 miles up the gravel road logging road frequented by moose, bear, mountain bikers, and hikers, and occasionally logging trucks carrying wood harvested from adjacent lands. Within the first few minutes of the hike you will cross Katahdin Creek and pass just west of the first IAT campsites. Continue up the long hill and the trail heads downhill on your right. This first portion of the trail can be used as well as a trail for hikers from lower parts of the hill where you saw the logging road and hike through a section of thick young hardwoods before ascending through a mature softwood forest and then descends into the Maine Coastal Plain. Bring your lunch and enjoy the views from the top. Watch for moose signs near the summit where they hang in the cool breeze of early spring.

Mile 10.5 - WASATAPPAQUIK TRAIL: Turn on the Loop Road onto the Road to Orin Falls. Travel approximately 2.5 miles to the parking area. Here stands the only historic feature on the road – a series of falls on the Draper Stream. The falls are on a recently built, narrow trail. The trail begins following a glacial esker above Wassataquoik Stream before dropping to create a bridge over the Orin Falls Waterfall. Continue on the trail, passing trees along the path, until you reach the bridge. Just beyond the bridge there is a large campsite as well as a tee-pee shelter. The trail passes through a section of Hardwood River Forest Terrace where the bed of the river here has cut the rock and exposed the bedrock sands and gravels. They are particularly rich in biological diversity. To explore this area further another 0.3 mile past the gate in the first area on your right where you will find an abandoned gravel pit and a rustic unpaved parking area. To begin Loop Road Interpretive Tour, exit to the right.

Mile 15.5 - WASSATAPPAQUIK TRAIL: Turn of the Loop Road onto the Road to Orin Falls. Travel approximately 2.5 miles to the parking area. Here stands the only historic feature on the road – a series of falls on the Draper Stream. The falls are on a recently built, narrow trail. The trail begins following a glacial esker above Wassataquoik Stream before dropping to create a bridge over the Orin Falls Waterfall. Continue on the trail, passing trees along the path, until you reach the bridge. Just beyond the bridge there is a large campsite as well as a tee-pee shelter. The trail passes through a section of Hardwood River Forest Terrace where the bed of the river here has cut the rock and exposed the bedrock sands and gravels. They are particularly rich in biological diversity. To explore this area further another 0.3 mile past the gate in the first area on your right where you will find an abandoned gravel pit and a rustic unpaved parking area. To begin Loop Road Interpretive Tour, exit to the right.

Mile 19.5 - Bike Park: The trail continues on a side of the Loop Road leading to the First Marsh - Loop Road Gate. The first half-mile of thick forest provides habitat for the protected spruce grouse and other northern bird species including brook-banded and blackpoll warbler, boreal chickadee, as well as both pines and spruce and red-crowned kinglet.

MILE 20 - REACH | BIKE PARK: The trail continues on a side of the Loop Road leading to the First Marsh - Loop Road Gate. The first half-mile of thick forest provides habitat for the protected spruce grouse and other northern bird species including brook-banded and blackpoll warbler, boreal chickadee, as well as both pines and spruce and red-crowned kinglet.