



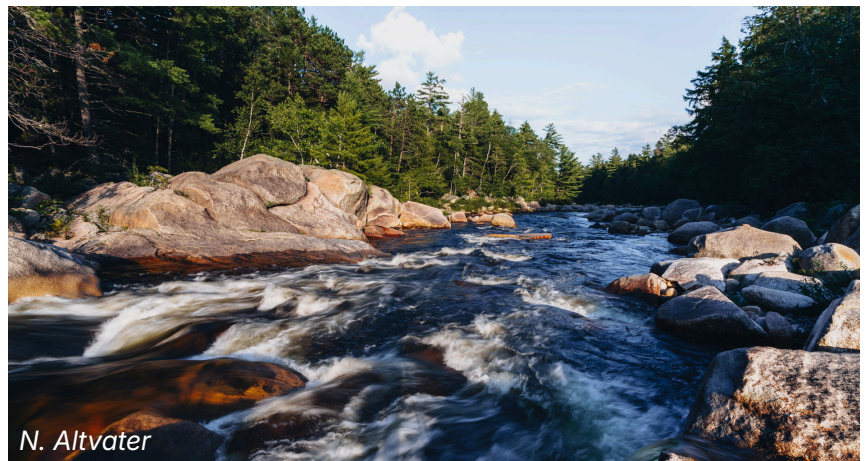
FRIENDS OF KATAHDIN Woods & Waters

IMPACT 2025 REPORT

Dear Friends,

2025 was an important year for Katahdin Woods and Waters with the official opening of Tekakapimək Contact Station—a space that honors Indigenous voices and storytelling, as well as offering a unique visitor experience at the monument. Designed through a collaborative process, Tekakapimək quickly became a destination in its own right and a source of positive national attention. Friends was excited to sponsor cultural programming at Tekakapimək this year, including a dancing and drumming demonstration by Firefly the Hybrid and Donna Decontie Brown. With regular operating hours that started in June 2025, Tekakapimək welcomed nearly 5,000 visitors during its first season, helping more people discover the magic of Katahdin Woods and Waters.

Your generous support helped make this happen, and perhaps you were among the visitors, with Woods & Waters Day weekend drawing over 400 people alone. Tekakapimək is welcoming more visitors than previous contact stations, including visitors of all ages and abilities thanks to accessible features from wheelchair-friendly paths to a family restroom and space for nursing mothers.



Thank you for helping people find connection to the landscape through a Wabanaki worldview, which for many is inspiring further exploration of these woods and waters and the histories that shaped them. We invite you continue reading to discover the many ways your support makes a difference, from our advocacy efforts to youth programs and community investments celebrating this special place.



Meghan Cooper
Development Director

PS: 2026 marks the 10th anniversary of the designation of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument! We can't wait to celebrate together on Saturday, August 15 in Millinocket - tickets to go on sale in June.

Visitors enjoyed a performance by Firefly the Hybrid and Donna Decontie Brown at the Eastern Lookout at Tekakapimək Contact Station.

Celebrating Dark Skies



J.M. Naturescapes

A growing sector of visitors, astro-tourists, helped Stars Over Katahdin reach over 400 attendees in 2025, marking its 12th and most successful year yet! Folks from across New England and beyond heard guest speakers from the National Park Service and Penobscot Nation, enriching the evening with cultural and scientific context. Guided by 10 expert volunteer astronomers with advanced telescopes and observational equipment set up under the darkest skies in the eastern U.S., many enjoyed seeing more of the night sky than they ever had before.

Our outdoor educators facilitated an experience for 20 local youth who spent the night in the dark: learning, exploring, bonding around the fire, and sleeping under the stars.

The community's enthusiasm for Stars Over Katahdin reveals dark-sky tourism as an important identity for the monument. Friends is proud to have helped fund a night sky ranger for the park service to help deliver more public programs in 2026!

Outdoor Learning for All Students

Friends' outdoor education program, Katahdin Learning Project, deepened its work in 2025, reaching students from Patten to Lincoln with place-based lessons and activities rooted in the landscapes and stories of the monument. Last school year, we delivered more than 100 programs to hundreds of K-12 Katahdin-region students, sparking curiosity, confidence, and connection to the outdoors. Summer and school vacation programs emphasized connection to community and finding joy in outdoor recreation.

Behind the scenes, education staff worked closely with a graduate fellow from the University of Southern Maine's Data Innovation Project to define a theory of change, develop a logic model, and upgrade our data collection and evaluation system. With a decade of programming in the books, we are grateful to have the tools to accurately measure and share our impact...stay tuned! The most powerful evidence of our impact comes straight from educators and students, though.

The voices and needs of local youth are paramount in our work. From professional certifications to always having healthy snacks on hand, member support gives staff the resources to meet the needs of our curious students.

"Scats and animal prints was one of my favorite lessons. I like to look at stuff and to touch stuff. It helps me remember. I go outside on my own when I get home and look for the same things I learned about. I even have a journal that I write in at home about my lessons."

J---, Katahdin Elementary School

Getting seriously silly before setting up camp at the group tent platform at Lunksoos



Our Changing Role: Advocacy and the Fall Federal Shutdown

2025 brought significant challenges for public lands nationwide. The National Parks Conservation Association reported a 25% decrease in permanent NPS staffing and 40% decrease in seasonal staffing. We observed the same impacts in the monument. Layer in a hiring freeze and threats to public history and science, and Friends had no shortage of talking points during meetings with elected officials in Maine and Washington, D.C.



Executive Director Brian Hinrichs with colleagues from Friends of Acadia and Schoodic Institute.

Our engagement with Maine's congressional delegation and our participation in national advocacy efforts supporting NPS reached record highs in 2025. Beyond advocacy, these challenges changed the nature and scope of our support of NPS. From paying internet bills to privately contracting for road grading, Friends was ready to step in where needed.

The NPS opened Tekakapimək Contact Station for its inaugural season on June 21, 2025! Photo: James Florio



This was most apparent during the prolonged federal shutdown from October 1st to November 12th. The shutdown created even more uncertainty for staffing, operations, and visitor services across the National Park System, placing added pressure on already strained parks. Throughout this period, Friends remained steadfast in our support, both publicly and behind the scenes. Most significantly, Friends provided an emergency donation to NPS in order to keep Tekakapimək open and staffed through Indigenous People's Day. We also worked through coordinated communications efforts to amplify key messages about visitor safety and respecting public lands.

The challenges of 2025 reaffirmed Friends' core mission of support, stewardship, and sustained engagement, even in the face of adversity.

Take a Closer Look



Visit friendsofkww.org/thebasics to find:

- Audited financial statements 2019-2024 (2025 to be posted in June 2026)
- IRS Forms 990
- Meet the Friends' Board of Directors
- 2024-2027 Strategic Plan

Your Support on the Ground

2025 was a big year for Friends-funded Priority Park Projects. The Katahdin Overlook redesign neared completion and will be ready for visitors this season. A new rest stop and short trail on the Hunt Farm Parcel along Swift Brook Road was completed. Road maintenance and stream crossing improvements continued, and key steps were taken in finalizing plans for new signage and wayfinding throughout the monument. We look forward to our continued partnership with NPS as these and other critical investments come to fruition!

Thank you to our corporate and nonprofit sponsors!

A full 2025 donor listing can be found at friendsofkww.org/supporters

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Mark your calendar for an extra-special **Woods & Waters Day** as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. Ticket sales and a weekend itinerary will be available in June.



AUGUST
15
SATURDAY



OCTOBER
3
SATURDAY

2026
EVENTS

Listings, ticket sales, and details at
friendsofkww.org/events



Plan a fall visit to enjoy gorgeous foliage, cooler days, and **Stars Over Katahdin**, FREE and fun for all ages.