

<http://pressherald.maintoday.com/story.php?id=293104&ac=PHedi>

Portland Press Herald  Maine Sunday Telegram

Letters: National park still a good idea

Maine Sunday Telegram

November 1, 2009



2007 Press Herald file

Mt. Kineo rises out of Moosehead Lake, a view that inspires those who favor preservation.

I appreciated George Neavoll's column ("Maine needs North Woods national park," Oct. 11) pointing out that national parks faced stiff resistance during their creation, but ended up the pride of their states, even enshrined on their states' quarters. Neavoll then calls for studying whether Maine's North Woods should become a national park. I admire his courage, because criticism comes swiftly to anyone suggesting a national park anywhere, including Maine.

However, before the usual combatants take their usual positions, it makes sense to take stock whether the usual conditions still exist in Maine. Times have changed: the landowners are no longer timber companies who hold the land for forestry. The landowners now are investment companies, who find that in the places Mainers most cherish, maximum profit lies in rezoning for vacation homes and resorts. We see the proof in the large development recently approved for Moosehead Lake. This area is precisely where Neavoll finds "Maine's Yosemite, New England's Yellowstone." It's now clear that arguing among ourselves will lead inevitably to

loss of the iconic wilderness character of the North Woods.

Given the change in conditions, perhaps it's time to seek new solutions. A national park has never been studied for the North Woods. However, there are other possibilities as well. The challenge of preserving enduring values in the North Woods may overwhelm the capacities of state regulation and private philanthropy. We may want to seek federal help to fund protection for a solution that embraces more public lands, and includes federal, state, public, and private participation.

With rational and open discussion, perhaps landowners, Maine government, interest groups, and the public can find a way to protect the North Woods. Maybe together we can craft a solution we'd put on a quarter.

Karen Herold

Cumberland

Where do we go from here now that Moosehead Lake seems headed for significant private residential development? Some would probably give in to what seems to be inevitable. However, those that see such a wilderness as this with a wider and more enlightened vision will hope for something better and finer to leave to the generations ahead.

Some say that Maine could become the new destination point for others in the country and indeed the world if we were to establish this unique environmental jewel of the Northeast into the Moosehead Lake National Park.

I believe this to be necessary and possible when everyone sees the historic environmental loss Maine could have in letting it be used for residential development. Economic development around and outside the park would be encouraged and promoted.

Several environmental protection groups like RESTORE and The Forest Ecology Network are actively working for the national park result.

Please let your voice be heard on this critical issue and never say it's too late.

John Oser

Parsonsfield