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Bureau of Parks and Lands  
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry



Backcountry canoeing, kayaking, boating, and fishing along the scenic West Branch, Sebomook, Lobster and Chesuncook Lakes

GUIDE & MAP

PENOBSCOT RIVER & SEBOMOOK CORRIDOR PUBLIC LANDS



## OVERVIEW

The upper reaches of the Penobscot River run through a mountainous, forested landscape defined by the powerful presence of Maine's highest summit, Mt. Katahdin (5,267 feet). This region is rich in recreational opportunities and traditions, and the Penobscot River Corridor (PRC), spanning over 100 miles of river and lakes, offers over 120 campsites and exceptional fishing, canoeing, and whitewater paddling. Wildlife abounds, and visitors frequently see moose, deer, black bears and bald eagles.

There are four distinct areas within the PRC: the Sebomook/Canada Falls area; the Upper West Branch and Lobster Lake; Chesuncook Lake; and the Lower West Branch.

### CANADA FALLS AREA/SEBOMOOK

Managed for recreation, wildlife and timber, the State's 41,436 acres of gently rolling hills and forests around Canada Falls and Sebomook Lake offer remote recreation opportunities—including hunting (deer, moose, bear, grouse and woodcock), fishing (wild brook trout and landlocked salmon), boating, wildlife watching and challenging whitewater paddling.

Weekly dam releases (July through September) below Canada Falls Lake generate 3-5 miles of technical Class IV-Class V whitewater in a highly scenic small-river setting. Minimum flows below the Sebomook Lake Dam ensure good whitewater boating (at beginning and intermediate levels) over a series of gentle drops called the Roll Dams, valued as a training area and for commercial excursions.

Primitive campsites border the rivers and lakes, providing great family camping opportunities and base camps for boating and fishing excursions. Two private inholdings, Historic Pittston Farm and Sebomook Wilderness Campground, offer lodging for those who prefer less rustic options. Both establishments draw hunters in the fall, and Pittston Farm serves many snow-mobilers (on the "Moosehead Loop" trail) and ATV users (who can now reach Pittston Farm from regional ATV trail networks on private land).

### UPPER WEST BRANCH AND LOBSTER LAKE

The wildest portion of the corridor, the Upper West Branch offers scenic canoeing, camping and fishing (with gentle waters from Roll Dam to Chesuncook Lake). Lobster Lake has predominantly wooded shores broken by sandy beaches and rocky outcrops (with a mix of sedimentary and volcanic formations that incorporate many fossils). Visitors enjoy watching the abundant birds, angling for landlocked salmon and trout, and hiking up Lobster Mountain from Jackson Cove.

### CHESUNCOOK LAKE

Maine's third largest lake, Chesuncook is popular among those seeking salmon, brook and lake trout, and white and yellow perch. It offers views to Mt. Katahdin and access to historic Chesuncook Village (dedicated as a National Historic Landmark in 1973). Much of Cero Island, just across from the Village, is a State-designated Ecological Reserve where forest ecosystems are kept in their natural condition and monitored over time.

### LOWER WEST BRANCH

Below Chesuncook Lake, the river enters the dramatic Ripogenuous Gorge, a two-mile granite-walled canyon with some of the Northeast's most challenging high-volume whitewater. The popular West Branch rafting trip begins at McKay Station, runs through the Gorge, and continues for 9 miles of flatwater and whitewater. Between Big Eddy and Ambejeus Lake is a mix of flat water and whitewater with several falls and stretches of heavy rapids. Past Debsconeag Falls, the river becomes calmer and there are scenic beaches (such as Omaha Beach, a popular swimming, picnicking and camping destination). Many campsites along the Lower West Branch are drive-to or easy walk-in settings (some are restricted to tents while others can accommodate large RVs).

The State holds a conservation easement on the privately owned timberlands along the river's corridor. This permanent legal agreement limits development within 500 feet of the water's edge and grants the Bureau of Parks and Lands the right to manage the river for public recreational use.



## TIMBER MANAGEMENT ON MAINE'S PUBLIC LANDS

The Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL) actively manages its Public Lands to achieve multiple sustainable benefits: resource protection, public recreation, wildlife habitat and marketable forest products (revenues from which help fund Public Land management). The Bureau employs scientifically based practices to achieve exemplary forest management fostering the health and viability of landscape-scale ecosystems. BPL's forest practices are green-certified by two independent auditors: the Forest Stewardship Council™ and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative™. No-harvest zones are regularly established to buffer sensitive natural resources and recreational areas in addition to the Bureau's Ecological Reserve System.



## PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Major funding for acquisition of State lands and other conservation easements in the area came from the Forest Society of Maine, USDA Forest Legacy Program, the Land for Maine's Future Program, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, the National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

This brochure was made possible in part by funding through the Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program, administered by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands.



## PROPERTY HISTORY

The rivers, streams, and lakes in the Sebomook/Penobscot region were highways for native people, who have been present here for nearly 12,000 years. Canoe routes in the region date back at least 1,000 years, linking the Kennebec, Penobscot, and Allagash rivers, are still enjoyed today by recreational paddlers traveling the historic 740-mile Northern Forest Canoe Trail.

Some of these paddling routes were taken by writer and naturalist Henry David Thoreau on three extended trips between 1846 and 1857. Thoreau's The Maine Woods describes his journey into a wild landscape that attracted both adventurers and lumbermen.

Lumbering, already beginning as Thoreau explored the region, continued to grow throughout the 1800s. Great Northern Paper Company operated two local establishments near Sebomook Lake to house and feed lumbermen and passing sportsmen. It purchased Pittston Farm and the surrounding township in 1906 and, at the peak of its production, the farm had more than 100 horses and a boarding house that could sleep 40 people. Great Northern also managed another farm, the Sebomook House (where Sebomook Wilderness Campground is now located). During World War II, the federal government used this property as an internment camp for between 200 and 250 captured German and Czech prisoners of war (who were sent out with axes and saws each day to cut pulpwood).

Over a span of decades, hundreds of dams were built along the river corridor to aid in floating logs and powering sawmills (and later paper mills). Both Sebomook and Canada Falls Lakes were created from dams. Today both dams are owned by Great Lakes Hydro America LLC and are operated as part of a headwaters storage system for downstream hydropower generation.

Ripogenus Dam, the largest dam ever built by a private company when it was constructed, merged three former lakes into Chesuncook Lake. The small logging settlement of Chesuncook Village was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1973. Only a few people still live in the village year-round, but it has an inn, Chesuncook Lake House, that was built in 1864 to serve the region's loggers.



## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Fees are required to access the North Maine Woods.

- The upper reaches of the Penobscot River Corridor lie within North Maine Woods recreational system: visitors must pass through a checkpoint and pay the required day use or camping fees. The State of Maine is a member of North Maine Woods, an organization that manages recreation on nearly three million acres in northern Maine. Fees collected at checkpoints defray the costs of managing public access and maintaining recreational facilities. [www.northmainewoods.org](http://www.northmainewoods.org)

### Logging trucks frequent area roads. Watch out for them and:

- Pull over and stop for trucks regardless of which direction they're headed; they have right-of-way.

### Know applicable laws.

- The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) Warden Service does search-and-rescue operations and enforces state fish and game laws, boating laws (on inland waters), and ATV and snowmobile laws. To learn more about applicable laws and to purchase appropriate licenses, visit [www.maine.gov/ifw](http://www.maine.gov/ifw).

### Pet owners should exercise caution.

- Trappers are permitted to use Maine Public Lands so be careful with your pets.

### Wear blaze orange during hunting season.

### Cell phones should not be counted on in an emergency.

- Cell phone coverage is spotty to non-existent.
- Plan carefully for trips in these remote areas: carry a map and compass. Notify someone of your intended route and time of return, monitor weather conditions carefully, and be prepared to wait out windy conditions on shore. River levels below dams can rise rapidly. Exercise caution and respect strong currents.

### Moose, bear and other large animals are abundant.

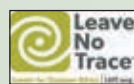
- Observe from a safe distance; do not flush wildlife.
- Food items must be securely stored when camping; keep tents free of food and food odors.

### Help stop invasive species.

- Clean all watercraft before they are launched and after retrieval. [www.maine.gov/dep/water/invasives/](http://www.maine.gov/dep/water/invasives/)
- Buy only local firewood. [www.maine.gov/forestpests](http://www.maine.gov/forestpests)

### Be a responsible and Leave No Trace.

- Learn more at [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org)



## SERVICES & FACILITIES

- Campsites** (limited to 12 people per site except at group sites that can accommodate 30 people): 42 along Canada Falls and Sebomook Lakes; 13 at Lobster Lake; 14 along the Upper West Branch; 22 along Chesuncook Lake; and 29 along the Lower West Branch. All sites have a fire ring, table and out-house, and many are accessible only by water.
- Three large-group sites** are along the Lower West Branch for which reservations are required (Horsrace, Salmon Point and Omaha Beach). Rafting groups eat lunch at these so reservations can only be made for one night and the site must be vacated by 11 a.m.
- Twelve boat launches.** [www.maine.gov/dacf/boatlaunches](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/boatlaunches)
- Picnic areas.**



## WHEN TO VISIT

The best paddling is between May and September, with the fishing usually best in either of those "shoulder season" months. Recreational dam releases tend to occur on Saturdays during July, August and September: call GLHA at 1-888-323-4341 for more on Canada Falls and Sebomook dam releases. For more on timing of McKay Station (Ripogenus Dam) releases, call Brookfield Power at 1-888-323-4341.

Mosquitoes and black flies are thickest in late May through July. Various types of hunting take place in fall, with bear bait season generally during September, moose hunting from late September through mid-October, and firearms season for deer in November. Snowmobilers usually find good trail conditions from December through March. The 20-mile Road to Historic Pittston Farm is plowed in winter; however, most roads are not consistently plowed so vehicle access in winter is limited. Snowshoers and backcountry skiers can explore surrounding lands from trailheads near Pittston Farm.



## PADDLING ROUTES

### UPPER PENOBSCOT RIVER CORRIDOR AND CANADA FALLS LAKE

Weekly dam releases (July through September) below Canada Falls Lake generate 3-5 miles of challenging Class IV-Class V whitewater. Between Sebomook Dam and Roll Dam, paddlers enjoy Class III whitewater through much of the season (at water levels from 350 cfs up to 3,000+). Below Roll Dam, the Upper West Branch offers a mix of quiet water and gentle quick water (typically a 3- to 4-day day trip to Chesuncook Village). Paddlers can take out at Umbazooksus Stream (a trip of 35 miles), continue to the eastern end of Chesuncook (another 17 miles), or head into the Allagash Wilderness Waterway (AWW) via either Umbazooksus Stream and the Mud Pond Portage or Caucomgomac Stream and Round Pond (both require substantial portages—for more details, see AWW materials).

### LOWER PENOBSCOT RIVER CORRIDOR

The Class III-V rapids in this stretch of river should only be run by guided whitewater rafts and experienced whitewater paddlers. See the AMC Canoe Guide to Maine or DeLorme's Volume 3: Northern Rivers canoeing guide for details.

## HIKING TRAILS

The Appalachian Trail is accessible off the Golden Rd. at Abol Bridge. Hiking trails managed by Baxter State Park link with the AT, providing several hiking opportunities in the Abol area (see Nearby Destinations).

Upper West Branch paddlers can stretch their legs hiking Lobster Mountain (2,318 feet) from the Jackson Cove campsite on Lobster Lake (a moderately challenging trail that is 2 miles one way and clearly marked).

Big Spencer Mountain (3,230 feet) is a remote but popular hiking destination with a 2-mile trail (including some ladders and steep sections) to its flat-topped summit. From the Golden Road, take the Greenville Road south toward Kokadjo approximately 7 miles to a rough gravel road (Culvert Road) on right, and travel 5 miles to trailhead (on left).



## PORTAGE TRAILS

Two historic portage routes connect Moosehead Lake and the West Branch of the Penobscot River: Northwest Carry (2 miles) and Northeast Carry (1.9 miles). These portages, first used by Native Americans, link the Kennebec and the Penobscot rivers, two of Maine's most prominent river systems. The Northwest Carry route is now part of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.

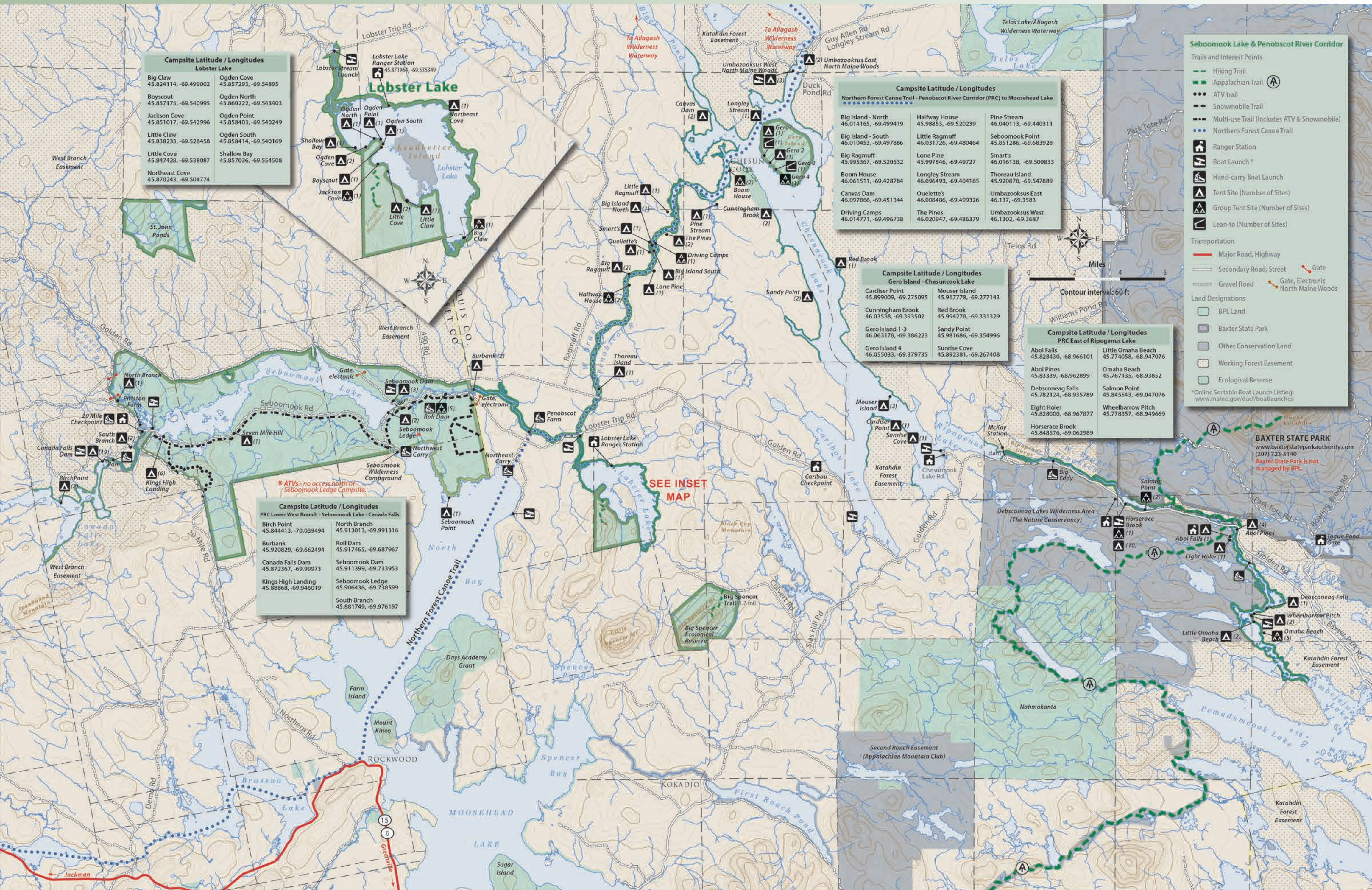
Along the course of the Penobscot River Corridor are numerous short portage paths around rapids or drops. Always research paddling conditions and scout challenging rapids.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE  
MONDAY-FRIDAY, 8-5  
Radio Dispatch Center  
(207) 435-7963

WEEKENDS & OFF-HOURS:  
State Police Dispatch Center  
(207) 532-5400, or  
1-800-924-2261 (in-state only)



# PENOBSCOT RIVER CORRIDOR AND SEBOOMOOK PUBLIC LANDS



**Campsite Latitude / Longitudes**  
Lobster Lake

Big Claw 45.824114, -69.499002	Ogden Cove 45.857293, -69.54895
Boyscout 45.857175, -69.540995	Ogden North 45.860222, -69.543403
Jackson Cove 45.851017, -69.542996	Ogden Point 45.858403, -69.540249
Little Claw 45.838233, -69.528458	Ogden South 45.858414, -69.540169
Little Cove 45.847428, -69.538087	Shallow Bay 45.857036, -69.554508
Northeast Cove 45.870243, -69.504774	

**Campsite Latitude / Longitudes**  
Northern Forest Canoe Trail - Penobscot River Corridor (PRC) to Moosehead Lake

Big Island - North 46.014165, -69.499419	Halfway House 45.98853, -69.520239	Pine Stream 46.040113, -69.440311
Big Island - South 46.010453, -69.497886	Little Ragmuff 46.031726, -69.480464	Seboomook Point 45.851286, -69.683928
Big Ragmuff 45.995367, -69.520532	Lone Pine 45.997846, -69.49727	Smart's 46.016138, -69.500833
Boom House 46.061511, -69.428784	Longley Stream 46.096493, -69.404185	Thoreau Island 45.920878, -69.547889
Canvas Dam 46.097866, -69.451344	Ouellette's 46.008486, -69.499326	Umbazooksus East 46.137, -69.3583
Driving Camps 46.014771, -69.496738	The Pines 46.020947, -69.486379	Umbazooksus West 46.1302, -69.3687

**Campsite Latitude / Longitudes**  
Gero Island - Chesuncook Lake

Cardiser Point 45.899009, -69.275095	Mouser Island 45.917778, -69.277143
Cunningham Brook 46.03538, -69.393502	Red Brook 45.994278, -69.331329
Gero Island 1-3 46.063178, -69.386223	Sandy Point 45.981686, -69.354996
Gero Island 4 46.055033, -69.379735	Sunrise Cove 45.892381, -69.267408

**Campsite Latitude / Longitudes**  
PRC Lower West Branch - Seboomook Lake - Canada Falls

Birch Point 45.844413, -70.039494	North Branch 45.913013, -69.991316
Burbank 45.920829, -69.662494	Roll Dam 45.917465, -69.687967
Canada Falls Dam 45.872367, -69.99973	Seboomook Dam 45.911399, -69.733953
Kings High Landing 45.88868, -69.946019	Seboomook Ledge 45.906436, -69.738599
	South Branch 45.881749, -69.976197

**Seboomook Lake & Penobscot River Corridor**

**Trails and Interest Points**

- Hiking Trail
- Appalachian Trail
- ATV trail
- Snowmobile Trail
- Multi-use Trail (Includes ATV & Snowmobile)
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail
- Ranger Station
- Boat Launch \*
- Hand-carry Boat Launch
- Tent Site (Number of Sites)
- Group Tent Site (Number of Sites)
- Lean-to (Number of Sites)

**Transportation**

- Major Road, Highway
- Secondary Road, Street
- Gravel Road
- Gate
- Gate, Electronic
- North Maine Woods

**Land Designations**

- BPL Land
- Baxter State Park
- Other Conservation Land
- Working Forest Easement
- Ecological Reserve

\*Online Sortable Boat Launch Listing: [www.maine.gov/dac/boatlaunches](http://www.maine.gov/dac/boatlaunches)

## NEARBY DESTINATIONS

The Penobscot River Corridor lies within the Maine Highlands Region that encompasses Baxter State Park and other notable North Woods attractions in Piscataquis County:

Moosehead Lake Shoreline Lands encompass several significant parcels along Moosehead Lake, including the renowned Mount Kineo with 5 miles of hiking trails.

Nahmakanta Public Lands, spanning more than 43,000 acres, offers lakeside camping and hiking trails (including 12 of the most scenic miles along the Appalachian Trail).

Allagash Wilderness Waterway has 92 miles of spectacular canoeing and fishing along Maine's only designated "National Scenic and Wild River."

Baxter State Park, with more than 200,000 acres and 46 mountain peaks (including Mt. Katahdin), provides abundant hiking, boating and camping opportunities and is the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail.

Debsconeag Lakes Wilderness Area (The Nature Conservancy), spanning 46,271 acres, contains mature forests and the highest concentration of pristine, remote ponds in New England.