



An Ranger's Quick Overview of Tumbledown Public Lands 2024

The effort of keeping this land alive is not easy as we all know, but well-worth the time and resources. Having boots on the ground, carefully curated management plans, and all other aspects in between shape the trajectory of the future at Tumbledown Public Lands is important.

As the prior steward in 2020 and 2023, the hiker dynamic seems to follow the same pattern this year in terms of variety of people. Everyone enjoys this beautiful land; from young couples to established summer camp groups, it is no secret these mountains attract all types. The majority of trail goers are usually respectful and understand the effects of high traffic. Talking to many seasoned Tumbledown hikers, they tend to acknowledge the steady increase of popularity even before it was purchased by the state in the early 2000s. And even for first timers, most of them arrive with the understanding that this public land is one of the most popular in Maine.

By Jared Briar

Overall Trail Statistics

Gathering data is essential for future management considerations and references. While car counts alone offer valuable insights, stats from the trail operations show what type of physical work went into the land. Keep in mind that these are only statistics for repetitive actions and don't represent the entirety of work put into the mountain.

- **Blowdowns:** 103 blowdowns were taken off of trails on the public lands. These trails include the Brook Trail, Parker Ridge, Little Jackson, and the Loop Trail.
- **Waterway Clearing:** While it is hard to determine an exact footage for this, a rough estimate would count over 2,700 feet of clearing trenches and waterbars this year.
- **Trash Removal:** About 28 gallons of trash was removed.
- **Fire Pits:** 22 fire pits were found and removed.
- **Corridor:** Roughly over 7 miles of trail was trimmed along each side while taking down dead-standing trees and hung-up branches.

What Is Going On Up Top?

While up by the pond, I get the chance to interact and help out many different types of hikers at all different skill levels. The activities that go on there are ones you would find usually at a beach: swimming, fishing, sun-bathing, picnics, and exploring just to name a few. I rarely see anyone not enjoying the view once they are up. An overall happy presence can be felt.

A major observation this year was the amount of different summer camps and college groups that



visited. As soon as June started, the charter buses seemed to flock to the Brook Parking Lot with grade and middle schoolers eager to dart up. For many if not most, it was their first time too. During the peak of summer, college groups from all around New England ventured up including a lot of students who were in America studying abroad. Some of these groups were originally from Australia, Germany, France, Ireland, Japan, and India (at least the groups I talked to). Then, Labor Day Weekend had nearly over 15 different college squads alone take the trails on top of the usual busy

foot traffic. Building networking and connections to these schools would offer endless mutual opportunities. And while this would be great, one must understand that Tumbledown already faces extensive exposure from word of mouth and social media alike.

As many of us know, the trail system you see on the map only shows what is maintained and deemed official by the state. The entire trail system extends at least double of what is marked, and people are still going on these social trails. Most who I spoke to out on these trails tend to be more than prepared and skilled in the woods, but it is always a good reminder for them to understand what risks are involved doing so.

Conclusion

Continued efforts to manage these lands holds the key to conservation and future education to those beyond our lifetimes. This public land can lead by example in terms of handling high traffic if managed right. The established Tumbledown Management Plan from 2020 can truly keep this place alive, and indirectly keep this state thriving with its unmatched natural beauty.

