

Chapter 6- Recreation

Introduction

Baldwin's rural character and natural recreational opportunities are strong drivers for new and longtime residents. Often, in rural communities, there is little provision of public recreation except that offered by the public schools. However, arts and recreation are still highly valued statewide. In Baldwin, natural open spaces and access to nearby lakes, ponds, and the Saco River allow for walking, hiking, fishing, snowmobiling, and swimming.

Public Recreational Resources

Sand Pond Beach

Sand Pond, located in East Baldwin off Route 107/11, offers swimming, a sandy beach area, and a boat launch for Baldwin residents. The area is open from 6am to 9pm, and parking is available for about 12 to 15 cars. Sand Pond is also frequented for fishing, which requires a State of Maine Fishing License. Swimming lessons are taught at Sand Pond during the summer months. Activities such as camping, campfires, and alcohol consumption are prohibited at the public Sand Pond areas. However, the town has experienced difficulties in policing this area.

Ingalls Pond Trails

Ingalls Pond Conservation Area, managed by the Francis Small Heritage Trust, is located in West Baldwin. The parking area can be accessed off of Pequawket Trail. A short trail network leads visitors past Ingalls Pond and along the Saco River, offering multiple scenic viewpoints along easy terrain. The Pond Cove trail is frequently used for fishing access to the Saco River and Ingalls Pond Cove. A portion of the Mountain Division Trail runs through this area, which can be accessed at the junction of the Old County Road trail and the old railroad tracks. Hunting, swimming, camping, and campfires are prohibited. The Francis Small Heritage Trust also owns conservation properties in the nearby towns of Limington, Cornish, Newfield, Limerick, and Porter.

The Mountain Division Trail

The Mountain Division Trail (MDT) follows the former Portland and Ogdensburg Railway (P&O). When Maine Central Railroad acquired the line, the name was changed to the Mountain Division Rail Line. The line was originally built to connect the port of Portland with the St. Lawrence Seaway in Ogdensburg, N.Y. with a spur connecting to Montreal. By the time construction was finished, there were more competing rail lines, and it became difficult for the P&O to be profitable.

Many years after rail service was suspended along the line, the Mountain Division Alliance group was formed in an effort to preserve the corridor for a rail trail connecting Portland to Fryeburg. In 2021 the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council was officially formed by MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note as a result of Resolve 21, Chapter 239. While some sections have already been converted to official rail trail, the final recommendation from the Advisory Council was to repurpose the entire corridor from rail use to trail use with potential for rail in the future. Approximately 10.4 miles of the envisioned 50-mile trail corridor are located within Baldwin.

Other Recreation

Baldwin residents and visitors enjoy other recreational activities year-round such as hunting, fishing, and trapping. Much of this is done on private lands, by landowner permission. Other activities include canoeing and kayaking on the Saco River, hiking, cycling, and snowmobiling. The Town has received a grant from the Maine Community Foundation to create walking and hiking trails around the Baldwin Community Center.

Youth and Adult Organized Recreation Resources

Baldwin Active Kids Program

Baldwin Active Kids runs an after-school program for children in Baldwin. The program runs daily throughout the school year until 5:30pm. Parents can enroll their children for one or multiple days of the week. The number of kids enrolled fluctuates from year to year, but in the 2021-2022 school year, the after-school program had 18 children enrolled on average. Outside of the school year, Baldwin Active Kids provides a Summer Camp program for school-aged children. Teens are invited to participate in the CIT (counselor in training) program. SAD 55 generously provides breakfast, lunch, and snacks for the campers during the summer. The summer camp and after-school programs are housed at the Baldwin Community Center and utilize both indoor and outdoor spaces. Campers are often able to take field trips to places such as Sand Pond.

Sacopee Valley Regional Council

The Sacopee Valley Regional Council (SVRC) is a regional recreation program that serves Baldwin, Cornish, Hiram, Parsonsfield, and Porter. SVRC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that operates on a very small budget yet does not fail to provide sports and other recreational activities year-round for all ages. In the fall, field hockey, karate, and soccer are offered. Basketball, cheerleading, karate, ice skating, and cross-country skiing are available in the winter. Softball, baseball, tee-ball, and karate run in the spring. Basketball and volleyball, along with numerous camp-style programs, are available in the summer.

Maine School Administrative District #55 Athletics

Baldwin is part of Maine SAD #55. Sacopee Valley High School and Middle School each have athletics programs that offer boys and girls sports during the fall, winter, and spring seasons. Teams compete against other middle and high school teams in Maine.