\$5.00 Sunday, October 5, 2025

# Maine Sunday Telegram

**WEATHER: Mostly sunny** and still warm High 73° Details, B8

**NEW ENGLAND'S 2025 NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR** 

## SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BACKLOG REACHES A RECKONING

Aging infrastructure plagues districts across the state. The money needed to address the crisis just isn't there.



By RILEY BOARD and DYLAN TUSINSKI Staff Writers

The sound of basketballs often reverberates through Laura Luchetti's

"We can't have gym and art on the same day," she said, from her room in the basement of the George E. Jack School, directly below the court. "It's too loud.'

The Standish elementary school, like so many across the state, was built in the 1950s to accommodate the postwar baby boom, but it no lon-

ger reflects today's educational needs. It's made of wood but lacks sprinklers. It's not compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act. Its heating and cooling system leaks. The library and music room are housed in portable classrooms that are still in use years longer than they were built to last.

"The needs have changed, and the functionality of this building has just gone down," said Clay Gleason, superintendent of School Administrative District 6, which includes Standish.

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### AMONG THE TAKEAWAYS

**MORE THAN HALF of** Maine's schools were built in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

THE COST TO BUILD a school has risen dramatically, even as available funding has not kept pace.

**DECLINING ENROLLMENT** will likely necessitate consolidation, an option many Maine communities resist.

At George E. Jack School in Standish, portable classrooms are still in use years longer than intended. (DARYN SLOVER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

## **VISITING ACAD DURING A SHUT**

Empty tollbooths and closed visitor centers don't deter tourists as the Trump administration considers 'irreversible' cuts.'

ACADIA ENTRANCE PASSES

By DYLAN TUSINSKI Staff Writer

CADIA NATIONAL PARK -The entrances to America's seventh-busiest national park were open Friday, but unmanned. Visitor centers were closed. Park rangers were scarce, most having been furloughed by the government shutdown.

The parking lots and Island Explorer buses remained full of guests determined to enjoy one of Maine's most popular tourist destinations at the height of leaf peeping season, but the experience looked a

"It's confusing to know what's open, what's closed, what we can do, what we can't."

**CHRIS DeMICHIELI** 

"It's confusing to know what's open, what's closed, what we can do, what we can't do," said Chris DeMichieli, who was visiting from Michi "We know they have limited services, but because the visi-

little different.

tor centers are closed down, it's been hard to find any information. The government shutdown that be-

gan last week has disrupted every federal agency, including the U.S. Department of the Interior, which manages the National Park Service. As Republicans and Democrats in Congress continue to cast blame and an end to the stoppage seems elusive, President Donald Trump has threatened to use the shutdown to carry out mass layoffs.

The Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram spoke to a dozen Acadia National Park visitors from across the country on Friday, day three of the shutdown. Most said their trips were largely business as usual, though the absence of park rangers and staff made finding their way around the park much more difficult.

DeMichieli and her travel compan-



Russ and Cheree Cheatham, of Alabama, take in the view from a section of the Park Loop Road between Sand Beach and Thunder Hole during their visit to Acadia National Park this weekend. At top, a park pass kiosk at the Hulls Cove Visitor Center informs travelers that it is out of service because of the shutdown. (PHOTOS BY BRIANNA SOUKUP/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

ion, Diana Griffin, had stopped at the Hulls Cove Visitor Center to buy a day pass and grab a map. But after walking up a couple flights of stairs from the parking lot, they found the center's gift shop and restrooms were closed.

So, they returned to the Island Explorer bus stop at the parking lot, only to find the self-service kiosk for day passes was out of order. A crowd of people had gathered around the machine, attempting to scan a QR code to buy a pass online after having made the same round trip as DeMichieli and Griffin.

Persistent drought hurts Maine farmers

After a wet planting season, the agricultural community hoped for a stretch of blue summer skies. What they

Please see **ACADIA**, Page A6

**■ 'IT WAS ALL SO UNSERIOUS':** How a potentially monumental Oval Office meeting failed to stop the federal government shutdown / A3

■ FACT CHECK on the shutdown / A3

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#### **NEW FICTION** Island residents in Down East Maine struggle as climate change

reshapes lives **BOOKS / E4** 

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water," Miller said. "A dry cow won't milk.'

Miller decided to haul water from his home to make up the difference until the rains came — but they didn't, at least not enough to re-

**By PENELOPE OVERTON** 

and ROBERT LOWELL

Staff Writers

the hunt for water since

June.

Heath Miller has been on

That is when the first sum-

mer heat wave hit Maine and

the Newburgh dairy farmer

realized the two wells that

he relies on to water his 260

milking cows were running

low. His cows need 50 to 80

gallons of water a day, de-

pending on how hot it is, and

'The cows can't run out of

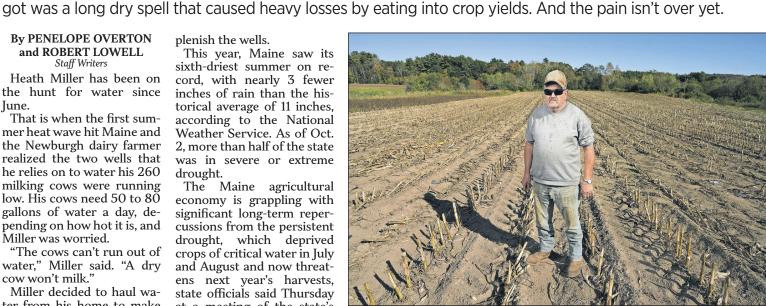
Miller was worried.

plenish the wells.

This year, Maine saw its sixth-driest summer on record, with nearly 3 fewer inches of rain than the historical average of 11 inches, according to the National Weather Service. As of Oct. 2, more than half of the state was in severe or extreme drought.

The Maine agricultural economy is grappling with significant long-term repercussions from the persistent drought, which deprived crops of critical water in July and August and now threatens next year's harvests, state officials said Thursday at a meeting of the state's Drought Task Force.

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Bob Parsons says his family harvested about 20% less corn this year on his farm in Gorham. "The corn started out good ... and then it was like someone turned off the irrigation pump," he says. (GREGORY REC/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)