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Bulletin: Prepared for the Employees of the Maine Department of Conservation, February 1990

Maine Department of Conservation

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BULLETIN

Prepared for the Employees of the Maine Department of Conservation

February 1990

Commissioner's Column

This issue of the Bulletin contains the latest information on the Department's budget. It updates an article, *The State Budget and DOC*, which I wrote for the January edition.

During the most recent review of the State budget Governor McKernan recognized the impacts of previous cuts to Conservation's budget, and as a result of his review, the additional reduction we had to make was less severe than it otherwise may have been.

I'm sure you join me in appreciation for the Governor's understanding and support for the Department's programs and mission.

While the budget occupies a great share of attention in the news, Department programs are producing exciting new achievements as we gear up for the coming field season. Just a few examples:

- After months of preparation the new MFASIS human resources system is "live", and your paycheck this week was produced on the new system;
- The third annual Conservation Law Enforcement Academy class will graduate on February 14;
- State Park campsite reservations are pouring in;
- MCC and SERVE/Maine are busy recruiting candidates and planning new projects for this spring;
- The new GIS system is running;
- Major land acquisitions and trades have been accomplished by Public Lands, Parks, and the Land for Maine's Future Board;
- Public response to the requirements of the new Forest Practices Act has been excellent. A technical working group has begun work on the draft harvesting regulations;
- LURC is leading a review effort by state agencies and private landowners on deer wintering area protection;
- Geology is examining policy issues related to ground water supply and use in Maine, as well as public policy implications of proposed mining operations;
- Staff from Parks, Public Lands, Forestry, and Geology have spent weeks doing research for the Governor and the Attorney General on issues related to the proposed takeover of Great Northern by Georgia-Pacific.

This is only a sampling.

So, even with the budget commanding most of the news at present, we continue the worthwhile efforts and professionalism that place our Department in such high regard throughout the state.

The credit is to you and your commitment to high standards. Thanks to each of you for your hard work in these challenging times.

Ed Meadows

National Geographic Grant to BPR

The Bureau of Parks and Recreation has received a grant of \$25,000 from the National Geographic Society to help restore Admiral Robert E. Peary's library at Eagle Island State Historic Site in Harpswell. The project, which will be supplemented by state funds, will take place next summer at Eagle Island with the involvement of several staff members from the Bureau of Parks and Recreation and the Division of Engineering and Realty. The project may also be featured in a National Geographic article to be published in the July issue.

Budget Update

Since the last Bulletin, it was announced that the projected state budget shortfall is now estimated to be \$210 million for the biennium. Departments were asked to propose additional cuts as a result. Conservation's additional reduction was \$349,000; our total reduction is now \$1.75 million. The reductions are \$1.17 million in FY 90 and \$578,000 in FY 91.

Overall, our department cut will be 5%. Our budget will continue to rise despite the cuts but the increase will be smaller. In FY 90, our budget will be up 5% over FY 89, and in FY 91 it will be up 7% over FY 90. Most of that growth is in new programs and positions in Forestry, Parks, LURC, and Geology. Many of those positions will remain vacant, but we also had to make cuts in other areas.

In making these reductions, we followed our previous approach of achieving savings through consolidation and operating efficiencies. We were also able to rely on the considerable amount of Personal Services savings from the first two quarters of FY 90, plus other unspent funds in our allotment reserve. This helped minimize the impact of cuts.

Obviously, the new reductions mean the impact will be that much greater on positions and programs. We will have to forego filling several positions, curtail travel, reduce replacement of supplies and equipment and make changes to procedures and work priorities in all divisions in order to absorb the cuts while still providing essential services. Each of us may need to adjust how we do our jobs as a result.

There will be three layoffs effective in July. We will work to assist these employees in finding other opportunities. We certainly recognize the effect this action has and are doing what we can to make the best of the situation.

Thirty-six full-time and part-time positions will be held vacant for varying lengths of time; six for the entire biennium.

New options are being developed for part-time work, job sharing, early retirement and educational leave with stipend. When the details are prepared all employees will receive this information. For some of you these opportunities may fit very well with your personal situation.

To achieve the new reductions some programs changed their original reduction proposals. Forestry, in particular, came up with a new plan. One result is that the Western Regional Fire Control Headquarters in Greenville will not be closed and the staff at that office will not be subject to layoffs.

Here are the principle elements of our plan:

Forestry: Phase-in new Forest Practices Act positions while ensuring all deadlines and rulemaking mandates are met; extend certain Fire Control vacancies; reduce maintenance and building expenditures; reduce capital for replacing damaged equipment; delay filling vacant entomology position;

Parks & Recreation: Reduce Montpelier restoration work; eliminate archeology project at town-owned Ft. Halifax; extend vacant historian position; delay staffing Woodbury Pond State Park until FY 92; establish "carry in/carry out" policy at major day use facilities; defer purchase of small equipment for park maintenance; leave some seasonal positions vacant until July, 1990;

Geology: Leave new geologist position vacant through FY 91; eliminate one time appropriation for digitizing drainage basins; reduce Maine's participation

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Budget Update continued

in U.S. Geological Survey Co-op; reduce one stream... gauging station and some aquifer mapping work;

LURC: Leave one Environmental Specialist II and four part-time clerical positions vacant through FY 90; leave half-time Information Specialist position vacant through FY 91; reduce funds earmarked for microfiche, travel, and public information;

Forests for the Future: Merge program functions with Division of Policy, Planning & Information in Forestry; eliminate Director position (one layoff); transfer clerical position to Administrative Services;

MCC: Reduce projects by two and reduce funds for transportation;

Administrative Services: Extend vacant accounting supervisor through FY 90; extend vacant Clerk Typist II through FY 90; leave new position in land conservation vacant for biennium; eliminate Storekeeper I position in FY 91 (one layoff);

Engineering & Realty: Leave Assistant Engineer position vacant for biennium; eliminate one Engineering Technician III position in FY 91 (one layoff). Funds requested for computer aided design package to offset impact.

To achieve these cuts, we asked each program to propose options based on their assessment of needs and priorities. Department priorities are to:

- Protect core programs affecting public safety and health;
- Protect programs serving the broadest public need and department priority, based on legislative mandates and our Mission statement;
- Maintain regulatory functions and environmental protection;
- Spread the impact equitably among major programs;
- Phase-in new programs versus starting them up all at once;
- Seek input from employees;
- Minimize layoffs and other disruptive personnel actions.

This plan must be approved by the Legislature before it is final. Our hearing was held February 5.

We believe we will still be able to offer quality programs and service to the public despite these changes.

We urge you to discuss your suggestions and questions with your bureau or division director. We will keep you advised as further developments occur. Your support and suggestions continue to be appreciated.

SERVE/Maine Nominated for National Award

Governor John R. McKernan nominated the SERVE/Maine Volunteers for the 1990 President's Volunteer Action Award. When nominating the volunteers for the national award, Governor McKernan pointed to the "significant and valuable work the volunteers accomplished for Maine's public natural resource agencies." During 1989 over 400 volunteers were enrolled in the SERVE/Maine program.

Kimball & Russell Recognized for Contributions to MFASIS

Barbara Kimball and Lucinda Russell have made a significant contribution over the last three months to the effort to successfully implement the MFASIS accounting system throughout state government. They were among the MFASIS trainers who became qualified in most of the available courses and did an exceptional job delivering training to future users of the system. Without efforts like these, the state would not have been able to bring the benefits of this new system into being.

Our department received the additional benefit of gaining input and further understanding of the system by having Lucinda and Barbara participate.

Conservation Notebook

Tom Charles, BPL, attended a 3 day Financial Analysis Course at Orono. •• **Steve Oliveri**, BPL, has received his commission as a notary public and has an official seal if the need should arise. •• **Jeanne Kannegieser**, BPL, asks anyone who has seen BPL's missing 35mm camera to contact her. •• **Al Lane**, **Steve Barden**, and **Bob Webb**, maintenance staff from BPR's Southern Region, have just completed the construction of over 200 picnic tables at the region's maintenance shop in Naples. •• **Scott Ramsay**, supervisor of BPR's Off-Road Vehicle Division, recently returned from an inspection trip to Aroostook County. Scott reviewed 16 municipal snowmobile trail grant projects and travelled over 400 miles by snowsled. He also spoke to a northern regional meeting of the Maine Snowmobile Association attended by 300 people. •• **Joe Kelley** just published a paper in Marine Geology describing his research on the inner continental shelf of southern Maine. •• **Woody Thompson** is organizing a two-day symposium on Maine minerals to be held at UMA on the weekend of April 21-22 co-hosted with the Harvard University Mineralogical Museum. •• **Pat Bailey**, Bureau of Parks and Recreation interpretive specialist, has announced the availability of public winter programs at Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park in Freeport. The programs, to be given every Sunday in February at 2:00 p.m., will include walks exploring aspects of the park's winter ecology. Programs at the park are also available to groups by request. •• **Scott Ramsay** and **Brian Bronson** have recently learned that Maine has been chosen as one of four states to host an ATV information and education workshop this summer. The workshop, co-sponsored by the Motorcycle Industry Council and the Bureau of Parks and Recreation's Off-Road Vehicle Division, will be attended by 40 professional managers of ATV-related enforcement, safety, and trail programs from throughout the eastern United States. •• **Dick Skinner** recently returned from an executive board meeting of the States Organization for Boat Access (SOBA) in Placida, Florida. At the meeting, Dick reviewed plans for the national Fourth Annual SOBA Conference to be held next September in Portland, for which Dick is in charge of local arrangements and planning. •• **Scott Wilson**, Executive Director of the Pine Tree State Arboretum, says the new Arboretum building features two rental class rooms (\$55 full day/\$35 half day) and a large conference room (\$75 full day/\$40 half day). Arrangements may be made by contacting Scott at 621- 0031.

Mt. Blue Skiing Popular

Recent snows have made for excellent cross-country skiing conditions at Mt. Blue State Park in Weld where BPR staff Bruce Farnham, Russell Scott, and Jim Lord have been working to groom trails. According to Doris Scott, Western Region Secretary, 374 people used Mt. Blue's 15 miles of trail in January this year.

MCC Projects Set

Herb Hartman, Steve Curtis, Bill Cleaves, Fred Bartlett, George Hannum, and Ken Spalding have set plans in motion for trail work and site improvements by an MCC crew at Shackford Head this summer. Shackford Head is a recently-acquired Land for Maine's Future property in Eastport that will be managed by the Bureau of Parks and Recreation.

MCC accepted 5 Spring Work Projects and 22 Summer Work Projects for 1990. The MCC is now looking for Conservation Team Leaders to supervise the outdoor work teams. For more information about these positions contact Ken Spalding, MCC Director at 289-4931.