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Bulletin: Information for Maine Department of Conservation Employees, December 1991

Maine Department of Conservation

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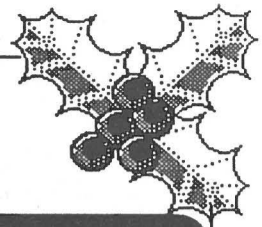
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December
1991

BULLETIN



Information for Maine Department of Conservation Employees

Commissioner's Column

With the holiday season here, I want to recognize the accomplishments the department made this year. Thank you for the extra efforts each of you made.

With the continuing problems in the economy, it has been a challenging and trying year for us all. With so many cutbacks in state government, many days it seems we are struggling alone to solve the problem. But we are not alone. The private sector is sharing the burden, as we have seen in the loss of 30,000 jobs in Maine. Many of us know, or have in our families, someone among that 30,000 who has lost their job.

I recognize the sacrifices and efforts each of you has made. It is gratifying that, despite these problems, the department has been able to maintain our reputation of providing quality, effective service to the public. That is a credit to each of you. In times like these, that reputation is even more important.

As we face continuing adjustment to our reduced budget, we know we will not be able to do all of the things we used to. We must evaluate priorities and focus on the most important ones. Providing quality service to the public in a timely manner is one of those priorities.

Again, I thank each of you for your hard work and dedication this year. Even though we have faced difficulty together, this is the time to count our blessings and to help those who are less fortunate.

I wish a very happy holiday season to you and your families.

Ed Meadows

Budget Update

Since the last *BULLETIN*, the department's share of the budget reductions was set at \$650,000 for the rest of FY 92. This is a lower figure than reported last month. This new amount recognizes the past cuts we have made and the necessity of maintaining our ability to carry out our public safety and health functions, protect public and private property, and safeguard the state's natural resources.

In addition to this reduction, however, the department requires additional funds to pay the direct costs of putting out fires last summer. The cost of controlling those fires exceeded the amount appropriated for that purpose by \$681,000. Our budget proposal included a request for that amount.

As you know, the legislature has not met to revise the budget. Therefore, the governor issued an executive order curtailing department budgets in December. Our allotment was curtailed based on the budget savings plan we submitted. Allotments will also be curtailed for the third quarter if the legislature does not pass a budget soon. Discussions are underway to resolve the need for funds to cover 1991 fire suppression costs.

Due to the extent of previous cuts to department programs, the current budget reduction proposal is directed to programs that had a relatively less severe cut in previous reductions.

Here is a brief summary of the department's spending reduction plans for FY 92:

Fire Control will leave ten positions temporarily vacant, but fill the positions in time for the spring fire season.

Forest Management will eliminate five more of the vacant positions established in the Forest Practices Act.

Maintenance, staffing and operating funds will be further reduced at parks and historic sites: 4.5

Budget Update continued

general fund positions will be eliminated and 3 others will remain temporarily vacant. In addition, all existing funds from the Park Development Fund will be eliminated.

Two vacant positions at LURC will be eliminated, one in development review and the other in enforcement.

The Maine Rivers Program will be eliminated as a general fund program. Two functions, review of river and hydroelectric relicensing projects affecting public boating and limited work on river access issues, will be supported with dedicated funds.

These cuts may be modified by either legislative action or curtailment order. In addition to these actions in FY 92, we are currently preparing our FY 93 budget submissions. Further information will be provided as developments occur.

Restructuring Update

Since the last *BULLETIN*, the Special Commission on Governmental Restructuring has held public hearings in Bangor, Augusta and Portland and is preparing a final report. The final report will be available as of December 16 from the Office of Policy and Legal Analysis, Room 101, State House, Augusta, Maine 04333.

The commission discussed two specific proposals regarding the relationship between natural resource agencies. Option A proposed by the co-chairs consolidated the Departments of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Marine Resources, and Conservation into one Department of Natural Resources. This proposed department would consist of four bureaus: the Management of State Owned Natural Resources (state parks, wildlife sanctuaries, public lands, submerged lands, and forest management); Management of Biological Resources (marine fisheries, freshwater fisheries, anadromous species, wildlife and critical areas); Licensing/Registration (hunting, fishing-recreational and commercial, watercraft and recreational vehicles; and law enforcement (inland and marine laws, and fire control). LURC would be attached as "an independent agency" to the Department of Natural Resources.

Option B proposed leaving the departments as they currently are structured. The commission recommended a process which would identify and implement cross training programs through an appointed interagency task force. Further, the commission recognized that consolidating functions "would be an extremely complicated undertaking."

In a letter to the commission supporting Option B, Commissioners Meadows, Brennan and Vail said, "We (the three departments) already are conducting a variety of interagency coordination and cooperation efforts, including cross training, sharing resources and interagency operation's agreements. We plan to extend those efforts in the future."

The commission accepted Option B in the absence of public support for the concept of consolidation. In another section of the report, the commission supported the combination of the Critical Areas, the Heritage, the Endangered and Non-Game Species programs that would be located in a separate unit in the DOC. The final report discussed many other issues affecting the operation and management of state government. Legislation is being drafted for presentation to the Second Regular Session of the Legislature which convenes January 8, 1992.

Sue Bell, deputy commissioner

Conservation Notes

BPL has been asked by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration to consider the Pineland Unit as a possible location for a new National Weather Service office, radar station and upper air balloon release station. •• LURC staff presented public outreach educational seminars in Greenville and Machias to explain the commission's regulations and permitting process. •• **Fred Todd**, director of LURC's Planning Division, spoke on wildland development trends at a meeting of the Society of American Foresters. •• BPR snowmobile program staff members **Scott Ramsay** and **Sue Roderick** have been busy processing snowmobile trail grant applications from municipalities. Applications for a total of 90 grants have been received, representing a 10% increase over last year. The grants awarded will total over \$530,000. •• **Tim Hall**, from the BPR's Central Region, reports that Camden Hills State Park is contributing to the holiday spirit in the Camden area. As in past years, the park's Mt. Battie Tower displays a 26 foot tall holiday star. The star, lighted by generator power, is maintained and operated by the Camden Lions Club each evening from Thanksgiving to New Year's Eve. •• BPR staff once again hosted the 10th Annual Great Osprey Ocean Race that took place at Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park in Freeport. A record number, over 160, ran the 10K race in near perfect conditions in a loop beginning and ending at the park. **Tom Skolfield**, **Dan Bell**, **Pat Bailey**, and **Gordeen Noble** worked with Freeport Community Services to direct traffic and runners and make this special event possible at a time when the park is normally closed. •• Fort Knox State Historic Site Manager **Mike Leighton** recently received an extremely significant donation made to Fort Knox. A local resident donated a 219-page historical ledger book that describes detailed construction activities at the fort from May 9, 1846 to October 1855. The ledger includes information heretofore unknown about the fort's construction and early facilities. Mike and **Sheila McDonald**, former bureau historian, photocopied the ledger in order to have access to it for future research, and then placed the ledger for safe-keeping in the Maine State Archives. •• Six BPR/DOC employees braved the weather to volunteer at a recent pledge night for WCBB public television station. **Scott Woodruff**, **Tom Cieslinski**, **Barbara Kimball**, **Dalton** and **Joanne Kirk**, and **John Titus** answered the phones on the pledge week's first night, which contributed to a record-setting day for pledges. •• **Scott Ramsay** and **Chip Edgcomb** recently attended a meeting with engineers from Vermont, New Hampshire and the U.S. Forest Service. The group discussed the development of plans for construction of snowmobile bridges that will meet safe engineering guidelines. The group will eventually formalize these plans in order to distribute them to agencies and clubs involved with snowmobile trail construction so that guidelines are in place for the construction of safe, environmentally sound bridges, which can be easily built in remote locations. •• The VRA has been transferred to the Bureau of Purchases. If there is no answer at the VRA number (7113), messages for the VRA may be left at 3641. •• Forest Rangers **Russ Landry** of Dexter and **Sue Myers** of Waterville recently spent several days enforcing tipping and Christmas tree laws in the Jonesboro area. •• District Forest Ranger **Doug Getchell** recently spent a day with WLBZ TV reporter **Barbara Barr** in the Addison area doing a story on the tipping industry. •• Two fire control forest rangers are on temporary assignment in Augusta this winter. They are **Brad Barrett** of Moscow (fire support projects) and **Bill Getchell** of Jonesboro (surplus equipment).

Conservation Notes continued

SERVE/Maine volunteer project descriptions are due January 17, 1992. If you need volunteer help for late winter, spring and summer, contact **Libbey Seigars**, SERVE/ Maine coordinator at 289-4945. Projects submitted by January 17th will be listed in the 1992 Volunteer Directory that will be mailed to people and organizations that want to help. •• Many BPR staff are gearing up for a busy winter of cross-country skiing use. **Stuart Wagner** and **Dennis Preston** from Cobscook Bay State Park and **Frank Appleby** at Aroostook State Park have already reported skiers on park trails and high expectations from skiing enthusiasts for a good season.

BPR Promotes Safety with Public Service Announcements

The Bureau of Parks and Recreation's Off-Road Vehicle Division has been at the forefront of safety education recently. Brian Bronson worked with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to produce three public service announcements(PSA) on ATV user trail etiquette and safety. Brian appeared in the PSAs, along with Pat Gordon and Mt. Blue State Park Manager Bruce Farnham. The PSAs have been aired on six television stations, reaching over a million viewers weekly.

The snowmobile program of the Off-Road Vehicle Division has also been involved in safety education. Program staff recently distributed a PSA on snowmobile user ethics and safety. The PSA was produced by a snowmobile manufacturer, reviewed by several state snowmobile program administrators including Scott Ramsay, and provided to Maine's television stations for airing this winter.

MGS Cosponsors National Conference

The Maine Geological Survey recently cosponsored the Eastern Conference of the National Ground Water Association. The 3-day meeting focused on topics of ground water studies ranging from investigative techniques such as geophysical methods, studies of flow in fractured bedrock, and ground water monitoring and contamination to agricultural impacts, underground tanks, and ground water management.

MGS Hydrogeology Division staffers Marc Loisselle, Craig Neil, Lauren Foster, Dan Locke, and Tom Weddle presented MGS research work.

The conference was attended by over 250 ground water professionals active in eastern North America associated with federal, state or provincial natural resource and environmental protection agencies, geologic consulting firms, management and planning firms or agencies, and municipalities. In addition to the day-long technical sessions, an evening reception highlighted by poster presentations of work in Maine was a great success. The poster session was the first of its type at this annual meeting and was suggested to the NGWA to be included in the meeting by Tom Weddle. MGS has participated in all the Eastern Conference meetings since 1984 and has been a cosponsor of the meetings since 1986.

1992 Season Passes to Parks and Historic Sites Available

Season passes to more than 30 state parks (excluding Baxter) and historic sites are available in time for Christmas.

Family Passes cost \$30 and provide the occupants of the vehicle free day use. **Individual Passes** good for free day use by the pass holder only, cost \$15. Order by sending a check payable to "Treasurer, State of Maine" to the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, Station 22, Augusta, ME 04333. Be sure to include the name of the person for whom the pass is intended. Call 289-3821 for more information.

Merry Christmas