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Bulletin: Information for Maine Department of Conservation Employees, March 1993

Maine Department of Conservation

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BULLETIN



Information for Maine Department of Conservation Employees

Commissioner's Column

A graduation ceremony for the department's Conservation Law Enforcement Training Academy was held February 26. Since 1989, nearly 200 Forestry, Parks, Public Lands and LURC employees have completed this five week program.

In remarks to the graduates, I spoke on the topic "meeting the challenge of change." Since this topic is pertinent to all of us in the department, I would like to share a few of the key points with you:

- This is a time of great change in the world around us, affecting all we do and all with whom we deal.
- These changes affect natural resources and the way people view them. Thus we must adapt our thinking and service delivery.
- The economy and government are changing throughout the U.S.—not just in Maine.
- We can help lead in change and see that it moves in a positive direction for the management and protection of our vital natural resources.
- People have expectations there will be change—but not consensus on what the changes should be.
- There appears to be a shift from public support for more services to a perception that government is too costly.
- The demand for social services and health care continues to swell, taking more and more public funding at the expense of other government services.
- In Maine there is a shift of the population from rural areas to urban areas. As a result people will have less direct connection to natural resources, with less understanding of the need to support resource management. There will be fewer rural, and more urban, legislators.
- The population is getting older, often affecting their values and interests.
- Policies and controversies at the federal level and in other regions regarding the management of national forests, endangered species and other resource issues will affect Maine. This will present new challenges but also new opportunities for working together with landowners on solutions.

What do these changes mean for us?

- Each of these trends affect our customers—those we provide services to or work with. As they change, we must adapt.
- We need to create organizations and procedures to meet the realities of the 1990's and, more importantly, to help lead Maine into the 21st century. We need to look at how we work together between programs now and look for even better ways to work together. Department efforts such as inter-bureau agreements and our partnerships with others are examples of such leadership.
- We need to constantly seek improvement in the way we operate—to find new techniques using technology, ingenuity and the creativity of every employee.
- With the changes occurring, our job in resource management is more important than ever, but it too is changing. We need to invite suggestions from those we work with.

We are doing a lot of these already—many of you are involved in efforts to help increase our effectiveness. There are many examples in every bureau but space does not allow listing them. But as we look at operating in the future with fewer resources we need to identify ways to do even more, such as:

- Reach out to all those who have a stake in our programs and in natural resources to gain their support.
- Expand an organized and sustained communication effort to get the word out on the importance of natural resources and the value of our programs.
- We need to build new partnerships and new alliances that we haven't cultivated in the past.
- We must urge state government as a whole to be more responsive, less restrictive in administrative procedures and to adopt new incentives for agencies to be able to "work smarter," such as encouraging investments in productivity improvement.

Each of us can respond to these changes by being alert to change around us; we can suggest ways to incorporate them into our work; we can identify opportunities and suggest ways to build new partnerships with those we serve; we can communicate the importance of natural resources and the role our department plays; we can suggest ways to improve government procedures. As we do these things we will continue to achieve success in our efforts. **Ed Meadows**

Mt. Blue State Park In The News

Bureau of Parks and Recreation staff associated with Mt. Blue State Park in Weld have faced new challenges this winter due to the controversy over timber harvesting in the park.

Bureau Director Herb Hartman has been confronted by protesters in Augusta, while Park Manager Bruce Farnham and Regional Supervisor Ken Wiley have worked at the park to ensure that repeated demonstrations there do not damage property, interfere with operations or endanger lives. Many other staff members from the bureau's Operations and Maintenance Division have also been called in to help as necessary.

The controversy stems from an exchange of deeds in 1966. Timberlands Corporation deeded 17 acres of shorefront property adjacent to the Lake Webb public beach and campground to the state in return for a deeded right to harvest timber for 30 years in a remote 1,000 acre section of the park, on a sustained yield basis. The 17 acre shorefront property was especially important to the bureau at the time because park planners intended to expand camping and create a new beach area. Development funds were requested for these purposes but were never received.

Timberlands Corporation, which harvested on a portion of the 1000 acres in the late 1960's and early 1970's, has exercised its legal right to conduct harvesting operations on the 1,000 acre tract until 1996. Harvesting must be conducted according to strict guidelines on tree size, winter operations, volume of wood harvested, buffer zones, trail protection and wildlife enhancement concerns.

Demonstrators have protested these operations and expressed concerns that they will lead to harvesting in other parks. A 1984 law prohibits commercial timber harvesting in state parks, with the exception of the Mt. Blue harvest, which was guaranteed by deed prior to the law's enactment.

The harvest agreement specifies that this year's harvest will end by March 15 at the latest.