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Maine Department of Conservation Employee News and Information Bulletin, April 1993

Maine Department of Conservation

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Maine Department of Conservation

Employee News and Information

April 1993

BULLETIN

FORESTRY

GEOLOGY

LAND USE REGULATION

PARKS AND RECREATION

PUBLIC LANDS

Commissioner's Column

The Appropriations Committee held a hearing on our FY 94/95 budget on March 8. The hearing included the Joint Standing Committee on Energy & Natural Resources (E&NR) which has jurisdiction over DOC. Members of both committees expressed concerns with the effects of the cuts.

Following our hearing with Appropriations, the E&NR Committee has held numerous work sessions to further discuss the details of our budget and its impact on our programs. E&NR recommendations are outlined in the adjoining column.

We have seen a tremendous outpouring of support for DOC this year—from conservation and forestry organizations, landowner and business groups, legislators, consultants, companies, and individuals. This support is in recognition of the important functions DOC performs and the quality service we provide to our customers—the citizens, applicants and businesses we serve. They value the department and the work you do. Even in these difficult times getting the job done in an effective, professional manner makes a difference in earning that support of Maine citizens who rely on and appreciate our department's work.

Last month Governor McKernan wrote to all employees about the state's Total Quality Management program (TQM). Legislation passed last year establishing TQM in all branches of state government. TQM is an approach to organizational management which involves employees at all levels to participate in creating ways to help improve the work process. TQM is widely used in the private sector, federal agencies and other states.

The Governor's Quality Council is currently developing objectives for the program. Each department will then develop its own TQM objectives, teams and schedule. Representatives from all levels in the organization and from the

employee associations will be involved. Over time, all employees will have an opportunity to participate in training sessions so we all can know more about TQM and how it works. That will take time since we all have many other tasks, especially with the start of field season. In the long-run TQM should save us all time since its purpose is to involve all employees in designing ways to reduce the time spent on work procedures.

I believe TQM has many benefits for each of us and great potential for helping improve the operations of state government.

A number of DOC employees have already expressed interest in participating at the beginning of the program. If you are interested, please contact Carol Michel, deputy commissioner.

Ed Meadows

E &NR Committee Makes Recommendations

After several weeks of reviewing the department's budget, the E&NR Committee issued a report on April 5 to the Appropriations Committee outlining their concerns and recommending increased funding in certain areas. The committee recognizes the importance of natural resources to the economy and the value of DOC programs to those natural resources and economic activities. The report included support for increases in funding they believe are essential for the department to operate at what they call a "barely adequate" level. This report is just another step in a long process and is not a final decision.

The E&NR report recommended restoring funds for:

- LURC's enforcement division, field offices and a position to implement the Natural Resources Protection Act.

- The state's (Geology) share for the stream gauge network and groundwater monitoring program.

- Fifty-two positions during the biennium and necessary operating funds for Parks to: maintain better parks supervision, public safety and resource protection; keep campgrounds open at Bradbury Mt., Aroostook and Lamolne; retain the reservation system; retain lifeguards at inland beaches; continue basic repairs; provide training; maintain staff presence at Ft. Edgecomb, Montpelier, Birch Point, and Warren Island; retain two positions for maintenance and historic site interpretation; restore positions in the Allagash Wilderness Waterway; and restore other positions at Fort Knox, Moose Point, Mt. Blue and Vaughan Woods.

Most of these added park costs will be offset by increased fees.

- The Maine Forest Service to maintain a "more adequate" level of capacity to respond to forest fires. Funds include support for some fire fighting capital equip-

ment, four unit rangers, one district in Island Falls (two positions), two radio operators, seasonal laborers and to extend seasons of other laborers. Funding is also recommended for two foresters to certify federally funded cost-share programs which assist small woodlot owners. As a result, the merger of the Divisions of Fire Control and Forest Management would not occur in this biennial budget, although the bureau will continue plans to move toward greater integration between divisions.

The committee recommended that GIS and MCC be continued as non-general fund programs and that DOC be authorized to secure support for them.

They also recommended legislative support for greater funding for park repairs and capital improvements.

The amount to fund these recommendations is approximately \$1.4 million in each year of the biennium. These amounts will be partially offset by recommended increases of \$476,000 in park fees and \$28,000 in LURC fees. DOC would still have a cut of approximately \$3 million each year.

The committee rejected the restructuring proposal and requested restoration of funding.

The committee reluctantly accepted the rest of the cuts, recognizing the impact they have on the department.

It is important to recognize these are only recommendations. The outcome is not certain.

When the report was presented on April 5, the Appropriations Committee reminded the E&NR Committee that as important as these programs are, the state has many other needs and faces a large gap between revenues and expenses. The Appropriations Committee will hold further work sessions and then the full legislature must adopt the entire budget. These actions could modify or eliminate E&NR's recommendations. The results will not be known for several weeks.

In the meantime, the department must take steps to prepare for the budget reductions which are scheduled for July 1 (see article concerning layoff process on back).

We will continue to provide information as it becomes available.

Conservation Notes

Allagash Ranger **Kim Lynch** and Forest Ranger **Bruce Reed** provided CPR training in March for **Albert Turner, Susan Myers, Gary Cook, Russ Landry and Bill Williams, MFS; and Tim Caverly and Matt LaRoche, BPR.** • The economic stimulus package before Congress includes funds that would enable the MCC to operate a work program on the Appalachian Trail this summer employing 72 corpsmembers and 22 staff. • **Jennifer Newhouse** has joined Administrative Services as clerk typist II. • The College Conservation Corps of Maine (CCCM) has begun recruitment for 18 corpsmembers. Contact **Dave Gerkens** at 6107. • **Jerry Gaboury** is the DOC savings bond drive chair. Contact **Mike Foley, Geology; Steve Curtis, Parks; Jean Colfer, Forestry; Dave Mercier, LURC; or Steve Oliveri, Public Lands,** for more information. • MFS mechanics **Roger Stanley** and **Randy Wood** of Old Town attended pump maintenance and operations classes. • The **Saco River (Fire Control) District** developed town forest fire warden meeting presentations on the wildland urban interface and the incident command system. • Cheers to **Arnold Martin, Darcy Labbee, Mark Berube, Tom Martin, Ritchie Hafford, Lance Martin** and player coach **Calvin Hafford** who finished first in the Ashland Volunteer Fire Department sponsored basketball tournament to support the **Learn Not To Burn Program.** • The 50th anniversary of the **Smokey Bear** Program will be celebrated this October through September '94. Send suggestions to promote fire prevention during this event to Forest Ranger **Jim Downie** at 2275. • The Maine Geological Survey is helping organize the fourth annual Maine Mineral Symposium in Augusta in May. Contact **Woody Thompson** at 2801. • MCC Corpsmembers **Duane Edgecomb** and **Jason Cook** have been selected to participate in the California Conservation Corps Backcountry Trails Project. • **Gov. McKernan** has proclaimed May 16-22 as Bike-To-Work Week. **Steve Oliveri** has offered to coordinate DOC's Augusta efforts. • Several MGS staff gave presentations at the Geological Society of America meeting. • Fifteen BPL staff attended the SAF and Wildlife Society meeting. • BPL's 20th anniversary in '93 was highlighted at the Bangor Sportman's Show. • Reid SP Manager **Dalton Kirk** spoke to the Bowdoinham Baptist Men's Association. • Unity Rescue reached families stranded during a March storm on a snowmobile loaned by Lake St. George State Park Manager **Mick Rogers.**

Layoff Process Begins

In previous communications we have stated that at the level of reductions we must make to reach our budget target it is necessary to eliminate 141 positions, which would result in 81 layoffs. In order to assure that we achieve the level of savings that were projected by having the layoffs completed by the end of the year, agencies have been instructed to begin the layoff process. The instructions specified that agencies are not to issue layoff notices to those positions which would eliminate or substantially modify a program. Therefore, we are now sending layoff notices and other information to many positions affected by the cuts. Other layoffs may follow as the legislature finalizes the budget. For the time being, however, we will not send out notices for those programs which would be eliminated or substantially modified or which have been recommended for restoration by the E&NR Committee.

We are forming a department-wide transition team to provide information and assistance to those affected by layoffs.

Conservation's Work Is Being Recognized.

"Conservation Cuts" - April Maine Sportsman editorial

"While sportsmen have been rightly focusing on the legislative attempts to wreak havoc with the Fish and Wildlife Department, we should also be concerned over proposed budget cuts which would do away with 20 percent of the Department of Conservation's budget.

The affects of such a drastic cutback on Conservation will affect everyone who cares about Maine's environment, particularly sportsmen. It will mean that state parks and campgrounds will close, boat launch areas won't be maintained, forest fire control will be greatly reduced and much of the state's environmental laws will be replaced by an honor system.

It's clear the Department of Conservation plays a vital role in protecting the environment all sportsmen depend upon and providing services we all can use. While economy in government is essential, we don't accept the attitude that the chain saw approach to cutting the Conservation Department's budget is sensible.

Conservation took sharp budget reductions last year. Asking for another 20 percent cut again this year is simply going too far. We urge sportsmen to speak up in defense of the Conservation Department and caution legislators to show restraint in cutting a budget that has already been reduced from meat to bone (HPV)." **by Editor Harry Vanderweide**

"A strong DOC supports a strong IF&W"

"SAM should be standing up for the Conservation Department too. Both departments are vital to the state. They get less than 15% of the state's budget but help generate about 85% of our economy. And their budgets have been cut and cut and cut." **E & NR Comm. Chair Paul Jacques in the March SAM NEWS (Sportsman's Alliance of Maine)**

"Department of Conservation Under Fire"

"SAM pleads for Restoration of Cuts"

"The sportsmen of Maine believe the mission of the Department of Conservation is vital to Maine's wildlife resources and outdoor economy. This department cannot stand any further budget cuts. It has already suffered reductions which place its mission- and our resources- in jeopardy." **Excerpt from a full page in April edition of SAM NEWS**

"Budget Cuts Killing Conservation"

"In the Department of Conservation, the budget cutters are tearing away the fabric of our state to save pennies. Conservation receives \$17 million of general fund revenue, less than 1 percent of the state's budget. That represents about \$15 from each of us who live in and love this state.

For less than a nickel a day, you are getting a tremendous bargain.

Consider the mission of this small but vital department. (LURC) is the planning and law enforcement agency for the entire unorganized territory-the great north woods of Maine. (BPR) guards our heritage-places like Fort Knox- and our stunningly beautiful state parks which offer recreation to many and play an important role in our tourist economy.

The Bureau of Forestry provides the foundation for a \$5 billion industry, the very backbone of our economy.

Mainers who supported the fight to re-establish our ownership of public lands understand that Conservation's Bureau of Public Lands, which is responsible for this legacy, plays a critical role in protecting our heritage of free and open access to the forests of Maine. Two-thirds of all the land we own in Maine is managed by the Department of Conservation."

Excerpts from Kennebec Journal column by George Smith

Maine Forest Products Council

"As we try to restore economic vitality and health to our state, it is counterproductive to undermine the very foundation of the state's largest industry (with) this level of reduction. We're talking quality of life here. If the forest burns, more than jobs are lost. We can ill afford to replicate conditions which led to the devastating fire of 1947." **Ted Johnston, executive director**