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Maine Department of Conservation Employee News and Information Bulletin, March 1994

Maine Department of Conservation

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Maine Department of Conservation Employee News and Information March 1994

BULLETIN

FORESTRY

GEOLOGY

LAND USE REGULATION

PARKS AND RECREATION

PUBLIC LANDS

Commissioner's Column

Last week the Northern Forest Lands Council released its draft recommendations on actions needed to address forest and natural resource issues in the region. The council was established by Congress in 1991 to analyze the threats and pressures on these resources, to identify solutions and build consensus among interest groups on how to solve the problems. Following three years of research, the report concludes that many existing public policies (such as taxation) do not support the goal of sound long-term conservation or the values citizens cherish from our forest. In some cases, existing policies even contradict those goals.

The recommendations cover 13 subject areas. They are outlined in this Bulletin by Don Mansius, the department's Northern Forest program coordinator. These recommendations have important implications for most programs in this department. If enacted they would enable landowners, both public and private, to enhance their management of forest resources, provide public access, protect important environmental values and continue a strong forest resource-based economy.

The report calls specific attention to the difficulty public agencies are experiencing managing existing programs due to limited funding. It makes specific recommendations for correcting that problem.

This report is an important opportunity to increase public awareness and build support for improved natural resource policies and programs at both state and federal levels. It strongly makes the case for the benefits of a balanced approach toward use, management and protection of lands.

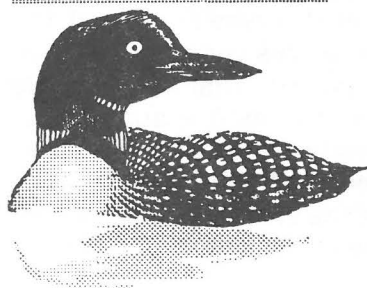
The project also provided substantial funding to compile natural resource inventory information in the state's GIS. This database will be of permanent value to our programs, and use by others, enabling effective analysis and decision-making.

The Northern Forest project has had the additional value of serving as an opportunity to build consensus among interest groups concerned about our forests. Hopefully this effort can serve as a basis to build a strong future together and avoid the controversy and divisiveness that has occurred over these issues in the Pacific Northwest.

Public meetings are scheduled to obtain comment on the report. Comments from DOC employees are invited. For copies of the recommendations or more information, contact Don Mansius, 287-4906.

Ed Meadows

BPR & IF&W Plan Conservation Plate Spinoffs



Steve Curtis and Lin Gosselin of the Bureau of Parks and Recreation have been working with Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife staff to design T-shirts and hats that will feature a design similar to that on the new conservation license plates. These products will be on sale at BPR and DIF&W facilities this summer. Like the license plates, the T-shirts and hats will be sold to benefit the Maine Environmental Trust Fund, which provides a needed financial boost to state parks and wildlife programs. BPR is also cooperating with DIF&W in plans to promote the sale of the new license plates, which will become available from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles on April 1.

DOC People

Newly Hired

Beverly Paquet, Clerk Typist,
Maine Forest Service, Harlow
Building

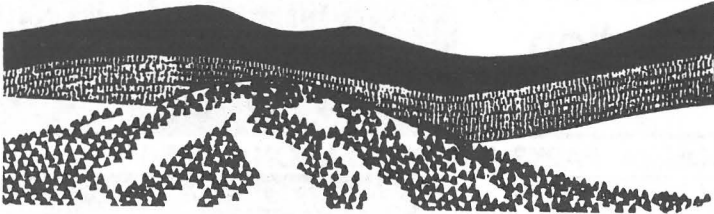
Conservation Notes

Patti Millette has completed a new educational video for the Maine Geological Survey's NSF-funded CREST project (Curriculum Resources for Earth Science Teachers in Maine). The video is titled "Piecing Together Maine's Coastal Geologic Puzzle". It shows how geologic forces have shaped and continue to alter the coast of Maine. Coverage ranges from ancient raised beaches to the modern ocean floor and includes footage from projects by the MGS Marine Geology Division. Part of the program features weather reporter **Lou McNally**. The video is available for viewing in the MGS resource center.

BPR's **John Titus** has been working with state park field staff members **Dan Bell, Phil Farr, Ken Wiley, Bruce Farnham, Scott Woodruff, Mike Leighton, Tim Hall, Matt LaRoche, and Pat Bailey** to design and implement a volunteer program for state parks and historic sites. Maine Volunteers in Parks or MVP, is modelled on the the SERVE/Maine program.

Forest Rangers **Mike Ricci, Roddie McLellan** and **Gary Sweetser** developed the 1994 Town Fire Warden Training Program for the Maine Forest Service's Fire Control Division. Prevention is the theme this year to support the national program honoring Smokey Bear's 50th Birthday. Fire Prevention Specialist **Jim Downie** provided information for the project.

(Conservation Notes continue on page four)



Finding Common Ground A Summary

Release of the Northern Forest Lands Council draft report, *Finding Common Ground*, culminates three years of research and effort by the council and affected interests. The draft incorporates substantial public input. Scores of individuals served on technical working groups. Each state also had a twenty-five member citizen advisory committee that brought together many interests. In addition, hundreds more have participated in the process by providing written and verbal comments at council meetings and during previous comment periods on council work.

The draft report is supported by all seventeen council members. It represents a composite view that many interests support, hence, the title, *Finding Common Ground*. The council's consensus on the draft recommendations is as important as the recommendations themselves.

The Value of the Forest

The forest, Maine's forest in particular, provides many goods, services and amenities to local communities, the state, the nation and the world. The contribution of the forest products industry to the state's economy is impressive. Recreation and tourism businesses also make substantial contributions. The forest also provides numerous public benefits: wildlife habitat, watershed protection, air quality, scenery and more. The forest defines our singular quality of life. All of these benefits come from land that, in Maine, is about 95% privately owned.

The Policy Environment is not Friendly to the Forest

What the council learned, and what the report lays out, is that

public policies and public attitudes regarding the forest are in conflict. The public says it cares deeply about the forest and the many values it provides. The

council heard this from nearly everyone, from small landowners to industrial woodlands managers, from hunters and anglers to those that may come to visit once a year. Unfortunately, the public policies that affect the forest often do not reflect or support the public's expectations. The council did not discover a major crisis that requires immediate action. However, it did find a policy crisis that, if not addressed, will inevitably leave the forest in a state that does not provide the many benefits that society expects. This requires action at both the state and federal levels. Six key problems were identified:

- Tax policy at all levels—federal, state and local—puts undue pressures on the forest resource.
- Business costs continue to escalate.
- Both business and land use regulations are perceived as inconsistent in application and ever-changing.
- Demands on the forest resource coupled with competing and conflicting demands of various user groups are increasing.
- Various interests often have not agreed on the major issues affecting the forest.
- There is a serious lack of funding to take care of land and facilities the public already owns.

The NFLC's recommendations address these problems in the context of thirteen core issue areas affecting the future of the forest.

Property Taxes

Rising property taxes have severe impacts on the ability of landowners to own and manage forest land. The council identified this as one of the most significant problems facing forest land across the region because of its effect on

private landowners' ability to hold onto their land. The council recommends strengthening current use taxation programs and moving away from the ad valorem property tax system.

Public Land Management and Acquisition

Public land acquisition and management are important in protecting components of the full range of values in the northern forest, where private lands cannot be expected to provide or protect such values. Unfortunately, financial support for management of existing holdings is woefully inadequate. The council recommends stronger support here. The council also recommends that states use a careful planning process should further public acquisitions be desirable. In addition, the council recommends more support for existing acquisition funding programs as well as consideration of other tools to protect important public values.

Federal and State Tax Policies

Certain tax policies work against long-term ownership and management of forest land in the Northern Forest. The council has identified some of the more far-reaching state and federal forest land tax policies that have serious, unintended, and adverse consequences on land management and conservation for private forest landowners. Encouraging long-term ownership and management through tax policy provides many public benefits. The council particularly recommends changes to estate tax, capital gains and passive loss rules.

Biological Diversity

The council recognizes that there is concern about the actual and potential loss of biological resources diversity in the region. To address this concern, the council recommends that states develop a process to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the landscape. The process should begin by assessing the status of biodiversity in each state and determine the

current level of protection on public lands and on private conservation lands by voluntary landowner agreement.

Outdoor Recreation on Private and Public Lands

Outdoor recreation is very important to the region's residents, visitors and tourism industry, yet landowners may incur increasing costs, inconvenience, and loss of privacy by allowing the public to use their lands for recreation. The council recommends stronger support for many public and private initiatives that will enable landowners to keep their land open and available for recreation. The council also recommends instituting a federal excise tax on recreation equipment to fund these and other programs.

Private Forest Land Stewardship

More private landowners would be interested in allowing public use of their land for recreation and managing for non-commodity purposes, if adequate technical and financial assistance were available. Unfortunately, it is not. The council recommends stronger support for the Stewardship Incentive Program to remedy this situation.

Forest Practices

The council heard considerable concern that some current forest practices in the region, most notably large-scale clearcutting and use of herbicides, degrade water quality, aesthetics, recreational opportunities, forest health and biological resources. Others have said that current practices have led to greater biodiversity and improved forest health. In addition, many believe this should be a subject of further study and recommendation. The council recommends that states examine the issue, take action where warranted, and support new or existing programs to inform loggers, foresters, landowners and the general public about sound forest management practices.

Market Development

Opportunities are expanding for employment in value-added sectors of wood product manufac-

turing in the region, yet these opportunities are being missed due to lack of supportive public policy. The council recommends support for: "Green Certification" programs to recognize and reward forest landowners who practice environmentally sound forest management, marketing cooperatives, and increased collaboration between state economic development and natural resource agencies.

Rural Development Through Forestry

Northern forest communities are highly dependent upon and subject to changes in the forest products industry. The council recommends increased funding for the USDA Forest Service's "Rural Development Through Forestry" program in the Northeast.

Education and Technical Assistance

Many forest products businesses, especially smaller ones, are unable to adopt new technologies that would enable them to participate more fully in rapidly changing and expanding wood product markets. The council recommends stronger partnerships between state universities to coordinate efforts to address educational and technical assistance needs of forest-based industries and landowners.

Workers' Compensation Insurance

Extreme workers' compensation insurance costs hurt the economic viability of forest-based businesses. The council recommends increased support for training programs to improve workplace safety and reduce workers' compensation claims and advocates reform of state workers' compensation programs to reduce costs.

Government Regulations

Government regulations have become increasingly complex and can unnecessarily impede forest-based business, land investment and economic development initiatives. Most often it is the process and implementation of regulations — not the content or purpose — that cause problems. Most vexing are (a) instability of related laws,

and (b) inconsistency, inflexibility and duplication in administration of regulations. The council recommends periodic review of administrative rules and development of innovative approaches to simplify and stabilize the regulatory process. In addition, the council recommends the establishment of consistent truck weight regulations to facilitate interstate commerce.

Land Use Planning

Land use planning and regulations have had mixed results across the region in discouraging conversion of forest land. There is also little well documented information on land conversion trends in the Northern Forest Lands. In addition, there has been a lack of timely and easily accessible information about the forest. The council recommends more timely, expanded and useful information collection and management systems.

Public Involvement and Development of Final Recommendations

Council members from each state briefed Congressional delegations and the undersecretary of Agriculture for the USDA Forest Service in Washington on March 2. Council members met with the press in each state on the morning of March 3 to discuss the report. The release of report began a seventy-five day public comment period that ends on May 16. Extensive effort will be made to seek public input. Five "open houses" and "listening sessions" are scheduled around the state. In addition, state council members will hold several meetings with various interests. Commissioner Meadows and NFL Coordinator Donald Mansius will coordinate a DOC response to the report.

The council will meet to analyze public comment and formulate final recommendations in early summer. Final recommendations are expected sometime during the summer.

If you have any questions about the NFL program, or would like a copy of the draft recommendations report, call Donald Mansius at 287-4906.

Conservation Notes

continued from front page

BPR's Boating Facilities Division has adopted a proactive approach in providing accessible pedestrian routes, parking, boarding float systems, "tie down/make ready" areas, and toilet facilities in the design and development of new and renovated boat facilities. In one aspect of this approach, **Ron Cyr** has recently completed Autocad drawings for accessible float systems. The challenges of providing for accessibility, as well as for meeting increasingly complex environmental regulations, has required additional design effort and increased development costs. According to **Chip Edgecomb**, however, unexpected benefits have resulted. For example, efforts to reduce slopes to provide for accessibility sometimes contribute to limiting erosion and phosphorous runoff problems.

Staff members **Brian Bronson** and **Pat Gordon** of BPR's ATV program are processing the results of a recent survey sent to over 2,000 registered ATV owners in Maine. The survey is designed to provide information about the types of ATVs in use, trail needs and preferences of ATV owners, as well as the amount of fuel purchased by ATV owners. **Jim Rea** has designed a data base program to compile and sort the survey information.

Forest Ranger **Lance Martin** was the lead defensive tactics instructor during a Maine Criminal Justice Academy course taught in Presque Isle. **Bruce Small** assisted for part of the course. The students expressed their gratitude to the Maine Forest Service for supplying Lance and Bruce. New Forest Rangers **Shade Nichols** and **Joseph Mints** were students in the course.

Forest Rangers **Bill Hamilton**, **Lance Martin**, **Bruce Small** and **Bill Williams**, defensive tactics instructors, recently met to conduct a review of the program and to initiate a campaign to solicit new instructor candidates.

David Allen gave a presentation on Land Use Regulation Commission regulations and forest management standards and requirements to professors and students in the schools of forestry, engineering and wildlife at the University of Maine at Orono.

The effort to "keep a regional treasure intact" by the Friends of Fort Knox is featured in the current issue of *Champion in Maine*, newsletter of Champion Paper Company. Champion employee gifts to the Friends of Fort Knox fund drive are matched through the company's charitable giving program.

Fred Griffith gave a presentation of Land Use Regulation Commission permitting requirements and other applicable procedures for sporting camps at a meeting of the Maine Sporting Camp Owners in Bangor.

Harry Doughty recently instructed an ICS (Incident Command System) course at the Criminal Justice Academy. The course was for police chiefs, sheriffs and other members of the law enforcement community.

Forest rangers **Kenny Wing** and **Maynard Thornton** instructed during two sessions of the advanced fire behavior course attended by forest rangers from Maine and New Hampshire and U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel. According to training coordinator **Leslie Wiles**, the federally certified course is one of the most challenging and comprehensive fire control courses rangers will attend during their careers.

The first Annual Forest Fire Awareness Week has been proposed by the Maine forest Service for the week of April 10th through 16th. Because most forest fires occur during April and May, forest rangers say the event's timing will be right to raise the level of forest fire awareness and prevent fires from occurring. A ceremony is planned during the formal signing of the proclamation.

The College Conservation Corps of Maine (CCCM) continues to work on service projects at Camden Hills and Lake St. George State Parks. CCCM crews are working with Park Manager **Gorden Bell** on clearing trees and brush from the roadside leading to the summit of Mt. Battie. CCCM teams at Lake St. George are working with Park Ranger **Mark Wight** on maintaining cross country ski trails as well as indoor projects such as constructing picnic tables and recycling bins.

CCCM is recruiting new corpsmembers who will begin the fourteen month program in June with a backcountry residential service project. Corpsmembers will then move onto campus at Unity College for two semesters. During the academic year, corpsmembers attend classes full time and work on conservation based, community service projects. Their second summer will be spent serving as assistant team leaders for a summer Maine Conservation Corps team, interns for a natural resource agency or as part of a backcountry team.

If you know a young person who may be interested in becoming part of the CCCM, please have them contact **Dave Gerkens** at 287-6107.

For the first time, two bronze Smokey Bear awards will be coming to Maine. Television stations WLBZ and WABI, both of Bangor will be the recipients of this prestigious national award presented by the Ad Council, USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. The awards are given annually for outstanding contributions to forest fire prevention.

An introductory fire fighting course conducted in Portland by the Saco River Fire Control District in Portland was the largest ever held there. **Bill Greaves**, **Alan Johnston**, **Steve Harding** and **Mark Mayhew** were instructors. **Jay Bernard**, who coordinated the entire event, said it worked because of team effort. Most of the trainees are willing to fight fire anywhere in Maine.