Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

PUBLIC RECREATION, ACCESS, AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS (WMA’S)
OVERVIEW

- Department Mission
- Acquisition
- Landholding Summary – where and how many?
- Management
- Public Uses
DEPARTMENT MISSION

Responsibilities are established in legislative statute (Title 12) and summarized in 4 areas:

- Preserve, protect and enhance fish and wildlife resources of the State;
- Encourage the wise use of these resources;
- Ensure coordinated planning for the future use and preservation of these resources; and
- Provide for effective management of these resources
ACQUISITION - HOW

Properties were and are acquired through several avenues:

- Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (1937) Funds (PR)
- State Bonding
- State and Federal Grants (i.e. LMFB)
- Gifts/Donations/Mitigation
ACQUISITION - WHY

Properties are acquired to further the Departments’ Land Acquisition Goal: “To provide a statewide, ecologically based system of land holdings for the protection and enhancement of important wildlife habitats that also provide opportunities for public recreation”
ACQUISITION - WHY

Supports the Departments objective to:

- Maintain/improve habitat conditions for featured species or biological diversity
- Develop, maintain and/or improve public access for traditional recreational uses
- Serve as habitat management demonstration areas
WMA SUMMARY

- Over 1,250 parcels
  ~106,000 Acres
- 61 Wildlife Management Areas
- Range in size from 111AC to 6838 AC
- All counties
- Management authority on over 200 coastal seabird islands, 40 owned by IFW
OTHER PROPERTIES

- Department owns or has jurisdiction over 117 boat launch facilities
- 9 Hatcheries and rearing stations
  - Generally small and scattered
  - Most are restricted access due to water quality, hunting allowed on larger properties
- Maine Wildlife Park in Gray, Maine
MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Primary objective is to maintain or create highest quality wildlife habitats possible through management techniques including:

- Timber harvesting operations (deer wintering areas, early successional habitat, etc.)
- Field mowing/maintenance
- Maintaining water levels on flowages (forage and cover)
- Fruit trees, herbaceous seedings, etc.
MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Secondary objective is to provide for public recreational uses, especially traditional uses.

- When recreational uses do not conflict with wildlife management objectives.
- Consists of both “consumptive” uses such as hunting, fishing, trapping and “non-consumptive” uses such as hiking, snowmobiling, etc.
MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Wildlife Management Areas also serve as demonstration areas where the public can see and be instructed about wildlife management techniques that might be incorporated on their own lands
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

- Endangered or Threatened Species (MESA)
- Unique natural areas/communities
- SWH
- Featured Species
- Biodiversity
PUBLIC USES OF WMA’S

Providing accessible opportunities for hunting, fishing and trapping is a main objective of IFW

- Increasing pressures from posted properties make WMA’s a popular destination for hunting and trapping

- All WMA’s are open to hunting and trapping, except Swan Island (Steve Powell) WMA due to overnight camping, guided interpretive trails and other recreational uses
PUBLIC USES OF WMA’S

Multiple and varied uses of WMA’s provide for continued public use in a changing landscape

- Hunting, fishing, trapping
- Hiking and Walking
- Biking, X-Country Skiing
- Berry Pickers, Leaf Peepers
- Horseback Riding
- Snowmobiling
- ATV’s
- Boating, canoeing
- Cemetery Visitors
- Dog Sleds
- Training hunting dogs
- Wildlife Watching
NON-PERMITTED USES OF WMA’S

- Overnight camping and fires.
  The exception to this is the Steve Powell (Swan Island) WMA, which provides for overnight camping, guided tours, and interpretive trails and the Walkers Falls Campground at the Brownfield Bog WMA.

- Regional Biologists can use discretion on potential conflicts in recreational uses.
PUBLIC USES OF WMA’S – RESTRICTIONS

- To protect ecological values and infrastructure, some recreational uses and access are restricted to certain areas or seasons
- Ecological Reserves (ER’s) proposed for 11,231 acres- some restrictions will be in place
PUBLIC USES OF WMA’S– SNOWMOBILES

- Generally permitted on WMA’s
- Offset trails from logging/access roads in some locations
- ITS trails through many WMA’s
PUBLIC USES OF WMA’S – ATV’S

- ATV’s, when properly used, can be a compatible use
- ATV’s allowed on most gravel roads
- Off-road use ONLY on designated trails
- Habitat criteria weighed when considering the establishment of off-road trails
ATV TRAIL ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

- Towns and ATV clubs negotiate to establish a presence in the community.
- IFW requires clubs to have landowner permission from where the trail is coming from and where it is going.
- Small WMA’s (<2000 acres) can not be a destination – road systems are not compatible with high traffic.
- Trail cannot compromise wildlife:
  - Annual maintenance required
  - Seasonal closure
SUMMARY

- WMA’s acquired for the protection and enhancement of wildlife resources of the State
- Coordinated planning and management ensures wise use of the resource
- Compatible recreational uses enjoyed
- Permanent conservation status ensures public access for future generations