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Bulletin: Prepared for the Employees of the Maine Department of Conservation, January 1990

Maine Department of Conservation

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BULLETIN

Prepared for the Employees of the Maine Department of Conservation

January 1990

Commissioner's Column

Our best wishes to you and your loved ones for a shining New Year. 1990 promises to be full and rewarding. With your help we can continue the outstanding record of achievement that Conservation has come to be known for in the last three years.

This Bulletin includes information on the State budget and the Department's proposed reduction. I urge you to read the information carefully and raise any questions you have with your supervisors. There will be a great deal of media attention on this over the next several months.

As you read this information, we urge each of you to suggest other ways to save money. Not only might you receive a cash award from the Employees Suggestion Program, but all savings we can make may mean less of a cut is needed somewhere else. We are particularly interested in your suggestions for different and better ways of operating. Too often we all get used to one way of doing things and don't take the time to find better ways.

We ask each of you to help achieve savings in every way possible—including conserving fuel, supplies, telephone, heat and travel. This is an opportunity for each of you to share in decision-making through your suggestions, improve our creativity and strengthen the management of all department programs.

Ed Meadows

The State Budget and DOC

This is a summary of current information about the state's fiscal situation and our plans to reduce Conservation's budget.

The economy in every state in the Northeast declined dramatically in 1989. The suddenness of the change was unexpected in all states. In Maine, for the first time in over a decade, sales tax receipts were below projections for seven of the last ten months.

The \$67 million reduction equals two percent of the total state budget. Most of the budget, however, consists of fixed costs such as grants to towns, aid to education and other expenses which are not readily reduced without specific law changes. Departments are working on plans to deal with the revenue shortfall in advance of a major problem. Most budgets will still go up after the cuts, but the increase over FY88/89 budgets will be less than before.

Departments have been asked to reduce their budgets by five percent for FY90 and to keep FY91 budgets at the original FY90 level. This will achieve the needed savings over the biennium.

Conservation's reduction target is \$842,000 for FY90 and \$559,000 for FY91 for a total of \$1.4 million. Departments were given the option to combine the two figures and propose a plan to meet the savings over the next 18 months. Conservation chose to use this 18 month option since we have more flexibility this year due to creation of new programs. Our plan proposes savings of \$1,039,000 in FY90 and \$363,000 in FY91 to achieve our target. An article in the December 31 *Maine Sunday Telegram* showed Conservation as cutting more than our target in FY90. The story did not explain that we are combining the two years and using the 18 month approach.

To achieve these cuts we asked each program to

propose options based on their assessment of needs and priorities. Our overall objectives in making the reductions are to:

- maintain forward progress on essential department programs;
- protect core programs affecting public safety and health;
- protect programs which serve the broadest public need and department priority, based on legislative mandates and our Mission statement;
- spread the impact equitably among each major program;
- phase in implementation of newly-established programs versus starting them up all at once;
- minimize layoffs or other disruptive personnel actions;
- seek input from employees; and to
- rely on savings from vacancies and allotment reserve.

The Department is fortunate to have several vacancies in new programs that we can keep vacant to produce savings without decreasing current programs or laying off people.

Our proposed reduction for the 18 months includes: Personal Services (salary savings), 80%; All Other, 19%; and Capital, 1%. The key elements of our proposal include the following items.

1. Phase in 12 of the new positions established in the Forest Practices Act rather than hiring all 19 employees at once. All deadlines and mandates in the new law will be met, including rulemaking. Some of the new forestry assistance will be delayed. All positions will be filled during FY91.

2. Woodbury Pond State Park in Litchfield will be open for public use this summer. Development of a new parking lot and improvements to the entrance road will go ahead, but full staff will not be hired this biennium. Staff from nearby facilities will provide limited operational support.

3. The three-year effort to consolidate fire control operations continues. The Western Regional Forest Service Headquarters at Greenville will be phased out and administrative functions will be divided among the other regions. Two employees will transfer to vacant positions in the same class. Two others will be assisted in their transition to other opportunities. The District Forest Service office in Greenville will remain.

4. Geology will give up a one time appropriation to contract out water supply studies. The work will be done in-house, but it will take longer to complete.

5. Parks will give up funds for archaeological and design work on town-owned land at Ft. Halifax in Winslow. Funding for repair work at Montpelier will be reduced. The work will proceed at a reduced level.

6. LURC will leave certain new positions vacant for a short period.

7. A vacancy in Engineering and Realty will be extended for one year.

8. A new Department position of Land Conservation Specialist will be kept vacant through early FY91.

9. The balance of the reduction will be from other positions and All Other.

We recognize the effects of each of these actions and are confident we can maintain program objectives despite the cuts. We will do what we can to minimize the impacts. We hope further cuts won't be needed.

Continued on back

Budget continued from front page

We recognize also that, despite this current reduction, Conservation has received significant budget increases in the last three years after two decades of cuts. LURC has received the largest increases in its history. Parks has received capital and new vehicles. Forestry has received new staff. Many programs have received new positions and resources. We have also received increased support for administration, training, and new computers now in use throughout the Department. Each of these has been a goal in our Vision statement.

Please bear in mind these are only proposals until they are approved by the Legislature. Your bureau or division director has more information about the changes in your programs. We urge you to discuss your suggestions and questions with them. As you know, it is often difficult to rely only on the media to get complete information.

We appreciate your support and ideas as we have gone about this task. We have sought to balance our mandate and the care of resources under our charge with the need for efficiency and good management.

We will keep you advised as developments occur.

Department Directors' Meeting

In December senior department staff held a two and one half day meeting to review accomplishments, critique ourselves and establish direction and priorities for the rest of the biennium. It was the first time we had had a chance to meet together as a group since the changes in leadership over the last year. In reviewing our accomplishments one thing was clear, we are very proud of DOC and appreciate the commitment and quality of your efforts.

1989 saw a great deal of change in the department. Dave Boulter, Tom Morrison and Hartley La Duke began as new directors. We had great success legislatively and received many new programs to implement, plus 24 new positions. We are outgrowing Harlow Building as a result and are working on solutions to the space crunch. Accounting and Personnel procedures are changing drastically with MFASIS. The number of new computers around is impressive. GIS is a reality and will be operational very soon. New land acquisitions are spectacular. Professional development and training opportunities have increased.

Each of these and more were objectives targeted in the Department's Vision statement. We plan to keep reaching for high goals.

It is clear to us that every bureau and division has a full plate and numerous competing demands. One of our priorities in 1990 will be to strengthen central department functions to help respond to the changes and to assist programs by providing strong central services. This includes new efforts in management, accounting, training, hiring, seasonal employees and financial management. At our meeting we made a commitment to follow up on specific department-wide management needs that flow from the Vision and Mission statements and your requests. These will be worked on in 1990. We will report further results to you.

MSECCA Success

The Department achieved 108% of its goal, raising \$8,524.00. Participation was up, with 39% of employees contributing. Thank you for your thoughtfulness and contributions to help others. Thanks to Hartley La Duke and the bureau coordinators for their efforts.

Cash Savings Awards

You all received in your last paycheck a brochure on the Employee Suggestion Program. Reminder: You can't win if you don't enter! Send in your suggestions. The brochure incorrectly identified the DOC representative: it is Judy Andrews of Administrative Services.

Kelley Picked for Down East Award

Joe Kelley, Director of the Maine Geological Survey's Marine Geology Division, has received *Down East Magazine's* 1990 Environmental Award. This prestigious award was given in recognition of Joe's extensive research on the Maine coast and his efforts to protect coastal environments through better understanding of geologic processes and appropriate legislation. The January issue of *Down East* contains an in-depth profile of Joe and describes the work that he and Steve Dickson have done for the Department of Conservation and other state agencies.

Susie Donahue: SERVE/Maine Worker

Susan Donahue is a very special worker at the Northern Regional Office in Island Falls. Susie, who is physically handicapped, wanted to build a work history and test her capabilities in the work place. She has volunteered well in excess of 225 hours to the Maine Forest Service under the SERVE/Maine Program.

Susie has mastered the routine duties of the office such as copying and filing, and has also worked extensively at computer entry.

Her cheerful personality and determination make Susie a pleasure to work with and a valuable volunteer.

Conservation Notebook

Lance C. Martin, Ranger at Second Musquacook Lake T11R, has been selected as the Northern Region's 1989 Forest Ranger of the Year. •• **Cathy Ward** has been cited by the Department of Administration for producing "one of the best" affirmative action programs in State government. •• BPR staff **John Titus** and **Tim Hall** recently attended a week of training to better identify and address safety issues in Bureau work places. •• Despite December's cold temperatures, a record 2,000 people were out to enjoy snowshoeing and cross-country skiing at Aroostook State Park during the month. •• **Jim Mangin**, BPR Snowmobile Coordinator, spoke recently to 120 snowmobilers at St. Albans •• **Harry Zinn**, SERVE/Maine intern, has completed his graduate dissertation, *Visitor Distribution, Characteristics, and Preferences on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway*. SERVE/Maine volunteers also worked with Northern Region Rangers to repair camps and towers and improve trails. •• **Bob Marvinney** has passed the state examination to become a certified Maine geologist. •• **Jon Matcalf** will host snowmobilers, cross-country skiers and other visitors to the Bigelow Preserve Lodge this winter. •• **Joe Wiley** and **Del Ramey** hosted UM grad students on a tour of the Scraggly Lake Unit. •• BPR's **Tim Hall** has been elected National Advisor to the National Lifesaving Association. •• A crew from the Windham Correctional Center helped clear drains at Sebago Lake State Park during a fall storm according to Park Manager **Phil Mayo**. •• Twice last fall, **Jay McIntosh**, Ranger at Reid State Park, travelled to Sebago Lake State Park to don SCUBA gear and assist maintenance crews with repairs to the park's water supply system. •• **Steve Curtis**, **Ron Hunt**, **Tom Skolfield**, **Tim Hall**, **Ken Wiley**, and **Scott Woodruff**, BPR supervisory staff, attended a roundtable workshop at the Northeast Recreation and Park Association meeting in New Hampshire. •• BPR's Boating Facilities Program has begun a major redevelopment project at the Saco River boat site under the supervision of **Richard Skinner** and **Ron Yates**. •• Foresters **Dennis Brennan** and **Bob Leso** have been recognized for exceptional work; Dennis for assistance to Cape Elizabeth and Bob for help to the Conservation School. •• **Jeff Bartley** of BPL's Western Region, has returned from educational leave. •• The Bureau of State Employee Health is sponsoring a Cross-Country Skiing Day at Carrabassett Valley on Wednesday, February 21. Call 289-4516 for more information.