

Commission To Study the Public Reserved Lands Management Fund

Minutes from Second Commission meeting – September 29, 2015 at 11:00pm Held in the Cross State Office Building, Room 216 – Augusta, Maine

Commission members present: Sen. Saviello, Sen. Dill, Rep. Hickman, Rep. Martin, Rep. Marean, Doug Denico, Thomas Abello, David Trahan, Greg Shute, Jonathan Robbins, Richard Smith, Bob Myers, Tony Madden

Commission members absent: John Bryant and Walt Whitcomb

1. Chairs' welcome, introduction of Commission members.

Presentations were made to the Commission by the following individuals:

2. Director, Maine Forest Service, Doug Denico - Responses to questions posed to MFS during the September 9, 2015 meeting of the Commission. Information provided by Director Denico can be found at <http://legislature.maine.gov/legis/opla/publiclandsmgmtmatrls.htm> and is summarized below:

- Provided Commission with the most recent (2000, amended 2007) Integrated Resource Policy, links to SFC/SFI certifications, an example of a 5-year land management plan and links to the complete list of land management plans, membership list of the constituencies involved in the public lands planning process, a description of how the harvest prescriptions encompass the multiple use mandate on public lands, an example of a prescription, a comparison of contract logging services v. stumpage for 2013, 2014 and 2015 YTD, a detailed plan to provide an annual allowable harvest using a forest biometrician and sophisticated harvest modeling tools, a summary of silvicultural advisory committee tour, current inventory of accessibility accommodations on public lands, and discussed details about the current Bureau of Parks and Lands budget;
- Contract lumber services (CLS) yields more revenue than stumpage contracts, Bureau is trying reduce the number of "middlemen" by dealing directly with the contractors that are doing the actual cutting to ensure they receive fair pay for their services. Getting a CLS through the state system can be burdensome and can result in lost opportunities because sometimes there is a limited window of opportunity to make a deal and get the wood cut.
- Bureau of Parks and Lands does not get any money from public reserved lands unless BPL provides a service;
- Need to do a better job of keeping recreational cost separated from other costs such as infrastructure, don't have those separated out at this point;
- Need better data on recreational use patterns and more education about recreational opportunities in public lands;
- Need to have roads in the right areas and the right time to properly manage land;
- Once we pay all our bills we need to have a \$2.5 million cash balance on hand to cover costs in an emergency;

- Currently, the annual allowable cut is 141,500 cords over 394,000 acres (166,000 discounted 15% to reach 141,500 cords). The discount number is arbitrary and unclear if it is needed after reviewing 1999 and 2011 forest inventories; and
- Proposed conducting a forest inventory next fall - will get an estimate for the Commission but doesn't think will be expensive;

3. Letter from five former commissioners (Sept. 24, 2015), Ronald Lovaglio, Former Commissioner of the Maine Department of Conservation-Felt the commissioners had something to offer the Commission to help it with its deliberations, take public trust very seriously and concerns about increasing the harvest; go slow. He suggested using any surplus to conduct a thorough forest inventory and proffered using the Fund to help with the Parks budget and then use the GF money that would have otherwise have gone to Parks to help with energy program.

4. During the public comment period, the following individuals / organizations testified: Lew Kingsbury; Steve Swatling; Kathy Johnson of Natural Resource Council of Maine; Gordon Mott; Mike Wilson; Ken Spaulding.

During the public comment period, the following points and arguments were presented:

- A. Kathy Johnson provided the Commission with a list of funding needs/recommendations for the Bureau of Parks and Lands. The document can be accessed at: <http://legislature.maine.gov/legis/opla/publiclandsmgmtmatr1s.htm>
- B. Wildlife and the protection of old growth forests are as important as a working forest, need to focus more on these aspects of public lands.
- C. Need to continue to build forest inventory as all past commissioners have done.
- D. The allowable annual cut is a technical and not a political analysis; politics should not set the max allowable cut; should determine how overall cut should be managed among species.
- E. BPL should take a more proactive approach in developing destination development strategies.
- F. Consider developing more agricultural uses for public lands.

5. Commission discussion.

During the course of the meeting, the Commission made the following requests:

- A. Director Denico - A copy of the bid criteria and sample form;
- B. Director Denico- An estimate of what it will cost to do a 5-year forest inventory in the fall of 2016;
- C. Director Denico-Brief presentation about spruce budworm strategy;
- D. Director Denico- List of priority recreation projects;
- E. Director Denico- Copy of the Sewall letter (one page) that was distributed during ACF budget process;
- F. Director Denico-ADA expenditures currently undertaken by Dept.;
- G. Director Denico-Additional clarity re: how much money is really available in the Public Lands account;

- H. Former Commissioner of the Maine Depart. of Conservation, Ronald Lovaglio- Review current forest inventory data and report back comments at the Commission's next meeting;
- I. Ronald Lovaglio- Provide recommendations on how to expand on recreational/job creation opportunities on public lands without putting a study together;
- J. Mike Wilson- Provide additional information on destination development;
- K. Commission staff-distribute updates done over the First Regular Session of the 127th Legislature addressing the spruce budworm issue.

Near the end of the meeting the Commission members made the following points.

- A. Budget matters, access and education – Should develop a way to track line items in budget; track road building component of budget separately from recreational costs; need to set up a reserve account to hold the \$2.5 million in emergency funds; consider alternative ways to list budget expenditures, encumbrances etc. so that it is less confusing to lay persons; before the next meeting, Commission members should review the letter presented by Kathy Johnson of Natural Resource Council of Maine.
- B. Access and education - Need to further consider educational outreach efforts such as signage about what opportunities exist on public reserve lands, what people are seeing on these lands and what is being done on public reserved lands; need to ensure long-term accessibility; look at boat launches for ADA accessibility to determine where needs are; unclear how to address ADA access issues; updating inventory and GIS system would be a good investment.
- C. Sustainable harvest - Legislature shouldn't determine annual allowable cut, that should be left to professionals based on science; make sure the Bureau has the tools it needs to determine AAC; consider establishing an allowable cut advisory committee to help determine AAC and other issues that arise that require certain expertise.
- D. Pest and disease control - Should look more closely at invasive species and other diseases and not just the spruce budworm, what is on the horizon; look at what was passed this past session regarding the spruce budworm laws; Denico will brief the Commission on what the bureau's strategy on pest/disease control.
- E. Tourism -Agencies need to work together to promote tourism on public reserved lands; should give destination development more consideration; webcasts, signage etc., to inform the public of the opportunities on these public lands.
- F. Next meeting- Next meeting is tentatively set for October 27, 2015.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 pm.