

**FISCAL YEAR 2024
ANNUAL REPORT**

to

The **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE**
on **AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION, AND FORESTRY**

**MAINE PUBLIC RESERVED, NONRESERVED,
AND SUBMERGED LANDS**



Farmer Mountain (background), an addition to Mt. Abraham Ecological Reserve (foreground)

**MAINE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION
AND FORESTRY**
Bureau of Parks and Lands
March 1, 2025



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ANNUAL REPORT
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Bureau of Parks and Lands

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL), within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF), is responsible for the management and administration of Maine's State Parks, Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands, Submerged Lands, Coastal Islands, conservation easement lands, and other lands as provided by law.

This report constitutes the required annual reporting pursuant to the following:

- 12 MRSA §§1853, 1839, and elsewhere,
- 12 MRSA §§1850(1), 1836(1), and elsewhere related to vehicular access to Bureau lands, and
- 12 MRSA §§1805 and 1853 related to Ecological Reserves on Bureau lands.

This report provides an overview of the scope of the Bureau's responsibilities and information on the Bureau's management activities during fiscal year 2024 (FY 24). As required, the report includes information on gates and barriers that prevent public vehicle access to Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands (Public Lands), recreation facility fees charged for using these lands, and a status report on Ecological Reserves. The report also includes information on timber, recreation, and wildlife management on Public Lands during the fiscal year.

Income and expenditure information is provided for FY 24; a report for the upcoming FY 26 budget is also included. The legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (ACF) must report by March 15th to the Appropriations Committee on the Bureau of Public Lands' upcoming FY 26 budget. The Public Lands division of the Bureau is a dedicated revenue component of the agency, funding almost all its administrative, planning, management, and operational activities from revenue generated from the land base, with some additional sources of funds provided through various grant programs.

The management of Public Lands is directed by statute. Title 12 MRSA §1833 and §1847 direct the Bureau to manage the Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands (644,645 acres in FY 24)¹ *“under the principles of multiple land use to produce a sustained yield of products and services in accordance with both prudent and fair business practices and the principle of sound planning.”* In addition, management of Public Reserved Lands must *“demonstrate exemplary land management practices, including silvicultural, wildlife and recreation management”* (12 MRSA §1847). Fifteen-year multiple-use plans for the properties direct the Bureau's Public Lands management activities. Benefits from the sound management of these lands include:

- *production of forest products,*
- *public access to recreational opportunities,*
- *enhancement of wildlife habitat, and*
- *protection of unique natural and cultural resources.*

The Bureau is also responsible for managing and reporting on public trust rights to Submerged Lands and Coastal Islands to the ACF Committee. When granting leases for Submerged Lands, the Bureau includes conditions to maintain customary and traditional public access, navigation, and commercial marine use. This report covers FY 24 along with some highlights from the first half of FY 25.

¹ This figure reflects updated property records and improved GIS data, as well as acquisitions and dispositions that occurred in FY 24.

II. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

In FY 24, lands under the Bureau’s ownership, management, or oversight included:

Acres*	Type
644,645	Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands held in fee.
401,207	Conservation and recreation easements
85,602	Fee lands held as Parks, Historic Sites, or Boat Access Sites
2.3 million	Marine and freshwater submerged lands
1,095	Publicly held coastal islands

**Acreages presented in this report are based on land transaction records, parcel boundaries mapped in geographic information systems (GIS), and, in some cases, land surveys. Because survey-grade mapping is not available for all lands, reported acreages may have an inherent mapping error of around 2%.*

See the map on page 3.

III. LAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The Bureau manages 147 Public Reserved Land units and 12 Nonreserved Public Land units, ranging from 30 to 44,000 acres. Management plans address the Reserved and Nonreserved Lands within a planning region and cover fifteen years, with five-year reviews. Management plans for all major land units are now in place.²

In FY 24, the following management planning work was conducted:

15-Year Management Plan Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flagstaff Region Plan: update begun; will incorporate 8,700 acres of new public land
Management Plan 5-Year Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kennebec Highlands Management Plan: plan review and update continues; will incorporate 800 acres of new public land
FY 25 updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Penobscot Region: 5-Year Plan Review completed Upper Kennebec Region: 5-Year Review begun

IV. ECOLOGICAL RESERVES

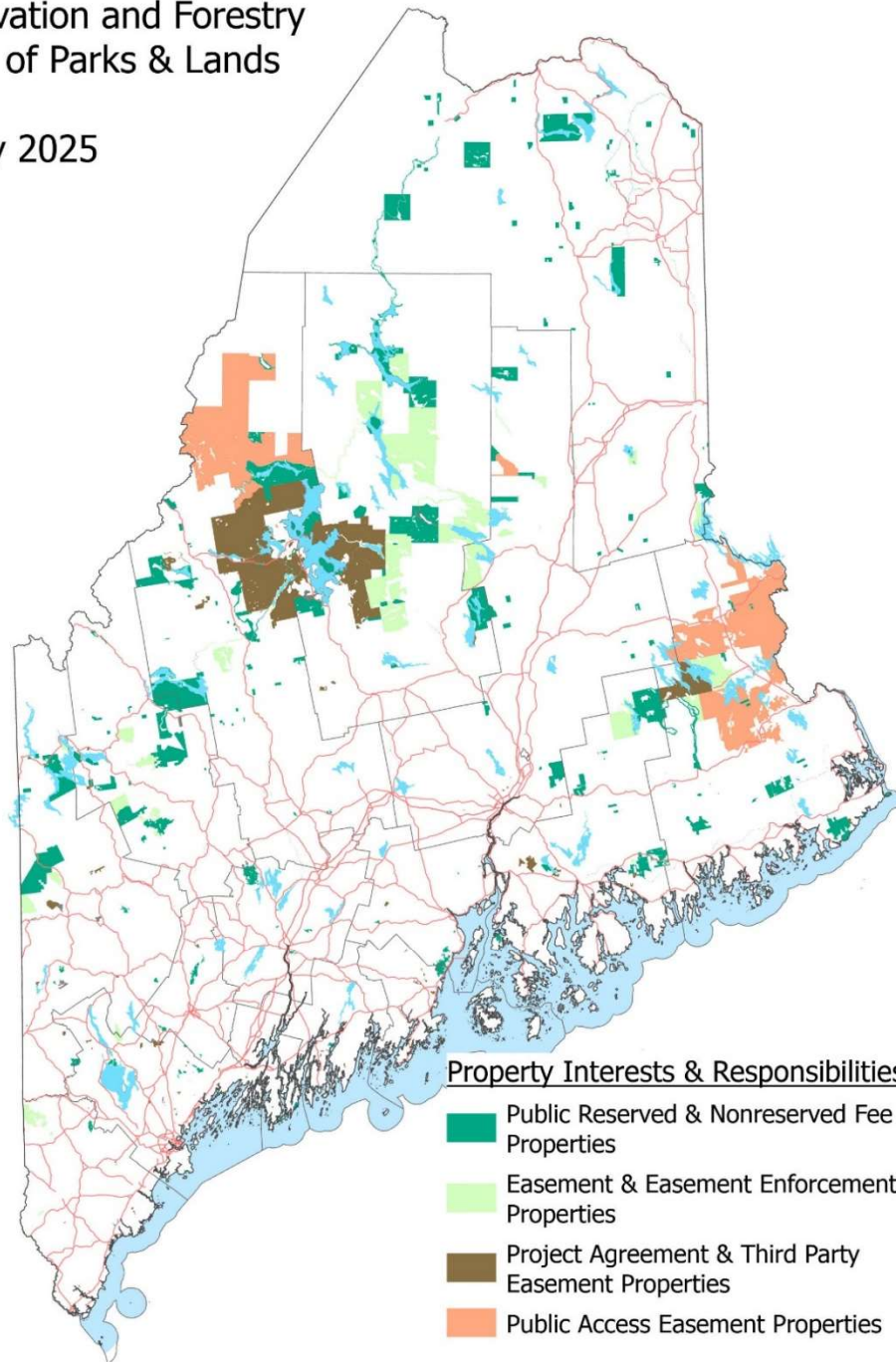
Ecological Reserves are designated areas containing representative native ecosystem types managed as Special Protection Areas. Subject to statutory limitations noted below, the Bureau Director may designate Ecological Reserves on Bureau lands in conjunction with adopting a management plan, and in consultation with the Ecological Reserves Scientific Advisory Committee. The Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) within DACF collects baseline ecological data and conducts long-term monitoring for the Bureau’s Ecological Reserve inventory.

² There are 41 major land units (units greater than 2,000 acres). The management plans are available on the Bureau’s [webpage](#).

Following is a summary of the status of these Reserves and the results of monitoring, scientific research, and other activities related to the Reserves (12 MRSA §1839 and §1853), and proposed designations of Ecological Reserves (12 MRSA §1805).

Department of Agriculture,
Conservation and Forestry
Bureau of Parks & Lands

January 2025



Current Ecological Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 designated reserves with a total of 100,388 acres
Statutory Limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The total Bureau land acreage designated as Ecological Reserves by statute may not exceed 115,000 acres FY 24 Status: 14,612 acres remain available for Ecological Reserve designation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No more than 8% of the operable timberland on Public Lands may be designated as Ecological Reserves* FY 24 Status: 12,382 additional acres of operable timberland remain eligible for Ecological Reserve designation
Proposed new/ expanded Ecological Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 new reserve proposed (Scopan) and 3 reserves proposed to be expanded (Bigelow, Salmon Brook Lake, Chamberlain) A total of 6,700 acres would be added to reserves following updates to management plans and reporting the additions to the legislature
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduled monitoring continued on a portion of the 540 permanent forest inventory plots on the reserves, which are revisited at ten-year intervals

* Lands acquired after the statute's effective date (2000) with the prior designation as an ecological reserve are not included when calculating acreage limits.

V. WILDLIFE RESOURCES

A wildlife biologist from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) is assigned to the Bureau through a cooperative agreement. The biologist develops and implements a habitat management program for Bureau-managed lands and collaborates with BPL staff across the state. In FY 24, a full-time wildlife technician cost-shared with DIFW was added to this program. The Bureau monitors and assesses approximately 35,800 acres of deer wintering areas (DWAs) on Public Lands as part of its balanced wildlife management strategy.

FY 24 habitat management highlights and other activities are summarized below:

Habitat Management Highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained 103 waterfowl nesting boxes Mowed fields to benefit grassland birds and other species on 120 acres at six different units Established 50 acres of herbaceous seeding for wildlife forage and erosion control Surveys for waterfowl, grassland birds, deer, songbirds, peregrine falcons, loons, snowshoe hares, and bats were completed across the state Waterfowl brood-rearing habitat surveyed in the Eastern Region 35 acres of apple tree inventory and pruning were conducted at four units Eastern Region staff participated in prescribed burn training at the Machias River Unit
Deer Wintering Areas (DWAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed 20,000 acres of DWA for harvest planning, harvest site visits, plan agreements, and Habitat Management Area discussions for zoned and cooperatively managed areas* Surveyed 7,136 acres of DWA, although a lack of restrictive conditions during much of winter 2023/24 resulted in many deer being dispersed beyond the core of their typical wintering areas
Timber Harvest Plan Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed timber harvest plans to ensure fish and wildlife habitat compatibility on 24,114 acres on or adjacent to the planned harvest units
Research Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BPL worked with various partners to facilitate several wildlife-related research projects on Public Lands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed additional special activity permits to avoid or minimize any potential impacts to wildlife
Other Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed forest growth and yield modeling project coupled with habitat planning for the Scraggly Lake unit. Ground truthing was conducted to confirm Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data previously used to quantify forest characteristics Continued implementation of the forest management plan for the Seboomook Unit as part of an agreement with DIFW to manage ~22,000 acres for Canada lynx, federally listed as a threatened species

* Areas where harvests incorporate DWA management guidelines beyond the acreage regulated as DWA

VI. RECREATION RESOURCES

The Bureau provides numerous recreation facilities for remote and backcountry camping, hiking, and boating. It maintains over 250 miles of public access roads for two-wheel drive vehicles with reasonable ground clearance. A summary of the FY 24 recreation program status and activities is provided below:

Current Inventory of Recreation Facilities and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 461 campsites 228 miles of day hiking and backpacking trails; dozens of trailhead parking locations 56 trailer-accessible and hand-carry boat launching sites Nearly 260 miles of public access roads Over 450 additional miles of adjacent forest management roads suitable for four-wheel drive access
Recreation Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 year-round rangers and four seasonal rangers 5 individuals contracted for recreation site maintenance 5 cooperative agreements with regional land trusts or mountain bike clubs Volunteer campground hosts program continued at Moosehead Lake, Flagstaff Lake, and Cold Stream Forest campgrounds Recreation monitoring and management with an Environmental Steward at Tumbledown Public Land
FY 24 Recreation Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Campsites and day use areas</u>: new and rehabilitated sites and amenities at eight management units across the state <u>Pedestrian trails</u>: Maine Conservation Corps trail crews maintained and improved hiking trails at the Kennebec Highlands, Tumbledown, and Cutler Coast, representing three of BPL's busiest hiking trails <u>Mountain bike trails</u>: BPL staff worked with a local non-profit to complete six miles of new trail at the Little Moose Unit, and worked with a local mountain bike club to construct a new parking area and new trails at the Wyman Lot (Flagstaff Unit) and Crocker Mountain <u>Off-road trails</u>: Staff redecked 500 feet of ATV boardwalk trail at Salmon Brook Lake Bog in Aroostook County <u>Signage</u>: One new unit yard-arm sign, numerous new kiosks, and other upgrades were installed across the state

VII. FEES

Most access to Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands is free. However, in some circumstances, fees are charged because these lands are accessed through private recreation management systems (e.g., North Maine Woods and KI-Jo Mary) or because the Bureau has contracted for management with nearby recreation providers (South Arm Campground and

Baxter State Park). Small increases in day-use and camping fees within the KI Jo-Mary managed area and day-use fees within the North Maine Woods managed area were implemented in FY 24. The Bureau also charges a fee for bear bait permit sites. A summary of fees charged in FY 24 is provided below:

North Maine Woods, Inc. Recreation Management (NMW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seven checkpoints, staffed seasonally, control primary access from main points to 95,000 acres of Public Reserved Land at six units. All fees are between \$12-18 per person per day/night, higher for non-Maine residents; no fees for people <18 years old, and free day-use for people 70+.
KI Jo-Mary Recreation Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three checkpoints, staffed seasonally, control access to 175,000 acres of primarily private lands where public recreation is allowed and to BPL Land in Bowdoin College Grant East. Day-use fees also apply for entrance or exit to the Nahmakanta Unit from the south via the KI-Jo Mary system. All fees are between \$12-18 per person per day/night, higher for non-Maine residents; no fees for people <18 years old, and free day-use for people 70+.
South Arm Campground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boat-access campsites on Upper Richardson Lake are managed for public use under lease by South Arm Campground, a privately owned facility on adjoining private land. The campground retains a portion of fees to cover maintenance of the twelve campsites and the Mill Brook public boat launch facility at the north end of the lake. Fees are \$18/night per site.
Bear Bait Permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees are \$30 for personal sites and \$65 for commercial sites In FY 24, the Bureau issued 459 bear bait permits: 183 for personal sites and 276 for commercial sites, with permit revenues totaling \$23,430.

VIII. PUBLIC INFORMATION

While it is impossible to count, or even estimate, visitors to a network of dispersed and lightly staffed Public Lands, millions visit the Public Lands, State Parks, and Historic Sites each year. The information provided on the Bureau website, through subscriber alerts and bulletins, the newsletter, press releases, and the Guide & Map series (both printed and online), prepares visitors for their day-use and camping visits. A summary of FY 2024 accomplishments in disseminating public information is provided below:

Bureau Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides maps and facility information for most Public Lands, State Parks, and Historic Sites Website received over 1.58 million pageviews across all programs and 144,067 downloads of documents; this is a 12.9% increase in page views and a 27.9% increase in downloads
Subscriber Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 14,000 people subscribe to BPL Events and News, and 4,000-8,000 subscribe to 16 other BPL subscriber topics An additional nineteen subscriber topics exist with an average of 3,000 subscribers each All subscription rates continue to increase
Guide & Map Brochures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bureau continues developing its in-depth brochures, available online and in print 3 updates were completed, and four are underway

Bureau Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An e-newsletter featuring Bureau news and events is sent monthly to over 32,000 email and text subscribers
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPL provided and collaborated with other entities on six educational and nature programs • Examples include Emerald Ash Borer and Shark education, Popham Colony and Whaleback Shell Midden history, and Teens to Trails nature programs

IX. PARTNERSHIPS ON PUBLIC LANDS AND STATE PARKS

The acquisition and management of Public Lands are achieved through collaboration with members of the public as well as a variety of stakeholders, conservation partners, and industries. The Bureau’s partnerships take many forms – from formal agreements with local entities to manage recreational use to partnering with state agencies on resource management and planning, and collaborating on events and outings that help connect new users to Public Lands. Several noteworthy partnerships from FY 24 include:

Maine Island Trail Association (MITA)	MITA and the Bureau continued their partnership for over 30 years in managing the Maine Island Trail, which now extends 375 miles and consists of over 200 islands and mainland sites for day visits or camping.
Maine Trail Finder (online)	The Bureau has worked with the nonprofit Community Geographics to develop descriptions and interactive maps for 40 trails located on Maine Public Lands.
University of Maine – Orono (UMO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UMO provided access to a BPL timber harvest and input for the University of Maine (UMO) winter Forestry Camp. • BPL collaborated with UMO researchers on a survey of Maine residents focused on outdoor recreation issues and trends and qualitative research to better understand historically underrepresented communities and their use of outdoor recreation in Maine. • Continued BPL contribution of funding and staff expertise to the University of Maine Cooperative Research Unit, which is focused on forest research priorities, including silviculture, wildlife, and other forest-related sciences.
State Agency Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MNAP oversees the long-term monitoring of BPL Ecological Reserves and provides technical reviews of potential acquisitions and management plans. • DIFW cost-shares a BPL staff biologist and biological technician to coordinate activities related to lynx habitat management, Deer Wintering Areas, invasive species, and development of statewide acquisition priorities. • The Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation, the Maine Office of Tourism, and the Maine Tourism Association identify outreach opportunities to deliver information about Public Lands to various stakeholders and the public. • The Maine Forest Service and the State Entomology Lab provide outreach about invasive insects and conduct spruce budworm and emerald ash borer trapping on Public Lands to monitor

	<p>population growth and detect potential outbreaks of these destructive pests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maine State Parks have numerous partnerships with nonprofit entities and vendors, including Impact Melanoma, the Nature-Based Education Consortium, LL Bean, the Girl Scouts, and many more.
Land Trusts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BPL collaborates on trail and facility maintenance with 7 Lakes Alliance, Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust, High Peaks Alliance, and Royal River Conservation Trust.
Maine Conservation Corps (MCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC trail crews are commonly used to improve trails on Bureau lands and completed several projects in FY 24 (see Section VI).
North Maine Woods / KI Jo-Mary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The North Maine Woods and KI Jo-Mary organizations contracts with BPL to maintain numerous day-use facilities and campsites on Public Lands within their management areas.
Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMC maintains Nordic skiing and snowshoeing trails on Public Lands abutting their properties as part of their extensive winter trails network.
New England Mtn. Bike Association (NEMBA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local NEMBA chapters are collaborating with BPL on planning, development, and maintenance of purpose-built single-track mountain bike trails at the Crocker/Bigelow units and Kennebec Highlands and Little Moose Public Lands.
ATV & Snowmobile Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous clubs collaborate with the Bureau's Off-Road Vehicle division on trail planning, funding, construction, and maintenance (including winter grooming of snowmobile trails).
Research Requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special activity permits for various research projects on Public Lands were issued.

X. TIMBER RESOURCES

The Bureau manages the natural resources on the lands under its care through a carefully planned multiple-use program that balances timber management with all other resource values. Timber revenues support the Bureau's Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands management expenses, including recreation facilities, public access roads, and wildlife management. Other public benefits include contributing to the local economy through contractor employment opportunities and supplying raw materials to regional forest products industries. The focal point of all Bureau forestry is demonstrating exemplary multi-aged management focused primarily on mature, high-quality timber.

FY 24 HARVEST LEVELS

The Bureau harvested 73,500 cord equivalents from ~5,900 acres in eight counties. The FY 24 harvest was ~45% of the ownership-wide annual Sustainable Harvest Level (SHL) of 159,000 cords. The SHL is the maximum volume that can be sustainably harvested and represents approximately 90% of the growth. The Bureau is required by law to maintain harvest levels below the SHL on a 3-year rolling average.

The table below compares harvest levels to SHL by region and Sustainable Harvest Unit (SHU). In each of the three Public Land regions (East, North, and West), growth significantly exceeded harvest. No SHUs exceeded the SHU-level SHL in FY 24 or on a 3-year average basis.

SHU Zone	Annual SHL	3-Year Annual Avg	FY24 Harvest	FY23 Harvest
ZE1	10400	7700	9000	6200
ZE2	11400	4200	3900	4400
ZE3	15700	10000	5000	13100
ZE4	9200	6200	2800	6500
ZN1	16100	15200	10700	21400
ZN2	11500	9000	8300	5900
ZN3	9700	9500	4600	11400
ZN4	10600	4700	3600	2700
ZW1	17000	9400	3800	9600
ZW2	13300	6100	7500	2700
ZW3	7800	5300	7100	7500
ZW4	9400	3500	2300	0
ZW5	2500	0	0	0
ZW6	14500	7000	2200	11600
EAST	46700	28100	20600	30200
NORTH	47900	38500	27200	41400
WEST	64500	31300	22800	31500
TOTAL	159000	97900	70700	103100

**All figures are cord equivalents, rounded to the nearest 100 cords.*

TIMBER INVENTORY

The Bureau is directed to periodically present an updated forest inventory to the legislature's ACF Committee by statute. Bureau-wide forest inventories were conducted in 1999, 2011, and 2016. Growth and yield modeling to estimate the SHL were conducted in 2012 and again in 2019.

Benchmark field data acquired in 1999 provided detailed timber, site, and natural resource measurements. This inventory was fully updated in 2011 and again in 2016, and it continues to be necessary for forest management planning and third-party forest certification. From 1999 to 2016, the Bureau's inventory grew from 20.9 cords/acre to 23.5 cords/acre. The Bureau employed growth and yield models to update the 2016 inventory information to support the current SHL estimates. Net growth on regulated acres (the operable acres modeled for timber harvest) is approximately 0.43 cords/acre/year, with an actual harvest rate of 0.28 cords/acre/year or 65% of growth. BPL estimates stocking for FY 24 at 24 cords/acre.

Another Bureau-wide forest inventory is planned for 2025-2026. The inventory will be preceded by timber cover typing (last conducted in 2013) and followed by growth and yield modeling to produce an updated SHL.

XI. TRANSPORTATION

The Bureau continued to improve road conditions within its Public Lands, focusing primarily on water quality protection and recreational needs. In addition, the Bureau implemented its timber management program by constructing new roads designed to withstand intensified rain and less reliable winter weather. There are currently about 258 miles of public access roads on

Public Lands. BPL foresees the need to accelerate the replacement of numerous culverts on existing roads to enhance climate change resilience and minimize damage caused by increasing extreme weather events.

To facilitate summer and winter timber harvesting activities across the state, several miles of timber management roads were constructed, upgraded, or reconstructed in FY 24, as detailed in the table below. Several temporary wood and concrete bridges were also installed. All three Bureau regions have purchased and are deploying folding steel temporary truck bridges to reduce costs for a sustainable road system.

Each year, the Bureau contracts maintenance services for grading and brushwork on public-use and shared-use roads and certain management roads that are open to the public.³ Details on the road miles maintained under contract are also provided below.

<u>New Roads – FY 24 (miles)</u>	North	West	East	Total
Public Access	0.0	0	0	0.0
Summer Management	0.9	9.5	2.3	12.7
Winter Management	0.6	3.5	0	4.1
<u>Upgraded roads – FY 24 (miles)</u>				
Public Access	0	4.5	0	4.5
Summer Management	4.5	3.5	3.9	11.9
Winter Management	0.5	5.5	0	6.0
<u>Roads Maintained – FY 24 (miles)</u>				
Public Access	45.0	89.5	94.0	228.5
Summer Management	27.0	9.0	28.0	64.0

<u>New Roads – FY 25 to date (miles)</u>	North	West	East	Total
Public Access	0	0	0	0
Summer Management	5.7	0.0	2.3	8.0
Winter Management	0	1.0	0	1.0
<u>Upgraded roads – FY 25 to date (miles)</u>				
Public Access	0	6.0	0	6.0
Summer Management	1.8	14.0	4.2	20.0
Winter Management	6.1	2.8	0.5	9.4
<u>Roads Maintained – FY 25 to date (miles)</u>				
Public Access	57.0	85.0	66.0	208.0
Summer Management	51.0	19.0	20.0	90.0
Winter Management	0	0	0	0.0

³ As defined in the IRP, public-use roads are all-weather roads designed to facilitate access to recreation facilities; shared-use roads are those that are open to ATVs, horses, and/or bikes in addition to passenger vehicles.

XII. PUBLIC ACCESS

Eighty-four percent of Public Reserved Lands were accessible to the public by motor vehicle without fee or special arrangements in FY 24. The following is a report of the few circumstances where motor vehicle access is constrained, as required in 12 MRSA §1853.

EXTERNAL GATES TO PUBLIC LANDS

North Maine Woods	Seven checkpoints, staffed seasonally, control primary access from main points to 95,000 acres of Public Reserved Land, including Deboullie, Round Pond, Chamberlain, Telos, and portions of Seboomook.
KI Jo-Mary	Two checkpoints, staffed seasonally, control access to Bowdoin College Grant East public lots totaling 2,200 acres. A third checkpoint controls access to the 44,000-acre Nahmakanta Unit. Additionally, a gate funded and operated by the Bureau at the border between Nahmakanta and the KI Jo-Mary system controls access from Nahmakanta into the KI Jo-Mary system.
Cary Plantation East	A locked cable gate on adjacent private land restricts access to this 230-acre parcel.
Magalloway Plt.	A locked metal gate on private land restricts access to this 1,000-acre parcel. The Bureau does not have access rights to this original public lot.
Cupsuptic	A staffed gate leased by the Kennebago Camp Owners' Association on private lands limits access to the 62-acre public lot in Stetsontown Twp. on Kennebago Lake. A public access agreement with the Association allows up to three vehicles at any time to access the lake via the public lot and to park at the Grants Camps lease site on the lot.
Davis Township	A locked gate on the private road north of the Dallas Plantation Public Lot was added in 2010, restricting the use of the Loon Lake Road out of Rangeley to access the Bureau's Davis Twp. Lot on Kennebago Lake. However, this public land unit can still be accessed via Bridge Road off Route 16 in Langtown Mill (Lang Twp).
Seboeis Plantation	The camp owners' association installed an external gate on a private road after repeated vandalism of private camps, limiting vehicular access to the 1,136-acre Seboeis Plantation lot.

INTERNAL GATES

The Bureau maintains 32 internal gates for safety purposes, to protect sensitive areas, to limit vehicle traffic on service roads, or to control certain recreational uses. None of the barriers restrict foot traffic; many are left open during winter to allow safe passage by snowmobiles. Some temporary gates are used for security during harvest operations.

LAND OPEN TO HUNTING

Public Law, Chapter 564 of the 123rd Legislature, amending 12 MRSA §1847 sub-§4, requires that lands open to hunting on Public Reserved Lands include at least the acreage open to hunting on January 1, 2008. Since 2008, apart from trail buffers required by law, no land has been removed from the acreage available for hunting. The law also requires the Bureau to report annually to the legislature's Joint Standing Committee of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife the acreage of Public Reserved Lands available for hunting and any changes from the January 1, 2008, levels.

- On January 1, 2008, there were 587,184 acres of Public Reserved Lands, of which **586,505** were available for hunting (excluding three small game preserves).
- In FY 24, 640,231 **acres (over 99%** of Public Reserved Lands) were open for hunting.

XIII. SUBMERGED LANDS

The State of Maine holds title to submerged lands in all coastal waters and Great Ponds. In coastal waters, submerged lands extend from the mean low-tide line seaward to the three-mile territorial limit of state waters. Maine’s Submerged Lands are managed under the Public Trust Doctrine to protect the public trust rights of fishing, waterfowl hunting, navigation, and recreation. The Submerged Lands Program plays a vital role in balancing competing uses of submerged lands and resolving conflicts between public trust rights and the demand for private and commercial uses of these lands. A summary of FY 2024 activities is provided below.

Project and Permit Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received 183 applications for Coastal & Great Pond Development Projects; 47 were determined to be exempt, 27 new lease and easement documents were completed • Processed eight applications for new leases and easements for existing structures found non-compliant after a 2015 inventory • Completed 108 requests for conveyance renewals, amendments, and transfers • Approved two new applications to recover sunken logs from submerged public lands
Water Quality Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2009, the legislature authorized funding from the Submerged Lands leasing program to support water quality monitoring efforts at the Department of Marine Resources' shellfish program; funding of \$80,000 per year has been extended through FY 24
Cobscook Bay Tidal Energy Pilot Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing and environmental monitoring continue through FY 25; Eighty percent of the lease revenue is directed to the Renewable Ocean Energy Trust Fund. • The Department of Marine Resources utilizes it for fisheries research and mitigation efforts associated with offshore energy projects.
Shore and Harbor Management Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds were provided to the Bureau and other state agencies for public boat ramp reconstruction at two ponds and the Kennebec River • Funds were provided to the Maine Island Trail Association to support ongoing recreation management of state-owned coastal islands
Harbor Mgmt. and Access (HMA) grant program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants were awarded to six municipalities; all the projects funded construction activities at new or existing water access facilities in coastal waters
Maine Coastal Island Registry Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The registry establishes ownership of 3,166 islands, and the Program continues to receive periodic requests to register an island or change existing registrations (address or ownership changes); there are also many requests for ownership information from persons interested in Maine islands

XIV. INCOME AND EXPENDITURES ACCOUNTING – FISCAL YEAR 2024

OVERVIEW

The Public Lands Program (Lands Program) has several different accounts established for specific purposes with statutory restrictions on their use. The Program has historically been funded entirely from dedicated funds with no General Fund support. **The statutes require that financial summaries be prepared on a fiscal year basis instead of the previous calendar year summaries.** This change began with the FY 13 report. The figures presented below may not compare to those reported in earlier years **on a calendar year basis.**

Public Reserved Lands Management Account (014.01A.Z239.22)

This account is restricted to uses related to the management of Public Reserved Lands status, including the original public lots, land acquired through trading Public Reserved Lands, and other lands designated as Public Reserved Lands. This account's income sources include revenue generated from harvesting forest products, camp lot leases, and other special leases on the Reserved Lands, grants, endowments, or dedicated funds, and interest on the account balance. In FY 24, the Lands Program conducted timber harvests that yielded 70,708 cords. Income for FY 24 was \$12,667,508, with expenditures of \$14,593,681 for a net loss of \$1,926,173. Because the Land Program's largest source of revenue is timber, income fluctuates from year to year in response to the amount of wood harvested and the economic conditions that affect timber markets. The cash balance accumulates when revenues exceed expenses. The cash balance as of June 30, 2024, was \$6,234,369.

Income from the Public Reserved Lands Account supports most of the administrative, planning, timber, transportation, recreation, and wildlife management activities on the land base. The revenue described above supports the significant seasonal fluctuation in cash balances needed for contracted logging services and the Bureau's overall ability to support the Lands management program.

The income or expenditure figures above include the monies received from camp lot leases and timber sales shared with towns and plantations pursuant to 12 MRSA §1854. Based on the income received in the calendar year 2023 (payable in 2024), the Lands Program revenue sharing amounts total \$116,853.27, paid to eleven towns and plantations.

Income		Expenses	
Earnings on Investments	\$289,716	Personal Services	\$3,789,511
Rent of Lands (1)	\$1,983,564	All Other	\$9,522,588
Grants from State Agencies (2)	\$44,500	Capital	\$ 912,244
Camp Lot Leases	\$417,294		
Registration Fees (3)	\$79,352		
Sale of Stumpage *	\$10,385,851		
Sale of Forest Products *(4)	\$500		
Recovered Cost (5)	\$45,070		
DICAP**	(\$625,892)	STACAP	\$369,338
Trust & Private Contributions	\$163,111		
Late Fees & Misc. income	\$9,779		

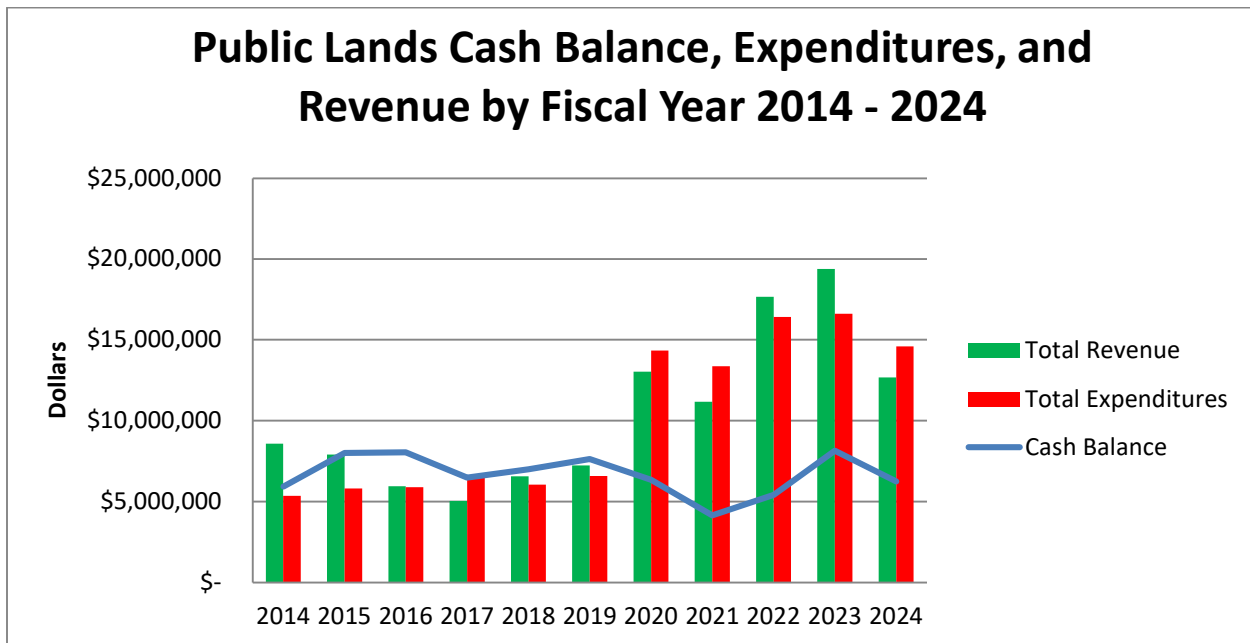
Svc. Fees Charged by Other Depts. (6)	(\$84,337)		
Legislative Transfer of Revenue	(\$41,000)		
Total Income	\$12,667,508	Total Expenses	\$14,593,681

* Represents the major components of the Division's income stream and is shown as the gross income before logging and trucking costs are paid; those costs are included as expenses as a portion of "All Other."

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a "revenue debit," although it is actually an expenditure.

- (1) Rent of lands is primarily the payment for Long Falls Dam on Flagstaff Lake and smaller amounts for sugarbush and other commercial leases.
- (2) Grants from state agencies include dedicated funds at the Maine Community Foundation and federal grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Recreational Trails Program.
- (3) Registration Fees are bear-baiting site permits.
- (4) Sale of forest products is from fir tip sales.
- (5) Recovered costs are road tolls collected for logging truck use of Bureau roads by neighboring timberland owners.
- (6) Service fees to other Departments are payments made to MNAP for the Public Lands Ecologist and invasive species management.

The chart below shows the total revenue, total expenditures, and cash balance for the Public Reserved Lands Management Account from 2014 to 2024.



* Beginning in FY 20, accounting practices were updated to show Contract Logging Services (CLS) as expenses rather than a revenue reduction. Thus, there have been no significant changes in revenue or expenses from 2019 to 2020, just in accounting practices.

Public Nonreserved Lands Management Account (014.01A.Z239.23)

This account manages lands not in the Public Reserved Lands System. These Nonreserved Public Lands include coastal islands and institutional lands (considered surplus by other state agencies) assigned to the Bureau’s Lands Program for natural resource management. Income is primarily derived from agricultural leases, though timber sale occasionally contributes when timber harvests are completed on Nonreserved Lands. Income for FY 24 was \$1,485 with zero expenditures. The ending cash balance was \$9,039. The Public Lands program plans its expenditures for each fiscal year based on the level of income it projects to receive from its various revenue sources. If projected income is insufficient, the Program determines whether the balance in its contingency fund is sufficient to carry it through until additional revenues are received. If both revenue projections and contingency funds are insufficient, then the Program postpones planned expenditures until revenue returns to an adequate level.

Income		Expenses	
Rent of Lands	\$1,485	All Other (not including STACAP)	\$0
		Capital	\$0
DICAP**	(\$0)	STACAP	\$0
Total Income	\$1,485		\$0

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a “revenue debit,” although it is actually an expenditure.

Land Acquisition Fund (014.01A.Z239.24)

Funds from this account are restricted by statute and the State Constitution to the acquisition of conservation lands and acquisition-related costs. These funds cannot be used to operate or maintain existing land; therefore, expenditures do not occur regularly. Income that accrues from sales, trades, or interest is carried forward until needed for future acquisitions. Income for FY 24 was \$34,815 against expenditures of \$658,412. The balance at the end of the fiscal year was \$661,994.

This year’s income was derived from the sale of land and interest earned on the account balance. Expenses included various acquisition-related costs such as surveys and appraisals. In all cases, funds were expended with other funding sources outside the Bureau. Funds from this account are restricted by the Constitutional Amendment (Article IX, Section 23) to acquiring lands with significant conservation and recreation value in the same county where the sale of lands generating the funds occurred.

Income		Expenses	
Earnings on Investments	\$38,973	All Other	\$93,747
		Capital	\$562,043
DICAP**	(\$4,158)	STACAP	\$2,622
Total Income	\$34,815	Total Expenses	\$658,412

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a “revenue debit,” although it is actually an expenditure.

Z23924 – Public Reserved Lands Acquisition Account Balances*		
Account	County	Balance at FYE 2024
2400	Acquisition	\$71,815.27
2402	Aroostook County	-\$425,000.00
2403	Cumberland County	-\$131,670.00
2404	Franklin County	-\$4,042.62
2406	Kennebec County	\$168,654.89
2409	Oxford County	\$966,461.72
2410	Penobscot County	-\$205.59
s2415	Washington County	-\$719.58
2418	Wilderness Society Grant	\$3,140.03
2419	Kendall Grant	\$2,698.19
Z239	Land Management & Planning	\$10,861.59
		\$661,993.90

*Accounts will be balanced through account reconciliation in FY 25, including reimbursement from federal grants. .

Nonreserved Land Acquisition Fund (014.01A.Z239.37)

This account was established to receive revenue from the sale of Public Nonreserved Lands. There was revenue of -\$14 and expenses of \$58,989 for FY 24. The balance at the end of the fiscal year was \$230,855. Funds from this account are restricted by the Constitutional Amendment (Article IX, Section 23) to the acquisition of lands having significant conservation and recreation value in the same county where the sale of lands generating the funds occurred.

Income		Expenses	
Reg Transfer Unallocated Investments	\$0	All Other (not including STACAP)	\$1,935
		Capital	\$57,000
DICAP**	(\$14)	STACAP	\$54
Total Income	(\$14)	Total Expenses	\$58,989

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a “revenue debit,” although it is actually an expenditure.

Z23937 – Public Nonreserved Acquisition Account Balances		
Account	County	Balance at FYE 2024
3703	Cumberland County	\$171,252.70
3753	Kennebec County	\$59,602.42
		\$230,855.12

Forest Legacy Fund (013.01A.Z239.35)

This account was established to receive grant revenue from the federal USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program to purchase valuable land and conservation easements. Funding for land acquisition projects is reviewed and approved at the national level. Project development is reviewed and approved for submission at the State level. The Bureau also receives annual grants that support the program administration and pre-acquisition costs for the Forest Legacy land purchases. Land for Maine’s Future funds are typically used as a match for these Forest Legacy grants to purchase land and interests in land. Total expenses in FY 24 were \$36,224. Total Forest Legacy revenues in FY 24 were \$55,949. Due to a timing issue with a federal reimbursement, at the end of FY 24, the account had a balance of -\$20,010.

Income		Expenses	
Federal Grants	\$57,269	All Other	\$35,239
DICAP**	(\$1,320)	STACAP	\$985
Total Income	\$55,949	Total Expenses	\$36,224

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a “revenue debit,” although it is actually an expenditure.

XV. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2026⁴

OVERVIEW

Pursuant to Title 12 M.R.S.A., Sections 1839 and 1853, the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry must review allocations for the Bureau’s dedicated funds and revenue accounts pertaining to Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands for the upcoming fiscal year and submit a written report to the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs by March 15th. To assist in the preparation of that report, the Bureau is submitting information regarding planned Bureau income, expenditures, and management of the following five dedicated accounts:

- ***Public Reserved Lands Management Fund***
- ***Public Lands Management Fund (Nonreserved Public Lands)***
- ***Public Reserved Lands Acquisitions as***
- ***Public Nonreserved Lands Acquisition Fund***
- ***Forest Legacy Fund***

The FY 26 account summaries of Bureau initiatives are generated from the State of Maine Budget and Financial Management System (BFMS). These accounts derive revenue from the sale of forest products, lease fees, interest on cash balances, and land sales. Aside from limited technical support funding, these programs receive no support from the State’s General Fund. The dedicated revenues in these accounts, supplemented by grants and other outside sources of revenue, must cover all operating expenses. The Bureau mainly plans its expenditures for each fiscal year based on the income it projects to receive from its various revenue sources. If the projected income is insufficient, the Bureau determines whether the balance in its

⁴ Note that information provided in this budget section reflects what has been submitted in the Governor’s budget proposal (subject to approval by the Legislature).

contingency fund is sufficient to carry it through until additional revenues are received. If both revenue projections and contingency funds are insufficient, the Bureau postpones planned expenditures until revenue returns to an adequate level. The Bureau has established internal financial management procedures to accomplish this process and reviews budgetary matters monthly and quarterly.

The Bureau continues to manage the State-owned Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands (the “Public Lands Program”) to produce timber on a sustained yield basis and within established harvest levels to generate revenue to support resource protection, wildlife, and recreation programs. Adding new lands and management responsibilities increases demand on the Bureau. Revenue in the Public Reserved Lands Management Fund is used to meet these additional responsibilities. Below are the FY 26 budget allocations proposed for each of the five dedicated accounts within the Public Lands Program. These allocations represent the limits within which the Bureau must operate.

1. Public Reserved Lands Management Fund Account # 014.01A.Z23922

Income		Expenses	
Earnings on Investments	\$489,176	Personal Services	\$4,944,981
Rent of Lands*	\$3,337,045	All Other (not including STACAP)	\$13,567,688
Camp lot Leases*	\$710,874		
Misc. Rents & Leases	\$20,495		
Registration Fees	\$133,983		
Sale of Stumpage*	\$17,536,175		
Recovered Cost/Land Damages	\$76,099		
Serv & Fees Charges Other Dept.	(\$142,400)		
Reg Transfer Unallocated	(\$143,376)		
DICAP**	(\$2,748,639)	STACAP	\$756,763
Total Income	\$19,269,432	Total Expenses	\$19,269,432

* Represents the major components of the Division’s income stream.

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a “revenue debit,” although it is actually an expenditure.

As of June 30, 2024, the Public Lands Program had an account balance of \$6,234,369 in the Public Reserved Lands Management Fund. Because most of the Program’s timber harvesting takes place during the winter, there is a significant seasonal fluctuation in income.

Timber markets in Maine can be highly variable from year to year. Over the last decade, several years with strong timber markets served to build a solid operating fund that acts as a contingency for periods of down timber markets, which are expected to continue into FY 26 and beyond. This fund supports contract logging services, personnel services, vehicle operations, information technology, management costs for road maintenance, forest inventory, monitoring systems, and expanded recreational facilities. Conservation easement monitoring costs are provided via dedicated endowment funds tied to specific easements.

The Public Lands Program typically plans on an annual harvest of 120,000 cords of wood on average, generating approximately \$5.8-6.4 million in net revenue in FY 26. However, ongoing

softness and volatility in Maine timber markets indicate that a FY 26 harvest of 80,000 cords and \$3.6-4.5 million in net revenue should be used for planning purposes. The Bureau is actively seeking alternative sources of funding, primarily grants for trails, road infrastructure, and climate-smart forestry practices to supplement income.

The Bureau will continue to plan expenditures with caution based on quarterly updates of projected income. There remains a need to find supplemental funding sources to ensure exemplary management of the Bureau’s increasingly popular recreational resources and extensive road system. Recreation management remains where infrastructure needs (signage, parking, trails, campsite, etc.) and limited recreation staff outweigh available resources. Likewise, the Bureau’s extensive logging and public use road system has suffered increased management costs due to an increase in catastrophic bridge and road failures in recent years, due to the high occurrence of extreme rain events each year. In just one month in 2023, catastrophic flooding caused more than \$500,000 in road and bridge washouts that were not budgeted for. The Bureau is working on estimates to proactively upgrade the entire road system to climate-resilient conditions.

New initiatives below represent pending requests for General Fund support, and are dependent on FY 26-27 biennial budget approval by the legislature.

- **Requested New Initiative** (Pending review and approval)

This initiative provides funding for capital construction materials, capital improvements to bridges and roads, and other improvements to recreational trails and sites used by the public.

Dedicated Revenue	Income	Requested for FY 26	Expenses
Earnings on Investments	\$66,220	Capital	\$3,000,000
Rent of Lands	\$451,736		
Camp Leases	\$96,231		
Misc Rents & Leases	\$2,774		
Registration Fees	\$18,137		
Recovered Cost	\$10,302		
Service and Fees Charged by Other Departments /Programs	(\$19,277)		
Sale of Stumpage	\$2,373,877		
Total Income	\$3,000,000	Total Expenses	\$3,000,000

- **Requested New Initiative** (Pending review and approval—010-01A-Z23922)

This initiative provides funding for Forest Climate Planning Response – Resilient Roads for public recreation and sustainable timber management, as well as for culvert replacement and upsizing to protect access for the public and protect the resource.

Dedicated Revenue	Income	Requested for FY 26	Expenses
		Capital	\$400,000

Total Income		Total Expenses	\$400,000

- **Requested New Initiative** (Pending review and approval)

This initiative provides funding for statewide insurance coverage through the Department of Administrative and Financial Services and the Division of Risk Management based on claims experience, coverage increases, attorney fees on claims, and actuarially recommended reserves.

Dedicated Revenue	Income	Requested for FY 26	Expenses
Earnings on Investments	\$131	All Other	\$5,032
Rent of Lands	\$894		
Camp Leases	\$190		
Misc Rents & Leases	\$5		
Registration Fees	\$36		
Recovered Cost	\$20		
Service and Fees Charged by Other Departments /Programs	(\$38)		
Sale of Stumpage	\$4,697		
DICAP	(\$755)	STACAP	\$148
Total Income	\$5,180	Total Expenses	\$5,180

- **Requested New Initiative** (Pending review and approval)

This initiative provides funding for statewide central fleet management services provided by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services.

Dedicated Revenue	Income	Requested for FY 26	Expenses
Earnings on Investments	\$1,437	All Other	\$55,211
Rent of Lands	\$9,805		
Camp Leases	\$2,089		
Misc Rents & Leases	\$60		
Registration Fees	\$394		
Recovered Cost	\$224		
Service and Fees Charged by Other Departments /Programs	(\$418)		
Sale of Stumpage	\$51,525		
DICAP	(\$8,282)	STACAP	\$1,623
Total Income	\$56,834	Total Expenses	\$56,834

2. Public Nonreserved Lands Management Fund Account # 014.01A.Z239.23

This account had a balance of \$9,039 at the end of FY 24, which is used as a contingency fund to cover expenses between the relatively small and infrequent timber harvests on these lands.

Income		Expenses	
Rent of Lands	\$36,474	All Other (not including STACAP)	\$32,761
		Capital	
DICAP**	(\$2,952)	STACAP	\$761
Total Income	\$33,522	Total Expenses	\$33,522

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a “revenue debit,” although it is actually an expenditure.

3. Public Reserved Lands Acquisition Fund Account # 014.01A.Z239.24

By statute, the money in this account is used only to acquire an interest in land. Lands purchased with the funds from this account have Public Reserved Land status. These funds are necessary to acquire rights-of-ways, in-holdings, conservation easements, and additions to the existing land base. As in most years, predicting potential land transactions' timing, income, and expenditures is difficult. If the opportunity arises, this budget allows the Bureau to acquire land or other interests within the available allocation. The “All Other” expenses cover the cost of legal assistance for title searches, drafting deeds, appraisals, and related items. At the end of FY 24, this account had a balance of \$661,994. Funds generated from sales of properties may only be used for land acquisitions in the same county as required by the Constitution. This limits the Bureau’s ability to use this fund to pursue acquisition projects in counties without funds.

Income		Expenses	
Earnings on Investments	\$7,232	All Other (not including STACAP)	\$201,672
Grants from State Agencies	\$132,334		
Sale of Land	\$100,160		
DICAP**	(\$30,251)	STACAP	\$7,803
Total Income	\$209,475	Total Expenses	\$209,475

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a “revenue debit,” although it is actually an expenditure.

4. Public Nonreserved Lands Acquisition Fund Account # 014.01A.Z239.37

The money in this account is used only to acquire an interest in Nonreserved Land. Lands purchased with the funds from this account have Public Nonreserved Land status. These funds are necessary to acquire rights-of-ways, in-holdings, conservation easements, and additions to the existing land base. As in most years, predicting the timing, income, and expenditures involved in potential land transactions is difficult. If the opportunity arises, this budget allows the Bureau to acquire land or other interests within the available allocation. The “All Other” expenses cover the cost of legal assistance for title searches, drafting deeds, appraisals, and related items. At the end of FY 24, this account had a balance of \$230,855.

Income	Expenses
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Grants from State Agencies	\$71,966	All Other (not including STACAP)	\$60,542
DICAP**	(\$9,082)	STACAP	\$2,342
Total Income	\$62,884	Total Expenses	\$62,884

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a “revenue debit,” although it is actually an expenditure.

5. Forest Legacy Fund # 013.01A.Z239.35

This account is used for USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program grant expenses for acquiring nationally approved Forest Legacy land parcels and any associated pre-acquisition costs. The figures above represent the “All Other” pre-acquisition budgets. For land acquisitions, financial orders are sent to the DACF Commissioner and the Governor for signatures and to establish the capital needed for the land purchase. Land for Maine’s Future funds are typically used as a match for these Forest Legacy grants to purchase land. At the end of FY 24, the account had a balance of -\$20,010.

Income		Expenses	
		Personal Services	
Federal Grants	\$102,957	All Other (not including STACAP)	\$86,378
DICAP**	(\$12,957)	STACAP	\$3,622
Total Income	\$90,000	Total Expenses	\$90,000

** Consistent with state accounting practices, DICAP is shown as a “revenue debit,” although it is actually an expenditure.