

Monday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

South Portland-based Lone Wolf Media is approaching its 30<sup>th</sup> year producing award-winning television specials and series for national and international media markets. The company's longevity is a remarkable achievement in the challenging world of television production. Even more remarkable, despite its global reach, the company is—and has always been—run entirely from Maine.

In 2023, Lone Wolf delivered an episode of *American Experience* for **PBS**, a documentary about the birth of US Special Operations for **Paramount Plus**, a twelve-episode series for **History Channel**, and the third season of our highly successful **HULU** true crime series, *Wild Crime*.

With our resume, it's easy to imagine that we're a large and profitable company, but the Film/TV business is difficult. When we secure a project, we have six to eight months of work, and then the job is over and the company puts its small staff to work developing and trying to sell the next project. Far too often, the distance between one project's conclusion and the next project's beginning is long enough to evaporate any trace of profit, lost to the necessity of keeping people employed and keeping the lights on.

For most of the company's years in business, that was the ebb and flow of our production cycle. There was rarely a year with real, tangible profit. Fortunes began to change for Lone Wolf in late 2018, when we created and sold **Smithsonian Channel** our three-part series *The Hunt for Eagle 56* about the discovery of a US Navy ship sunk by a German U-Boat off of Cape Elizabeth, Maine in the final days of WWII. Because nearly all of the filming would be done in Maine, and our staff was almost entirely comprised of Mainers, we decided to apply for the Visual Media Incentive program.

At the project's conclusion, Lone Wolf received a wage reimbursement through the Maine Film Office that allowed us to do something we had rarely been able to do in the company's history: hire staff and pay for development work *while* we were still in production on another project. The result was simple and obvious, but also paradigm shifting: we were able to develop and sell the next project *before* the current one ended. Suddenly, we found ourselves with some positive momentum. We didn't need to spend our profit just keeping the business afloat, we could reinvest it in more meaningful ways to grow the company.

The five years since producing *The Hunt for Eagle 56* with help from the Maine Film Office have been the most successful, most prolific in the company's history. It was with funds from the incentive's wage reimbursement plan that we were able to develop our very popular **HULU** series, *Wild Crime*, which spends roughly 50% of its filming budget in the state of Maine, despite featuring stories from Colorado, Texas, California, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Maine, it turns out, makes a pretty good stand-in for all of those locations!

*Wild Crime* is a real Maine success story. We film significant portions of every season here in the state where we work almost entirely with a cast and crew of Mainers. In our most recent

season, we hired more than twenty-five crew and over sixty actors to work on the show, all from Maine. We spent nearly \$1M last year in Maine on that one project alone, most of it in wages to Maine residents. We are proud to announce that *Wild Crime* was just renewed for a fourth season.

The Visual Media Incentives have done far more for Lone Wolf than just allow us to develop one successful series. It has allowed us to reshape the work environment at our company. Wages have gone up. We expanded 401K access and matching contributions. We've doubled the size of our management staff. For the first time in many years, we've been able to offer our employees robust health care benefits—something that was previously unattainable for a small company like ours. It's helped us to pay for more development work, which in turn allows us to bring more work into the state. Today, Lone Wolf is employing far more Mainers, at higher wages and with better benefits, than at any time in the company's history.

If every Maine production company was able to achieve success similar to Lone Wolf's through these incentives, there would be significant growth in our industry. Far more talented Maine filmmakers would have stable employment here in the state. It is Lone Wolf's belief that the immediate goal of the Maine Film Office should be to bolster our local filmmaking economy by supporting our local production companies and individuals. Applied properly, Maine will grow in many different sectors of the market: camera and lighting equipment rental shops, studios, props houses, Post-Production facilities, etc. Enticing these folks to set up shop here will create a robust infrastructure. A new bedrock on which future projects can be built. Maine will have created a robust and self-sustaining industry.

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