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# Executive Summary of the Task Force to Study the Operations of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

## **Introduction:**

The Task Force to Study the Operations of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife met between August 24 and December 1, 1995. After studying Department operations and touring an array of Department facilities, the Task Force submits to the Second Regular Session of the 117th Legislature its recommendations and legislation for improving the Department.

The Task Force finds the Department is staffed by professional and motivated employees. In addition, the Task Force notes the Department has undertaken a variety of initiatives on its own to improve its operations, including computerization of operations, automation of certain services and improvements through Total Quality Management practices. Nonetheless, after scrutinizing Department operations and policies, the Task Force identified several areas in which the Department could realize improvements.

The Task Force's recommendations provide approximately \$2.7 million in savings, revenue enhancements and service enhancements. *See Chart 1, page vi*) These recommendations will help lessen the need for future license fee increases.

The recommendations summarized below will be considered by Governor Angus King and the Department as part of the ongoing work of the Productivity Realization Task Force

The IFW Task Force also recommends that it meet with the Department during June of 1996 to review implementation of the Task Force's recommendations.

## **Bureau of Administrative Services: Recommendations**

The Task Force offers a variety of recommendations that would improve the bureau's operations and provide the Department with approximately \$1.9 million annually in savings, revenue enhancements and service enhancements. These recommendations fall into the following general areas:

- *Process and tracking* Ways in which the bureau can more efficiently process and track information and supplies;
- *Boat Registration* Legislative changes to boat registration laws to reduce the bureau's administrative burdens;
- *Centralization* Legislative or gubernatorial action to repeal the centralization of vehicle purchasing and telecommunication services, or, at a minimum, to exempt the Department from centralization. Centralization is costing the Department more than if it were to accept bids for vehicles and computer services from the private sector; and

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- Technology: Ways in which bureau operations can improve through better use of technology.

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## **Volunteerism: Recommendations**

The Task Force finds that volunteers play an important role in helping the Department's staff meet a wide range of statutory responsibilities. The following recommendations concerning volunteers would provide the Department \$698,687 in savings and services:

- Assistance: The Department should effectively use volunteers as deputy wardens, as assistants to biologists and as operators of "watch" programs;
- "Adoption" approach: The Department should expand use of the "adoption" approach to volunteerism, in which companies, organizations or individuals sponsor Department facilities and programs; and
- Search and Rescue: Department wardens should play a coordinating role in search and rescue operations and leave ground operations to volunteers. Wardens currently participate in ground searches. This involvement decreases the amount of time wardens can spend enforcing fish and wildlife laws, and warden coverage is already spread thinly across large warden districts. In addition, the Department receives no General Fund reimbursement for its involvement in search and rescue operations.

## **Office of Public Information and Education: Recommendations**

The Task Force finds that the Department has a tremendous information resource available through the Office of Public Information and Education. The Task Force's recommendations for this office would generate \$56,344-worth of efficiencies and revenue enhancements. The recommendations would require the Department to:

- Planning: Write an external communications plan to define its mission and priorities in the area of public information and education. Current Department efforts are diffuse;
- Methods: Broaden its vehicles for disseminating information to a variety of media, including books, magazines, CD ROM and the Internet;
- Customer service: Create several customer-service representative positions designed to address the majority of inquiries received by the Department;
- Magazine: Increase the appeal and marketing of the *Maine Fish and Wildlife* magazine and merchandising materials; and
- Inter-agency: Establish a better working relationship with other state agencies to improve public relations and merchandising opportunities.

## **Wildlife Management: Recommendations**

The Task Force reports three recommendations concerning wildlife management:

- Moose: Maine's moose herd has increased to a level where additional numbers of moose could be harvested;
- Reporting of violations: Maine guides should be strongly encouraged to exercise their authority to report violations; and

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- *Federal dollars:* The Appropriations Committee and the full Legislature should allocate to the Department federal dollars available for surveys concerning Maine's fish and wildlife resources. This allocation should take place during the Second Regular Session of the 117th Legislature.

### **Fish Hatcheries: Recommendations**

The Task Force reports two recommendations concerning management of the state's fish hatcheries:

- *Bond:* The Task Force supports raising money through a bond referendum to upgrade existing hatcheries and rearing stations. Any proposed bond referendum should be backed by a plan to educate Maine citizens about the economic and recreational benefits provided by Maine's hatchery program; and
- *Privatization:* The potential exists for privatization to play a role in adding to the state's capacity to raise fish. However, the majority of Task Force members recommends the state place a high priority on upgrading existing hatcheries and rearing facilities.
  - \* *Minority report:* Two Task Force members (Rep. Royce Perkins and Rep. John Underwood) recommend the state place a high priority on privatizing hatchery production.

### **Relations with License Holders and the General Public: Recommendations**

The Task Force reports two recommendations concerning the Department's relations with license holders and the general public:

- *Education:* The Department should seek opportunities to educate license holders and the general public about the science and reasoning behind the Department's resource management policies; and
- *Inter-personal skills:* The Department should improve the manner in which Department personnel interact with individual license holders and the general public.

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