

Maine's natural resource agencies must change to thrive



The way
Maine
people
and
visitors
enjoy the
outdoors
has
changed
in the last
three

decades. This bears directly on how we fund natural resource agencies and work with natural resource businesses and constituencies. It is increasingly cost-effective to collaborate in the management of parks, public lands, and wildlife areas to name a few. Opportunities for integrated approaches to tourism, outdoor recreation, and rural economic development are at our doorstep.

—Governor John Elias Baldacci

LD 1453 will make needed changes to our state natural resource agencies to strengthen the land and waters on which Maine's economy depends.

PURPOSE of LD 1453

- Improve agriculture and strengthen rural life
- Enhance inland fisheries and wildlife resources
- Enhance the state's land resources including coordinated planning for multiple uses
- Conserve and develop marine and estuarine resources, including coastal fishing industries

2008 Natural Resource Agency Task Force Recommendations

The organization plan must implement the following task force recommendations as part of the new department:

- Combine financial management of natural resource agencies under one unit at the Department of Administrative and Financial Services;
- Improve business processes of issuing licenses and work towards a system that can serve all customers including hunting, commercial and recreational fishing, etc.;
- Market agricultural products, seafood, parks and lands and other programs with a single high impact branding effort;
- Acquire and manage public access to coastal and inland waters as a single program;
- Align natural resource districts and co-locate staff from multiple programs in regional full service offices;
- Create a single entity to manage public lands and to communicate with citizens about opportunities for access and recreation consistent with the management goals for those lands;
- Review advisory boards and committees to determine the most effective balance of citizen engagement and cost to the state;
- Prioritize programs and services to meet the most critical needs, not low priorities.

State Planning Office ~ www.Maine.gov/spo

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GOVERNOR'S BILL

LD 1453

An Act to Reform Natural Resources Agencies and Create the Department of Natural Resources



SPONSOR:

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CO-SPONSORS:

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BILL HIGHLIGHTS:

LD 1453 reorganizes the departments of Agriculture, Conservation, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and Marine Resources into one Department of Natural Resources and provides that:

- the Governor appoints an Acting Commissioner of the new Department of Natural Resources on July 1, 2009;
- the Acting Commissioner drafts a plan for reorganization, develops a detailed transition to the new structure, and submits implementing legislation by January 1, 2010;
- the Acting Commissioner seeks ideas, accepts information, and addresses the concerns of stakeholders, legislators, members of the public, businesses, outside experts, and others;
- the Acting Commissioner estimates and plans for transition costs and makes recommendations on the best configuration of advisory councils; and
- an estimated biennial savings of \$3 million be reinvested in the new Department of Natural Resources.



WHY REORGANIZE?



The current structure of our natural resource agencies hasn't changed in 30 years. These agencies face a number of significant challenges

including:

- declining revenues over the past 10 years;
- increasing demand for natural resources from global markets;
- radical changes in various business sectors that depend on natural resources;
- resource loss from sprawling development;
- competition between resource users;
- dramatic changes in demand and types of outdoor recreation;
- growing environmental threats ranging from air pollutants to invasive plants and fish;
- a need to access the best new technologies for scientific research and resource management; and
- a new awareness that ecosystems need to be managed holistically.

Public Hearing:
May 11, 2009, 10:00 AM
Room 216, Cross Office Building

BENEFITS OF REORGANIZING:

- Improved service delivery to natural resource-based businesses and industries.
- Coordinated and integrated policies in outdoor recreation, natural resource management, education, promotion and research.
- Management of natural resources as ecosystems where land, wildlife, fisheries, forests, and farms are all considered together.
- Improved and better integrated effort in planning, research, stewardship land management, law enforcement, outdoor education and marketing.
- Better ability to make use of advanced technology and plan for changes in natural resource use.
- Improved capability to access grant funds through a centralized effort.
- Significant savings and efficiencies by eliminating duplication and unnecessary expense in overlapping programs.

