

Natural Resource Agency Task Force

Draft Homework Assignment #2 (will emailed to task force members on June 16)

We are interested in your specific thoughts and suggestions about ideas that would lead to improved services within the Natural Resource “arena”. Using categories suggested in the legislation establishing the task force, please provide your best thinking. Ideas can run from general outcomes or strategies to specific programs or activities. Should you have time or interest, you may be interested in reviewing past reports for ideas that bear consideration in 2008.

Please note: This is our first “pass” at this, knowing that we will likely get additional thoughts as we better understand the agencies, their missions and services. And still more thoughts as we gather input from constituents and citizens...

Where might we find ways to improve service and redirect money within and among the five natural resource agencies through:

1. Increased efficiency:

I have an observation that I would like to flesh out. Generally, every department has a Commissioner and a Deputy Commissioner. In most cases, both appear to be "policy" leaders rather than administrative experts. It might be more productive to redefine these roles along the corporate model of a CEO and a COO. One is the strategic leader and spokesperson. The other focuses on the nuts & bolts of running daily operations more efficiently.

Another observation: the Legislature sucks too much productive time away from department personnel. Committees are not disciplined about how much "hand-holding" they require. The legislative process needs to show more respect for department time, and perhaps this needs to be codified somehow.

- combine management of all state lands into one place (parks, public lands, wildlife management areas, marine resource)
- combine management of outdoor recreation into one place (snowmobile, ATV, boat ramps, hiking, rafting) ~ connect with Office of Tourism
- combine efforts to combat invasive species into one place (SWAT team approach for water-borne and terrestrial invasives)
- combine laboratory expertise and infrastructure and match with appropriate pilot projects to involve private enterprise in laboratory work
- consolidate registration, ministerial permitting and licensing across natural resource sector (not regulatory permits administered by DEP)
- develop effective approach at joint marketing
- develop a fully integrated approach to natural resource enforcement among Marine Wardens, Game Wardens, LURC enforcement, Forest Rangers and DEP enforcement; combine administration and equipment as appropriate

- combine biological expertise that now is spread across different agencies together to develop ecosystem management approach: example: integrate efforts of IF&W, DMR and DEP to develop fish and river restoration plans
- combine management of buildings, real estate of all natural resource agencies to promote multi-service centers in the field and increased coordinate and cooperation at the local and regional level (and save money)
- ensure that GIS expertise is coordinated and consolidated where appropriate
- review all ocean, coastal and marine related policy and science to see if it should be housed in one place (now spread out across 3 agencies)
- consider benefits of combining efforts of services provided to farmers and fishermen more generally

Focus on core missions

Centralization of needs all agencies have though obviously some of this already happens.

Fewer regional offices. Let some staff work out of home office like corporations increasingly do in this increasingly technological world.

The task force could use the advice of a retired CEO that has the experience of numerous mergers so she or he could advise where they can always find cost cutting measures.

Possibly having all routine licenses and permits be done by one agency

2. Coordination, cooperation across agency lines

Entomologists, biologists, labs

At least having personnel share the same buildings so relationships can be developed and interaction enhanced.

Have all of the agricultural functions down by the Department of Agriculture (i.e. agricultural composting, pesticides, nutrient management, agricultural education, farm labor etc)

3. Integration of functions:

One thing I don't understand: why do we have two departments managing public lands? DOC has parks and public reserve lands. IFW has Wildlife Management Areas and boat ramps.

This could go under #3. Maine's rivers should be managed under an integrated watershed approach as opposed to the current 'reach' approach. This would be in line with recognized good science today and would help bridge the current divide between IF&W and DMR

4. Elimination of duplication:

Regrettably, I have made myself a nuisance by chronically asking why we have two entities managing solid waste. Both DEP and SPO have solid waste functions. I understand the historical rationale, but I don't perceive that the duplication is currently serving the state well.

One central licensing bureau?

There is far too little coordination across agency lines in regards to research and science. If agencies are not combined there needs to be some over arching multi-disciplinary science council that can coordinate science. In many watersheds, IF&W, DMR and DEP do their own monitoring and research which probably overlaps and is too often not coordinated.

5. New organizational configurations:

One of the things I'll be curious to learn about is why Maine has two departments for fish. If the fish is salty, it's DMR; if it's not salty, it's IFW; if it's both, we argue. Also, I'll be curious to hear why Agriculture is a separate department but Forestry is under DOC. Arguably, forestry is a no less important o Maine's economy.

Agency regulating private citizens making a profit

Agency managing public resources for public benefits

Potential combination of DMR/IFW

Potential combination of DOC/AG

Potential combination of DMR Marine Patrol and IFW Warden Service

Department of Agriculture include the Maine Forest Service and aquaculture. Similar to the USDA structure

6. Advances in science and technology

GPS for field staff; integrated use of GIS technology; aka spatial database

Better utilization of non-governmental entities to help implement state of the art science and technology. As only one example, the Nature Conservancy is continually developing new and better approaches to species and habitat management and monitoring that the state could access for no cost.

The ideas below represent suggestions that I have gathered over time. I believe these suggestions warrant consideration by the task force but that are not recommendations I am able to endorse yet. The proposal on land and water has been suggested by a significant number of friends and allies and I submit it on their behalf.

General Suggestions

It will do little good to move functions around in state government if we are unable to change the culture and attitudes of those who serve in these agencies, focusing them on customer service and needs and marketing that fosters economic growth.

This was amply demonstrated in the review of DIF&W by the Management Assistance Team of the International Association of Fish and Game Agencies, which noted, “ensuring that the agency is tied to customer needs, price sensitivity, and awareness are all vital to a state fish and wildlife agency’s long-term survival. For success, the marketing efforts cannot exist in a vacuum, but need to be infused into all Department programs as an overall approach to doing business.”

Both internal and external communications are inadequate in these agencies and must be improved within an effective Information and Education program. The MAT report found that DIF&W, “needs to place greater emphasis on information and outreach efforts in order to meet the agency mission long into the future.” Since that report was issued in 2004, DIF&W has reduced its I&E efforts. Indeed, when budgets are tight, information, education, and marketing are the first programs that are reduced.

Finally, establishing accountability for the decisions and policies of these agencies may be the most important step this task force can take toward re-establishing the public’s confidence in state government. This will involve new ways for the agencies to engage the public, and establishing methods of tracking and reporting on the results of the decisions and policies of each agency.

Just imagine government agencies that communicate effectively with their customers, market Maine’s experiences and products effectively, and are held accountable for decisions, policies and programs.

Specific Ideas

- 1) Combine all land and water programs and functions in one place, including:
 - a) parks, public lands, historical sites, wildlife management areas;
 - b) easement lands;
 - c) water, boat, and land access programs;
 - d) trails, motorized and nonmotorized ;
 - e) landowner relations;
 - f) acquisition programs including LMF and Forest Legacy;
 - g) geology.
- 2) Simplify and streamline each agency's rule-making procedures and processes, eliminating citizen-boards while establishing strong appeal processes.
- 3) Reduce the number of political appointees to assure that professionals are in place at all levels below commissioner, and reduce the layers between field staff and the commissioner.
- 4) Reduce the presence of agency staff at the legislature to improve productivity, and require each agency to fully report its lobbying efforts.
- 5) Establish user-fees whenever possible to make programs self-sustaining with identifiable constituencies and customers.
- 6) Evaluate the necessity of existing advisory and working groups and eliminate as many as possible.
- 7) Reorganize all regional offices so that agencies can share space and staff.
- 8) Move conservation law enforcement officers (game wardens, marine patrol, and forest rangers) into one agency with separate divisions such as these: marine and inland wardens, forest rangers, recreation vehicle enforcement officers, search and rescue, with appropriate cross-training and cooperative enforcement efforts.
 - Consolidate marketing function in a natural resource marketing group, the current duplication is ineffective and wasteful.
 - In a similar way consolidate the information dissemination and public education functions.
 - Maybe a department of public response for natural resources questions?
 - Combine the Natural Resource section of SPO with the like agencies (why is there an SPO coastal program rather than housing it at DMR?)

- Combine oversight of recreational fisheries on both fresh and salt water combining similar science needs and product development issues (leave commercial fisheries with DMR)
- Where can we combine facilities? Greenville is an excellent example of multiple agencies with separate buildings and overhead in almost the same location.
- Before we go to far down this road though we need an honest accounting of the current natural resource service center, it's effectiveness and cost to the agencies. We do not want to build another effort that will not improve what currently exists.

Where might we find ways to improve service and redirect money within and among the five natural resource agencies through:

1.

Increased efficiency and #3. ♦ Elimination of duplication and #2

Coordination across agency lines:

♦

Currently the State has multiple offices that take in \$ and issue licenses and permits. ♦ All of these could be consolidated into a single office with revenues distributed to the appropriate agency electronically. These should all be consolidated into a single department with offices at multiple locations across the State. ♦ Give the issuing of all licenses, permits, registrations & etc to the Secretary of State to administer. ♦ A few examples (please find and add more!)

i.

DMR and IF&W both issue permits for fishing ♦ both commercial and recreational. ♦ Soon there will be a marine as well as inland recreational fishing license (or the Feds will get it).

ii.

The Secretary of State and IF&W both issue licenses for motor vehicles (i.e. cars, trucks, boats, snowmobiles, ATV ♦s, trailers & etc).

♦

Currently multiple state agencies hold title to State lands. ♦ While management may belong at the agency level, legal title belongs to the people of the State of Maine. ♦ Currently multiple agencies have staff that manage acquisition and sale of state lands. It is impossible to get consistent reports of who owns what, exactly what is owned, or where

restrictions or public access points exist. Basic legal title and records management functions needs to be consolidated into a single location with inter-agency responsibility.

- Increased efficiency: contract vehicle needs with a private fleet management company; consider greater role for forest rangers on search and rescue freeing up wardens to spend more time where an armed law enforcement officer is needed.
- Coordination, cooperation across agency lines: More sharing (co-locating) of building use and equipment – we don't need two or three of everything.
- Integration of functions: Put all state owned land (fee and easements) under one agency; all off road vehicle functions and responsibilities should be in one place.
- Elimination of duplication: consolidate water access programs into one agency.
- New organizational configurations
- Advances in science and technology: Consolidate licensing wherever possible; all public reporting requirements should have the option of filing electronically.

Where might we find ways to improve service and redirect money within and among the five natural resource agencies through:

I understand this is a “first pass” but I am finding it hard to really think about increased efficiency, integration of functions, elimination of duplication and organizational configurations without knowing more about what each department is responsible for. I think we should have a complete review of each department including activities (programs), staffing levels (and experience), and boards and/or commission that are part of each department.

1. Increased efficiency

2. One stop shop for licensing (licenses that do not require any type of inspection or certification).
3. Improving the state's payment system would saving money, currently the state pays more for many services and products because of the time it takes vendors to receive payment.
4. Coordination, cooperation across agency lines
5. Integration of functions
6. Elimination of duplication
7. Combining licensing efforts (as explained in section 1).
8. Combining of all natural resource agencies marketing efforts, and develop an integrated program with professional staff either or contracted.
9. Are there programs within state government that could better be delivered by the private sector? Is it possible that we have programs within state government that are only there because they have "always" been there? If so we should explore what opportunities there are to privatize these programs.

As I've been reviewing the materials, I guess I'd like to start my ideas with a request:

I've been somewhat overwhelmed by the volume of activities of the various agencies. Would it be possible to come up with some sort of agency by agency chart showing the activities listed by each agency, division and bureau. I think if we were able to look at just functions it may be easier to start sorting through things.

Now on the ideas/questions.

Licensing & Registrations:

Licensing and registration functions should be managed by one agency, preferably one that already offers a well-functioning online system. It seems that over time as agencies have undertaken online registration systems, they get hung up on whatever project they're working on specifically while technology passes them by. Some systems are laboring away on seemingly endless glitches, when well-performing variations of what they're trying to do is available right off the shelf at Staples. I would be a step in the right direction to identify the most effective and efficient system available within state government and roll registration and licensing functions into it.

Legislative Functions:

It sends a poor message when seven or eight agency employees are at a legislative hearing or work session, many times just sitting there. Agencies should identify and assign personnel to handle these assignments more effectively. If specific expertise is needed, it can be handles on a case by case basis rather than have large numbers of staff sitting unproductively for long periods.

Land Management:

All land programs should be managed within one agency. This could include parks, public lands, trails, wildlife management areas, etc.

State Planning Office:

When you look at the various projects managed by the State Planning Office, it appears that many of them are possibly duplicating tasks that fall under the responsibilities of natural resource agencies. These should be reviewed with an eye toward eliminating duplication of efforts.

10. organizational configurations
11. We should look at the USDA for some ideas on natural resource configuration; I would suggest that we could combine forestry and aquaculture in the department of agriculture. The works very well at the federal level.
12. have been looking at programs within SPO have a few ideas to put on the table for organizational configurations:
13. Land for Maine's Future - Move this program into a new department (to be created) that would include all public lands owned by the state, including parks, boat landings, etc..
14. Costal Program - move this programs to DMR
15. Waste Management and Recycling - move to DEP
16. Floodplain Management - move to DEP

Rather than list each group I am going to list the items of concern and suggestions.

- 1/ State owned or leased buildings across the State could we better use them and perhaps eliminate some. Combine Dept use of buildings where feasible.
- 2/ Do the same with vehicles and other equipment such as planes, helicopters. boats, snowmobiles, atvs, and office equipment.
- 3/ Could we share legal attorneys among the five depts and perhaps have one legal dept for all ?
- 4/ Combine ALL licensing into one operation.
- 5/Establish a land management div to manage all State owned or leased/easements under one Mgt Dept.
- 6/ If we decide to combine Depts I would suggest that NONE of the present Depts loose a seat at the Cabinet table.

7/ Upgrade all technology to operate under one program for all the Natural Resource Agencies. Combine all biologist together the same the land mgt div.