

**Summary of Ideas and Discussions, Natural Resource Agency Task Force
Schoodic Education and Research Center
September 9 & 10, 2008**

Ideas with Broad Support

Following small and large group discussion on September 10 these ten ideas seemed to have broad consensus support (no final decision). Numbers 7- 10 came up near the end of the meeting and merit more discussion but there seemed to be initial support for these ideas.

1. Marketing of Maine's Natural Resources led and leveraged by Department of Economic and Community Development
2. Review the "business processes" of each agency issuing "ministerial" licenses and work toward a system that best serves customers and clients (front-end portals) as well as agency data and other management goals (possibly located at Secretary of State).
3. Move oversight/management of all state boat launch facilities to single agency (Dept. of Conservation)
4. Move towards more agencies/staff being co-located in various regional offices to increase communication and collaboration
5. Move towards rational alignment of districts for natural resource agencies to increase communication and collaboration among staff members and between agencies and local government and citizens of those regions
6. Create a single entity to manage public lands and to communicate with citizens about opportunities for access consistent with management goals for those lands (Dept. of Conservation)
7. *Suggest each agency to engage with staff and stakeholders to prioritize programs and services, with an end result to drop or reduce low-priority work in favor of more critical needs;*
8. *Suggest each agency review advisory boards and committees to determine most effective mix of citizen engagement and cost (staff time and expenses)*
9. *Move floodplain management from SPO to DEP (or MEMA)*
10. *Move waste management (except landfill oversight) from SPO to DEP*

Ideas still Needing More Background and Further Discussion

Two further ideas are under consideration – with background being gathered for next meeting

11. Relationship and Possible Re-configuration among Agriculture, Forestry & Aquaculture (including possible move of animal health from DMR and DIF&W to Dept. of Agriculture)

12. Possible consolidation of functions for Marine Resources and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (and possibly including Maine Natural Areas Program).

Note: Other ideas around consolidating recreational management (snowmobiles, ATVs etc.), landowner relations programs and a natural resource “ombudsman” were not resolved and may depend in part on how other ideas sort themselves out.

Vision (a future we want to encourage)

In addition to further background on the two ideas above, a third working group was to bring back some further thinking about the outcomes we are seeking from these suggestions, as they relate to Maine’s natural resources, the people who utilize them and the people who manage them. These outcomes might be stated as a vision for the future of natural resources in Maine... where we enjoy both prosperity and the natural resources which support us.

We already have a draft four-part “screen” for determining whether our eventual recommendations will serve the state, its natural resources and its people—our recommendations should:

- Ensure efficient, effective use of human resources and agency capacities
- Improve services to Maine people, businesses and others using our natural resources
- Address current and emerging future natural resource management challenges and opportunities
- Assure healthy, sustainable ecosystems into the future, as well as long-term economic and other benefits to Maine people

Evolution of task force ideas to date

Ideas brought forward from July 22 preference voting

1. Develop an effective approach to joint marketing, leverage resources of Office of Tourism
2. Include Forestry and Aquaculture with Department of Agriculture (all are supporting private enterprise on either private land or in the case of aquaculture, on lease of public resources)
3. One agency to manage commercial activities on private land
4. Combine management of state natural resource lands
5. Have personnel share buildings to enhance interactions and collaboration
6. Streamline routine licensing and house in single agency
7. One agency to manage marine and freshwater fisheries
8. Minimize agency staff time before legislative committees
9. Focus on core missions, let go of things that have crept in over time
10. Combine DMR Marine Patrol with IF&W Warden Service
11. Enhance/Combine Information and Education programs

Subsequent ideas generated on September 9, after quick review of feedback from August stakeholder survey:

- a) Move agencies to more “self-sustaining” basis through user fees, endowments, etc.
- b) Assure that commissioners of NR agencies meet on regular basis and create a unified budget (in subsequent discussion, commissioners told task force members that they meet monthly and work together on budget)
- c) Consider three clusters of natural resource agencies, as suggested by 50 state review of how states allocate natural resource functions (Agriculture, Environmental Protection and All other functions)
- d) Review and streamline advisory functions and bodies for all NR agencies
- e) Review and consider eliminating Board of Environmental Protection to speed up decision-making around permits
- f) Continue to improve customer/client access to information about what each agency does and services it provides
- g) Revisit the knowledge and experience base of existing and retired state agency staff who have important insights to share
- h) Pay attention to key consumer trends regarding natural resources and what are likely to ways to reach out to the “next generation” of users and enjoyers of natural resources
- i) Avoid just moving pieces around—focus on what will really improve the quality of our natural resources, improve our ability to manage human use of /interaction with these resources, and improve the experience of citizens who use the services of our agencies

- j) Broaden the base of support for wildlife management by reaching out to wildlife watchers and others who don't choose to hunt
- k) Focus on the core functions we want agencies to perform—fight against “mission creep” and especially look at those functions we will need agencies to carry out to meet future demands (population changes, energy demands, etc)
- l) As we look to what agency functions are important, try to integrate habitat needs, land-use planning and recreational needs
- m) Look to the 1991 report on agency reorganization for past “wisdom” that might support our recommendations
- n) Ask principle authors of Brookings Institute report on Maine to review and comment on our draft recommendations
- o) Foster collaboration among agency staff members through formal and informal work around significant issues that are important to the natural resources and the citizens of Maine, as they emerge

Subsequent Ideas that emerged from five discussion groups, asked to prioritize up to ten ideas and provide rationale, on Tuesday, September 9

- A. Combine management of state natural resource lands under one entity (4 of 5 groups)
- B. Develop an effective approach to joint marketing, leverage resources of Office of Tourism (3 of 5 groups)
- C. Improve and integrate information and education functions of all natural resource agencies so that citizens get clear and consistent messages (2 of 5 groups)
- D. Streamline routine licensing and house in single agency (2 of 5 groups)
- E. Combine marine and freshwater fisheries (2 of 5 groups)

Ideas below were each listed by single group:

- F. Integrated and collaborative approaches to law enforcement
- G. Review connection/placement of Agriculture, Forestry and Aquaculture
- H. Place management of state public boat launch facilities in one agency
- I. Place oversight/management of motorized recreational vehicles in one agency
- J. Align various natural resource agency district lines to promote staff communication and coordination where it makes sense
- K. Co-locate agency staff in buildings to promote collaboration
- L. Review and streamline advisory committees who serve agencies
- M. Recreate an ombudsman function to serve all NR agencies
- N. Consider a three-cluster approach for Natural Resource functions, as outlined in report reviewing 50 states configurations
- O. Place all landowner relations in one agency (Inland Fisheries and Wildlife)
- P. Move LURC to SPO or DEP
- Q. Second look at our work by Brookings Institute
- R. Review and prioritize programs, stop doing some in favor of high priorities