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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Review of the Baxter State Park Authority
under the Government Evaluation Act**

The Government Evaluation Act

The Government Evaluation Act ("Act") provides for a system of periodic review of the efficacy and performance of state government agencies. The review of an agency's finances and programs must include a review of agency management and organization, program delivery, goals and objectives, statutory mandates and fiscal accountability. (3 MRSA § 951 et seq.) The law was enacted in the 117th Legislature to replace the old Government Audit and Program Review Program and substituted a legislative audit of each agency on a rotating basis with an agency self assessment. The first reviews under the Act will be completed at the end of the 118th Legislature.

The keystone to the Act is the agency program evaluation report which consists of a number of components required by the statute. Essentially, the report is an agency self-assessment which the committee of jurisdiction uses as a starting point for its evaluation of the agency's effectiveness, efficiency and performance. The components that must be included in the report are: the agency's enabling state and federal legislation; program descriptions; organizational structure, position count and job classifications; compliance with federal and state health and safety laws; ten-year financial summaries; regulatory agenda; coordinated efforts with other state agencies; constituencies served by the agency; alternative delivery systems; and emerging issues for the agency.

Review Process

Pursuant to the requirements of the Act, the Joint Standing Committee Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry notified the Baxter State Park Authority of its intent to review the agency shortly after the end of the 118th Legislature's First Regular and First Special Sessions. The Baxter State Park Authority submitted its program evaluation report on October 31, 1997.

The Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee held two meetings to conduct the review under the Act. On January 22, 1998, Charles J. Gadzik, Chair of the Baxter State Park Authority, and Irvin "Buzz" C. Carverly, Director of Baxter State Park, appeared before the committee to respond to questions relating to the Authority and the operation of the Park. This meeting was advertised as a public hearing on the Authority's program evaluation report. On February 19th, the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee completed its review of the Baxter State Park Authority. The findings and recommendations are presented in this report.

Findings of Review

The Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has reviewed the Baxter State Park Authority and finds that the Authority is operating in accordance with its purpose to satisfy the terms of Governor Baxter's Trust. (12 MRSA §900). The committee finds that the Baxter State Park Authority is performing effectively and efficiently in carrying out its statutory mandate regarding operation of the Park.

The Baxter State Park Authority is a three person authority consisting of the Attorney General, the Director of the Maine Forest Service and the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The Authority has full power in the control and management of the Park and in the exercise of all Trust obligations. Further detailed information about the Authority can be found in the Authority's Program Evaluation Report and the 1996 Baxter State Park Annual Report. Statutory provisions are found 12 MRSA §900-§908

Committee questions and discussion at both meetings focused on the Parks' potential as an educational resource. The Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee urges the Authority and the Park Director to continue and augment its educational efforts, especially with regard to wildlife and forestry. It is the committee's understanding that the Park Naturalist has responded to a suggestion from Representative McKee in planning this summer's evening program series. The Scientific Forest Management Area affords a unique opportunity to demonstrate exemplary forest management. The committee encourages increased use of this area as an educational tool.

In reviewing the Authority, committee members shared many personal accounts of visits to the Park. In concluding this report, the committee members again recognize the magnanimity of Governor Percival Baxter's gift and the importance of the Authority's charge to interpret Governor Baxter's intent and preserve the trust.