

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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State of Maine

90th Legislature

REPORT

of the

Recess Committee

on

Feasibility of Acquiring Property

for the

Establishment of Public Bathing Beaches

and for

**Encouraging the Development of the Shores of the
Lakes and Streams of the State**

Created by Chapter 60 of the Resolves of 1939

to

THE 90TH LEGISLATURE

SECTION I

Although Maine has been advertised as one of the nation's leading recreational states, it has been singularly delinquent in providing public facilities for recreational pursuits that its visitors expect and that its own people should have as a heritage.

Before outdoor recreation and travel reached their present degree of popularity, Maine people and the few visitors who then came to the state enjoyed virtually untrammelled access to our coast, our lakes, our mountains and our forests.

Today, however, a great proportion of the most desirable recreational sites have been purchased by private interests. Slowly, but surely, the areas where the rank and file of our citizens could enjoy the various recreational pursuits that their state has to offer have disappeared. It is possible today to drive for mile after mile along our highways without encountering a spot where the motorist and his family can stop to avail themselves of bathing facilities or picnic grounds. An inexpensive day at lake or seashore for the Maine family of moderate means is almost an impossibility today.

It is not hard to envision a future when thousands of our citizens in modest circumstances who cannot afford to pay for the privilege of using private facilities will be unable to find a place along our highways or in our recreational centers where he may legally enjoy the scenic beauties and recreational opportunities of their native state. The visitor to Maine who is touring the state will likewise find himself in a position where he will be unable to stop to take advantage of the many outdoor pursuits that, as a guest of Maine, he has a right to expect would be provided for him.

With the steady growth of Maine as a recreational state, the present situation will grow worse steadily. Acquisition of more and more of the desirable sites now available by private interests will take place.

From available information Maine has lagged far behind other recreational states in providing recreational facilities for the general public. Public bathing beaches, picnic grounds and camping sites are far too few to take care of the steadily growing demand for such facilities.

Baxter State Park, Acadia National Park, the Sebago Lake Public Beach, the Lake St. George Public Beach, the Mount Blue State Park and the Aroostook County State Park are, with the exception of the camp sites maintained by the State Forestry Department, virtually all of the areas in the whole of the State of Maine owned by the general public which are suitable for public use all of which are on inland waters.

When it is considered that Maine is almost as large as all of the rest of New England and that it has 2,486 miles of seacoast, 2,500 lakes and over 5,000 rivers and streams it will be seen that the publicly owned places just mentioned are all too few.

It has been said that the recreational business is Maine's greatest single industry. Yearly it brings approximately \$100,000,000 into our state. It is not unreasonable to assume that in the future this vast industry will suffer if we do not give our visitors recreational opportunities that they can rightfully expect.

The State Park Commission is the only state agency existing that is empowered to create and maintain the facilities that have been mentioned as highly necessary. The necessary money that the Commission will require to carry out the work of making additional areas available cannot rightfully be considered an expenditure. It would be an investment not only in the recreational business, that we cannot afford to lose, but would also be an investment in the health and happiness of our children who have as their heritage the right to enjoy to the fullest the many recreational advantages of their native state.

We believe that the time has come for taking definite and positive steps toward the establishment of a publicly owned salt water beach recreational area and additional fresh wa-

ter facilities where thousands of our citizens, their friends and neighbors can enjoy a dip in the Atlantic, a sun bath on the sands or a picnic on the beach.

It is the opinion of this committee that a modest approach to this problem, by necessary legislative action, is not only timely and appropriate but that it is a matter worth serious thought and action at this time.

SECTION 1A

“Maine comprises $\frac{1}{2}$ the area of New England, yet spends the least of any state on Public recreation.” (Park, Parkway and Recreational Area Study) as is indicated by following table.

PUBLIC RECREATIONAL APPROPRIATION

Maine	1939-40	\$ 1,000.00
New Hampshire	1937-38	15,500.00
Vermont	1939-40	25,250.00
Massachusetts	1939	147,175.00
Rhode Island	1940	119,995.00
Connecticut	1939	291,192.00

Experts in the field of recreation advise that good recreational planning should include 1 mile out of every 10 of seashore, lake shore and river bank. It would seem that no figures need be tabulated at this point to indicate Maine's very definite and woeful deficiency to its citizens. Maine has lost for public use much of its water property and “No Trespass” signs are frequent. The owner erects these only upon frequent trespass by the public because they consider this right a heritage. This condition is a stark reminder that the state is not fulfilling its obligation to keep up with the times and make available areas when the public can be welcomed and properly supervised.

SECTION II

What are other states doing with this problem of public bathing beaches? Let us look around and study a few, some because they are neighbors, some because of natural similarities and some because they are entirely different from "The Land of Remembered Vacations".

1. Minnesota; a state comparable to Maine in climatic, water, flora and fauna resources. The following table sets forth a striking similarity in natural resources and a striking contrast in public recreation.

	MINN.	MAINE
Climatic Zone	North Temperate	North Temperate
Lakes	10,000	3,000
State Acreage	54,196,300	21,145,600
Per Capita Income	\$416	\$415
Rank of Recreation as a business	3	1
Per Capita Income (Recreation)	\$49	\$125
Appropriation (State Parks 1939)	\$50,624.85	\$1,000

Each Maine citizen receives two and one-half times as much income as a citizen of Minnesota, yet the latter appropriates fifty times as much for active participation in its third largest industry as Maine does in one of its most important industries.

2. New Hampshire, as we all know, found public recreation a profitable business. The State operates twelve bathing areas in addition to those found in the White Mt. National Forest. The leading area for bathing is Hampton Beach State Park—the type needed in Maine. This was built in 1937 at a cost to the State of approximately \$200,000. On an ordinary Sunday, over one thousand cars are parked on the area and fifteen hundred people pay for using facilities.

Since Hampton Beach State Park is of a character we believe is most needed in Maine, let us give it further consideration. Everett Wood, writing in a publication of The Maine Publicity Bureau, paints the following picture:

“We must travel no further than Hampton Beach to find a highly successful, state-operated public salt water beach and recreational area such as is envisioned for Maine. Two thousand feet of shore, picnic grounds, tennis courts, etc., provide an ideal playground for New Hampshire citizens. A parking space accommodates 2,000 cars: a \$200,000 building provides clean adequate facilities for bath houses and toilets. Attendants are always present in the interest of safety, all of whom are commissioned as special police, not only look out for the comfort and safety of patrons, but also keep order and see that a high standard of cleanliness is maintained. Attendance has increased steadily, more and more organizations are selecting it for outings; and no one in New Hampshire is worrying about the cost since they have discovered that the project has proven to be a valuable asset to the State.”

SECTION III

ADVISABILITY OF MAINE EXPANDING ITS FACILITIES FOR PUBLIC BATHING BEACHES

It is known that other states have found it profitable, from the financial side—not to mention the social benefits derived—to enlarge and improve public recreational facilities.

The large percent of the rural population of the State should be included in any recreational planning as well as the urban and city populations. This planning should include all types and ages.

In other States, no conflict has been found between public and private investments in public recreational areas. In fact, private enterprises are keen supporters of public developments in their region. The State Park Commission has found that the public are very much in favor of public

bathing, as one of its Parks had an increase of 59% last summer over its 1939 use. This was without publicity until the latter part of the season.

For the past two tourist seasons the State Park Commission has conducted surveys to determine out-of-state use of State Parks. With 1,000,000 visitors annually the ratio of out-of-state users would be expected to be higher than in other states when recreation is not the major factor for consideration. "This is not so, however. Mt. Blue, with its super scenery, mountain trails and bathing facilities, attracted less than 1% more than the average State Park." (State Park Commission Report to the Governor, November 1939.)

For 1940 the average of four Parks indicated that 15% of Park visitors were from out-of-state, or 1.2% less than the average shown in 63 State Parks scattered throughout 23 Eastern States.

Public recreational facilities do not compete with the facilities provided by private capital, but rather augment them and provide a well rounded out and complete tourist service.

"Maine has unlimited potential and untapped recreational resources to offer its tourists. It is the purpose of the Recreational Study . . . to work out a program for the conservation and adequate use of these resources." "As Maine citizens know and learn to enjoy their natural advantages, then will develop a Maine consciousness that will insure the success of a "public recreational program". (State Park Commission Report to Governor, Nov. 1939.)

At a recent meeting in Boston on New England Recreation an outsider made the statement that "Maine has a \$100,000,000 business, a \$100,000 advertised program and a \$1,000 production plant, referring to the State Park Commission. Public beach developments should be planned for Maine citizens who need them. If our summer visitors desire to avail themselves of our beaches we are making "Vacationland" a better and more gracious host.

It has been indicated that other States are finding public resorts profitable. Should not Maine consider this now?

Maine's 1,000,000 visitors come from those States that are making recreational improvements. Maine must face this issue if it is to continue to attract vacationists.

The State Park Commission has recommended in its State-wide Study that its greatest need is for seashore parks. Two are now possibilities and should receive careful consideration. These two areas are so located that they would be within fifty miles of 20% and 28%, respectively, of the 800,000 year round residents of Maine. It would be highly desirable if funds were made available to develop bathing facilities at one of the existing State Parks.

That public interest is beginning to manifest itself is shown by the following editorial in the Portland Evening Express on October 30, 1940:

"Why not a public bathing beach for the benefit of that forgotten man of Maine, the year-long resident of Vacationland?" "Such a beach should be out of town, yet near enough to be served by busses; it should not be restricted solely to use of those who own automobiles."

The State and Federal Governments did excellent work in creating a public recreation area on the north shore of Sebago Lake, a bathing beach and picnic ground developed by State agencies and the Federal Resettlement Administration (now the Soil Conservation Service.)

The State Highway Commission is to be congratulated in their efforts to provide turn-outs at lake sights, additional picnic sights, etc. all of which add to the attractiveness of our country side and to the enjoyment of the visitor. In this activity expansion of the program will fill a long felt need.

Respectfully submitted,

HAROLD N. HANOLD,
For the Committee.

The Committee
Worthen of Penobscot
Dorr of Oxford

Miller of Bath
Dow of Kennebunkport
Hanold of Standish