

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 20, 2006

The Honorable John E. Baldacci
Office of the Governor
1 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0001

Dear Governor Baldacci:

I am pleased to submit the following information as the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund's ninth annual report. Submission of this information is required under TITLE 12, MRSA part 13, chapter 903, subchapter 6, section 10308.

By way of history, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund was established in July, 1995 after a campaign by Maine Audubon Society and the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine generated more than 53,000 signatures on petitions to place the lottery issue on the November, 1995 ballot. Due to the strong support among Maine residents, the Legislature enacted the proposal into law, bypassing the need for a referendum.

The Fund's sole purpose is for "maintaining, improving and expanding state and local natural resource conservation programs and associated compatible public uses." Revenue is generated exclusively by a dedicated instant lottery ticket distributed by the Maine State Lottery.

The Heritage Fund law requires that funds raised by the lottery be expended in four general categories: for fisheries and wildlife, and habitat conservation projects (35%); for acquisition and management of public lands, parks, and wildlife conservation areas (35%); for endangered and threatened species conservation projects (15%); and for natural resources law enforcement (15%). Priorities within each of the four funding categories are described in the enclosed Strategic Plan.

Since the program began, twenty-five Heritage Fund lottery tickets have been issued. Two tickets were issued this year: “Reel In The Money” and our current ticket “Lucky Duck.” Voided tickets of this year’s designs are attached.

Approximately 79 percent of Heritage Fund lottery ticket revenue is allocated toward winnings and ticket distribution and advertising expenses. The remaining 21 percent is transferred to the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund. This profit figure has totalled nearly \$12 million since the program’s inception.

Grants are awarded semi-annually to natural resource agencies in response to grant proposals. To date, there have been eighteen grant cycles, in which the Heritage Fund received 773 grant applications. Applicants include state natural resource agencies in partnership with non-profit conservation organizations. In response, the Heritage Fund has awarded nearly \$12 million in grants to 470 conservation projects. The grant sizes have ranged from \$561 to \$110,000. A brief description of the 46 grants awarded this year is attached.

Since the Heritage Fund program began, grant recipients have included the Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife; the Department of Marine Resources; the Department of Conservation; the Department of Environmental Protection; the Department of Agriculture; the State Planning Office; the Land for Maine's Future Board; the Maine Conservation Corps; the Atlantic Salmon Commission (and formerly the Atlantic Salmon Authority); the St. Croix International Waterway Commission; York, Cumberland, Oxford, Piscataquis, Washington and Central Aroostook Counties Soil and Water Conservation Districts; the Wells Reserve; and the Saco River Corridor Commission. These state natural resource agencies have partnered with scores of non-governmental organizations to accomplish their projects, so the impact of these grants reaches well beyond the scope of these agencies alone.

The Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund is continually building public awareness of the Program. In the past year, it has worked with Ursus Productions to produce more than a dozen television segments highlighting specific conservation projects funded by the Heritage Fund. These segments are airing regularly on commercial stations throughout Maine as well as on public television. Two television ads featuring Harry Vanderweide and Cate Pineau were run on Channel 13 and cable television. A radio ad featuring Maine comedian Gary Crocker recently aired, promoting the Fund’s current lottery ticket, Lucky Duck.

The Heritage Fund Board continues to implement its Strategic Plan by ensuring that all funded projects substantively address one of the four funding categories established in the Fund's enabling legislation. I am confident you will find that the projects funded to date, whether evaluated individually or as a group, make a substantial contribution to the protection of the State's natural resources.

The Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Board looks forward to its ongoing role in providing an alternative source of funding for innovative conservation projects. If you would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Catherine Sonnier Pineau
Executive Director