

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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January 23, 2005

Senator John Nutting,
Representative John Piotti,
and Members of the Joint Standing Committee
on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry,

We are pleased to submit this report, summarizing the activities of the Board of Agriculture during 2004. Over time the Board has moved from being an externally-imposed oversight committee to being a real advocate for agriculture within the University and for the University's agriculture programs to the outside community. This advocacy role is one that helps to improve the visibility and credibility of all the agricultural activities happening on the campus and in the outreach activities of Cooperative Extension.

This past year exemplified this growth. The Board had in-depth discussions of both long-term strategy and short-term necessities. We remain convinced that the only way that agriculture in Maine can prosper is to have the University of Maine actively involved in many ways—through research, through teaching of those students interested in agriculture, and through its extension functions.

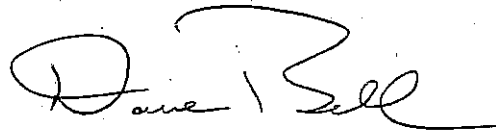
On the administrative side, David Bell of the Maine Wild Blueberry Commission completed two years as chair of the Board in November. Russell Libby of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association was elected as the incoming chair at that same meeting.

We welcome the continued support of the committee, and your active participation in these debates about the future role of agriculture in the University.

Sincerely,



Russell Libby, MOFGA



David Bell, Maine Wild Blueberry Commission

University of Maine Board of Agriculture
Annual Report
CY 2004
December, 2004

The University of Maine Board of Agriculture met twice during 2004 to discuss agricultural research and extension programs at the University. Issues addressed at the February meeting include the updated long-range plan for the Maine Agricultural Center and the actions to be taken by the Maine Agricultural Center to help implement the recommendations for the Governor's Taskforce on the Maine dairy industry. The projects to be completed using the \$1.0 million received from the "jobs bond" passed in June of 2003 were also discussed. The November meeting was devoted to the upgrades needed at the Witter Teaching and Research Center which houses the livestock programs of the University and agriculture's requests for R&D bond money to support the agricultural programs of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMCE) and the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station (MAFES). The highlights of the discussion and the actions taken are summarized in this report.

During 2003 the University and the Board, updated the long-range plan for the Maine Agricultural Center. The update was needed because many of the recommendations contained in the original report had been completed and the changing environment facing agriculture required new priorities. The updated plan focused on three issues: profitability of agriculture, sustainable water use and irrigation, and biosecurity and food safety. The updated plan was approved by the Board at its meeting in February and members of the Board presented it to the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee of the Maine Legislature in April of 2004.

The report issued by the Governor's Taskforce on the dairy industry was also discussed at the meeting. The Maine Agricultural Center formed a team of extension and research faculty to study the plan and to implement those recommendations that related to research and education. Dr. Gary Anderson presented a plan to the Board that outlined the recommendations the team would address, including estate planning, financial management, and risk assessments for animal disease and food safety. Educational material and training sessions have been held on these issues.

The Board also discussed the projects that were being undertaken at the research farms with the "job bond" money. Each of the projects was reviewed. As of December 31, 2004, the following projects have been completed: the new greenhouse at Aroostook Farm, the electrical service has been installed at Littlefield Ornamental Trials Garden, the silage bunkers and other project at Witter Center are completed, the new storage buildings at Rogers Farm and University Forest are completed, and the new shop has been completed at Blueberry Hill Farm. Ongoing projects include the irrigation well at Highmoor Farm and the construction of the office/laboratory building at Blueberry Hill Farm.

At its second meeting in early November, the Board discussed the general budget situation of the University, UMCE and MAFES, and concerns were raised about the FY06 budget, given escalating healthcare costs and the uncertain budget situation at the state level. The need for upgrades and a vigorous maintenance program at the Witter Teaching and Research Center were also discussed. As that entire facility comes under USDA inspection, several improvements are needed to comply with USDA criteria. These include replacement of roofs on several buildings, moving the current shop to an expanded facility at Rogers Farm, removing unused structures, repairing and painting existing buildings and eliminating the pigeon flock at the Farm. The Board agreed that the Witter Facility was crucial to the future health of the livestock industry of Maine and agreed to recommend support for bond money to conduct the needed upgrades and repairs.

Michael Eckardt, Vice President for Research also attended the meeting and led a discussion of the University's request and review process for R&D Bond submissions. He suggested ways to build support for the agricultural portion of the bond request; Vice President Eckardt voiced his support of the agricultural request for the bond package and agreed to keep the Board informed of the status and progress of the R&D bond.

Representatives of the Board of Agriculture met with Janet Yancey-Wrona, the Governor's Science Advisor, in late November to discuss and support the agricultural portion of the University's R&D bond package. The representatives expressed industry support for the bond request and the Board's willingness to work for passage of the bond package in the Legislature. The group also agreed to give the Science Advisor information about the importance of agriculture in the Maine economy and the jobs created by agriculture that the bond would help sustain. This information is viewed as being crucial to the development of support for the R&D bond package as a whole.

A copy of the information about the economic importance of agriculture and forestry in Maine that was forwarded to Janet Yancey-Wrona is attached.

Talking Points for the Agricultural and Forestry Bond Impacts

The \$3.0 million requested in the R&D bond for Agriculture and Forestry would allow the University of Maine to better serve the agricultural and forestry industries of Maine. For example the required improvements at the Witter Center would support the livestock industry of Maine, including the dairy, beef, sheep and equine sectors. The improvements at the Jacob Shur facility would serve forestry, potato, wild blueberry and horticultural sectors, and the development of irrigation research capacity would serve the apple, small fruits and vegetables, and potato growers. The growth chamber facility would support basic and applied research related all aspects of agriculture and forestry.

Forestry and agriculture have long been and continue to be important components of the Maine economy. Support for the Agriculture and Forestry bond request will help sustain the jobs and income provided by these sectors of the economy. The following "bullets" illustrate the economic importance of these industries.

- In 2000, the Maine forest products sector directly supported 31,600 jobs and produced \$6.0 billion in products.
- The total economic impact of the forest products sector in 2000 was about \$10 billion in sales and 76,000 jobs.
- Maine's 7,200 farms incorporate about 1.4 million acres and have annual sales of about \$500 million.
- Maine's 400 dairies produce about 650 million pounds of milk annually, with a value of around \$100 million.
- The total economic impact of the Maine dairy industry (suppliers, producers, processors, manufacturers, distributors, sellers, etc.) is approximately \$570 million in sales, 4,000 jobs and \$130 million in earnings for Maine families.
- The producers and businesses that comprise the Maine dairy industry contribute about \$25 million in state and local taxes (income, sales and property taxes).
- Maine potato growers produce about 16 million cwt annually on 66,000 acres, with a value of about \$100 million.
- The total economic impact of the Maine potato industry (suppliers, growers, processors, distributors, transport, etc.) is about \$540 million in sales, 6,100 jobs and \$230 million in income for Maine families.

- Maine potato growers and related businesses contribute about \$32 million in state and local taxes annually.
- The total economic contribution of the Maine harness racing industry in 2000 was approximately \$50 million in sales, over 1,600 jobs and \$15 million in income to Maine residents.
- Environmental horticulture (nurseries, greenhouses, cut flowers, turfgrass, retail and landscape services) is the fastest growing segment of Maine agriculture.
- Over 780 environmental horticulture firms sold \$286 million in products, provided almost 10,000 jobs, paid over \$140 million to employees and contributed more than \$20 million in state and local taxes in 2001.
- More than 1,100 farms sold over 30,000 beef animals in 2002, contributing over \$15 million in sales.
- Over 500 farms raise 9,000 sheep in Maine and produce more than 50,000 pounds of wool and 4,000 sheep for market each year.