

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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<p style="text-align:center">JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MARINE RESOURCES</p>

**Review of the Department of Marine Resources
under the Government Evaluation Act**

The Government Evaluation Act

The Government Evaluation 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 by 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

The Marine Resources Committee informed the department on May 1, 1997 of its intent to review the department under the Government Evaluation Act. The committee received its evaluation act report from the committee on November 1, 1997. The committee held two worksessions on the report: January 5, 1998 and March 13, 1998. In addition, members of the committee attended a session on March 6 at the Fishermen's Forum in Rockland in which the department reviewed its report with Maine's fishing community.

Findings

The Department of Marine Resources is the State's steward of Maine's salt water resources. It enforces Maine's salt water fishing laws, it develops plans for the management of Maine's marine resources and it ensures the public health and safety regarding the harvesting and sale of marine organisms. The department also plays an economic development role through the development of new means of harnessing value

from Maine waters, such as aquaculture, and through the marketing of the State's marine resources. In addition, the Department provides essential State representation on federal and interstate entities that develop regulations which impact Maine's fishing industry.

The Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources finds that the Department of Marine Resources is operating within its statutory authority. In addition, the committee commends the department for its ongoing efforts regarding the co-management of fisheries. Co-management involves bringing scientists, government officials and members of the fishing community together to jointly develop conservation measures. Co-management has proven itself to be a highly successful method of developing effective conservation measures that have the support of all parties involved.