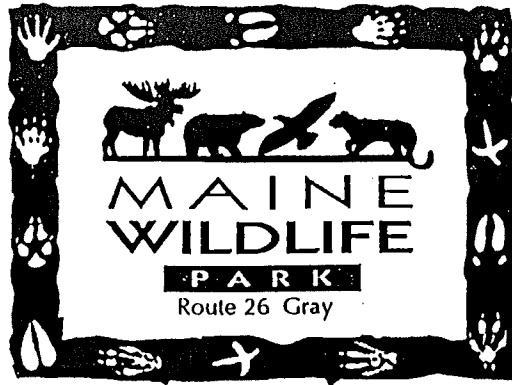


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February 1, 2000

Senator Michael Michaud
Senate Chair, Appropriations Committee
Station #2
Augusta, ME 04333

Representative Elizabeth Townsend
House Chair, Appropriations Committee
Station #3
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: 12 MRSA, Section 7735-A, Annual Report of the Maine Wildlife Park

Dear Senator Michaud and Representative Townsend:

Enclosed please find the 1999 report detailing the financial revenues, operations expenditures and plans for future improvements of the Maine Wildlife Park in Gray, Maine. The First Regular Session of the 115th Legislature originally authorized this dedicated account.

I would be pleased to provide you with any additional information. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 287-3303 or at Lisa.Kane@state.me.us.

Sincerely,

Lisa J. Kane
Natural Science Educator

1999 Status Report
 Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Maine Wildlife Park
 Gray, Maine

The Maine Wildlife Park is open to the public from April 15 to November 11 each year. Over 80,000 people visited the facility during 1999, and revenues totaled \$231,217.91, a 9% increase over 1998 revenues. (dedicated account interest included).

<u>Attendance Breakdown</u>	<u># of visitors or visits</u>
Family Pass use (compiled from daily tally sheet)	2523 (average 1.2 visits per pass)
Individual Pass use (compiled from daily tally sheet)	13
Complimentary Pass use (compiled from daily tally sheet)	51
Community Pass use (compiled from daily tally sheet)	1127
Fish and Wildlife Open House Day	3609
Complimentary Loon Plate Passes (compiled from collected passes)	5768
<u>Regular Admission</u> (compiled from cash register receipts)	
Seniors	4707
Adults	31,094
Groups	17,704
Children	15,311
<u>Grand Total</u>	

81,907 visitors during the 1999 season

The facility is staffed by four full-time employees who care for over 30 wildlife species on exhibit; orphaned and injured wildlife brought in by the public, IFW wardens and biologists; maintain buildings and grounds; manage and staff the facility seven days a week throughout the year. Two summer college interns, 2 weekend wildlife caretakers, and 2 part-time seasonal individuals working as Public Program Coordinator and Admissions Gate Volunteer Coordinator are hired through a Temporary Services agency. An 'Americorps' employee completed his second season working on upgrading and adding to the wildlife and conservation education exhibits and programs in 1700 hours of labor during 1998-99.

New Programs

In order to increase visitorship and thus revenues, the Wildlife Park continued an increased advertising campaign started during 1997, for the 1999 season, which included weekly publicity in area event calendars and vacation guide pullouts, radio advertising, print ads and coupons, participation in festivals and parades as exhibitors, membership in the Portland Convention and Visitors Bureau, ads in the Maine Tour Connection magazine, etc. The Wildlife Park was featured on a variety of television and newspaper news stories, and in Public Service Announcements on the Outdoor Cable Channel. Special events held during the peak summer season included the Fish and Wildlife Open House, Full Moon Night Hikes, WBLM Radio Day, Loon License Plate complimentary pass program, etc. A successful LL Bean Outdoor Discovery Program Children's Wildlife Photography Workshop session was held in May.

The Maine Audubon Society (MAS) continued in a third year association by operating their environmental, wildlife and conservation book store and gift shop as a concession at the Wildlife Park. MAS fully provides merchandise, staffing, hardware, and administration associated with regular operation of a branch of their gift shop, sold IFW merchandise, and provided the Wildlife Park with a 60% of the net. Total sales reached \$41,678.98. The Park realized \$6313.86 in additional income and the store was again positively received by visitors.

Existing Programs and Enhancement

During 1999 we continued to have the entrance gate attended throughout the season. This was accomplished with the Wildlife Park's organized force of gate volunteers, over 40 of whom donated close to 1300 hours staffing the front entrance, taking admissions fees, directing visitors and answering questions. A paid Temp. Services Volunteer Gate Coordinator administers this essential program.

The popular fish and wildlife education program for elementary, middle and high schools visiting the Park continued, and increased participation with 1352 spring, 1090 fall participants, for a total of 2442 students attending during the 1999 season, held in May-June and Sept.-October. With education about wildlife and conservation programs a major goal of the Park, we will continue to add more programs to increase our audiences for the 2000 season.

Because of the demand for guided tours of the wildlife exhibits, offered by trained volunteers on request from school groups, scout groups, church groups, Elder Hostels and others, we implemented a \$.50 additional per person fee for the tours. Over 2200 people were served by this program, participating in some 67 tours, with 650 hours of time donated by tour guides. A continuing problem is finding enough qualified and available people to lead tours on weekday mornings to meet the demand we have for them. We hope to partner with local high schools to train seniors to lead tours to fulfill their community service requirements to graduate. All education volunteers were trained and their volunteer time coordinated by the Public Program Coordinator; and continued to be a popular program both with the volunteers and the visitors to the Park.

The Sunday summer Weekend Wildlife Program series continued to be well attended when set up like an exhibit and staffed by knowledgeable presenters that talked with visitors as they passed through the Park. This format proved to be much more popular with visitors. Specific programs have already been scheduled for specific dates to be listed in 2000 summer event calendars from Boston to Bangor.

Night Hikes continued to be a great way to expand Park programming. Although one Hike was rained out, the 2 others attracted over 600 visitors. A particularly well-attended Hike was held near Halloween on the full moon, again a way to attract visitors during the less well-attended times of our open season.

Improvements

The installation of an 8 foot chain link perimeter fence began during November, 1999 (funded by 50% by BGS, and 50% by MWP). The first third of the project was completed by December, 1999, the second 2/3 of the job to be completed by June 30, 2000. Total cost: \$95,000. The perimeter fence will allow the removal of visually and esthetically awful interior double chain link fencing around

the so-called dangerous animals, required by the USDA, our regulatory agency. It will also improve security and hopefully limit or eliminate the chances of a robbery. It should also function as a safety feature for both the exhibit wildlife and our visitors.

A new main water line from Route 26 into the Park to accommodate new exhibit and building water demands was installed this summer. This water line replacement program must continue during 2000 to fix leaks that are becoming apparent as the 2" black pipe that has served the Park for over 40 years disintegrates.

The Maine Warden Service Association raised funds to construct a Warden Service Museum building, stick built on a slab with log cabin siding, near the Park picnic area. This will house the large warden service glass case exhibit that has previously resided at LL Bean and Kittery Trading Post, plus other historical warden service artifacts. This should be a popular and educational exhibit for visitors to the Park, and wardens will be working to open the museum by June 10, Fish and Wildlife Open House Day, 2000.

A large, 4'x6' full color interpretive mural/sign describing raptors was designed and completed and will be installed this spring. The Friends of the Wildlife Park paid for this attractive and informative new sign.

The large, new wild turkey display was completed in time for the Dept. Open House in June. This naturalized exhibit demonstrates typical Maine turkey habitat, with several birds occupying this attractive exhibit. Wild birds are often sighted visiting the captive flock and are duly reported by visitors.

Little, unfortunately, was done on the Native Turtle and Wetlands Exhibit during the summer of 99 due to the inability of our principle partner, a landscape architecture firm, to work on the project. We are hopefully back on track with them this winter, have received a formal extension from the Outdoor Heritage Board, and now expect to complete this exhibit by August, 2000.

We continue to follow the 5-year Master Plan for the Wildlife Park. This plan has assisted the facility in identifying goals and objectives, a logical sequence of capital improvements, and plans for accommodation of an increase in visitors, among other things..

The Friends of the Maine Wildlife Park

This nonprofit group was organized in 1991 in response to the threatened closure of the former Game Farm as a cost-savings proposal to the Legislature by the Department. The group seeks to increase public awareness and participation in Wildlife Park programs and exhibits, as well as solicit donations above and beyond admission fees to provide monies for programs and improvements at the Park. Its members hope to see the Wildlife Park continue to grow to meet the needs for wildlife and conservation education in Maine. Friends volunteers constructed an attractive new building to house ice cream, candy, soda and carrot/apple (for the wildlife) sales during 1999, netting their organization about \$13,000. Funds from this and other activities allow the Friends to plant and maintain annual and perennial flower beds throughout the Park, mail out a Friends of the Wildlife Park informational newsletter 3x a year, build a small shelter for the complementary wheelchairs and strollers made

available to visitors as they enter, and more. The organization has collected about \$14,000 for Furbearer exhibit improvements, specifically for a new coyote exhibit, which we hope to begin construction on this summer.

Other:

Unfortunately, the Wildlife Park experienced a robbery the night of the very successful Fish and Wildlife Open House on June 12. Over \$10,000 in cash and checks, and the locked safe in which the money was kept, was stolen. State police assumed the investigation and although they have a suspect, they could never gather enough evidence to make an arrest. The installation of the perimeter fence, and a variety of new security procedures, will hopefully make this a one time experience. State Risk Management was able to provide insurance reimbursement for most of the stolen money.

2000-01 Wildlife Park planned capital improvements/expenditures and other Fund-Raising Initiatives

The Maine Wildlife Park's next capital fund-raising priority will be to reconstruct the Deer Yard and the Moose Yard in conjunction with the installation of the perimeter fence, in the spring of 2000. Attractive interpretive signs, viewing overlooks, and photographic opportunities will be included in the new wooded and natural habitat areas for deer and moose.

Deer yard relocation (in conjunction with perimeter fence installation)
Estimated Costs: \$50,000.00

Moose yard relocation (in conjunction with perimeter fence installation)
Estimated Costs: \$8,000.00 (most materials purchased)

Construction of New, naturalized Coyote Exhibit
Estimated Costs: \$20,000.00
Friends of Wildlife Park to fund most of this project

Existing Furbearer exhibit relocations
Estimated Costs: \$50,000.00

Redesign roadway at main entrance to increase safety of visitors, staff and state police
Estimated Costs: \$25,000
Maine DOT to include in RT 26 improvement project in 2001

Build new show fish pool (needed to replace Dry Mills Hatchery pool which could be closed at any time depending on downstream water quality issues)
Estimated Costs: \$95,000

Annual Operating Costs

The cost of operating the Maine Wildlife Park for fiscal year 1999 was \$256,794.48 (includes all salaries and operations). IFW regular (general fund) revenue covered salaries of \$57,855.24. General operating expenses of \$83,444.17, capital improvements and equipment costs of \$500, and personal services of \$114,995.07; a total of \$198,939.24, were borne by the Maine Wildlife Park dedicated revenue account.

The cost of operating the Maine Wildlife Park for the first 6 months (July-December) of fiscal year 2000 was \$149,470.23. A salary of \$28,865.14 was borne by the MDIFW General Fund. Three full time permanent positions averaging \$20,744.83 each, and general operating expenses of \$58,370.59 were borne by the dedicated revenue account.

The First Regular Session of the 115th Legislature mandated, through Chapter 591 (dated 7/17/91), that a dedicated account be established in which to deposit all Maine Wildlife Park revenues. Fiscal Year 1994 was the first year that any portion of the dedicated account was allocated. Monies from admission and donations had been allowed to accrue, with interest, in the dedicated account from July 1, 1991 to July 1, 1994 in order to provide a starting point from which to begin operating the facility from its own revenues. The cash balance as of December 31, 1999 was \$322,876.58, of which \$96,350 is obligated for outstanding contracts and operating expenses for 1/1/00 to 6/30/00.

Section 7735-a of Chapter 591 also mandated that this facility become "increasingly financially self-sustaining", which has been demonstrated since 1997 by assuming the salaries of three full time gamekeepers from the IFW general fund, as well as the salaries of 6 summer temporary employees, leaving only the Superintendent's position funded by the Department's general fund.

Summary

If annual revenue does not support the annual operation of the Maine Wildlife Park, (personal services and general operating expenses), the difference is withdrawn from the dedicated carrying account. Over the last 4 years the Wildlife Park has assumed more and more of its total annual operating expenses. The IFW general fund currently supports only 1 full time staff position. With the increased promotional campaign implemented in 1999, we maintained, and even somewhat surpassed, the break even point we reached for the first time last year.