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ANGUS S. KING, JR.
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF
INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
284 STATE STREET
41 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0041

O.F.P.R.

2001 FEB -8 AM 9:33
LEE E. PERRY
COMMISSIONER



February 1, 2001

Senator Jill Goldthwait
Senate Chair, Appropriations Committee
Station #2
Augusta, ME 04333

Representative Randall L. Berry
House Chair, Appropriations Committee
Station #3
Augusta, ME 04333

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

Dear Senator Goldthwait and Representative Berry:

Enclosed please find the FY2000 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



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FISH AND WILDLIFE ON THE WEB: www.mefishwildlife.com

INFORMATION & EDUCATION: (207) 287-5244

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LEE E. PERRY
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January 29, 2001

Senator Jill Goldthwait, Senate Chair
Representative Randall Berry, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Goldthwait, Representative Berry and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

As required by Resolve 2000, Chapter 101, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has prepared a report regarding license and permit fees, penalties and other money received by the Department.

In summary, the report contains the fees received for licenses and permits issued by the Department, recreational vehicle registration fees, the amount of money received as a result of fines and penalties, as well as all miscellaneous revenue (testing fees, rental of property, sale of publications, mailing lists, etc.

We are available to answer any questions you may have about information contained in this report.

Sincerely,

Lee E. Perry
Commissioner

/ale
Attachment



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2000 Status Report
Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Maine Wildlife Park, Gray, Maine
January 31, 2001

The Maine Wildlife Park is open to the public from April 15 to November 11 each year. The park experienced about a 1% drop in attendance this year, most likely due to the extremely wet weather in May and June, and several wet weekends in July. (State Parks experienced an overall 9.5% decrease in attendance this year; Acadia Park a 4% decrease) Over 79,000 people visited the facility during 2000, and revenues totaled \$263,056.72 (dedicated account interest included).

<u>Attendance Breakdown</u>	<u># of visitors</u>
Family Pass & Community Pass use (compiled from daily tally sheet)	3733
Fish and Wildlife Open House Day	1856
Complimentary Loon Plate Passes (compiled from collected passes)	3629
<u>Regular Admission</u> (compiled from cash register receipts)	
Seniors	4143
Adults	31,059
Groups	17,786
Children	14,841
Unstaffed Gate	2108
<u>Grand Total</u>	<u>79,155</u>

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, Game Wardens and biologists; maintain buildings and grounds; construct new exhibits and displays; 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 during the open season.

New Programs

In order to increase visitorship and thus revenues, the Wildlife Park continued to increase advertising for the 2000 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, work with the Dept. of Tourism, etc. The Wildlife Park was featured in 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, the Loon License Plate complimentary pass program, Brownie Day, Summer Wildlife Days, etc.

The Maine Audubon Society (MAS) continued their association with the park for the 4th year by operating their nature, wildlife and conservation bookstore and gift shop as a concession. MAS fully provides merchandise, staffing, hardware, and administration associated with regular operation of a branch of their gift shop, the store also sold IFW merchandise (for 100% profit to MWP), and provided the Wildlife Park with 60% of the net. Total sales reached \$42,781.91. The Park realized \$10,236.17 in additional income. The store was again positively received by visitors.

Existing Programs and Enhancement

During 2000 the entrance gate was staffed 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 Temporary Services Volunteer Gate Coordinator administers the volunteers in this essential program.

The popular fish and wildlife education program for elementary, middle and high schools visiting the Park continued, and we saw increased participation with 1040 kids in 24 programs during spring, and 999 kids in 22 programs during fall; for a total of 2039 kids in 46 programs during the 2000 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 programs to increase our audiences for the 2001 season.

There is a large demand for guided tours of the wildlife exhibits, offered by our trained volunteers for school groups, scout groups, church groups, Elder Hostels and others. Over 1950 people were served by this program, participating in some 59 tours, with 339 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. 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. Special exhibits cover a wide array of fish and wildlife topics and are staffed by knowledgeable presenters who chat with visitors as they pass through the Park. Programs occurred on 16 consecutive Sundays during June, July and August. This format has proved to be much more popular with visitors. Programs have already been scheduled for specific dates to be listed in 2001 summer event calendars from Boston to Bangor.

Night Hikes continued to be a great way to expand Park programming. The 3 scheduled night visits attracted over 987 visitors, who pay the regular admission for a 2 hour visit. A particularly well-attended Night Hike (620 visitors) was held on Friday the 13th with a full moon, again a way to attract visitors during the less well-attended times of our open season.

Weekday Wildlife Programs were staffed by our summer Wildlife Educator and proved to be a popular way for visitors to learn more about the wildlife at the Park. Turtles, owls, mammals

and other topics were presented in 15 minute programs several times weekly for park visitors. We hope to expand this program by creating a designated space with visitor seating and a stage for daily wildlife programming.

The Wildlife Park hosts an annual Volunteer Banquet in February to recognize and thank the volunteers that give their time to the park in so many ways. Park staff recognizes and appreciates the efforts of over 100 volunteers at the wildlife park, many of whom have been volunteering steadily for years.

Improvements

The installation of an 8 foot chain link perimeter fence began during November, 1999 (partly funded by the Bureau of General Services, and 50% by MWP). The project was completed by June 30, 2000 at a total cost of \$95,000. The perimeter fence will allow the removal of visually and esthetically unappealing interior double chain link fencing around the "dangerous animals", required by the USDA, our regulatory agency. It will also improve security and function as a safety feature for both the wildlife and our visitors.

Planning has been implemented to improve the Wildlife Park entrance from Route 26. The Dept. of Transportation will fund most of the \$225,000 project. MWP will fund the relocation of a water main at the corner of Game Farm Road and Route 26. This project will make our entrance safer, more attractive, and visible to the steady traffic on Route 26. Work will begin this spring as soon as weather permits.

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 now houses the large warden service exhibit, plus other historical artifacts. It was dedicated and opened this summer and has proved to be a popular exhibit for visitors to the Park.

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

Twenty interactive wildlife management signs were constructed and installed at various locations around the park by the Future Builders of America.

A large, 4' x 5' full color wild turkey mural/sign was completed in late fall. It will be installed next spring and interprets the recovery and management of wild turkeys in Maine. The funding for the sign came from a fund-raising effort by local citizens in memory of a Park volunteer.

The Native Turtle and Wetlands Exhibit, funded by a Maine Outdoor Heritage Grant, was installed during July and August. Final landscaping, fencing, paths and the underwater 'turtle cam' will be installed in spring 2001. Several turtles were introduced to the exhibit to overwinter. More species will be placed in the exhibit next spring as the exhibit is completed.

Work began on the new Maine Moose Exhibit. Land clearing and preparation, fencing , gate installation, and visitor pathways were completed. A barn and moose shelter will be completed next spring, and our 2 moose installed for the 2001 season.

Work also began on the new Coyote Exhibit, funded by the Friends of the Maine Wildlife Park. Land clearing, site preparation, drainage and building footings have been installed. Building construction and fencing will begin as soon as weather permits in spring 2001.

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

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. 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 funds 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 2000, and netted their organization about \$12,491. Funds from this and other activities allow the Friends to plant and maintain annual and perennial flower beds throughout the Park, produce and mail a Friends of the Wildlife Park informational newsletter three times a year, buy and maintain complementary wheelchairs and strollers for visitors as they enter, sponsor the Sunday Summer Wildlife Days, and more. The organization has collected about \$9500 for Furbearer exhibit improvements, currently targeted at the new coyote exhibit.

2001-2002 Wildlife Park planned capital improvements/expenditures and other Fund-Raising Initiatives

The Maine Wildlife Park's next building priority will be to construct the new White-tail Deer Exhibit in the spring of 2001. Attractive interpretive signs, viewing overlooks, and photographic opportunities will be included in the new wooded and natural habitat areas for deer. Fred Thurston of Conifer Industries, has donated a generous \$10,000 towards this project, and the completion of the moose exhibit.

Deer yard relocation (in conjunction with perimeter fence installation)
Estimated Costs: \$25,000.00

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

Renovation of staff housing on the property:
Estimated Costs: \$50,000

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

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 total cost of operating the Maine Wildlife Park for fiscal year 2000 was \$277,310.28 (includes all salaries and operations). General operating expenses of \$82,708.52, capital improvements and equipment costs of \$19,884.28, and personal services of \$116,435.50; a total of \$219,028.30, were borne by the Maine Wildlife Park dedicated revenue account. IFW regular (general fund) revenue covered salaries of \$58,281.98.

The cost of operating the Maine Wildlife Park for the first 6 months (July-December) of fiscal year 2001 was \$185,488.09. Three full time permanent positions totaling \$60,681, and general operating expenses of \$45,637.03 of all other and \$48,726.95 of capital, were borne by the dedicated revenue account. A salary of \$30,443.11 was borne by the MDIFW General Fund.

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 in this account as of December 31, 2000 was \$344,511.84; of which \$135,590.00 is obligated for outstanding contracts and operating expenses for 1/1/01 to 6/30/01.

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. Despite the challenges of inclement weather, the park overall experienced a positive 2000 season.