

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Paul R. LeFurge
GOVERNOR

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

Chandler E. Woodcock
COMMISSIONER

January 31, 2013

Senator David E. Dutremble
Senate Chair, Fish and Wildlife Committee
Station #2
Augusta, ME 04333

Representative Michael A. Shaw
House Chair, Fish and Wildlife Committee
Station #3
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: 12 MRSA, Section 10254 - 1 and 2 of Chapter 903
Annual Report of the Maine Wildlife Park

Dear Senator Dutremble and Representative Shaw:

Enclosed please find the FY2012 report detailing the financial revenues, operations expenditures and plans for future improvements at 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 557-0118 or at Lisa.Kane@maine.gov.

Sincerely,

Lisa J. Kane
Maine Wildlife Park Supervisor



Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
2012 Legislative Status Report
Maine Wildlife Park
Route 26, Gray, Maine



Introduction

The Maine Wildlife Park is owned and operated by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The Park was open to the public from April 14 to November 11 in 2012, and saw its highest revenue-generating season ever this year with 106,211 visits and \$693,615 in total revenue for calendar year 2012. This represents about a 10% increase in attendance compared to 2011, even as the park faced the economic and weather-related challenges of high gas prices and many rainy days.

Local visitors accounted for about 50% of attendance, with as many as 45% from out of state and 5% from out of the country during peak season! The park's special events, advertising and PR work, wildlife and conservation education programming for school children, and popularity with both Maine residents and tourists alike, all helped the park meet its legislative mandate and stay 'in the black' for the 6th consecutive year.

On a sad note, 2 of the park's oldest wildlife residents passed on this year, a 33-year old black bear and a 20-year old mountain lion. These animals were fondly remembered by many long time visitors and staff. It is, however, a testament to the level of care wildlife receive at the park, since both these animals doubled their wild counterparts usual lifespans.

On a historical note, MacNeil Brown was Game Farm Superintendent from 1933-1943. His wife Irene put a 100-page scrapbook together about the game farm and IFW. His son (MacNeil Jr.) contacted the park from NY this summer and sent us the scrapbook with a \$100.00 donation. We scanned the entire book and 1 article in particular is quite prescient.

Sometime between 1944-46 Portland Press Herald reporter Henry S. Beverage wrote the following: ***"A trip to the Dry Mills game farm will prove highly interesting to every lover of wildlife. And it will impress on visitors the possibilities of establishing here a wildlife park where motherless animals can be cared for and where thousands of Maine people and visitors can see the species with which the State wilderness abounds."***

Given sufficient funds with which to build and maintain such a project, it might well become one of the show places of the state. It is another reason why Maine people should vote to provide additional revenue for the inland fish and game department by approving the hunting and fishing license increase at the September elections."

Admission Fees

The wildlife park last raised admission fees in 2009. It is remarkable that with all of the continuing annual improvements to infrastructure and exhibits, the park has been able to maintain its extremely affordable pricing structure for the 5th consecutive year.

2009-2013

Community Pass	\$225
Mountain Lion Pass	\$120
Family Pass	\$70
Individual Pass	\$35
Adult	\$7.00
Senior	\$5.00
Child	\$5.00
Group (15 or more)	\$3.50
Guided Tours	\$1.50
Child under 3	Free



Staffing

The facility is staffed by four full-time employees who care for over 30 wildlife species on exhibit, as well as much of the orphaned or injured wildlife brought in by the public and Department staff. Park employees maintain buildings and grounds; construct new exhibits and displays and staff the facility seven days a week year 'round.

Curtis Johnson continues to do an outstanding job as Park Superintendent. In his 7th year in the position, he continued to pull staff and volunteers together to focus their talents and energies on a multitude of projects. Under his daily leadership, the park has achieved many of its current goals. Assistant Superintendent Steve Oliveri was hired in October 2011, and has brought many valuable skills and a new perspective to this important position. The two current Gamekeepers, Jon Bagley and Howard Powell, are excellent caretakers of our wildlife and the facility as a whole. The same 4 full time positions have operated this 7 day a week, 365 day a year facility as a wildlife park since 1982. To date, the park now sees 5 times the visitors and the number of building and exhibits have quadrupled.

Most of the park's seasonal part time workers returned, in some cases for up to the 9th consecutive year, to fill positions at the gatehouse, nature store, grounds-keeping, assistant game-keeping and education coordination. Up to 12 seasonal staff are hired through a temporary services agency during the open season. Most of these part time staffers return year after year and have provided dedicated, innovative and invaluable help by contributing towards the park's smooth operation, while providing quality experiences for our visitors.

Operations Overview

The Wildlife Park actually reduced its print and paid advertising program in the 2012 season, while increasing our online presence via free web based event calendars and social media. We did continue our participation in free vacation guide pullouts, print and internet ads and coupons; and participation in festivals and parades as exhibitors; as well as a paid membership in the Portland Convention and Visitors Bureau and cooperative marketing efforts with the Maine Office of Tourism.

The Wildlife Park is fortunate to be featured in a variety of television and newspaper stories year 'round on local Channels 6, 8 and 13; via MPBN, the Discovery Channel, and various Time Warner and other cable channels. FOX 23's "Your Hometown", a very effective television advertising promotion, aired throughout a 4th summer. For the 7th year, a brochure distribution contract was hired to distribute over 7500 brochures along state tourist travel routes within range of the park. The Park's Facebook page has become quite popular and continues to grow, with over 8600 'fans' reached with weekly event updates and photos of our wildlife. In addition, the 7 area businesses that make up 'The Gems of Route 26', (www.gemsof26.com/) continued to collaborate with additional promotional advertising and package deals to bring visitors to the western interior of the state.

The park is also a popular feature story source for local media. MPBN's 'Incredible Maine' ran a ½ hour Park feature twice on its popular Saturday morning time slot. Channel 6's '207' did a segment about the park's April opening with our Bald Eagle as a live guest. Channel 8 did 2 remote early morning broadcasts. North Woods Law, the popular new Animal Planet TV show featuring Maine Game Wardens, was spotlighted at a park event on a weekday afternoon in August. With only social media promotion, over 1100 visitors arrived at the park and paid admission to visit with and get autographs from their favorite game warden stars. The Bangor Daily covered the Mountain Lion Exhibit opening and did another piece on our opossums. A variety of print and TV media did stories about the park throughout the open season. When media need wildlife footage for a story, they usually approach the wildlife park to accommodate them.



Our busy summer event schedule continues to attract new and returning presenters and visitors. A 'Maine's Big Cats' program kicked off this summer's event season, with a grand opening of the new, state-of-the-art mountain lion exhibit. The Pow Wow and Halloween Night events unfortunately both had rain, decreasing past years' very high participation. However, Youth Archery and ATV days had very good attendance, with hundreds of youth getting a chance to shoot a bow or ride an ATV.

Nature Store

The Nature Store continues to be a popular stop with our visitors. Nature Store staff continue to improve the store's visual and purchase appeal with new merchandise and attractive displays. The store saw \$135,786 in total sales, and realized a net of \$68,600 - while carrying \$11,500 of remaining merchandise into 2013. This is a 48% increase in net revenue for the store compared to 2011. All nature store revenues are deposited into the park's dedicated account, from which the entire park budget, (operations, personal services and capital improvements) are drawn.

Other Special Programming

The popular Summer Photography Pass Program almost doubled this year; while the Winter Photography Pass continues to generate additional revenues for the park during our 'off' season.

The fish and wildlife education programs for elementary, middle, high schools and home-schoolers saw 2690 children participating in 46 classes offered in May-June and September-October - 28% increase in participation! Guided Tours continue to be well attended, with close to 1000 children in 56 tours. Because of dramatic cut backs in school field trip budgets, the park is making every effort to ensure that a school visit is both worthwhile and affordable. We will continue to try to find grant funding to offer stipends to schools that book a conservation education program or tour at the park. With education about wildlife, habitats and conservation a major goal of the Park and the Department, we will continue to add new programs and solicit this type of funding to attract new audiences for the 2013 season.

Our summer staff and volunteers present daily summer Wildlife Programs in July and August. The 20 minute free wildlife programs are offered twice daily, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and are a very popular addition to visitors' park experience. Anywhere from 5-30 people at a time attend programs about wildlife at special locations throughout the park, or in the amphitheater-style seating area under the pines. A Story Hour for children is offered on Thursdays during this same time period, with a crafts session afterward; again at no charge.

The Saturday Summer Wildlife Days Program series, sponsored by and with financial stipends provided to presenters by the Friends of the Maine Wildlife Park, continued to attract new presenters and audiences. These weekly special programs cover a wide range of fish, wildlife and conservation topics and are staffed by knowledgeable presenters from many different organizations, who chat with visitors as they pass through the Park. This format has proved to be popular with visitors. Events occurred on 23 Saturdays from May through October.

Volunteers

Over 150 Park Volunteers include Gatehouse attendants, gardening and landscaping workers, Friends group administration and fundraising, Snack Shack administration and operations, tours and education, help at the Nature Store and a variety of Community Service projects.

As has been the case for years, the Admissions Gate continues to be staffed solely by volunteers throughout the season, 15-20 of whom donated over 1400 hours staffing the front entrance, collecting admissions fees, directing visitors and answering questions. A seasonal Gate Coordinator administers the volunteers in this essential service. Gate volunteers collected \$539,932 in admissions fees this year.





The park is very fortunate to have such a talented group of volunteers and Friends, many returning year after year to help keep us in operation. Comprising nearly 40% of total annual labor contributions, there are few facets of the park's operation in which volunteers are not directly involved. The park is also fortunate to receive assistant game-keeping help each summer from several college student interns, majoring in wildlife ecology, zoology or veterinary medicine throughout the season.

In addition, during much of the winter, the park staff is joined by inmates from the Maine Correctional Center in Windham. This talented crew is of tremendous assistance in completing many projects that would otherwise be impossible to complete. Examples of their work this winter include siding and/or painting our large maintenance buildings,

construction of a new outdoor shelter, outdated exhibit removal, site preparation for new exhibits, the renovation and repair of numerous signs, park furniture, buildings and fences, winter clean up and facility shut down, and assisting with countless other projects. There is even one inmate who is a very talented artist. We are using his talent to help us illustrate our new wildlife species signs.

All of this support is what makes the park's ability to operate possible. In addition to being an essential relationship for the park, the partnership between IF&W and volunteers should be a model to other agencies, institutions and communities throughout the State and beyond. It is a great example of what motivated citizens can do for their communities, their government and the 'quality of place' in their very own towns.

The Wildlife Park hosts a formal annual Volunteer Banquet every March to recognize and thank over 100 volunteers for giving their time to the park in so many ways. We also host a very casual Summer Picnic for up to 100 volunteers and their families. The Department recognizes and appreciates the dedicated efforts of all wildlife park volunteers, many that have been volunteering steadily for years.

Improvements

- Park-wide waterline replacements and improvements
- A new state of the art mountain lion exhibit, funded in large part by the Friends, was completed and ready for the April 2012 park opening and May grand opening.
- New life-size Moose outline street sign for Rt. 26
- Improved housing and presentation of the park's bobcats and lynx
- New park sculptures: including a dramatic new chain sawed mountain lion carved out of a 12' white pine stump left after a take down in the picnic area. In addition, a small turtle was carved from another stump in the vicinity of the flagpole garden
- A Bald eagle sculpture was created and donated by artist Tom Merriam
- Phase 1 of Moose Fence Replacement was achieved w/ funding from the Friends
- Pavement was replaced from the back gate to big cats exhibits
- 33 conifer trees were planted in the pine picnic grove as replacement trees as the old trees reach their age limits through a grant from the American Forests Global ReLeaf program
- The Summer Photographers Pass Program doubled to 52 participants this season
- The Dry Mills Show Fish Round Pond has been rebuilt by the Hatchery and Engineering Divisions with MOHF grant funds; and will have a scheduled grand opening in June 2013.
- Facebook 'fans' more than doubled in 2012 to over 8600.
- We continue to follow a 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 accommodating an increase in visitors, among other things.

Awards

The Maine Wildlife Park won the Greater Portland Convention & Visitors Bureau Rose Award in recognition of service excellence! The Park was honored at the Annual Meeting, April 11th at the Double Tree. There was a speech to honor the Park and a 5-minute video produced and shown highlighting the Maine Wildlife Park's achievements.

Our new cougar enclosure is #6 in New England Travel's Top 10 New Things to See and Do in New England.

The Friends of the Maine Wildlife Park

This nonprofit local group was organized in 1991 in response to the threatened closure of the former 'Game Farm', as the Department originally called it, as a cost-savings proposal to the Legislature. 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 fund wildlife exhibit improvements and additional programs at the Park. Its members hope the Wildlife Park continues to grow to meet the needs for wildlife and conservation education in Maine.



Friend's volunteers continue to operate an attractive "Snack Shack" to house ice cream, candy, and soda sales. Funds from this and other activities allow the Friends to fund the cost of heat & materials for their greenhouse, plant and maintain annual and perennial flower beds and hanging flower baskets throughout the Park; contract with a local landscaper to do additional grounds work within the park; produce and mail a Friends of the Wildlife Park informational newsletter 3 times a year, sponsor the Saturday Summer Wildlife Days, provide a variety of wood and granite benches for seating around the park, provide funding for new wildlife exhibits, and often much more.

The Friends generated roughly \$56,952 in income and donations during the 2012 season; with revenues coming from the Snack Shack, Penny Smashing Machine, Greenhouse Plant Sales and general Donations. The Friends were also able to create an attractive new web site, www.wildlifeparkfriends.org, that will benefit their mission as fundraisers for the Maine Wildlife Park.

Future Wildlife Park capital improvements/expenditures

(Not in order of priority)

Phase 3 of Water line repair/replacement	Estimated Costs: \$50,000
Phase 2 of Moose Fence Replacement Project (funded by the Friends)	Estimated Costs: \$16,000
Construction of New/ Expanded Restroom Facilities	Estimated Costs: \$350,000
Renovation of Visitor's Center	Estimated Costs: \$25,000
Design/Construction of a Wildlife-Themed Playground	Estimated Costs: \$200,000
Construction of new Lynx Enclosure	Estimated Costs: \$75,000
Construction of Fish Casting Pool Excavate and enlarge a natural, spring fed pool in the old deer yard large enough to be able to offer catch and release fishing opportunities to visitors.	Estimated Costs: \$200,000
State of Maine OIT Connect/Install	Estimated Costs: unknown
Update Master Plan	Estimated cost: \$10,000

2012 MWP Annual Operating Costs

Because the Wildlife Park's regular open season spans 2 fiscal years, it is a bit more challenging to report and make comparisons of revenues vs. expenditures. Thus a distinction must be made between Fiscal Year revenue vs. Calendar Year revenue. As stated in the opening paragraph, the park generated \$693,615 in total revenue for Calendar Year 2012 (January-December).

The total cost of operating the Maine Wildlife Park for Fiscal Year 2012 (July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012) was \$564,521 which includes all salaries and operations. Total revenue for Fiscal Year 2012 was \$695,353 (dedicated account interest included).

FY 12 general operating expenses were \$316,488; there were no capital improvement or equipment costs, and personal services cost \$248,033 for a total of \$564,521 borne entirely 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 2013 was \$311,079. Total revenue through December 2012 in FY 12 was \$479,424. Four full time permanent positions costing \$117,252, general operating expenses of \$193,827 in all other and \$0 of capital were borne entirely by the park's 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 in this account as of December 31, 2012 was \$863,697; of which \$39,290 is obligated for outstanding contracts and \$269,666 for personal services and general operating expenses for 1/1/13 to 6/30/13.

Section 10254 - 1 and 2 of Chapter 903 also mandated that this facility become "increasingly financially self-sustaining", which has been demonstrated since 1997 by assuming, from the IFW general fund, the salaries of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, two full time gamekeepers, as well as the salaries of up to 12 summer temporary employees; plus all annual 'all other' and 'capital' expenditures.

