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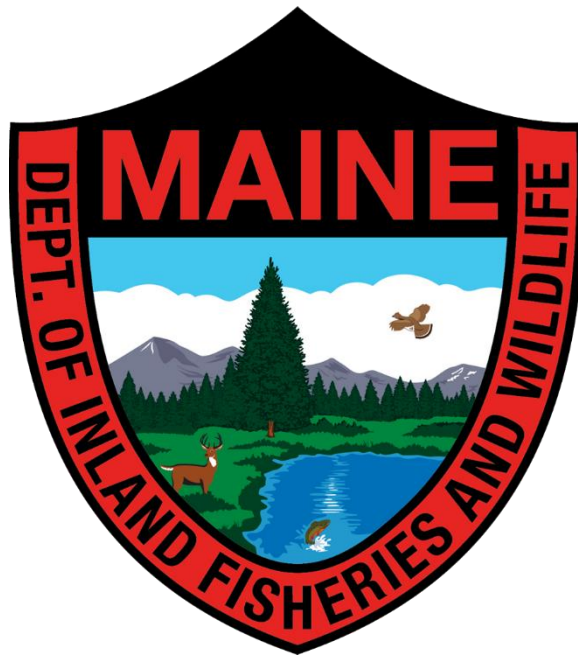
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# Maine Warden Service

## 2019/2020 Search & Rescue Report



## Report from the Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife



2020 Annual Report on:  
Maine Warden Service Search & Rescue

130<sup>th</sup> Legislature – First Regular Session

Dated: January 1, 2021

# Maine Warden Service

2019/2020 Search & Rescue Report



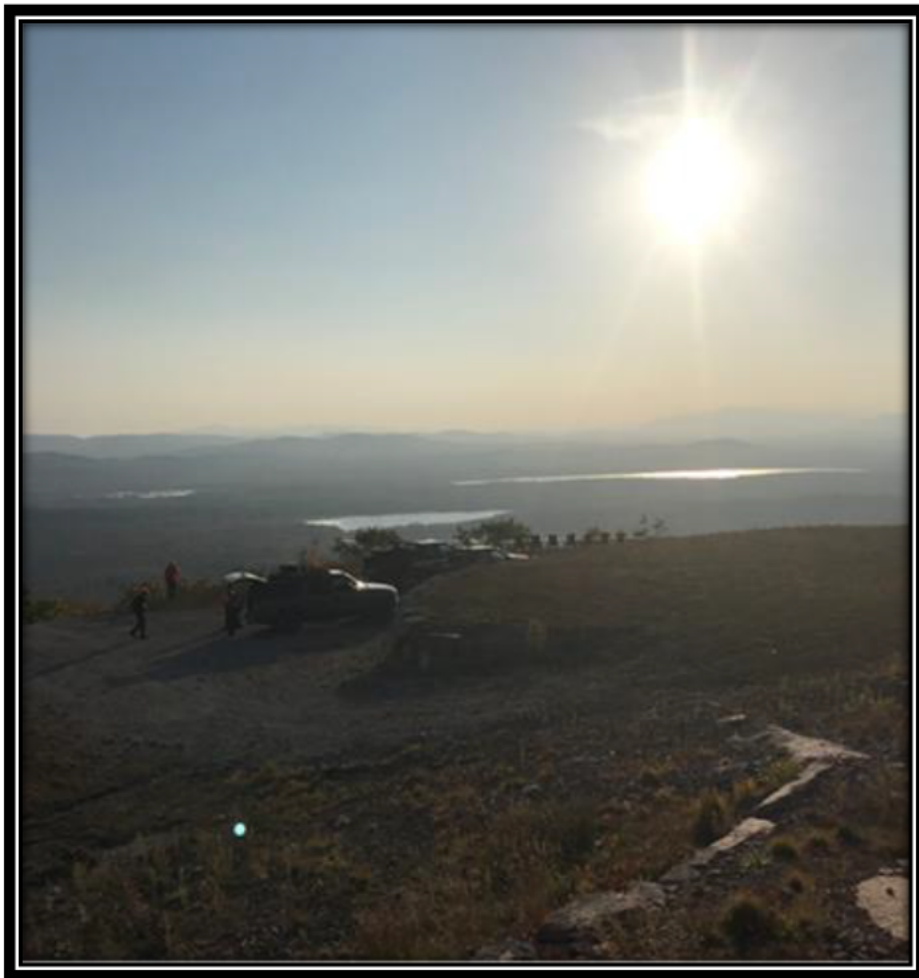
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## SEARCH AND RESCUE

### REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2019/2020

*Search & Rescue Coordinator – Sgt. Josh Bubier*

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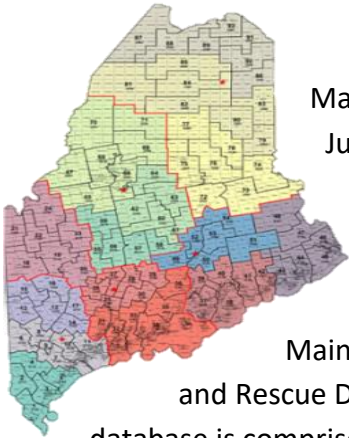


# Maine Warden Service

## 2019/2020 Search & Rescue Report



### Maine Warden Service Search and Rescue Report Introduction



Maine Warden Service Search and Rescue Reports are compiled annually from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. This synopsis includes all Search and Rescue (SAR) Calls for Service (CFS). These CFS could last only minutes and end with the missing person arriving home before a game warden even arrives on scene or they could last days or even months with no resolution.

Maine Warden Service search categories are aligned with the International Search and Rescue Database (ISRID) categories and definitions with a few specific to Maine. This database is comprised of 30 search categories and we added three more categories to include the searches or rescues that occur along the Appalachian Trail, SAR Watercraft, and SAR Suicide. SAR Appalachian Trail is a subcategory of SAR Hike. It assists in determining the number of rescues that are occurring on that one trail. Maine has a high amount of boating activity, so we have decided to keep this separate from other water related SAR categories. The difference between SAR Suicide and SAR Despondent is the victim's fate. Victims that have been found alive are recorded as despondent, and victims found deceased are recorded as suicide. Both categories are closely related and will be merged into one category.

SAR data is compiled through the SAR Coordinator Sergeant Joshua Bubier and Greenville Headquarters Office Specialist April Collins. In the past, secretaries from different divisions would independently compile search data specific to their division and forward to the main office in Augusta. The current process utilizes technology to streamline data and offers increased accountability for reporting and operational management.

# Maine Warden Service

## 2019/2020 Search & Rescue Report



### Synopsis from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

Maine Warden Service responded to 417 Search and Rescue related CFS which carried a financial burden of \$262,629.37. From March 2020 through June 2020 the Maine Warden Service felt the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic when it came to search and rescue. People were encouraged to get outside and socially distance particularly in April through June. Citizens living in southern Maine flocked to mountains in central and western Maine. In April, many locales in southern Maine had little to no snow and ice, however to the north and west this was not the case and we found people coming to hiking trails covered in snow and ice and were ill-prepared for the conditions. These scenarios led to numerous rescue calls, far more than in a typical year for some of these mountains.

Another unfortunate effect of the pandemic across Maine was unemployment and financial hardships faced by so many. We saw a marked increase in searches for people falling into the “despondent” category. Individuals falling into this category often suffer from depression and have made statements of hurting themselves or committing suicide but in the end are found alive. Those who are found deceased and have committed suicide fall into a separate category (SAR-Suicide). In 2019/2020 searches in the Suicide category dropped by 6, but rose by 12 in the Despondent category for a combined increase of 27% from 2018/2019.

Top 5 categories 2018-2019	Top 5 categories 2019-2020
1. Hike – 93	1. Hike - 107
2. Snowmobile - 51	2. Watercraft – 60
3. Watercraft - 49	3. Alzheimer’s - 29
4. Child ages 1-15 - 37	4. Hunt - 26
5. Hunt - 37	5. Despondent - 22

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### Search and Rescue Statistical Analysis

2019-2020 Search and Rescue (SAR) Calls for Service (CFS) observed an overall decrease of 1.4% or 6 less searches that were conducted for the fiscal year. This is a slight decrease after several years of increasing search and rescue calls for service. The average over the last several years has remained approximately the same with 418 SAR calls per year.

There could be many factors related to the number of Search and Rescue incidents. Many rescues in remote areas are resolved quicker now because of increased cell phone coverage and 911 location services. We also continue to see more satellite-based (SOS type devices) emergency rescues every year as the price of these items decrease. Despite advances in technology we routinely see individuals who either don't have cell phones, turn them off or simply leave them at home or in their vehicle prior to becoming lost.

The top five search categories have changed for the 2019/2020 fiscal year, though Hiking remained the number one category with the most incidents:

- **HIKING** has once again remained in the number one spot for searches. There are two separate categories for Hiking, SAR-Hike and SAR-AT (Appalachian Trail) but we combine them for the purpose of this report. SAR-Hike accounted for 84 of our hiking searches and 23 more occurred on the Appalachian Trail (21%) for a total of 107. This is an increase of 13% percent. Tumbledown Mountain outside of Weld, Maine accounted for over 16% of all hiking searches that were not on the AT.
- **WATERCRAFT** has jumped into second place with 60 searches, this is an increase of 11 (21% increase) searches than we responded to in the previous year.
- **ALZHEIMERS** is the third highest with 29 searches. Alzheimer's search incidents have increased by 2.
- **HUNT** has jumped into the top five and is the fourth spot despite the number of Hunting searches decreased from the previous year. Twenty-six searches were conducted for lost hunters during 2019-2020. Again, this is a decrease from the 37 searches in 2018-2019.
- **DESPONDENT** is in the top 5 for the first time in over 3 years with 22 searches this year which is a 120% increase from the previous year.



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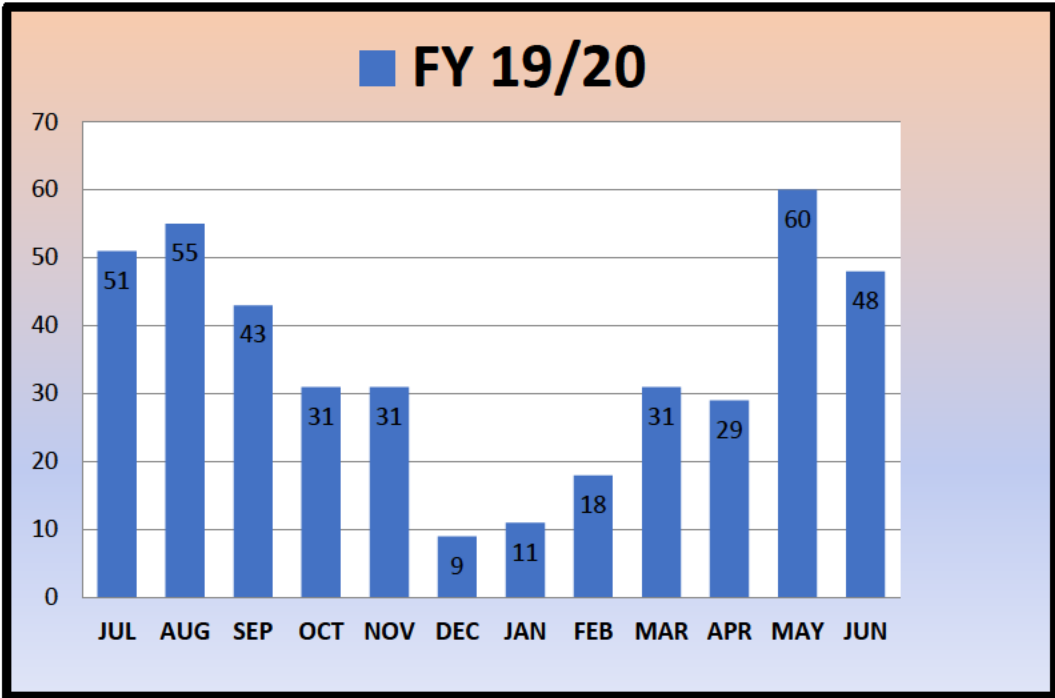
### SAR CFS BY MONTH

The number of searches broken down for each month has been useful information for operational needs. In this graph, you will see last year's searches by month. The busiest months for searches do tend to fluctuate from year to year however; in looking at the past 5 years and beyond, one trend remains consistent – the months of June, July and August are always in the top 5. Weather is one of the biggest factors affecting when Search and Rescue operations occur. When the temperature is too high or too low people do not go outdoors as much. An additional factor which has also played into other search categories for this year is the COVID-19 pandemic. For the past 7 years, May has never been the busiest month for search and rescue incidents. The spring of 2020 brought dry weather and people were encouraged to get outdoors and socially distance. As previously mentioned, with the warm, dry weather, the Maine Warden Service had numerous search and rescue calls for injured, stranded and lost hikers during the months of March, April and May. Wardens reported a high frequency of incidents involving novice hikers who were ill-prepared for their hikes.

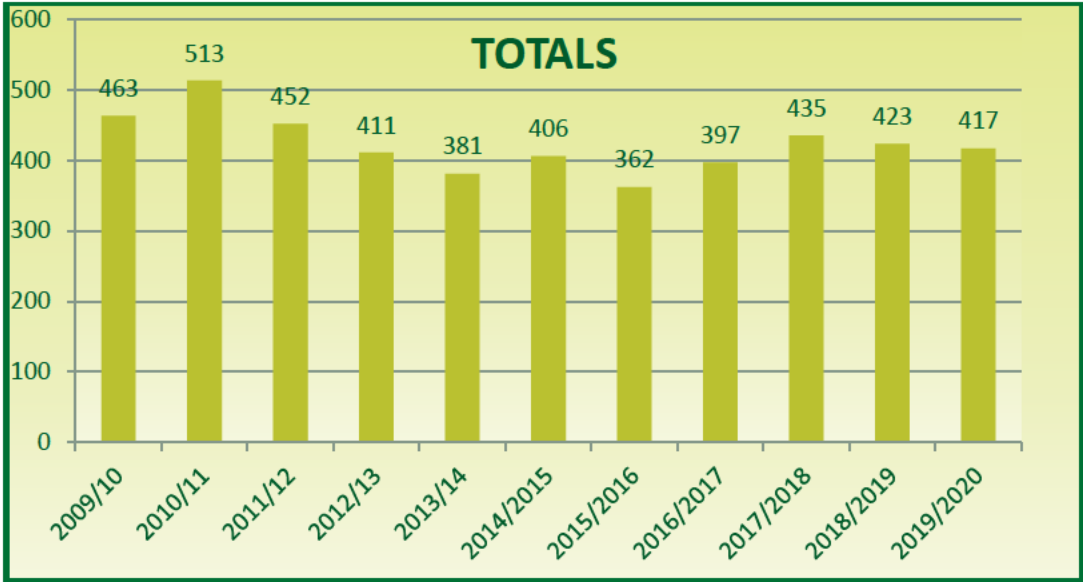


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SAR TOTALS PER FY YEAR



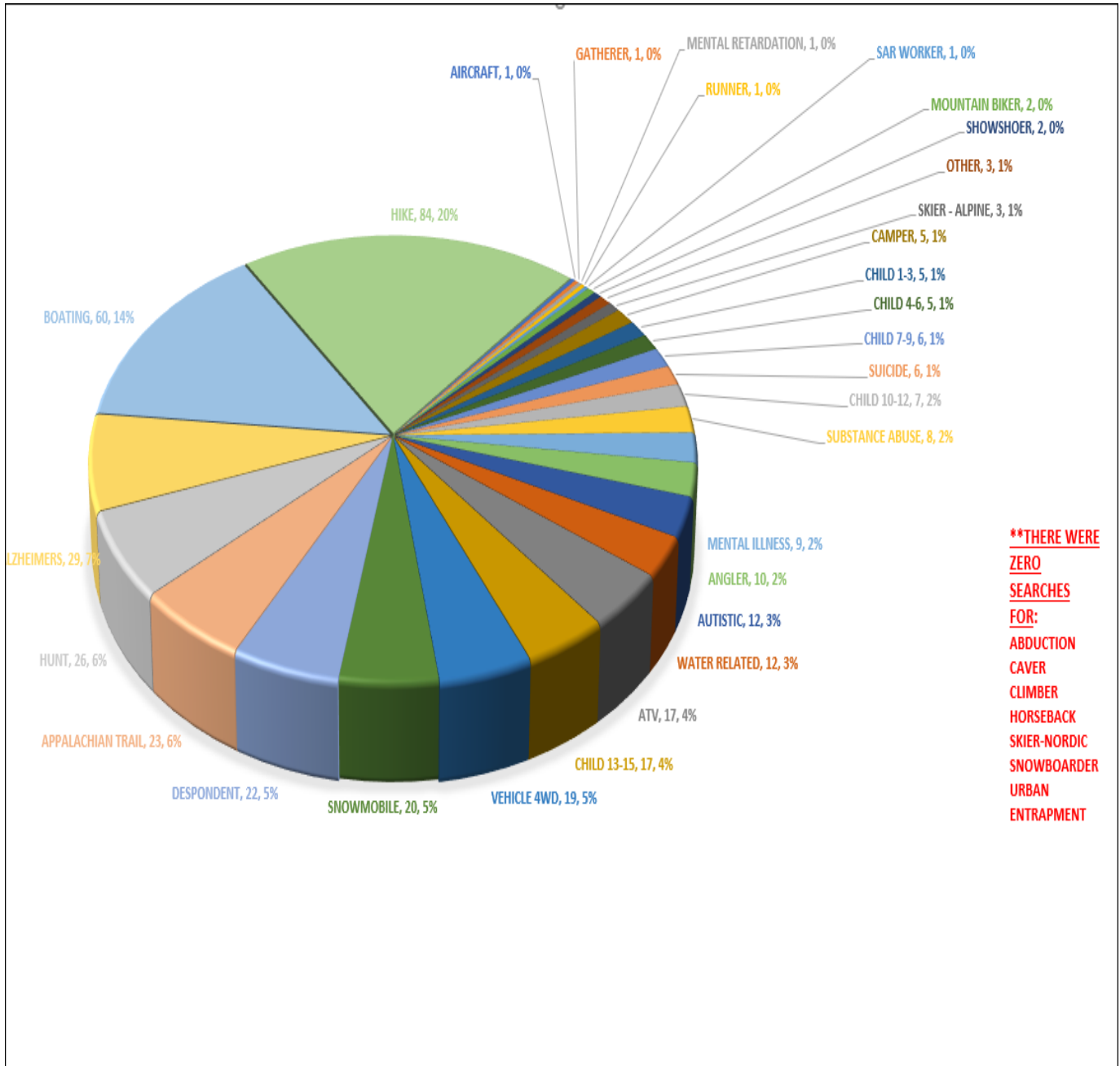


# Maine Warden Service

## 2019/2020 Search & Rescue Report



Total Calls for Service by category with percentage



# Maine Warden Service

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### 2019/2020 SAR COUNTS AND TOTAL COSTS BY CATEGORY

CATEGORY	SearchType	TOTALS
AIRCRAFT Count	1	\$119.32
ALZHEIMERS Count	29	\$43,248.75
ANGLER Count	10	\$2,901.94
APPALACHIAN TRAIL Count	23	\$14,774.40
ATV Count	17	\$14,012.26
AUTISTIC Count	12	\$4,870.62
BOATING Count	60	\$40,491.70
CAMPER Count	5	\$1,379.88
CHILD 10-12 Count	7	\$5,304.45
CHILD 1-3 Count	5	\$3,154.10
CHILD 13-15 Count	17	\$6,784.06
CHILD 4-6 Count	5	\$276.97
CHILD 7-9 Count	6	\$484.07
DESPONDENT Count	22	\$12,025.52
GATHERER Count	1	\$0.00
HIKE Count	84	\$34,820.78
HUNT Count	26	\$6,689.51
MENTAL ILLNESS Count	9	\$3,668.85
MENTAL RETARDATION Count	1	\$5,637.72
MOUNTAIN BIKER Count	2	\$191.16
OTHER Count	3	\$496.02
RUNNER Count	1	\$10.93
SAR WORKER Count	1	\$110.38
SKIER - ALPINE Count	3	\$1,766.68
SNOWMOBILE Count	20	\$8,462.41
SNOWSHOER Count	2	\$54.34
SUBSTANCE ABUSE Count	8	\$21,102.06
SUICIDE Count	6	\$17,500.80
VEHICLE 4WD Count	19	\$6,006.16
WATER RELATED Count	12	\$6,283.53
<b>Grand Count</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>\$262,629.37</b>

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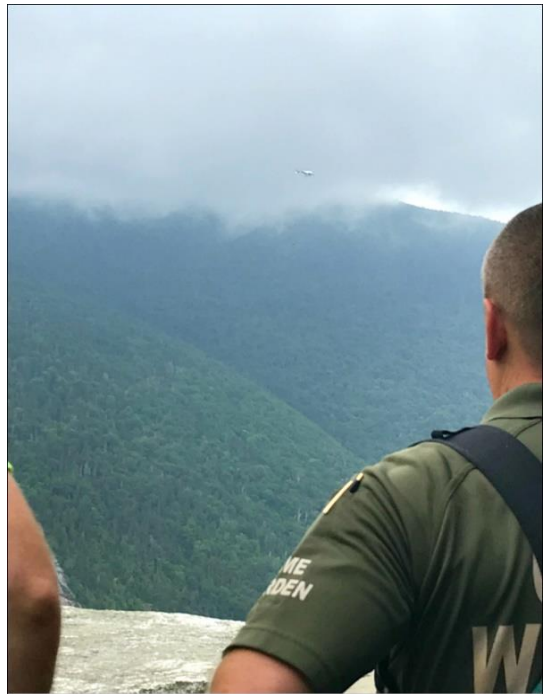
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### SAR Cost Analysis

There was a slight decrease in Search and Rescue CFS during the year and a significant decrease in costs for the 2019/2020.

The costs to perform searches decreased significantly by 26.7%, a total decrease of \$95,849.04 from the previous year. Most years, Search and Rescue spending is the result of the number of complex searches we respond to. For the 2019/2020 year, we responded to less searches, and the number of complex, multiple day searches were nearly non-existent during the fiscal year. The more time that goes by when a person is missing, the more resources we expend. Searches that are typically resolved within 5 or 6 hours involve a relatively small number of game wardens and equipment. In 2019/2020 approximately 92% of our searches were resolved within 12 hours.



### **TOP 5 COSTS BY CATEGORY**

The most expensive search category for 2019-2020 was Hike/AT Hikes at \$49,595.18. Most of these searches involve rescuing people who have sustained a medical issue or suffered injury while on a trail.

The #2 category for costs was the Alzheimer's category with \$43,248.75. This category often involves complicated searches and investigations. Many people with Alzheimer's lack reasoning or are not logical because they don't even realize they are lost. Our most expensive search for 2019-2020 fell into the Alzheimer's category and accounted for \$22,952.03 of the total.

The #3 category was Watercraft searches which cost \$40,491.70. Although Boating search incidents have steadily declined over the past 10 years. This recreational activity still attracts hundreds of thousands of

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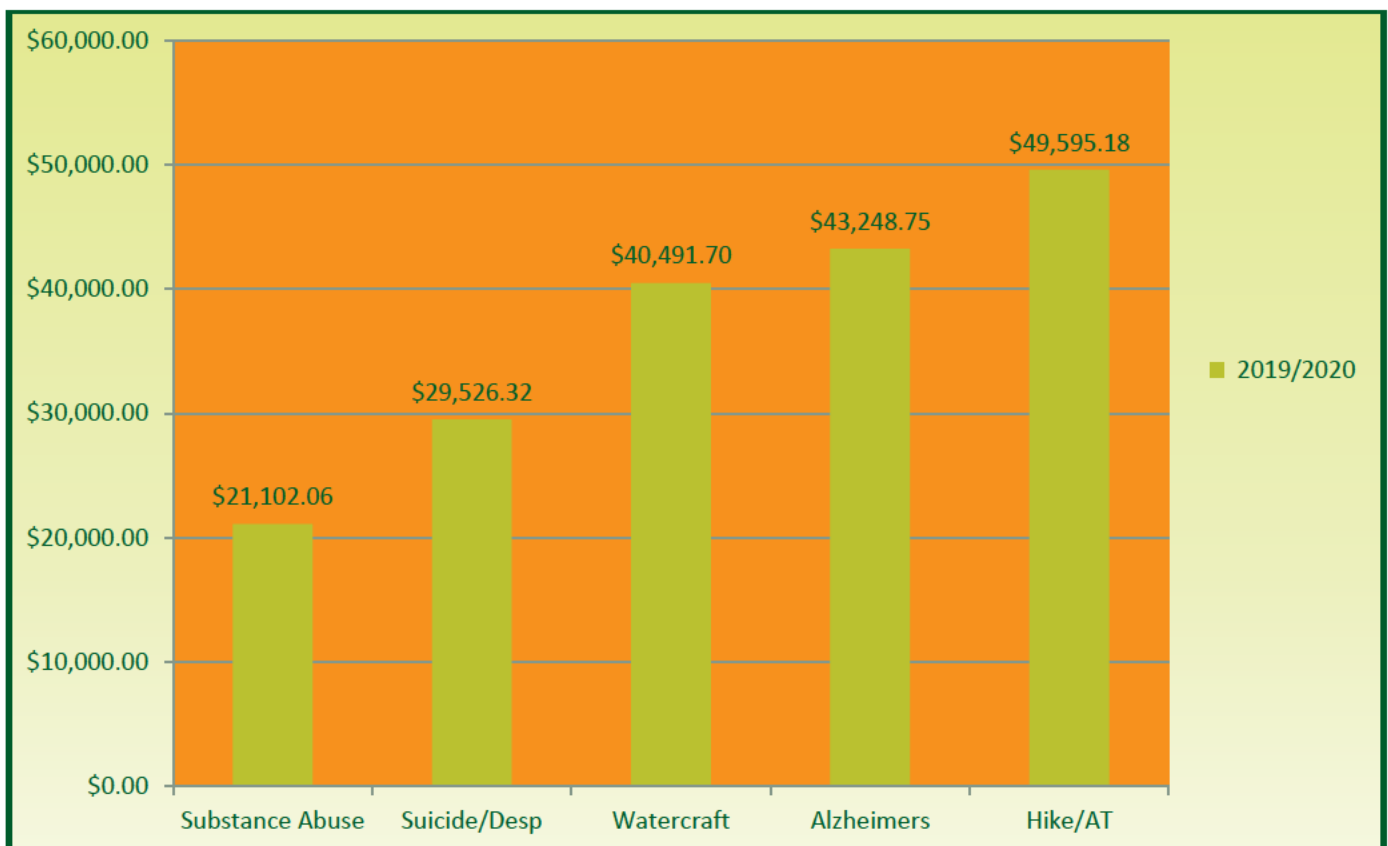
## 2019/2020 Search & Rescue Report



users and enthusiasts. Unfortunately, these searches most often involve drowning which can involve highly specialized equipment and resources.

The #4 category for cost was Suicide/Despondent at \$29,526.32. Most of these searches are difficult because the individuals often don't want to be found and leave no or very little clues as to their whereabouts or intentions.

The #5 most costly search category was Substance Abuse at \$21,102.06. These too are sometimes challenging as the subject is under the influence of drugs or alcohol and may not want to be found or are unable to help themselves.

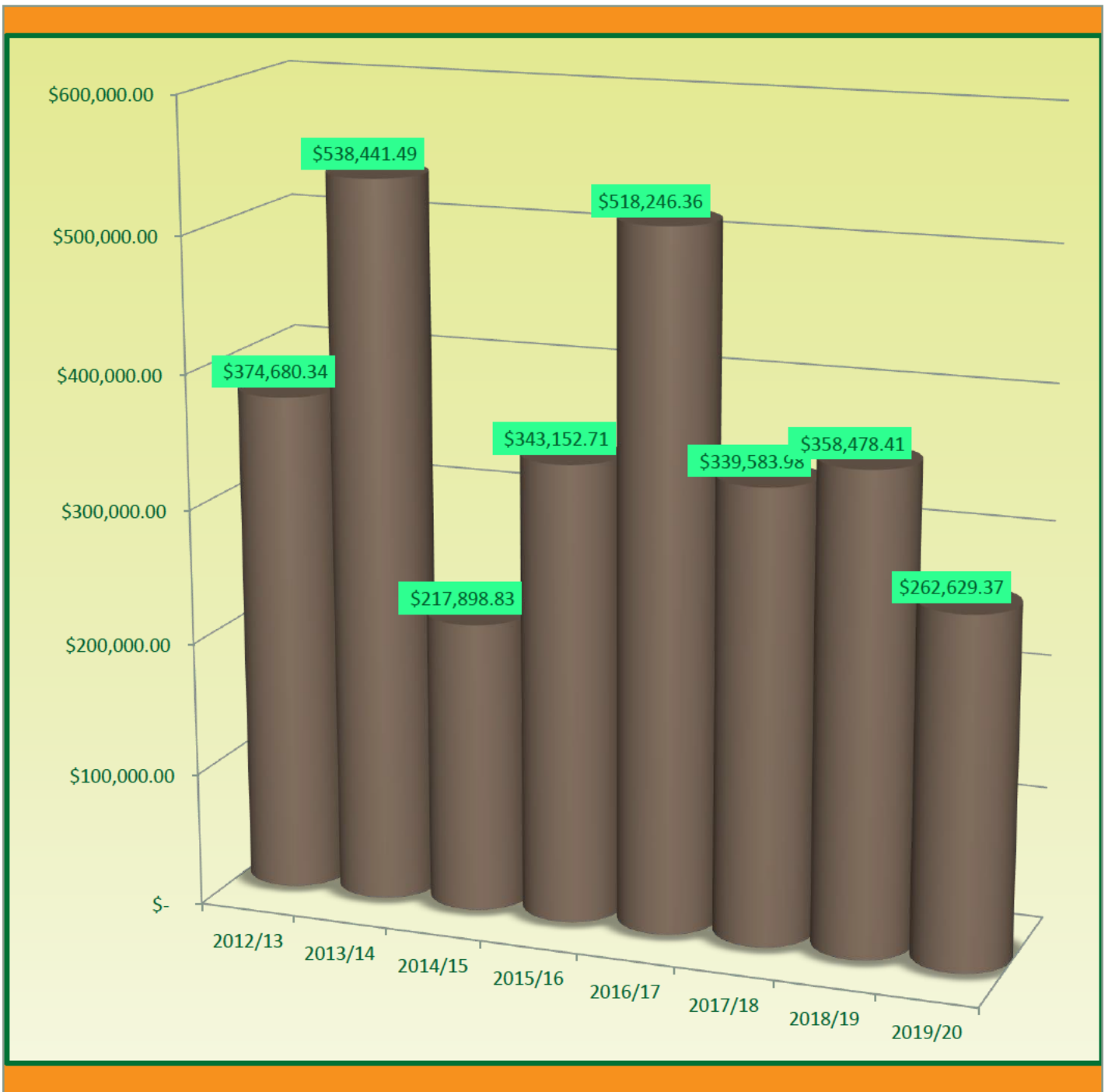


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TOTAL COST By Fiscal Year





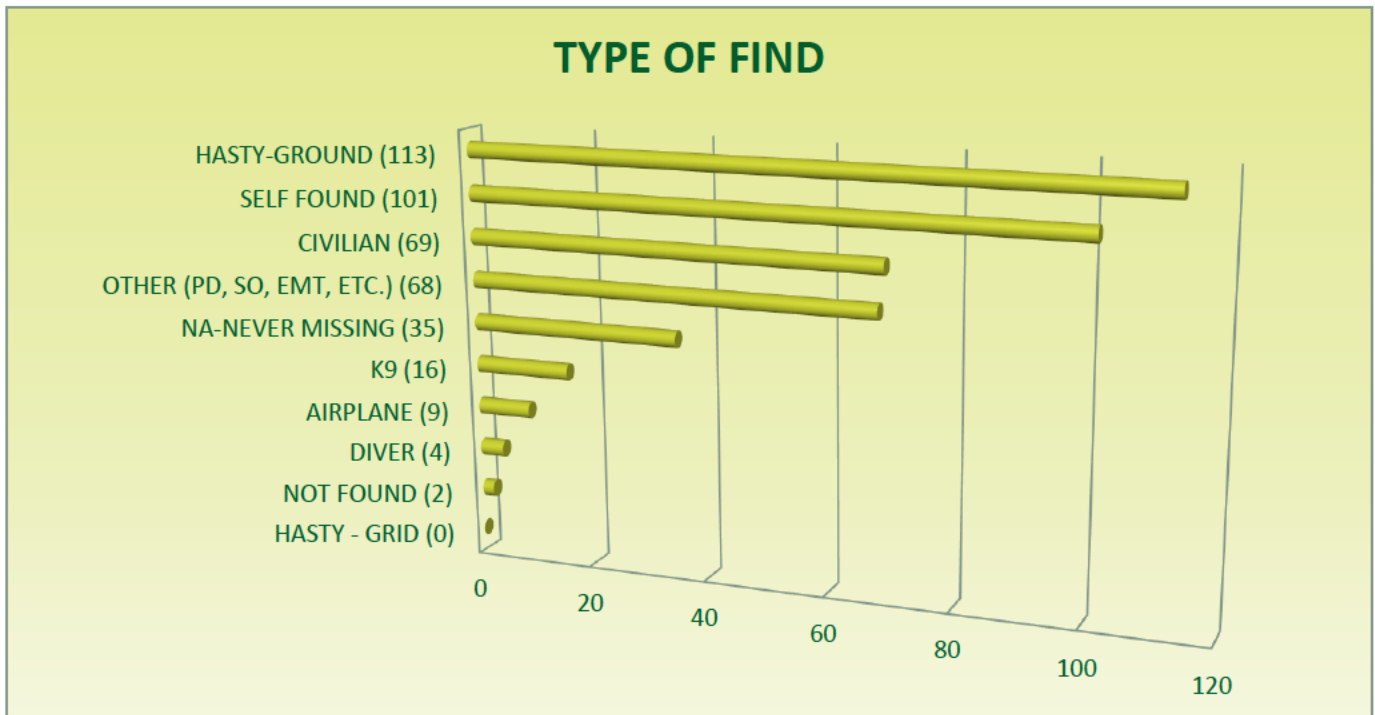
# Maine Warden Service

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### What resource or method of search found the person?

The Maine Warden Service tracks the primary search method that was used to locate the lost or missing person. The “Hasty Search” is the most effective and most utilized tactic that results in a find. This tactic involves quick searching in high probability areas that will most likely find the lost person with 113 finds during this period. “Self-found” is a category that generally occurs very quickly after a person is reported lost or missing. The lost person or persons generally figure out where they are and report back to the caller before we arrive on scene. The “Other” category is a catch all and could be police or fireman that located the person before wardens arrived or cell phone coordinates were used to locate them, and they were assisted by dispatchers. Specialized search resources like K9, Divers and Aircraft accounted for 29 finds. These specialty team resources train year-round and searches are often in difficult to outright dangerous conditions to locate lost or missing people.



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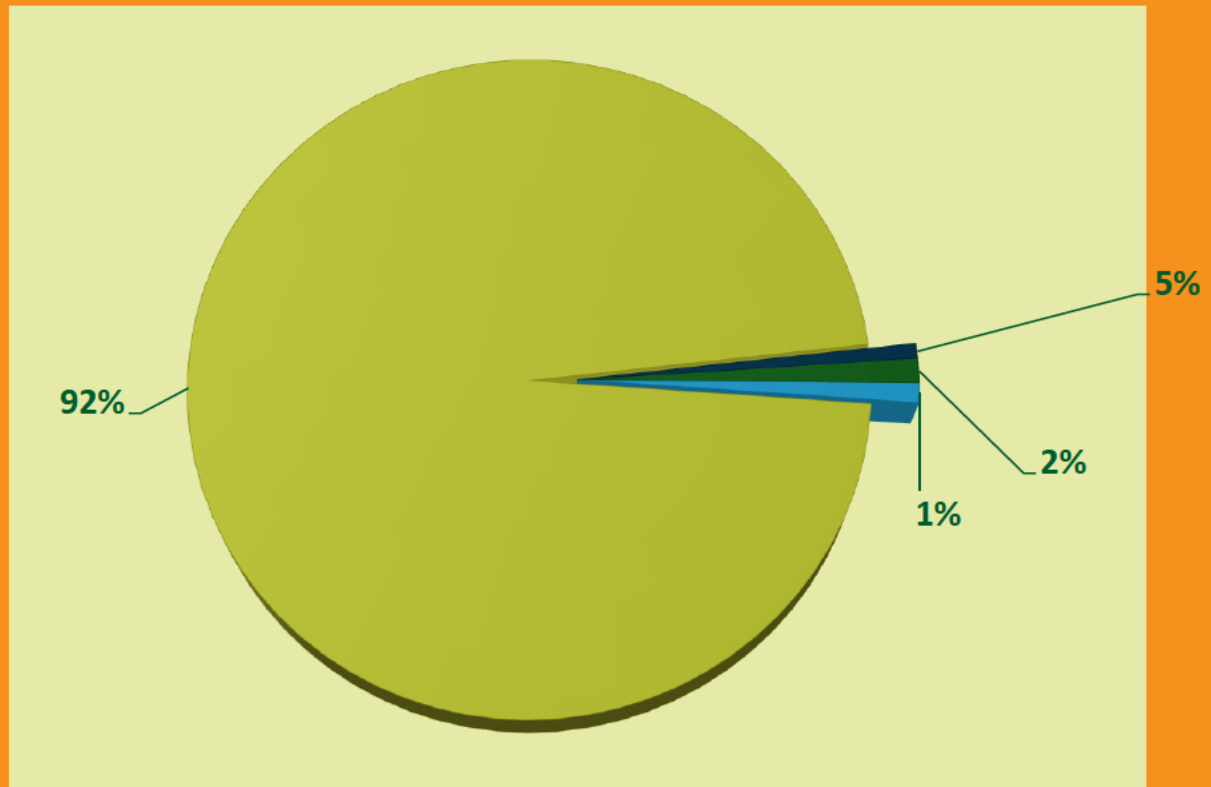


### Length of time it took to locate the person

The Maine Warden Service uses the Incident Command System (ICS) 12-hour operational periods. Our data shows that within 12 hours, 92% of the people are located. Within 24 hours, 97% of people are located. These statistics have been the same for over a decade since we started keeping this statistic. Multi-day search operations are not a common occurrence.

### Operational Period (Per 12 Hour Period)

■ 1 Operational Period ■ 2 Operational Periods ■ 3 Operational Periods ■ 4 or More (2 still missing)



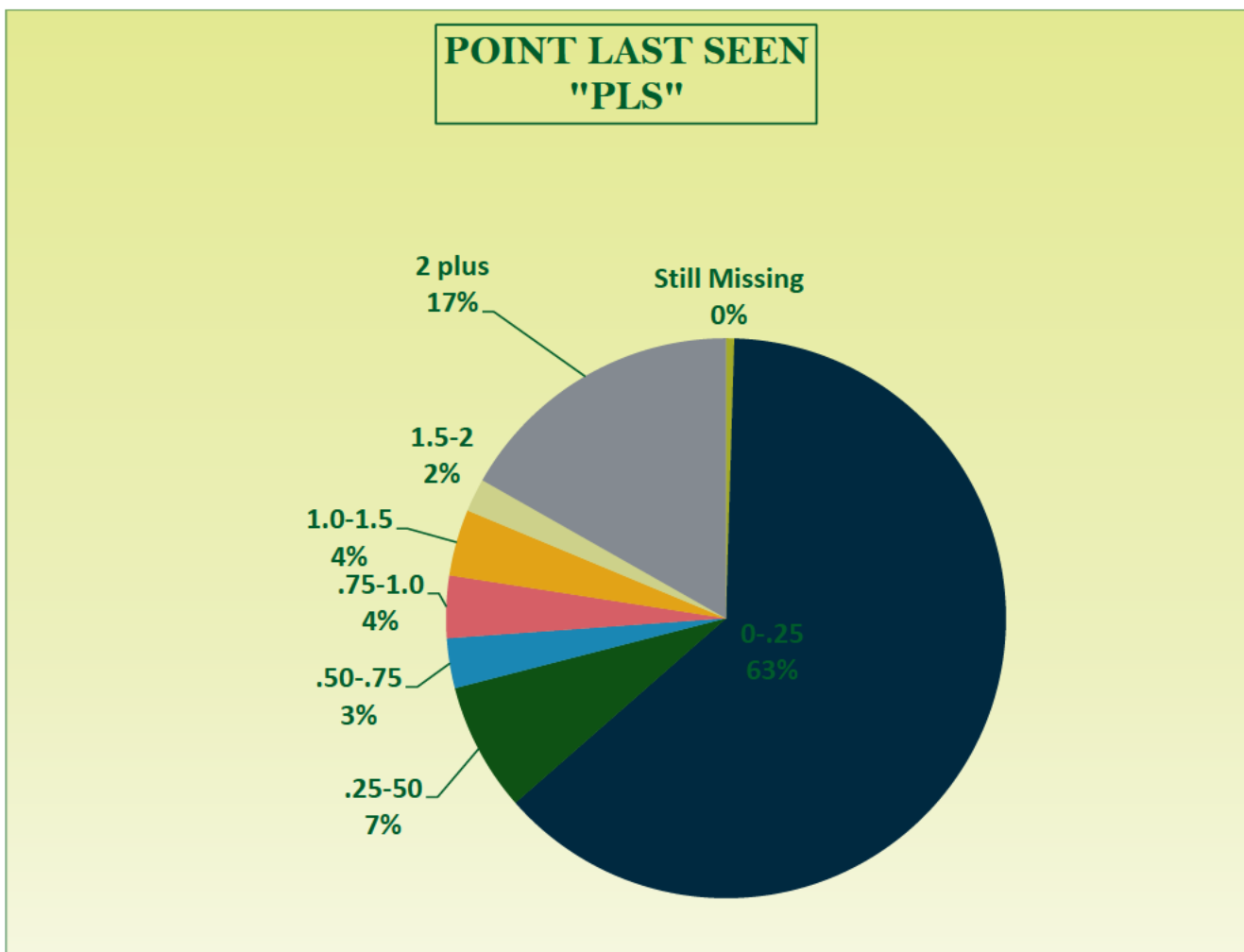
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### DISTANCE OF PERSON FROM PLS WHEN LOCATED

How far are these people located from where they are reported missing? This data is a straight-line measurement from the best Point Last Scene (PLS) that a dispatcher or warden can obtain at the time. Our distance has remained the same at 63% of people being found in the first quarter mile from the PLS. Almost 77% of lost people are found within 1 mile from the PLS. Searching a mile on land or water takes a considerable amount of resources, time and effort to do effectively.



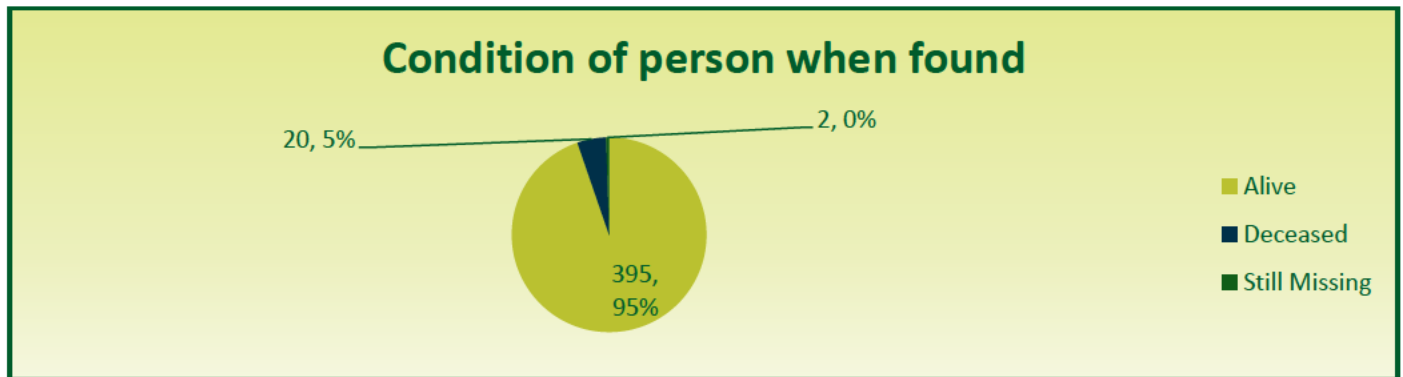
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### When found, what is the condition of the person?

The Maine Warden Service has a high find rate for lost or missing people. The Maine Warden Service collects data from three choices for a person's condition if found during a search: alive, deceased, or still missing if the person was not found. For this fiscal year, 95% (395) of the people reported lost or missing were found alive. This is consistent with previous years. The remaining 5% (20) were found deceased.



Of the 20 incidents where we found the missing person deceased, 6 of them were suicides which was lower than it has been in previous years. As the chart above shows, there are two individuals considered "Still Missing" which accounts for only .4% of our total. The two people still missing include Diana Esteys from Medford Maine who has been missing since the fall of 2016 and Anneliese Heinig of Richmond who went missing in November of 2019 in Falmouth.

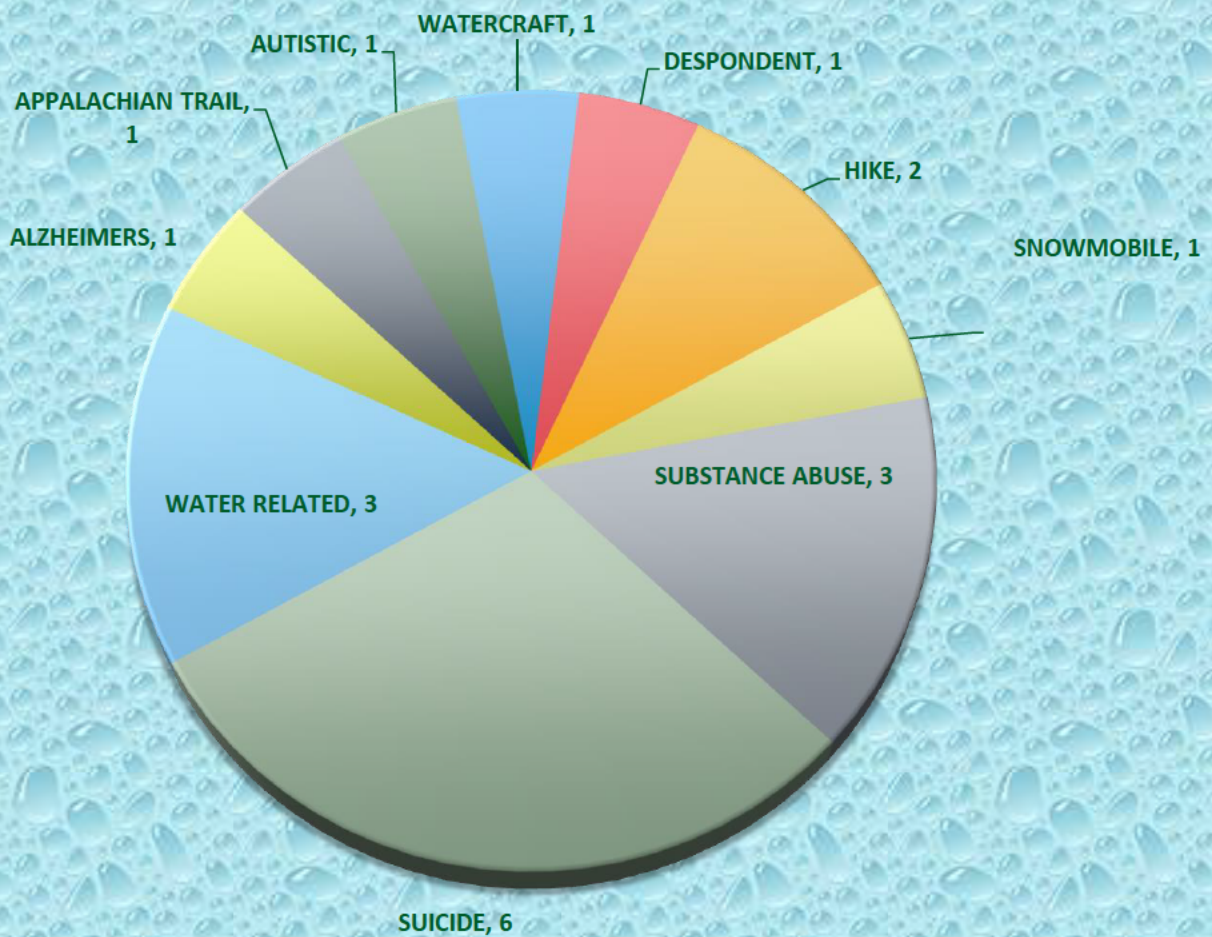
The Maine Warden Service is still working with the Maine State Police to locate Diane Esteys. It is unclear whether Ms. Esteys disappearance is a result of criminal activity or if she left her residence for a walk as she was accustomed to doing. Heinig is presumed to have drowned. Her vehicle was found parked near a bridge over the Presumscot River on I-295, a witness saw a woman matching her description walking toward the bridge away from her parked vehicle. These are very complex incidents and investigations. The Maine Warden Service rarely ever "gives up on a search". We continue to act on tips and information and conduct search and rescue trainings with our K9 and dive teams along with our volunteer partners with the Maine Association for Search and Rescue and the Maine Search and Rescue Dogs in the areas where people go missing.

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### SAR/FOUND DECEASED (20 TOTAL)





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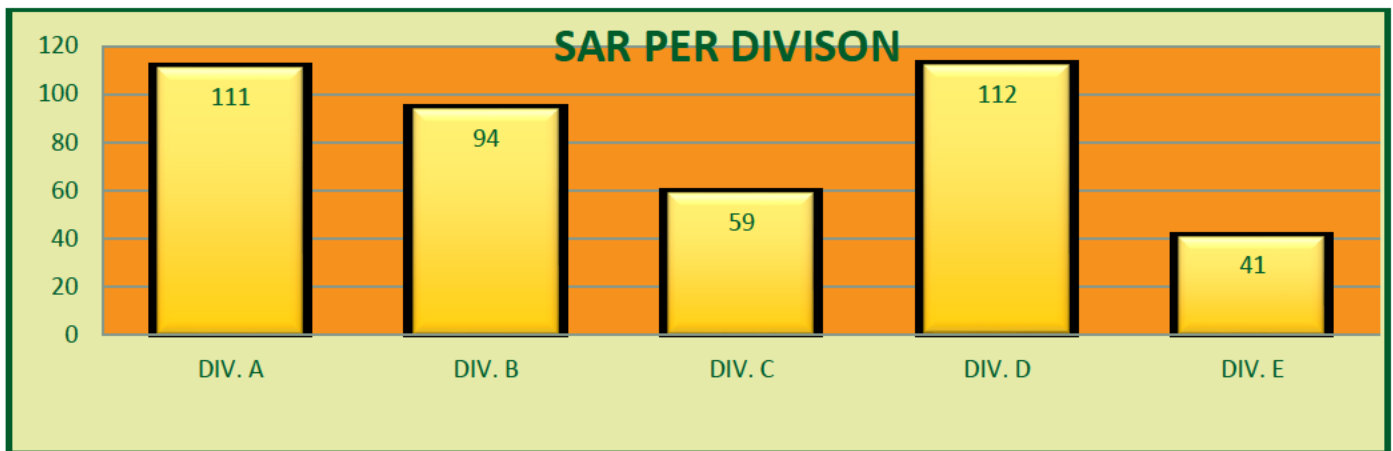
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### SAR CFS BY COUNTY AND WARDEN DIVISION

We again tracked searches by County and Warden Service Division in which they occurred. The top three counties are Piscataquis (75), Oxford (59) and Franklin (47). Piscataquis County has consistently been in the top three.

Warden Service Division D has the greatest number of searches with 112 search incidents. Division D includes the majority of Somerset county, nearly all of Piscataquis county and parts of Penobscot county. The area is vast, is rich in natural resources and people flock to the area for their recreational pursuits. Though not as vast, Division A includes parts of Sagadahoc county, Androscoggin, Cumberland, York and Oxford counties and includes a good majority of the State's population. Northern and western Oxford county also has many hiking trails, many of which are extremely difficult. Combining the higher population and some of the State's most difficult hiking trails results in Division A accounting for the second most searches in the State.

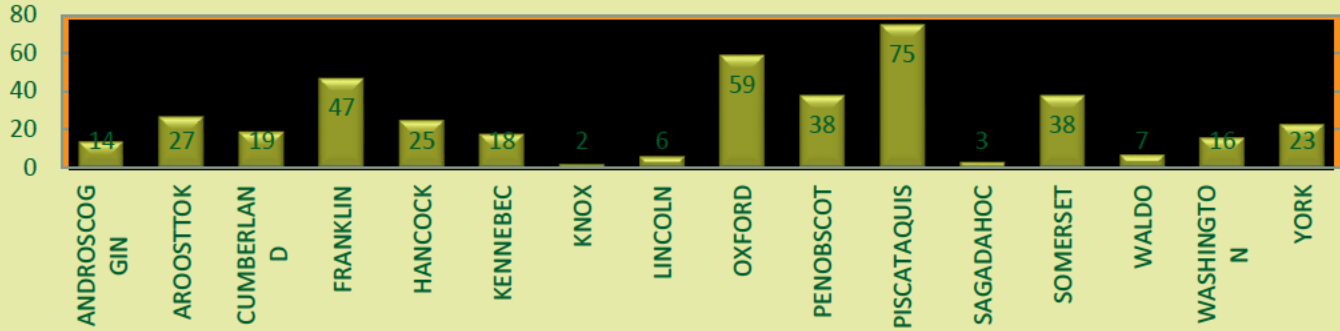


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### SAR PER COUNTY



The graph above shows the breakdown by county. As the graph shows, the counties with the most searches (Franklin, Oxford, Piscataquis, Penobscot and Somerset) are counties typically associated with larger tracts of woodlands and also tend to have many hiking trails. The Appalachian Trail winds its way through a number of those counties.

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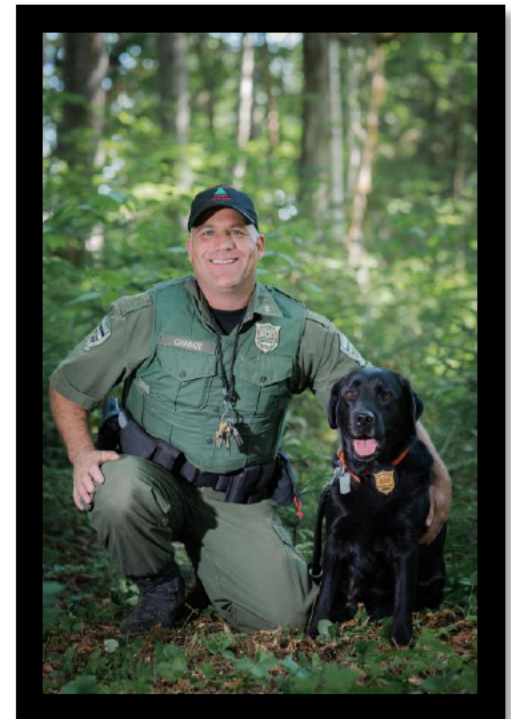


### SAR STORIES

#### ***K9 RUBY LOCATES MISSING 78 YEAR OLD***

On April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in Bowdoin, 78 year old James Conway who suffers from dementia left his residence after telling his wife he was going outside to retrieve something from his garage. It was 2 o'clock and Conway never returned to the residence. As is typical, family and friends will often spend time attempting to locate their missing loved one, whether it is a child or adult.

At approximately 6:00 pm Mr. Conway's wife called 911 and reported her husband missing. Early April can be a dangerous time of year. Daytime temperatures can reach comfortable levels, particularly on sunny days but nighttime often brings conditions reminiscent of winter. Mr. Conway was not dressed for cold temperatures and coupled with his age and Alzheimer's diagnosis, we put the search at a very high priority. Game Wardens along with several other agencies responded immediately.



In addition to personnel on the ground, a Maine Warden Service aircraft was also deployed to search from the air for any sign of Mr. Conway. Bowdoin fire department also responded with their drone which was equipped with infrared technology and began searching for Mr. Conway.

Corporal Dave Chabot and his K9 partner Ruby arrived on scene and retrieved a "scent article" from Mr. Conway's home. Cpl. Chabot and Ruby left the residence and went to the location Mr. Conway was last reportedly seen and K9 Ruby almost immediately began tracking. Cpl. Chabot followed K9 Ruby as she meandered along on what Cpl. Chabot could only hope was Mr. Conway's trail. At 7:45 pm K9 Ruby and Cpl. Chabot located Mr. Conway on the edge of a woods road, almost ¼ of a mile from his residence. Mr. Conway was alive but unresponsive and severely hypothermic. Emergency medical responders were summonsed and began to immediately treat Mr. Conway on scene, and he was then transported by ambulance to the hospital for further treatment and observation.

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Time can be of the essence in certain situations in search and rescue operations. Mr. Conway's situation was dire and he would not have survived the night. The Maine Warden Service K9 team maintains high standards and train weekly in order to answer the call to duty, day or night no matter the weather.

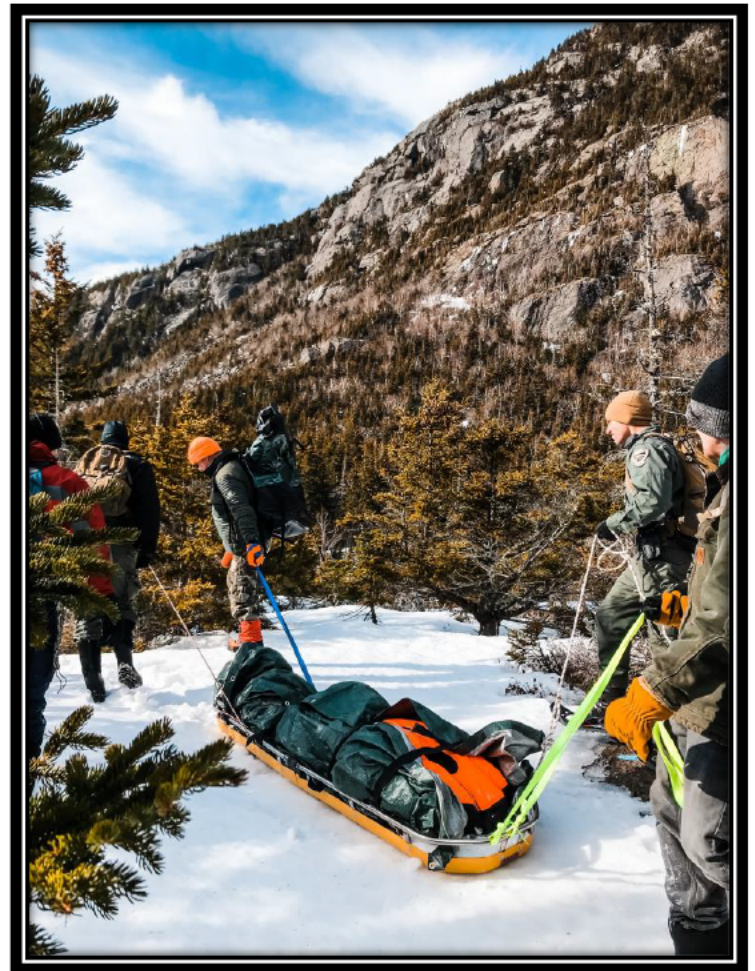
### ***MAINE WARDEN SERVICE LEADS RESCUE OF INJURED TUMBLEDOWN HIKER***

Not all search and rescue missions are for people lost or missing. Often in the mountainous regions of Maine these calls are a true call for "help" when an individual knows their location but have injured themselves and need medical attention and assistance.

On March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 in Township 6, Emilia Hutchinson, age 30 and her two young children, ages 8 and 10 decided to go for a hike up the "Loop Trail" on Tumbledown Mountain. Hutchinson would be just one of hundreds of people to attempt the hike in early spring as the COVID-19 pandemic settled in on our State and citizens sought outdoor activities such as hiking to socially distance while remaining physically active.

Around 11:00 that morning Emilia and her children came to a trail that was impassable due to accumulated ice and some snow. The family turned around and headed back down the loop trail when Emilia slipped and fell down a steep slope and struck a tree, breaking her ankle. The loop trail is categorized as an advanced 1.5 mile trail in hiking guides.

The Maine Warden Service has developed a great relationship with the Maine Forest Service and now routinely call on its Rangers and helicopters for





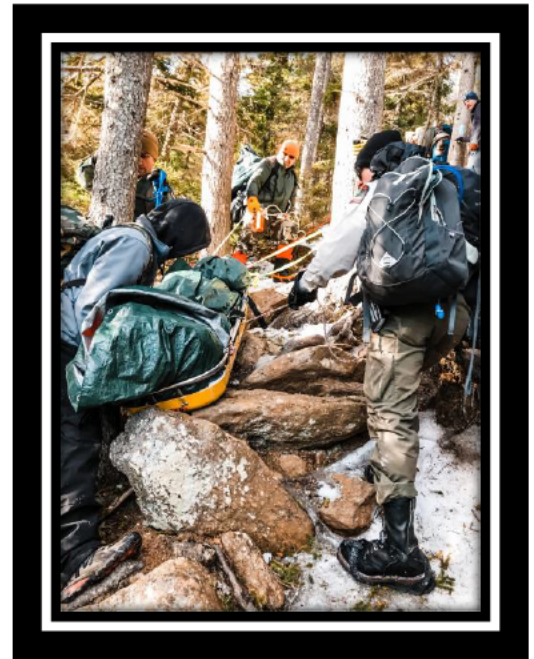
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“short hauls” in rescue situations. This is an extraction technique where a Ranger is lowered to a patient and is able to lift them on a line and transport them to a safe place, most often to a waiting ambulance. On this particular day attempts to rescue Emilia with the Forestry helicopter were called off due to high winds, so emergency personnel from the Maine Warden Service, Maine Forest Service, Phillips Fire Department, Wilton Fire Department, Mount Blue State Park and Franklin County Search and Rescue loaded her in an emergency rescue toboggan and carried/pulled her down the mountain in a technical rescue down the icy, snow-covered challenging terrain.

After hours of carrying Emilia and leading the children back down the mountain, she was transported to the hospital in the ambulance which was waiting at the trailhead parking area.



### Search and Rescue Volunteer Partners

With around 100 game wardens (at full capacity) that are considered “field level”, the Maine Warden Service relies heavily on the assistance from other professional volunteers from across the state. The Maine Association for Search and Rescue (MASAR) was formed in the 1980’s to assist wardens with SAR incidents. MASAR is composed of 15 individual units who have members that have passed proficiency tests and field exams to earn a certification as proof that they have the basic skills to be a searcher in Maine. There are also several “sub” groups within MASAR, Maine Search and Rescue Dogs (MESARD) and Maine Mounted Search and Rescue.

MESARD are individuals who have purchased and trained K9’s for use in search and rescue. MESARD maintains high standards. They require all members train 16 hours per month and meet certification in trailing/tracking, wilderness air scent, article searching and 2 year cadaver (human remains) certification, both on land and water. Maine Mounted Search and Rescue utilizes horses to search areas. These



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individuals, like their K9 and MASAR ground searcher counterparts train monthly and they are a huge asset on searches. They move slowly atop a horse which gives the searcher an entirely different vantage point than the average ground searcher has. Additionally, Maine Mounted has also begun introducing cadaver scent to their equine partners which has been done in other parts of the U.S. effectively.

A lot of individual time, sacrifice, and personal money goes into being a searcher. Some must train more than once a month to maintain certifications. They are often called during the middle of the night and in harsh conditions to work side-by-side with game wardens. Most have professional careers and often will leave their work or use earned leave time to assist in search and rescue operations. As we see by the above stories, their training, desire and professionalism has assisted the Maine Warden Service in several harsh weather and terrain incidents this past year. A number of these search groups are also experts in “technical rescue” such as high angle rescue which require the use of specialized equipment such as ropes, pulleys and other climbing gear to affect rescues in extremely steep and dangerous terrain. Without them, our mission and the people of the State of Maine would suffer greatly. We are truly indebted to the teams and members of MASAR.

Sadly, during the 2019-2020 period we saw one SAR team dissolve. Unity college had struggled at times to maintain certification due to constant changing student involvement and leadership. When colleges and universities across the country sent students home for the remainder of the year to finish with remote learning this essentially ended Unity College Search and Rescue’s ability to assist the Maine Warden Service with SAR missions. During the summer of 2020 it was also announced that Unity College would be going to an online/remote learning model with no students on their campus for in person learning. This has sealed the fate of the Unity College Search and Rescue team, putting MASAR down one team. The Maine Warden Service is very grateful for the service the Unity College SAR team has provided us over the years. Many of their students gained valuable experience assisting us in many high-profile searches. Some of these students have moved on to careers as game wardens.

**MAINE WARDEN SERVICE MOBILE COMMAND VEHICLE REVIEW.**

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The Maine Warden Service has had a mobile command vehicle for several years now. It has proven to be an invaluable asset to members of the Maine Warden Service's Incident Management Team.

The MCV was dispatched to relatively few incidents, during the FY 2019/2020 year. The MCV is most often utilized on searches and multi-jurisdictional incidents that are multi-day events. The MCV is usually parked for multiple days at these incidents and acts as the "command post". It provides invaluable support in allowing multiple game wardens to work in a mobile workstation and still have office functions such as scanning, printing, and copying of documents, wireless internet, and comfort from seasonal elements like rain, snow, heat or cold situations.

The MCV currently has about 17,000 miles on it. Moving forward into FY 2020-2021 the Maine Warden Service will be working with the Maine Emergency Management Agency to identify and complete upgrades to our unit in order to stay current and effectively accomplish our mission during search and rescue operations.



### PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE IN MAINE

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Everyday Maine Game Wardens partner with many different Federal, State, County, Local and non-governmental agencies to complete search and rescue missions across the state. These groups have specific skills sets and specialized equipment that we rely on to get our search and rescue job done every day across the state. These are just some of the many agencies we work with.

### Maine Warden Service Partners in Search and Rescue



**Special Acknowledgement - Retirement in the Search and Rescue Community**

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For approximately three decades Lt. Kevin Adam served the people of the State of Maine, protecting the citizens, visitors and all the natural resources our great State has to offer. For the past ten years Lt. Adam served as the statewide Search and Rescue Coordinator and leader of our incident management team, managing some of the largest searches in our State's history. Some of these historic events included searches for Ayla Reynolds, Geraldine Largay, homicide victim Nichole Cable and Cpl. Eugene Cole's killer – John Williams. In April of 2020 Lt. Kevin Adam ended his long and respected career with the Maine Warden Service and retired. Lt. Adam is now working as a supervisor in Baxter State Park. We would be remiss to not take this opportunity to thank Lt. Adam for his dedication and service and wish him well on his future endeavors.