



Professional Guide

The Official Newsletter of the Maine Professional Guides Association

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PO Box 336 • Augusta, Maine 04332 • www.maineguides.org • Email: info@maineguides.org

President's Report

By
Rick Hill, President

Choices. Life is about choices. We are called upon every day to make them. Some are easy – What will I wear today; What movie will I go to this weekend; Where will we go to dinner? Easy, right?

Then others require a little more thought – Who is the best man (or woman) to be the next president; Who will I vote for? Choices we are all going to have to make sooner or later if we want to participate in the process.

Then there are the choices that are really going to affect our daily lives. Those are the real hard ones because it requires us to get off our butts and actually do something!

Those are the choices that shape our lives going forward and have a significant impact on what we do or don't do, how we will live or choose to live, and what really matters to us, our family and our future.

These are the choices that are the easiest to put off. To let somebody else make. To not get involved in because someone else will do it and we won't have to.

We all know how that is, the path of least resistance. We are all guilty of it and we all have done it.

Fess up – you know you have!

I spent two days this week in Augusta for LURC's hearing of testimonies from intervenors in Plum Creek's Moosehead Lake Concept Plan. I am sure some of you went to the public hearings. You undoubtedly heard all the reasons, both for and against, why this plan should or should not go through. In the end a choice must be made, and that choice will forever impact our lives.

Tearing Down Our Traditions

If nothing else, I realized during those two days, that this process is yet another chance for our adversaries to tear down those traditions and ways of life we all hold dear here in Maine. There is a relentless effort that goes on all day, every day, in every corner, that seeks to accomplish that goal at all cost, and if you just don't believe it, spend a couple days observing as I did.

It is easy to bury your head in the sand and be involved in everyday life and not pay attention to the things going on around you that are going to potentially change your life. It is easy to let things slide and hope that it will all turn out for the best. But it is very hard to wake up one morning and find out that you can no longer do those things you have done all your life and planned your life around. Then what?

There has never been more at stake than there is right now. MPGA made a choice months ago that we were going to rise to the occasion and become a more professional organization and become a more visible force in this arena for the benefit of our membership.

We made the choice to support the efforts that the vast majority of our sportsman community supports. And we chose to become part of the process and make our views heard in hopes of having a say in how the future will be formed.

Make a Choice

Now it is up to you to choose. If saving the ways of life we have been accustomed to and preserving the traditions we hold dear are important to you, then we need your support NOW! It doesn't happen without the financial fuel needed to keep the engine running.

We can only be effective if we can continue to be part of the process. We are powerless if we can't. The choice is up to you, our members. What's it going to be? See page 15.

Happy New Year!

Rick

MPGA Officers

Chairman:	Don Dudley, Patten	446-6170
President:	Rick Hill, Mt. Chase	528-2183
Vice Pres:	John Rust, Hampden	337-5858
Secretary:	Bert Goodman, Patten	528-2320
Treasurer:	Bob Parker, Wilton	778-4077

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Super Raffle Super Success

Bert Goodman,
Super Raffle Committee Chairman



Top ticket sellers will receive this one of a kind Marlin 45/70 Guides Gun with the MPGA logo etched into the stock – See Below

We are happy to announce that the 2007 Super Raffle was a tremendous success. This years ticket sales grossed \$31,085, almost three times the ticket sales from the 2006 raffle.

On December 2nd the drawing was held to select the lucky winners for the 2007 Super Raffle. Congratulations to all winners, and thank you to all who supported the Association by buying tickets, selling tickets, and by donating a prize trip.

Ten Raffle Winners from six states

1. Freshwater Fishing Trip - Robert Raab, Dickerson, MD
2. Bear Hunt over Bait - Mark Johnson, Smyrna, DE
3. Saltwater Fishing Trip - Mary Gagne, Windham, ME
4. Whitetail Deer Hunt - Chet Bowens, Milford, PA
5. Canoeing Adventure - Dick Laliberte, Leeds, ME
6. Bobcat Hunt over Hounds - Robert Knowles, Seabrook, NH
7. Vacation Package - Bill Brann, Readfield, ME
8. Bear Hunt over Hounds - Kevin Helwig, Niagara Falls, NY
9. Upland Game Hunt - Jerome Yasenovsky, Gaisytown, PA
10. \$1,000 LL Bean Gift Certificate - Robert Winch, Fort Edward, NY

Super Ticket Sellers

This year the MPGA added a new twist to the event. Incentives were added to increase participation, ticket sales and raise more money for the MPGA.

Ticket sellers who sold \$1,500 in tickets will receive a “45/70 Marlin Guides Rifle”, personalized with the MPGA logo emblazoned on the stock. Those who sold \$1,000 will receive a \$200 LL Bean Gift Certificate, and sellers of \$500 will receive a \$100 LL Bean Gift Certificate.

The “Super Sellers” are:

- Tenley Bennett - \$1,500
- Wayne Bosowicz - \$2,045
- Shawn Bautaugh - \$1,500
- Joe Bowen - \$3,200
- Mike Carver - \$500

- Allen Christianson - \$1,725
- Nelson Cole - \$750
- Stephen Cole - \$1,550
- Alex Cote - \$1,500
- Bill Dyer, Jr. - \$500
- Holly Goodman - \$1,000
- Don Helstrom - \$2,000
- Paul Laney - \$1,500
- Sean Lizzotte - \$1,150
- Dwaine Lord - \$950
- Bob Parker - \$1,500
- Jon Parker - \$1,500
- Jaye Parker - \$1,500
- George Perry - \$1,500
- Richard Theriault - \$500

The rifles will be presented at the Annual Banquet on April 12, 2008, while the LL Bean Certificates were in the mail in time for Christmas.

MPGA has been working hard and diligently for over a year now to take our association to a new level of efficiency and influence. We also know that this transition requires money, and the Super Raffle is a very important part of this effort.

Our challenge for 2008 is creating more member participation, and raising the bar to \$40,000 in gross sales.

So, a Super Congratulations to those of you that rolled up your sleeves, went to work, and made the 2007 Super Raffle a Super Success!

For information about donating a trip or selling tickets for the 2008 Super Raffle, contact:

Bert Goodman

P.O. Box 323

Patten, ME 04765

(207) 528-2320

Email: info@northcountrylodge.com

“You win – MPGA wins – Guides win”

ProPlan

Still there. Still a great deal. But when we change from a lengthy magazine format to this rapid response newsletter format, something had to give. And one thing will be the regular listing of ProPlan offerings.

But not to worry! ProPlan info will soon be published in two forms: 1) a webpage will soon be available on the Association website; and 2) full information will be included in our new Professional Guide “Annual” Edition that will be available next January.

Meanwhile, if you have any questions or want to place a LL Bean order, just contact Bob Parker, our ProPlan Coordinator. Contact Bob Parker at 778-4077, or send an email to: info@maineguides.org

Legislative Report

By
Skip Trask, Legislative Liaison

Maine Frequent Target of Animal Activists

Sportsmen and sportswomen in the State of Maine have endured a flurry of animal activism over the past few years. It's pretty easy to understand the reasons. National animal rights groups are encouraged by the urbanization of the southern part of our state and the resulting wave of protectionism that is building there.

These large national organizations are also being heavily courted by the handful of animal fanatics living among us. Local animal activist groups are every bit as committed to their cause as the national organizations. Operating under whatever title serves their purpose, be it the No Snare Task Force, Maine Friends of Animals or the Wildlife Alliance of Maine (WAM), these fanatics are relentless in attempting to force everyone to play by their rules.

The big problem facing local activists is that they don't have any money, and their fundraising effort among their limited Maine constituency has proven fruitless. That's why our local adversaries are constantly begging for help from their national counterparts. It's all about the money, and the large national animal rights groups have money to burn.

Maine, along with Massachusetts, has become one of the most liberal states in the nation. Even so, our state still allows many of the traditional outdoor recreational activities that the animal rights fanatics have been successful in outlawing in other places.

There's a good reason why we are still able to enjoy these privileges here, and it's not because the government has been looking out for our interests. Only through intense determination, hard work and financial sacrifice have Maine sporting enthusiasts been able to maintain our traditional way of life.

Whenever the protectionists, local or national, have tried to chip away at the time-honored activities that define us, we've always come out swinging. Our success rate isn't perfect, but, given the numerous attacks we've faced over the past few years, we're doing pretty well!

The Humane Society of the United States invaded our state in 2004 disguised as Maine Citizens for Fair Bear Hunting. They were persuaded to come here by Maine Friends of Animals after their preliminary polls showed that they could outlaw all of our effective bear harvesting methods. Not until much later did they learn their mistake.

After spending nearly a million dollars on what they believed was a winning campaign, they went home empty handed. It's no secret that their leaders were absolutely astounded at the ability of Maine's various sporting interests to unite, raise a bunch of money and develop a strategy that would defeat this vicious attack on our hunting heritage.

More recently, in 2006, another national animal rights group traveled to Maine from the west coast. The Animal Protection Institute (API), based in California, believed they could bring an end to most of our trapping privileges. They were brought here largely through the efforts of the Wildlife Alliance of

Maine, the Bangor-based group whose top ranking officials have repeatedly denounced many of our outdoor traditions.

Rather than initiate another referendum and risk hundreds of thousands of dollars, they took a less costly route and filed a civil lawsuit in Bangor federal court against the State of Maine (F&W Department). They used technicalities contained in the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) to bolster their demands for a ban on all trapping practices that could possibly result in the accidental capture of federally protected wolves, eagles and lynx.

The API and their WAM supporters knew from the onset that even if their lawsuit didn't accomplish what they intended, there was a very good chance that the state would be ordered to reimburse them for their legal expenses. In short, they figured that they had a lot to gain and very little to lose.

In the end, they gained very little. They made the same mistake that the HSUS made prior to the bear referendum. API totally underestimated the ability of the sporting community to unite, intervene in the case as co-defendants, assemble a team of top-notch attorneys and play a major role in ending this lawsuit with minimal damage to the interests of the interveners and the Department.

Unfortunately, API did receive reimbursement from the state for most of their legal expenses. They claim to have spent about \$220,000 on this lawsuit, and they were reimbursed by the state to the tune of about \$140,000.

The reimbursement was part of the negotiated settlement and was paid by the F&W Department with money acquired from the sale of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses – money that should have been used to manage and protect the wildlife they cared so much about.

Lawsuit Settlement Favors Sporting Community

Sportsmen and sportswomen across the country were big winners in the negotiated settlement that brought an end to the API lawsuit. While it is true that trappers were forced to give up the use of their larger foothold traps at land sets in lynx habitat, the concessions were miniscule compared to what might have been.

Less than a week prior to the settlement it looked as if the 2007 trapping season might be shut down. In late September, several of us attended a preliminary hearing in Bangor and listened to Judge Woodcock as he explained his legal duty to put a stop to the incidental trapping of lynx. The judge made it clear that if the case went to trial he would almost certainly find the state liable for lynx taken incidentally in traps and would be obligated to impose a remedy to bring an end to what he described as obvious violations of the Endangered Species Act.

Such a finding would have been a huge victory for API. A finding of liability against the state would have set a terrible precedent and opened the floodgates for similar lawsuits in Maine and across the nation.

For example, if the issuance of a trapping license makes the state liable for the accidental trapping of a lynx, it stands to reason that the state would also be liable if a bobcat hunter's dog caught a lynx on the ground or a licensed angler accidentally caught an endangered sturgeon while fishing for striped bass.

...Legislative Report continued on page 4

As it turned out, the lawsuit was settled, the trapping season remained open, and trappers will be allowed to continue to use most of their existing equipment.

Perhaps even more importantly, there was no finding of liability on the part of the state. There was no finding that the state did anything wrong. No legal precedent has been set that can be used in similar lawsuits in the future.

“Short” Legislative Session Bringing Big Challenges

Maine legislators are elected to two-year terms, and each term consists of two regular legislative sessions.

The first regular session lasts about six months, ending usually in late June. During the first session there are no restrictions on the number of bills that may be submitted or the types of issues that may be considered.

The second session, often referred to as the “short session”, usually concludes in late April and is supposed to be limited to legislation dealing with emergency and spending issues. During the screening process, however, politics often comes into play, and some bills are allowed to be considered that don’t technically meet the necessary qualifications.

For example, a bill to increase the number of dogs that may be used by a bear hunter, hardly an emergency, made it through the screening process. Another fish and wildlife bill, one that would end December grouse hunting, did not make the cut.

Despite dozens of bills being disqualified, the current “short session” will bring plenty of controversy and numerous challenges to the guiding industry.

In total, more than 500 bills are likely to be considered. Nearly two hundred of those will be bills carried forward from last session. Another couple of hundred bills requested by legislators made it through the screening process, and about fifty more were submitted by various state agencies.

There will also be lots of bills coming out of the Governor’s Office as the session goes along.

Several issues will be considered this winter that could impact MPGA members and your businesses. Let’s discuss a few of them:

An Act to Restore Diadromous Fish in the Saint Croix River

Don’t let the title fool you. This bill is primarily about alewives, and the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) will be pushing hard to get this legislation enacted.

A similar bill, in 2001, created a long and explosive battle in the halls of the legislature. Bureaucrats and environmental groups were insistent that alewives be allowed to return to their “native habitat” to spawn, even though they knew that unrestricted migrations of sea-run alewives had all but wiped out a world-class bass fishery at Spednik Lake in the mid-1980s.

The MPGA joined forces with the Grand Lake Stream Guides Association in an all out lobbying effort to kill that bill and protect the fresh water fishery that sustains the guiding industry in Washington County.

We also got some help from IF&W whose fishery biologists are often at odds with the DMR over the impacts of sea-run alewives on fresh water species.

After waiting seven years, the DMR has apparently decided to take another shot at it, and I can assure you that the upcoming battle will be every bit as intense as in 2001.

Unfortunately, the current director of fisheries at IF&W is relatively new to that position and knows little about the battle that took place back then. Even more unfortunately, he recently informed us that the F&W Department is not concerned about a limited number of alewives being allowed to pass into the St. Croix drainage as long as those numbers don’t exceed an agreed upon threshold.

Interestingly, that is exactly the same “compromise” that DMR and the environmentalists tried to sell seven years ago. We weren’t convinced then, and I’m pretty certain we won’t be convinced now either, although IF&W seems to have bought into it.

I’m not sure what the compromise will be this time around, but, in 2001, they were promising a threshold on the number of alewives that would be allowed through the fishways to 4 per acre, or somewhere around 90,000 fish a year, for the first 4 or 5 years. After 4 or 5 years, they would take a look at how things were going and modify the plan accordingly.

Of course, if alewife numbers increased and markets developed, there would be greater local support for relaxing the threshold, which is exactly what environmentalists were anticipating.

Let’s just assume, however, that the run never exceeds 90,000 adults, and that only half of those fish are fertile females, and that only half of those fertile females reach the spawning grounds. We’re still talking about as many as four billion alewife eggs being deposited into our lakes, or about two hundred thousand per acre.

The MPGA has already agreed to team up again with the Grand Lake Stream Guides to oppose this latest threat.

It may be more difficult to defeat the measure this time around. Growing numbers of protectionists are intent on restoring native species (alewives) to historical habitat regardless of the potential impact on exotic species (largemouth and smallmouth bass).

These folks are willing to ignore the likelihood that alewives were never able to negotiate the St. Croix River in significant numbers prior to the removal of a natural barrier in Milltown.

They could care less that the ecosystem into which these billions of alewife eggs will be released is completely different than it was 175 years ago when a tidewater dam at Calais completely eliminated all upriver fish migration for more than 40 years.

They are unaffected by the argument that bass in the St. Croix drainage were introduced to fill a void and developed

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into a world-class fishery with little if any competition from alewives.

Most disturbing, however, is that they don't give a hoot about what happens to the bass fishery or the many Maine guides who depend on that fishery for their livelihood.

I cannot understand why, after what took place in 2001, the DMR is pushing this issue again. I'm sure, as I've heard them say many times, they feel that they have a mandate to return these fish to their native habitat.

They also have an obligation to listen to the people whose lives will be affected by their actions. They'll be hearing from the MPGA, speaking in opposition to their bill, within the next several weeks.

An Act to Allow Certain Assistance to Bear Hunters

At the time I wrote this article I had not seen the exact language contained in this bill, and I had not had the opportunity to discuss the bill with the sponsor. However, it is my understanding that the bill was submitted at the request of one or more bear hunters and would increase the limit on the number of dogs that a bear hunter is allowed to use.

First of all, let me say that many MPGA members offer guided bear hunts with dogs, and probably every one of them would sometimes like to run more than 4 dogs at a time. On the other hand, at least some of them remember very well the history behind the current restriction.

The MPGA will be opposing this bill only because we feel that we must do what is best for the future of bear hunting.

Bear hunting with dogs came very close to being banned completely in the early 1980s. At that time it wasn't the animal rights groups that wanted it outlawed, it was members of the general public living throughout rural Maine.

Resident and nonresident bear hunters were using uncontrollable numbers of bear dogs. Many of these dogs were caught chasing things they shouldn't have been chasing, including domestic animals. Many of these dogs were showing up where people didn't want them – often times the dogs were obviously lost and looking for something to eat. Nonresidents sometimes couldn't recover all of their dogs and returned home, leaving the dogs to fend for themselves.

The number of complaints from the public was staggering. It was a matter of imposing strict regulations on the use of bear dogs or losing the privilege completely.

The outcome, which most residents willingly accepted at the time, was a limit of 4 on the number of dogs that could be hunted at one time and a requirement that nonresidents could bear hunt with dogs only if accompanied by a resident Maine guide.

The guide requirement wasn't put in place to help the guiding industry, as some believe. It was done to ensure that somebody local would be responsible for any trouble the dogs might cause.

Since those changes have been in place, most of the old problems have disappeared. Bear hunting with hounds, however, still creates considerable controversy at times. Our bear hunting methods have endured several recent attacks, and we've been fortunate enough to survive those attacks with most of our privileges still in place. This is not the time, in my

opinion, to try to relax bear hunting restrictions that were imposed for good reason.

The MPGA Board of Directors has agreed that another debate in the halls of the legislature about hunting bear with hounds is not currently in our best interest.

I'll be talking with the sponsor of this bill about the possibility of having it withdrawn. If that doesn't work, I'll be asking the F&W Committee for an "ought not to pass" report.

Deer Habitat Enhancement and Coyote Control Program

Last year the legislature enacted a resolve directing the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to establish a working group *"to review existing programs and efforts related to creating, enhancing and maintaining critical deer habitat in the State and reducing predation of deer by coyotes."*

The resolve indicated that the working group should *"look for ways to improve and increase wintering habitat for deer and for ways to increase the survivorship of deer on a year-round basis."*

It went on to say that the group should *"establish methods of controlling coyote populations and set goals to manage the coyote populations."*

The Commissioner is supposed to report the findings and recommendations of this group to the Legislative F&W Committee early this winter. The Committee, in turn, is authorized to submit legislation to implement any working group recommendations they decide to put in place.

The working group has been meeting on a regular basis since early summer, and, just before I completed this article, I got a chance to review a preliminary draft of their recommendations.

This group, in my opinion, has covered a lot of ground and done an outstanding job. The group was chaired by MPGA Board member and sporting camp owner Matt Libby. Don Dudley, who also happens to be an MPGA Board member, also served on the working group as a representative of the Maine Trappers Association.

This newsletter contains a working group update from Matt, so I won't go into many of the details here. However, in discussing legislative issues that may prove controversial to guides, I think it's important to point out a couple of working group recommendations contained in the preliminary draft that may be difficult for some of our members to support.

I wish to make it absolutely clear that each of the preliminary working group recommendations, including those I'll be mentioning here, could be modified or removed before the report is finalized and submitted to the legislature.

Several working group recommendations for restoring the deer herd in northern and eastern Maine focus on predator control. Most of the emphasis is on coyotes, as it should be.

However, it's no secret that black bears are also part of the equation. Fawn deer are especially vulnerable to depredation by bears in the spring of the year.

One of the preliminary working group recommendations is a short-term reduction in the bear population to reduce fawn mortality. In addition, the working group suggests a spring bear hunt as one way to reduce the population.

Both of these issues – intentionally over harvesting bears

and hunting bears in the spring - are likely to become extremely controversial.

There is no "quick fix" for the dwindling deer herd in the northern and eastern parts of the state. It's going to take a lot of time. In the interim, the bear hunt is what's allowing many sporting camps to stay in business.

If the bear population is reduced sufficiently to have any appreciable impact on fawn mortality, will the quality of Maine's bear hunt be compromised?

If bear numbers are significantly reduced for several years, what's to ensure that their numbers will eventually return to current levels?

The possibility exists that not only will we have a struggling deer population in these areas, we could also be looking at problems with low bear numbers. Should we really consider placing one important big game species at risk with the hope that another important big game species might receive some small benefit?

It's ironic, I think, that only a few years ago the bear guiding industry was being asked by the F&W Department to start considering changes that would reduce the bear harvest. We were on the verge of harvesting too many bears.

Now we are talking about over-harvesting bears to see if it will help the deer herd. It's a huge risk, and I'm not sure that the majority of guides and outfitters are willing to take that gamble.

One suggestion for reducing the bear population is to restore the spring bear hunt. I'm not sure how many of you remember the turmoil back in the early eighties when the spring hunt was eliminated. The Department determined that too many bears were being harvested, and they adopted a rule closing the spring season.

This happened only a few months before the spring season was scheduled to open - hunters had already booked their hunts and sent in their deposits.

There was a huge uproar, and the legislature got deeply involved in it. They passed two bear hunting bills that winter. One was an emergency bill over-riding the Department rule and keeping the spring hunt open one more year. The other bill eliminated all spring bear hunting in the future.

When you consider what took place in the eighties, along with current objections to spring bear hunting by animal protectionists and the recent controversies about our bear hunting methods, I think it is highly unlikely that the legislature would be inclined to restore spring bear hunting.

I personally don't think this is a good time to bring another "bear hunting battle" into the halls of the legislature. Even more importantly, we need to be very careful what we ask for and consider the consequences of what we might get.

Maine's black bear management program is working extremely well. If we try to tinker with it we'll almost certainly create a lot of trouble for ourselves, and we may jeopardize the one thing that's keeping many of our members in business.

The Board of Directors will be discussing these issues in detail over the coming weeks. It will be interesting to see how it all plays out.

Consolidation of Natural Resource Agencies

There are several other issues that will keep us busy during the current legislative session. Near the top of the list is the Governor's plan for consolidating natural resource agencies.

Nobody has seen the plan, if indeed one exists, but rumors are flying rampant. Some involved in the preliminary planning discussions are indicating that only certain services within the natural resource agencies will be consolidated.

Others are talking about a "super agency" that would be created by combining several existing departments - Fish and Wildlife, Conservation, Marine Resources and Agriculture. Neither approach makes any sense to me.

A few years ago, in an effort to save money, the accounting and business management sections of several natural resource agencies were removed from those agencies, and a completely separate bureau was created to provide these services for everyone.

It has been an absolute fiasco. Can you imagine trying to run a business and having someone else, who knows little about your operation, handling your checkbook? If you get a call about an unpaid bill, you have to call another office on the other side of town and try to get answers from some bureaucrat that doesn't have time to worry about your problem.

Some of the affected agencies have had to hire new employees to compensate for those that were eliminated when the consolidation took place. In the end, the anticipated cost savings never materialized, and the various agencies are far less efficient.

Now try to imagine one commissioner in charge of guiding, dairy products, sport fishing, forestry, boating, public lands, hunting, blueberry growing, trapping, parks, snowmobiling, commercial fishing, animal welfare, ATVs, potato growing, licensing of dogs, search and rescue. The list is nearly endless!

You think it's difficult now to get a meeting with the commissioner to discuss issues that affect your organization? Just wait until we have a "super agency"! Oh sure, you'd get to meet with a bureau director, but there would be two or three layers of bureaucracy between the bureau director and the top decision maker.

When you look at other states that have combined natural resource agencies, you find increased bureaucracy, less opportunity to deal with people that understand your issues, and little in the way of cost savings.

It's ironic, I think, with all talk coming from the current Administration about the need to protect the things that make Maine unique, that this same Administration is willing to discard some of the most unique things about Maine state government - things that are extremely important to many Maine people. It's pretty unique for a backwoods guide to be able to walk into the office of the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and talk about things of mutual concern.

Getting rid of the small natural resource agencies wouldn't save any significant amount of money, but it would change the feeling of ownership and closeness that many Mainers feel toward the agency that oversees and protects their outdoor interests. The MPGA will lobby strongly against any attempt to consolidate natural resource agencies!

Have a great winter!

Skip Trask, Legislative Liaison

Deer Task Force Nears Final Recommendations

Matt Libby

This year has been a real challenge for MPGA members in getting a new deer working group together on the problems with the deer herd in Northern and Eastern Maine.

We started with an MPGA group who met several times to kick around the problems and possible solutions. We of course had all of the answers.

This group was making good progress when, at the annual banquet in April, Dan Martin, IF&W commissioner asked me to chair a group to deal with just such a task. Don Kleiner (MBA), Don Dudley (MTA), and I (MPGA) were the only guides on the group, along with representatives of Maine Audubon, Maine Forest Products Council, Small Woodlot Owners of Maine, SAM and wildlife biologists.

The group has finally finished after spending eight full day meetings in Bangor, led predominantly by Mark Stadler and Sandy Ritchie of IF&W.

The draft plan, called "Recommendations to the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for Increasing the Deer Herd in Northern and Downeast Maine", is being reviewed and will soon be finalized.

The report contains short term strategies for everything from improved habitat to predator control to deer yard research. I will update the group with the finalized plan when it is accepted by the group.

I am happy with the direction of the group and as usual with such a group and its recommendations; the devil will be in the details.

Habitat Issues

IF&W and woodlot owners large and small will work out the habitat issues that we formed guidelines for. Habitat was the most contentious subject for the group. Landowners don't want to give up land if deer won't be, or aren't, using it. While wildlife biologists believe that if you build it (the yards) they will come.

A compromise plan is being formulated for most large landowners soon. The main thrust is to expand riparian zones and formulate a landscape plan, not just small deer yard islands such as there are in many areas of the state now.

I believe that long term forest management is viable in these yards if the two groups work together. Old over-mature yards are no better for deer than clearcuts.

This group's progress will be monitored by a task force group semiannually. Public involvement and media coverage will pressure the groups to do a good job. The zoning hammer may be implemented in the future of course, if this cooperative plan falls apart.

It will be up to guides to be a one of the watch dogs and not let any one group, whether it be landowners or biologists, get us in a hole again.

Predator Control

Predator control was unanimously accepted by the members of the task force as a necessary method to jump start the deer herd.

There are members of IF&W who are not in favor of any coyote control, but they did not make (or weren't asked to make) any presentations to the group. One university professor did come out against widespread control.

Future control focus of the state will be on professional animal damage control agents in and around the deer yards.

Coyote control methods were left open to any thing the group can make use of that is ethical and legal. Snaring is no longer allowed in this part of the state until the State gets an incidental take permit for lynx. Snaring will be an uphill battle to reinstate, but will be worth the work to get it back. Of course, control methods will change as new products come on the market and as snaring, trapping, etc either get re-authorized or outlawed.

Bear predation is also a concern and will be addressed in the future with possible depredation permits or a short spring season, all of which would have to be approved by the legislature and would entail public hearings.

Public involvement in predator control is important at this time in getting control to work. Guides and trappers will most

likely be the catalyst in many local areas to make this work, following the department's guidelines.

Research

Research will also be a key factor in making the plan sustainable. As many of you know, without a written report by credible scientists our chances of funding or gaining any public support will not be forthcoming.

Anecdotal accounts just don't hold up. Most wildlife management tools we now have are based on old information and/or incomplete new information making management of deer populations nearly impossible.

Population estimates are mostly educated guesses and we hope to change that with better reporting and more help for the department.

Final Recommendations

This is just a quick overview of what is drafted. The final version should be out in early January and will be more detailed. The department should have a link to this proposal on their website. We'll let you know.

Revenue from years of hunting license purchases by deer hunters has not resulted in a significant understanding of Maine's deer population

Governor's Task Force Regarding the Management of Public Lands and Publicly-Held Easements

The Task Force was created as a result of concerns that public lands were not being properly managed, and that certain recreational uses were being favored to the detriment of others.

The Task Force was asked to develop recommendations to improve the accuracy and availability of information regarding management of public lands in Maine and to ensure that decisions regarding management of public lands are made in a fair manner that meets the full array of recreational interests in Maine now and into the future.

In conducting its work, the Task Force was directed to specifically address the following:

1. Create a baseline inventory of the existing management and recreational uses and types of access on public lands in Maine and in the context of private, municipal and federal lands;
2. Review and document the statutes, rules and guidelines that direct decisions regarding the management of and recreational uses on public lands in Maine;
3. Collect information regarding the trends in recreational use in Maine, the adequacy of supply in relation to demand; and the gain or loss of access by recreational use on private land that may have a relation to recreational use on public land; and
4. Identify strategies and resources necessary to reduce conflicts regarding recreational use on and access to public lands and to adequately plan for existing and future needs for the broad array of recreational activities in Maine.

Preliminary Recommendations

The Task Force met during the summer and fall while information was collected by the Bureau of Parks and Lands, IF&W, and the State Planning Office.

A sub-committee drafted a set of recommendations which were released at the end of November. Public comments sessions were then held in Bangor and Portland.

The preliminary recommendations included (among several others):

1. Recreational Access and Conservation Forum - A forum comprised of the state's major groups representing environmentalists, conservationists, sportsmen, and outdoor recreationists, would be discuss continuing issues and address emerging conflicts.

2. Future Recreation and Conservation Needs - The State should undertake a long-term planning effort to project user and conservation needs. This effort would identify current and projected needs for the full spectrum of uses for which Maine's public lands and easements could be suitable

3. Access to Moving Waters - An initiative to secure access to Maine's moving waters – with a mix of walk-in, boat and hand-carry launch options available that match the size and uses of the water.

4. Updating Maine's Ecological Reserve System - A scientific review panel should review progress in establishing and monitoring the ecological reserve system in Maine, including a review of currently allowed uses of, and access to, existing reserves; and to develop clear guidelines for determining what types of recreational activities are compatible with specific reserves, both existing and future.

5. Further Development of Backcountry Recreational Opportunities - Similar to the development of the infrastructure that public and private interests together have created to support motorized recreation, state agencies and recreation groups should develop a process by which a long-distance network of hiking and remote backcountry trails could be created, mapped, signed at trailheads, and sustained.

Public Hearings

As directed by Executive Order, this Task Force held two public listening sessions, the first in Bangor and the second in South Portland. The Task Force asked that the public to address these questions:

- What is working well and not so well regarding recreational opportunities on our public lands?
- What types of recreational activities would you like to see offered or provided on Maine public lands?
- What recreational activities are missing from our public lands?
- What more could we do, or how could we better manage public land for recreation?
- What should the State's public land management priorities be?
- What are your ideas for addressing conflicts between different user groups regarding priorities or uses of public lands?

Public Hearing Comments

Public comments ranged from those wanting more motorized and consumptive access, to those who wanted more "backcountry wilderness" areas – ie, non-motorized zones.

Many of the non-motorized persons felt that it was unfair that the state had a staff person to assist the snowmobile and ATV users. However, there were few suggestions about how to fund a "backcountry trail person" or recognition for how the registration and fuel taxes are paid by those motorized users.

Here are just a few of the comments:

Dick Fennelly (MPGA Member) – Lamoine: Access to these areas is very important, particularly the access to logging roads, which provide for game recovery. Eco-reserves on public lands are particularly problematic for game recovery. Lands formerly owned by Champion, now owned by SFI, are gated. This further limits access in this region and as result he now looks more to public land. Suggested compromise or specific user

permits for eco-reserves. Permits could be issued for specific permits for a finite period of time. The Downeast Unit land management plan indicates that the land The Nature Conservancy acquired from H.C. Haynes will be designated as an eco-reserve. Suggested that the State not agree to accept land donations that preclude traditional access.

Darcy Schofield (The Sierra Club) – Greenville: Ecological reserves work well for ecological values, backcountry and wilderness. The importance of these values will increase in the future due to development pressures and climate change. Recognized the contributions of snowmobiling and motorized community to the economy (in Greenville), but non-motorized and motorized uses can not occur together. They should be separate for safety reasons. Advocate of backcountry. Recognized that there is a lot of public land in Maine and there is enough room for all, but they should not occur together. By promoting backcountry, a more diverse winter economy will occur.

Bob Hamer (Moosehead Lake Chamber of Commerce, MPGA Member) – Greenville: Commended the Bureau of Parks & Lands for free camping opportunities in and around Moosehead Lake. A more active role in promoting ATV use should be taken. Snowmobiles saved the Moosehead economy. ATV could boost the off-season economy. A trail from Newport to Greenville to Jackman could be established if use was not limited. There is a need for X-country ski and bike trails in Moosehead region. Visitors to the chamber always ask the same questions; “where can I... moose watch, camp by the water, and ride an ATV”. Snowmobiling should remain a priority – Studies have shown that a large percentage of business owners felt it was important to their business. Significant ecological areas should be protected and buffered. In past two and a half years they have tracked visitor questions and comments and less than 12 occasions were related to backcountry. While not discounting backcountry recreation, these users prefer more remote activities than that around Moosehead Lake. Priority should be to promote and keep viable snowmobile and ATV economies.

Frank Roby – Stoneham: Would like to see more backcountry recreation and more hiking trails. There is currently no hiking program like there is for ATV’s and snowmobiles. Backcountry also helps wildlife and provides relief from noise.

Paul Sannicandro, (MPGA Member) – Millinocket: LMF advocate, but feels that people need to be empowered to be part of the decision making process and guide where and what types of recreation funds are being spent on. Acquisition should be prioritized in economically depressed areas. ATV economy could provide boom to economically depressed economies. Acquisition in Millinocket area could eliminate the “donut hole” status of their ATV trails, as there is currently no connectivity with other trail systems. As an avid backpacker and outdoor recreationist he recognizes polarities and access problems. Maine should not become anti-hunting – could

create loss of revenue to the State and Massachusetts is an example. Education on tolerance of each others recreational pursuits may lead to the encouragement of new types of recreation.

Concerns

MPGA, as well as Maine Snowmobile Association and SAM, have concerns about the final recommendations. Due to the limited time for these meetings (all were full-day events), many issues were barely touched upon and certainly not resolved.

Such would be the recommendation to develop more non-motorized backcountry areas (item 5).

Several organizations, including Maine Audubon and the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) frequently make the point that merely hearing or seeing a motorized vehicle or machine ruins their entire trip, whereas most of us seem to have no problem seeing another user and then immediately getting over the interruption and getting back to our chosen activity.

Can Maine realistically accommodate such exclusive mindsets in the middle of an industrial forest? Why aren’t these folks making more use of Baxter Park?

Also, the Task Force was directed to review the management of public lands, not to advocate for buying more of it. While private lands were considered vital to outdoor recreation, there was only one major landowner involved in the discussions. Perhaps then, more private landowners could be included in future discussions.

Considerable time was spent having the various interest groups work better together. While this was a worthwhile and necessary approach for this Task Force, there seemed to be little progress on developing ways to make the various recreational activities more compatible.

Next Steps

There is obviously much to be done on these issues, as six meetings can’t resolve them all. The subcommittee charged with drafting the Findings document will complete its drafting process and submit the final draft to the entire Task Force no later than Friday, January 11.

A comprehensive final report, to include the Findings document, will be submitted to the entire Task Force on Monday, January 14, for further discussion.

The final report will also include the executive summary and table of contents. In order to avoid circulating a very large file, all appendices will be posted on-line. (Appendices will include minutes, agendas, presentations and other handouts – all of which have been previously circulated or posted on-line.)

The final report will be assembled and submitted to the Governor on Friday, January 25. Already, concerns have been expressed about potential changes being made after the Task Force’s meeting on January 14th!

“In past two and a half years we have tracked visitor questions and less than 12 were looking for backcountry.”

- Bob Hamer, Greenville Chamber of Commerce

LURC's Hearings on the Moosehead Lake Concept Plan

"First off, at some fundamental level, the whole debate we're hearing seems to be whether it's primitive or whether it's the rest of us who are rustic luxuryists, I guess, or whatever we call that. But there is, obviously, a huge continuum of visions about what recreation ought to involve in this area." – LURC Commissioner & Chair Bart Harvey

"When you apply the term wilderness to Maine, it's substantially different in meaning than when you apply the term "wilderness" to, say, the Amazon Rain Forest. It's a -- at best it's a qualified wilderness at -- at best, that word. It's a managed forest with substantial infrastructure that has existed for well over 100 years." – LURC Commissioner Ed Laverty.

Concept Plan Update

Recent changes to Plum Creek's plan include: permanent public rights to use 57 miles of major access roads and the ITS 110 connector; a community stewardship board funded by land sales that would oversee recreational uses; guides would not be charged higher fees than other member of the public (except the bear baiting program would remain as is); and that any fees charged would be only based on costs incurred.

MPGA's Opening Statement

The following sections are taken from our opening statement made by attorney Ken Lexier on December 3rd. Ken represents MPGA, Maine Snowmobile Association, Maine Bowhunters, and ATV Maine:

These four organizations support the rezoning petition and we respectfully urge the commission to approve it.

Legal and Policy Issues

Their testimony speaks to four legal and policy issues relevant to the rezoning proposal.

1. The first is demonstrated need. There is according to the testimony of our witnesses a real sense of a decline in the tourism industry.
2. On the issue of the extent to which there is undue adverse impact on traditional and existing uses. Everybody agrees that with development there comes a price. But from my clients' perspective the minimal loss of trails and access will not be unduly adverse. And the benefits from conservation measures, increased tourism, and trail easements are substantial.

Now, to make sure the presentation is balanced, my clients also want you to know that there are some parts of the plan that they are not particularly happy about. One aspect of the plan that most of our clients feel strongly about and are dissatisfied about is the 29,000 acres in the First Roach Pond area that will be sold in fee. The reason why they are upset about that particular part of the plan is because they believe it will result in a loss of primitive recreational opportunities, particularly

bear hunting, and that there will be a loss of access.

3. The third policy and legal issue is the preservation of a commercial forest. A working forest means new and improved roadways for access. Successional forest growth is important for animal habitat. An unfragmented vast working forest increases the likelihood that there will be permanent public access to this land. Use of motorized means of transportation is important not only to riders but to access for primitive recreational experiences.

4. The fourth major policy and legal issue that drives our clients to support the plan is conservation. For our clients and their over 30,000 members the approximately 350,000 acres of land in permanent conservation is one of the most significant factors in their decision to support the Plum Creek plan. This is a unique opportunity for the State of Maine to ensure perpetual access to hundreds of thousands of acres of working forests which will also ensure the members of our client organizations an unfragmented open space for primitive and traditional recreational uses.

Summation Points

In addition to the four policy/legal matters that were just shared with you, there are some specific points that our clients try to make through their testimony.

1. Number one is forest fragmentation. It is potentially a death knell for many of our clients if this forest becomes fragmented. The loss of trails, the loss of access through a fragmented forest with fragmented ownership would be a serious loss for the organizations that we represent. And one of the reasons why we support this plan as strongly as we do is that it ensures that vast stretches of forests will not become fragmented.

This is also from BPL November 20th, *"Because the concept plan proposed extensive guaranteed access across hundreds of thousands of acres, the Maine public has more to lose (narrowly looking only at access) under the status quo than under the proposed concept plan."* That summarizes exactly the heartfelt belief of our clients that the conservation that is being offered here will provide for a vast unified forest which is essential for the type of activities that our clients engage in.

2. The second specific point that I wanted to make is we offer support for this plan because our members depend on the goodwill of land owners around the state to participate in the type of recreational activities that they engage in. We are supporting this plan because we want to support the land owner. And we want that bias to be clear up front. We need land owners to support motorized recreation and commercial hunting activities and guiding activities.

Plum Creek has been an exemplary land owner from our perspective. We would like to keep Plum Creek as the owner of this land. That they are a profit seeking organization looking to maximize their return on investment from our perspective is a valid purpose as long as they can satisfy the regulations and standards for development.

...LURC Hearings continued on page 11

3. Third specific point that we would like to make is business planning. Our business members consider it vital in terms of their decision as to whether or not they are going to grow their businesses, reinvest in their businesses, and invest in new businesses to know that hundreds of thousands of acres are going to be available for recreation forever.

If you are a business person owning a lodge or a restaurant and you are looking at the potential for a fragmented forest, for a lack of conservation, for kingdom lots, for out sales to people who are going to shut off trails, not allow people in, that is an important consideration.

However if you know that 360,000 acres of land are going to be open forever with guaranteed public access and you have some cabins that are near that land you can feel confident that if you make an investment in your business that the types of activities that your clients are looking for, that your business customers are looking for, are going to be available forever.

4. The fourth specific point that our clients would like to make is the need for diversified recreational opportunities. We don't view this as a kind of an "us-versus-them" thing. That is why they believe and they want the commission to understand that it is not just ecotourism or nature based tourism. It's about bringing all recreational interests together because there is enough space and enough opportunity in the Moosehead region for all kinds of recreational pursuits. That is one of the reasons why the stewardship fund is such an important part of this plan because it will provide for recreational management.

5. The fifth specific point that we would like to make is you will hear use of the terms "wilderness", "pristine", "untouched", "natural state" and "unspoiled" to describe the plan area. Our clients want you to know that those do not describe the plan area and that it is an emotional appeal without basis in fact.

6. The sixth specific point that we ask the commission to be aware of is to keep an eye on the big picture which from our perspective is landscape scale conservation, permanent public access, needed tourism infrastructure, and economic development.

Hearing Testimony

In addition to three public comment sessions in December, LURC held hearings on the plan for ten days.

Testimony from all witnesses, 170 in total plus numerous state agency comments, was submitted in writing and is available online from LURC's website. MPGA's witnesses are Rick Hill, John Rust and Stephen Cole.

The hearings allowed every witnesses to be cross examined by all of the 31 intervening parties, of which MPGA is one, as well as LURC staff and LURC commissioners.

The cross examinations were organized into topics, and witnesses were assigned to appear on panels depending on their testimony's topics.

Perhaps the best way to get a feel for the hearings, and our positions on the proposed plan, is to skim through some of the following quotes taken from hearing transcripts:

"Overall I think it comes down to for us is there is a lot of real strong benefits for guides and the public on this proposal. The conservation, the protection of those lands and the areas around them to do all these activities is really important. And there are some costs and impacts. And we are all going to have to make some adjustments – whether the plan is there or not. I would much rather know what is going to happen up there before I start developing a marketing plan for a canoe service and then find out as soon as I get my promotion going and I start booking people something is being proposed that is going to affect me. Same with hunting. We like to know what is going to be there so that if we start booking people. Hunting guides book people a year or two ahead. We don't want to find out two years from now that the customer we booked can't even hunt somewhere." – John Rust, MPGA.

AMC's Land Use Policies

"We certainly have made no secret of the fact that we are very concerned about the portion of the conservation framework which would involve the Appalachian Mountain Club." – Bob Meyers, Maine Snowmobile Association.

"They are essentially proposing approximately 15,000 acres of future acquisitions that they would turn into an eco-reserve, which presumably there would be a corresponding loss of access both for us and a lot of other traditional users." – Bob Meyers, referring to a February 2004 memo from the AMC to the Maine Natural Areas Program, which outlined the proposed eco-reserve on their KI property and the headwaters of the West Branch of the Pleasant River.

"We have had a lingering issue, as these reserves were created on both public and now private lands, that the purposes were getting skewed. And sometimes the purpose was more to exclude some users, especially motorized users. We had that concern with KIW. And it's a growing concern in the Roaches, that the reserve is created not specifically to protect a particular habitat type that needs to be protected in Maine as a base for research but to change the uses and the dynamics of that particular property." – George Smith, about the AMC's designation of the eco-reserves.

"A place where a person hunts is not necessarily interchangeable because it's typically a place you know well and you are intimate with. So displacement is fairly large in that scenario. You would have to go some place else and it takes a period of time to know a new place and to be effective there." – Don Kleiner, when asked how being displaced from the Roach Ponds area would affect bowhunters.

"I started coming to the conclusion that the most intensive uses are some of these wilderness activities, mainly because they require so much land mass to accommodate a simple activity. You know, we can go snowmobiling, and it is not uncommon to see a cross-country skier on the trails, or a dog sled, or things like that, but this notion of going canoeing and not hearing a logging operation or going hiking and not seeing a hunter and stuff is just -- to us it seems just a little strange." – Bob Meyers, commenting on the demands of some groups like the AMC to have exclusive use areas.

"The trails that we are going to lose on the south end of Third and Fourth Roach Pond are some of the most pristine and scenic of all the trails we have. So to replace those would be very, very difficult. We lost a significant trail in the Katahdin Lake deal and -- the same thing. The other thing with ATV trails which differs from snowmobile trails is that we have ground contact. It is much more important where we put those trails. And the real irony of what we lost at the Katahdin Lake deal was that the ground supported heavy ATV use. And the same is true on the gravel road system in the Moosehead region. So, yes, we could add more miles, but will we be able to replace what we anticipate losing? Probably not. However, that said, we still support the plan." – Dan Mitchell, ATV Maine, commenting on the effects of having atv trails displaced from areas like the Roach Ponds.

"Without that kind of access you can't get hunters into the wood lots where they would hunt. You can't get fishermen close enough to a pond where they could walk in even if they had to walk in rather than drive all the way. And you can't take wildlife watchers through some of the areas." – John Rust, regarding use of forestry roads by passenger vehicles.

"Essentially you are pushed out into an area where someone else is so it could create a crowding. You lose a land mass where you are dispersing people and now you crowd them into a smaller area. You have a potential for more conflicts or degrading experience for those people." – John Rust, on the effects of closing access as done by the AMC.

"The idea of what you can do there and how that works is probably more serious. Don Kleiner just alluded to what happens to a hunter, a deer hunter say, who knows that area. Another aspect is the bear hunting. This is a system that has developed over the years where the locations that are used are spaced apart. It's pretty well full up right now. If you take out someone's use of that now, there probably is no place they can go. If they can find a place it may not be for hundreds of miles." – John Rust, when questioned about the effects of recreational "displacement."

"The first parcel that AMC purchased, 37,000 acres, they discontinued the bear baiting in there. And those people using that area were displaced, but unfortunately they couldn't pick up places elsewhere because there were other people there. So they have lost the ability to make that business work for them on those sites." – John Rust.

"In our testimony and other statements, we made it clear that we are not happy with what could happen with the Roach parcel. We have also stated publicly that we do support the plan. Even that loss, painful as it is, that is part of what we are willing to give up to make sure that there is almost 400,000 other acres where, despite the ownership that may change in the future, there is public access, there is hunting ability on those lands, and that they can't be broken up into kingdom lots where the owner can say no hunting or no public access." – John Rust.

Impacts on Recreation Opportunities

"I can't say that a lot of my customers feel as though what may take place with the Plum Creek plan is really all that bad of a thing. We have been protecting watersheds for quite a long time now. And the corridors that we use are fairly well protected now." – Dan Legere, Maine Guide Fly Shop (and MPGA member), when asked by Commissioner Schaefer how his flyfishing customers feel about the Concept Plan.

"They are multiuse areas. For instance, I'm on the east outlet, and some of the raft companies run these – we call them rubber duck trips where they are inflatable kayaks. And they come down. And some people may think that they spoil the scenery. We find them very entertaining. You're talking about first-time white water users that are playing bumper pool with the rocks. So they are there for five minutes, and then they are gone." – Dan Legere, describing how multiple uses affects his fishing clients on the East Outlet.

"What would be lost in the Moosehead area is the significant back-country riding that is really what brings people to the Moosehead area. Right now all of the landowners, the big landowners in northern Maine, allow back-country riding on their logging roads with very few restrictions. And this is what brings people to the Moosehead region." – Tom McCormick, President of Moosehead Riders Snowmobile Club, when asked what would happen if a new landowner did not continue with Plum Creek's generous open access policies.

"The Moosehead region for the last 30 years has been known for its back-country riding where the family can go out off of the fast trails. They can dub around the back woods and the roads. And this is the major use that we see in the area that needs to continue. Plum Creek has always allowed us that use. If Plum Creek sells future land, that use would go away. And that's a major concern that we have because there is only guaranteed permanent trail. But with our large utilization of the back-country, which is basically the area from Greenville, to Jackman, to Millinocket, that area has always been a very high use motorized recreational area. That is now changing. And the new landowners coming in are seeking to change that. And therefore we are losing. And that's a major concern that I have." – Tom McCormick, President of Moosehead Riders Snowmobile Club, describing the dominance of motorized recreation around Moosehead, and how new landowners like the AMC threaten those recreational activities.

"The concern there was when we trade off one use for another or allocate certain lands for another's use, are we doing the best thing with our money. And I even heard some discussion this morning when the AMC panel was being questioned -- a million dollars to build the hiking trail maybe that isn't a good use of the money for the people involved. But if million dollars were given to the community Stewardship Fund maybe that group of people would decide that there were more important uses once they took a look at what the economy and local interests had, the recreational opportunities that were lacking." – John Rust, regarding the testimony of several others who claim that participation in hiking and wilderness recreation is definitely growing.

Getting to Know the AMC

“Just to address usage, at the 6 and 15 route bridge, there will be ten people there fishing. I put my boat in about a half a mile down. I won't see a soul, occasionally another fly fisherman. All the way down into Indian Pond, as I stated earlier, there is some raft activity there that just comes through on occasion, but I'll drop into Indian Pond, and there are three prime camp sites right there at the mouth of Indian Pond. I mean, they are just such beautiful camp sites. I have never once ever seen them occupied completely. When we come out onto the lake, quite often we are the only ones there. When we put in we all have our vehicles shuttled around so they are there at the end of the day. And our vehicles will be the only ones there.” – Dan Legere, about the level of use at the East Outlet.

“They are extremely pleased. And our rebooking rates are extremely high. So I can't speak for them, but they are obviously having a great time.” – Dan Legere, when asked about his customers' satisfaction with the area's fishing opportunities.

“[Indian Pond] is really a bass lake now. And the bass boats have been on there for a long time. And bass fishermen like to go 100. And they have been doing that for ten years. It is a multiuse body of water that is really underused.” – Dan Legere

“With the exception of the holiday weekends. Moosehead is 75,000 acres. You really don't have to go too far to be by yourself on there.” – Dan Legere, about boat crowding on Moosehead Lake.

“The difference for us is if fishing is good, we'll be there regardless.” – George Smith, commenting on Walter Graff's statement that fishermen want aesthetic buffer zones around ponds.

Conservation Framework

“Our discussion has always been about the whole conservation. And the reason for that is that's what the plan proposed as it stands right now. We have no doubt that that can happen. If the parties involved have the credibility with us that brings out our concerns – as you heard our concerns about the Roach Ponds – we wouldn't be concerned if we weren't totally confident that those folks would pull that deal through.” – John Rust, when asked would we support the plan if only part of the conservation occurred.

“These organizations are really good at what they do. And I think we should respect them for that. They will pull it through. And I think they are getting a good price. And I would hate to have it go back on the market without that [the conservation easements] and have Plum Creek go after the full price. They are getting a good price. I think these organizations know it.” – John Rust, regarding the possibility that the Nature Conservancy and the AMC fail to complete their end of the conservation deal.

LURC's hearings have been a good opportunity to learn more about the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC).

Even though the AMC will acquire 29,000 acres around the Roach Ponds if the plan is approved, they have given varied testimony that sometimes supports, and sometimes opposes Plum Creek's plan.

What follows are a few quotes, mostly of AMC's Deputy Director Walter Graff, taken from transcripts of the LURC hearings. The quotes give you an overview of the cross-examination by sportsman groups including MPGA, MSA and SAM, and a good look into the AMC and their plans for their lands in Maine.

“We have a vision for the Moosehead Lake region as a world class destination for primitive back country nature based tourism.” – Walter Graff's opening statement.

“Our intent is to create this primitive recreation experience that -- you know, this piece of the Roach Pond tract is really a keystone piece between our property, the KIW property, and the Nahmakanta property then goes up to Debsconeag and then goes up to Baxter. It's really creating a corridor of a recreational experience on, basically, an undeveloped landscape in the traditional sense of development.” –

Walter Graff.

Eco-Reserves & Roach Pond Plans

“There is a potential that we might set some of the area aside as a non-motorized reserve area. That's part of our notion of protecting the watershed of the west branch of the Pleasant River.” – Walter Graff, on the likelihood of his creating another non-motorized eco-preserve around the Roach Ponds.

Roads & Motorized Activities

“Road access to the sites that have historically been used as boat put-ins and take-outs on larger water bodies for day and multi-day trips should be permanently guaranteed as part of the concept plan.” – Walter Graff's opening statement for AMC, asking that Plum Creek guarantee road access. Funny though, he won't guarantee that on AMC's land!

Hunting Policies

“We allow bear hunting on our property.” – Walter Graff, when asked if the AMC allows bear hunting on their KI lands.

“We decided in the end we would eliminate those. And the reason we eliminated those was more from the standpoint that the bear season and our hiking season are pretty similar. It's August, September, November and that we determined that there may be conflicts there that we could not overcome. So we thought in the end eliminating bear baiting just made sense.” – Walter Graff, when asked if the AMC allows bear baiting on their KI lands. Sense to whom?

“What we're saying, is that a plan is better than no plan.”
– Walter Graff, AMC.
MPGA Agrees

Follow the Money

"We're going to look at -- you know, as a nonprofit, we look at all opportunities for funding." – Walter Graff, when asked by LURC Commissioner Schaefer if one of the funding sources is going to be the Lands for Maine's future.

More Public Hearings

Cross examinations will resume on January 14th, and will continue until complete. Discussion of the conservation easements will be coming up then.

The final public hearing was postponed due to a snowstorm, and has been rescheduled for Saturday, January 19, at the Greenville High School, starting at 10:00 am.

More Information

For info on the entire plan, visit these websites:

www.plumcreekplanmaine.com
www.maine.gov/doc/lurc/

Note: You can listen to the hearings at the LURC website.

LURC Proposes New Comprehensive Plan for UT's

Those who own property, work or recreate in the 10.5 million acres unorganized territory of Maine should be aware of an ongoing planning effort by the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC).

LURC consists of a staff and seven Commissioners appointed by the Governor. The unorganized area of Maine consists of townships, that have no local government, and plantations that have limited town government but rely on the State through the Land Use Regulation Commission to regulate many important activities.

About every ten years, LURC evaluates their regulations to see if they need to be modified. During the past two years, LURC has been preparing a document called the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP). The CLUP is a very important document because it outlines what changes LURC thinks should take place over the following ten year period.

The current CLUP is in draft form and will be going out to "workshops" in late January. From what is heard at the workshops, the draft CLUP may be changed and then go to public hearings before being voted on by the LURC Commissioners.

Comments may be sent to LURC if attendance at a workshops or hearings isn't possible.

The draft CLUP is a huge document but is worth reading and commenting on by guides. The draft can be found online at LURC's website:

www.maine.gov/doc/lurc/reference/cluprev/PublicWorkshop

If time isn't available to read the whole document, then the Vision, Recreation and Development sections would be good for you to review.

To some of us, the draft CLUP appears to have changed a great deal from past documents and deserves our attention. A few items of interest would cover:

1. Increased focus on "primitive pursuits" which don't include motorized activities such as motor vehicle access and snowmobiling. While the enabling LURC law doesn't single out a specific category of recreational uses, such as primitive pursuits, but advocates instead for "well planned for multiple uses", the draft CLUP specifically singles out primitive pursuits.
2. More regulatory control over trail development. Trails are quite necessary for many businesses including snowmobiling, bear baiting, deer hunting, fishing and boat launching. It would be unfortunate to have such trails become difficult to construct.
3. Camp size is a big issue. The draft is proposing to limit the size of camps consistent with what took place in the distant past. Clients today seek more amenities than can be packed into a small single floor cabin having very limited floor space.
4. For those of you who own land, there are special issues. Currently a landowner can sell a parcel of land for a camp in specified LURC zones once in five years. The draft proposes that such development would only occur in areas pre-approved by LURC and have to go through the expensive subdivision process. The draft does not indicate where these areas would be so it is unclear which landowners would retain the opportunity to sell a parcel.

For the many guides depending on the unorganized area of the State as a base for part of their business activities, the draft CLUP could have serious implications. MPGA has been involved in reviewing the document, but we need you to let us know exactly how your individual situation and location will be impacted. Only with that info from you can we be most effective at providing comments and suggestions to LURC.

Membership Questions?

Got a question about your membership, dues, or website directory listing? Contact Bob Parker:

Bob Parker
778-4077
Email: info@maineguides.org

...or write to the Association:

Maine Professional Guides Association
PO Box 336
Augusta, ME 04332-0336

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Donate to MPGA

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MPGA Meeting Schedule

January 6th - Board of Directors meeting, 9:00 AM (open to all members). Holiday Inn on Odlin Road, Bangor.

February 24th – Board of Directors meeting, 9:00 AM (open to all members). Holiday Inn on Odlin Road, Bangor.

March 30th – Board of Directors meeting, 1:00 PM (open to all members). Augusta Civic Center, Augusta.

April 12th – Annual Membership Meeting and Banquet, 5:00 PM (open to all members). Jeff's Catering, Brewer.

MPGA Show Schedule

March 14th thru 16th – Sportsman Show, UMO Field House, Orono.

March 21st thru 23rd – Sportsman Show, Wilton.

March 28th thru March 30th – Maine Sportsman Show, Augusta Civic Center, Augusta.

April 5th & 6th – Sportsman Show, Presque Isle Fish & Game, Presque Isle.