



Natural Resources Council of Maine  
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**Initiatives in the 2018/19 Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
Biennial Budget OPPOSED by the Natural Resources Council of Maine**

- 1. In violation of the law, the budget eliminates oversight of Public Reserved Lands by the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands.** By statute, the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands “administers all functions of the Bureau” including oversight of Public Reserved Lands. These lands are, by law, funded solely through a special revenue account. The proposed budget eliminates this funding source for the Director of the Bureau (see A-75), institutionalizing the current illegal practice of allowing an employee outside of the Bureau (the Director of the Maine Forest Service) to exercise authority and control over our Public Reserved Lands. *The current funding structure for the Director of Parks and Public Lands position should remain the same, and oversight of Public Reserved Lands should be returned to the Bureau of Parks and Lands.*
- 2. The budget removes a position that is essential for the Bureau to effectively monitor and steward its land holdings and conservation easements.** The proposed budget removes the position (Senior Planner, A-75) charged with conservation easement management, monitoring, and enforcement from the Bureau. As of FY 2015, the Bureau was legally responsible for overseeing nearly 400,000 acres of conservation and recreation easements, enforcing nearly 10,000 acres of Forest Legacy conservation easements delegated to the Bureau by the U.S. Forest Service, and serving as the back-up holder and overseer of nearly 400,000 acres of third-party conservation easements. Conservation easements are binding contracts; failing to adequately monitor, enforce, and otherwise meet the terms of the easements can be grounds for costly lawsuits. *This Senior Planner position should be retained within the Bureau of Parks and Lands.*
- 3. In proposing to eliminate a top leadership position from the Bureau of Parks and Lands, the budget would weaken the Bureau’s overall effectiveness, efficiency, and mission.** The budget eliminates a Public Service Manager III position (see A-74), also known as the Director of Operations. This position serves as the bridge between Parks and Public Lands, coordinating major projects, and prioritizing and coordinating resources. Traditionally, all top field positions report directly to the Director of Operations, including regional parks and Public Reserved Lands supervisors. Without this position, the Bureau would not be able to achieve its mission to protect and manage its natural resources, offer recreational opportunities, and provide environmental and economic benefits for present and future generations. *This Director of Operations - Public Service Manager III position should be retained.*
- 4. The budget would degrade State Park visitors’ experience by cutting 24 positions.** The budget proposes to eliminate 15 Assistant Park Ranger and nine Laborer positions (see A-92). Assistant Park Rangers and Laborers are the public face of Maine’s State Parks. Assistant Park Rangers interact directly with the public, providing information, handling emergencies, and taking care of our state’s most beloved resources. Laborers, in addition to their maintenance responsibilities, are trained in CPR and first aid, and assist in locating lost people. These

responsibilities cannot be handed off to contractors, as the responsibilities often go beyond job description: crisis response, visitor concierge services, and parking management. These responsibilities must remain with those that often return yearly and who are committed to the mission and success of Maine's State Parks. If these positions are eliminated, visitor experience and park facilities will deteriorate at a time when park attendance is at an all-time high. *The 24 State Park positions should be retained.*

5. **The elimination of a Land for Maine's Future planner position would unnecessarily hamstring the program.** This position moves grant applications and projects forward. Eliminating this position would disrupt the program's ability to meet the public's and applicant's expectations and the program's effectiveness (see A-72). *This LMF Planner position should be retained.*
6. **The proposed reallocation of 17 Forest Ranger positions from the Division of Forest Protection program to the Forest Health and Monitoring program could weaken Rangers' ability to enforce natural resource laws.** This proposal could result in a drastic change in Forest Ranger responsibilities, including a diminished emphasis on natural resource law enforcement (see A-54). Forest Rangers enforce many important environmental laws that protect our forests and waters. They are the boots on the ground, inspecting timber harvests for compliance with the Forest Practices Act and water quality standards. In 2014, Forest Rangers performed more than 5,000 compliance inspections. We are concerned that if Forest Rangers' responsibilities are drastically changed, Maine's woods and waters would not be adequately protected, and illegal timber harvests and polluted lakes, rivers, and streams would result. *Absent a coherent explanation for this budget initiative, these positions should remain allocated within the Division of Forest Protection.*
7. **The budget eliminates the Historic Site Specialist position.** Eliminating this position would fundamentally threaten the integrity of Maine historic sites including Colonial Pemaquid, Fort Knox, and Popham Beach State Park (see A-92). This position is responsible for managing, interpreting, and restoring dozens of State-owned historic properties. Eliminating this position would compromise the State's ability to preserve our state's history. *The Historic Site Specialist position should be retained.*
8. **The proposal to move the Maine Coastal Program to the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) will diminish the effectiveness and reach of the program.** Moving the program to DMR will undermine essential support to coastal municipalities with regard to coastal planning. Coastal municipalities rely on the program to improve water quality, respond and prepare for the impacts of rising sea levels, conserve coastal habitat, and promote sustainable development. Moving to DMR will narrow the program's mission of broadly managing Maine's coastal resources to one that is solely fish-focused. *The Maine Coastal Program should remain within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (A-77).*
9. **The budget eliminates the Municipal Planning Assistance program and with it a grants program relied upon by rural communities with limited resources.** This program helps communities update their comprehensive land use plans to respond to the community's needs, such as balancing economic growth with natural resources or developing zones that anticipate the impacts of climate change. *The Senior Planner position should remain within the program and funding should not be eliminated (A-86).*