



Department of Fish and Wildlife
Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation
Department of Environmental Conservation
State Geologist
Natural Resources Conservation Council

Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife
103 South Main St. 10 South,
Waterbury, VT 05671
Tel: (802) 241 - 3247
FAX: (802) 241 – 3732

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 8, 2006

TO: James Ehlers and Jim Shallow; Co-Chairs Fish & Wildlife Department Funding Task Force

FROM: Thomas Decker; Chief of Operations

CC: Wayne Laroche; Commissioner
Sher Yacono; Business Manager

SUBJECT: Funding Task Force request for information on Department volunteer match, projected needs, staffing and funding levels.

Please find the following information that the Funding Task Force requested of the Department via your list of questions from your October 16, 2006 meeting.

How much more Federal funds are available that the Dept can't use?

At the end of State Fiscal Year 06 the following Federal funds were still available:

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| Federal Aid in Sports Fish Restoration | \$104,580 |
| State Wildlife Grants | \$602,540 |
| Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration | \$706,240 |
| Landowner Incentives Program | <u>\$1,486,065</u> |
| TOTAL | \$2,899,425 |

The Department reverted some Federal Funds back to the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 2005.

The amount of state match needed to completely spend the 06 carryover funds is \$966,475

How much match is necessary to use all available Federal funds?

The Department calculates that on average \$2,030,300 annually is needed to match all federal funds available to the Department.

How much match does the Department receive for volunteer time (include programs)?

Volunteers are used in the following Department programs:

- Let's go fishing events
- Children's fishing events
- Fin clipping of hatchery fish
- Stocking of catch able fish
- Spread stocking of Atlantic salmon for the CT river Restoration program
- Morgan hatchery brook trout fry rearing and stocking
- Lake Champlain Walleye Association rearing & stocking of walleye fry and fingerlings
- Essex cooperative steelhead rearing pond
- Dead Creek goose roundup
- Citizens and NGO participants in our planning exercises associated with development & implementation of our Wildlife Action Plan
- Sports group rear fish annually for the department

The following Federal grants used volunteer as match in 2006:

- Habitat Grant - \$680
- Waterfowl Grant - \$10,276
- Aquatic Ed Grant - \$7,113
- Hatchery Grant - \$5,072
- Hunter Ed Grant - \$69,379
- Total \$92,520

In addition, the Department requires that on sub-grants awarded out to other third parties, that the third party provide the necessary non-federal match to the project.

What is the estimated cost to 'fix' all our access areas?

The Department is currently in Phase II of its access development plan. During Phase I (1984-1993) and the first part of Phase II (1994-2005) the Department completed projects totaling \$4.7 million. The balances of Phase II projects (2006 – 2008) that have not yet been completed are estimated to be \$1.2 Million. The total estimated to be spent on access areas from 1984-2028 is \$14,490,257. Please find the attached Department Access Area planning document that outlines projected costs and projects for the future.

Funding Task Force Chairman asked for “Statement of Need” relative to the next ten years and what program needs and staffing levels the Department would propose if funding sources were unlimited.

The Department solicited input from Division Directors regarding what kinds of programs would they develop over the next ten years with unlimited funding as described by the Task Force in this request. The following is the framework of that exercise.

Statement of Need – Background Mission and Core Services:

The Department mission is “*the conservation of all species of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont*”. The Department manages fish and wildlife resources to maintain healthy populations and providing sustainable use of these resources (10 VSA Section 4081). Conservation actions that are used to achieve this mission include collecting population and distribution data, regulating hunting, fishing and trapping, develop species management plans, restoration initiatives for threatened and endangered species, participating in environmental reviews, managing wildlife habitat on Department owned land (over 125,000 acres on Wildlife Management Areas), conducting research, providing technical assistance to private landowners and other public land management agencies, enforcing state laws, stocking fish, maintain over 150 access areas, conducting surveys of the public, and producing informational and educational curriculum and materials. Establishing partnerships and working collaboratively with public and private conservation organizations is also an important element of what we do.

Department Programs and Funding:

The Department has four main programs that support the Department’s Strategic Plan (2006-2010) All Department employees are organized into one of five Divisions (Fisheries, Wildlife, Outreach, Law Enforcement and Administrative Services). These Divisions contribute in some way to our four over arching programs. Most employees are involved with a minimum of two programs and some employees and work units are integral to all four programs. Our primary program is **Resource Conservation** of fish, wildlife, habitat and natural communities. Typically projects and activities under this program address fish and wildlife populations, habitats, and endangered species. Examples are white-tailed deer, black bear, and waterfowl research, endangered species recovery and monitoring, habitat assessment, acquisition and management, habitat protection, Lake Champlain salmon management, law enforcement and educational efforts.

The Department also has a strong focus on fish and wildlife dependent **Recreation** which involves the sustainable utilization of fish and wildlife resources or viewing and watching wildlife. Licensing, law enforcement, land acquisition and management, fishing access areas, fish culture operations, public information and hunter education are program examples.

The Department’s Law Enforcement, Fisheries, and Wildlife Divisions obviously contribute to **Human Health and Safety** programs. Responses to rabies, Avian Influenza, Chronic Wasting, sick or problem wildlife, fish die-offs, and controlling populations of moose and deer through regulated hunting are elements of this program. **Effective Management** is an element in all programs, activities and functions of all Divisions, particularly the Administration and Business office functions of the Department.

Current Department Staffing, Operations and Functions.

The Department has 134 authorized positions (4 of which are Limited Term for three years). Approximately 27% employees work in regional district offices (St. Johnsbury, Barre, Essex, Rutland and Springfield), 16 % work at fish hatcheries (Bennington, Newark, Grand Isle, Roxbury and Sailsbury), 26% in Waterbury office and 31% from their homes statewide. The Department currently has 8 vacant positions. The Department has maintained 8-12 vacancies over the past five years due to insufficient funding. Functionally the Department has an Administrative staff of 10 (business office, licensing, and commissioner's office), 22 staff in Wildlife Division, 45 in Fisheries Division, 45 in Law Enforcement Division, and 9 staff in the Outreach Division.

Future Department Staffing, Operations and Functions for 2016 – Needs Assessment

Administration Division -Business Office & Licensing Unit:

The business office consists of three staff; a Business Manager responsible for the Department's fiscal health, a Financial Officer responsible for monitoring all Department Grants and Contracts including the drawing in of Federal funds, and a Grants Program Assistant responsible for processing all grants and contracts as well as coding all payments. The licensing unit, within the business office has two Administrative Assistants responsible for all license sales and managing over 400 license sales agents.

The business office is responsible for the creation of the Department's \$16 million budget, financial monitoring of all expenditures and revenues from over 75 funding sources, processing all contracts and grants-out, drawing in over \$5 million in Federal funds, and the management of over \$5 million in Federal grants to the Department. The largest Federal funding source to the Department is the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This federal agency has strict rules and regulations that must be followed or the Department risks losing its funding. Recently the Department has now received two new grants (Landowner's Incentive Program and State Wildlife Grant) that add much more complexity to the administration of USFW grants. In addition to Federal requirements, the business office must also comply with numerous State of Vermont Administrative rules and regulations. The Administration continually places more and more emphasis on "internal audit controls". These tighter controls require the financial staff to create new processes for Department staff to follow, document the new processes, and then monitor that they are being followed. The business office could use two additional Full-Time Employees (FTE). One position would assist in the monitoring of grants and Federal funds (\$63,709) and the other position would be an administrative assistant to help with clerical tasks (\$52,798).

Currently, the licensing unit depends on temporary staff for data entry of all license and biological harvest information. Ideally this should be done by one permanent FTE (\$47,963). In the near future the sale of licenses will become a more automated process. This may reduce or shift some administrative functions, but it will also add the need for a new position (\$61,253). This position would be responsible for training all license agents on the automated process. This position would be required to monitor the process, including providing quality control and quality assurance of the information being entered. In addition this position would be responsible for creating reports as required to provide information to the public (harvest reports), to law enforcement (license verification) and to management (number of licenses sold).

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| 1 Grants Monitoring Coordinator | \$ 63,709 |
| 1 Administrative Clerk | \$ 52,798 |
| 1 Licensing Specialist | \$ 61,253 |
| 1 Data Entry Specialist | \$ 47,963 |
| <i>Total Administration Division Business Office & Licensing Unit</i> | <i>\$225,724</i> |

Law Enforcement Division:

Presently warden coverage is not adequate to provide the service expected from the law enforcement division. The Department would propose filling the three vacant warden positions (\$235,520) and reinstating the Special Investigations – Detective Unit to investigate commercial and other serious illegal wildlife crimes. This unit was disbanded due to personnel reductions in the past. The present staffing of the Warden force is as follows; 40 full time positions and three vacant warden positions. The Law Enforcement Division does not currently have the resources to investigate large scale and commercial poaching activities. New technologies (internet) have made poaching a global problem. As seen in a 2002 turtle investigation, turtles were being imported into Vermont from around the world and exported all around the US in the pet trade. The money involved in illegal hunts and animal parts are a problematic for illegal activity. The cervid trade poses a serious ecological health risk to Vermont’s wildlife and needs to be monitored. Commercial fishing and markets need increased monitoring. Vermont is also a likely/probable receiving state for illegal shell fish as discussed with Maine and Massachusetts. There is a need for full time personnel to address these activities and multiple cases in various states of investigation presently underway. There are many more potential cases on the horizon.

The Detective Unit would be comprised of one supervisor and two detectives (\$235,520). The supervisor would coordinate activities of the unit, interstate investigations and resources, equipment purchases, training, alternate funding sources and assist in investigations. The investigators would conduct covert and overt investigations involving large scale and commercial poaching activities in Vermont. They would also assist other states with similar investigations, assist in hunting incident investigations, monitor guiding activities in and out of state, commercial fishing/fish markets, fur trade, commercial snowmobile and ATV activities, importation inspections, commercial access area use, commercial marine activities, pet trade, game farms, marijuana/drug enforcement (focus on state lands but not excluding private land), importation of game and fish from other states and countries to include US customs ports of entry and airports. Provide support and security during covert investigations. Assist district wardens with complex investigations. Also, a pool of wardens would be trained in undercover work to assist in covert investigations and covert security when needed. This will also help recruitment when a position becomes available in the future.

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| 3 Wardens to Backfill Current Vacant Positions | \$ 235,520 |
| 3 Warden Positions for Special Investigations Unit | \$ 235,520 |
| <i>Total Need Law Enforcement Division:</i> | <i>\$ 471,040</i> |

Wildlife Division:

The Wildlife Division is currently staffed by 22 staff scientists and specialists, including four Limited Service positions and one in-house contract position with The Nature Conservancy. The Division has compelling needs to deliver increased and better technical assistances to private landowners, increase staffing for various species management and research programs (e.g. ornithologist, herpetologist, and several others) improve data management and statistical capabilities, address workload issues in environmental review (e.g. wind energy, resort development), increase active habitat and species management on Wildlife Management Areas, address land acquisition and land administration of roads, bridges, kiosks and boundaries, address regional and municipal land management planning initiatives. Additionally, Vermont Comprehensive Wildlife Action Plan has many inventories, conservation actions and management plans that need attention. Critical habitat maps for deer yards, bear feeding areas and other habitats and Wildlife Management Areas have outdated maps. Wildlife health and disease issues such as Chronic Wasting Disease, Avian Influenza and Rabies are issues the Division did not have to address several years ago. These and other diseases represent significant work load increases. Addressing invasive exotic species, permitting issues dealing with importation of wildlife, rehabilitators, wildlife pet trade, scientific collecting and a variety of other reviews all require more staff. To fully meet program needs the Division needs 19 new positions (includes conversion of four existing Limited Service positions to Full-Time positions) as per below:

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|--|-------------------------------|
| 3 Species Scientists for wildlife diversity | \$199,350 |
| 5 Conservation Service Specialists (private lands technical assistance) | \$332,249 |
| 2 Wildlife Management Area Biologists | \$132,900 |
| 5 (1 per district) Wildlife Specialists dedicated to the Wildlife Management | \$306,265 |
| 1 Operations Coordinator | \$76,068 |
| 1 Action Plan Coordinator | \$69,423 |
| 1 Data Manager | \$63,709 |
| 1 Permit Review Specialist | \$63,709 |
| <i>19 Staff Total Needs Wildlife Division Staffing</i> | <i>\$1,243,673</i> |

Fisheries Division:

Hatcheries: Staffing levels are reduced at several hatchery stations. Existing staff are picking up the duties and responsibilities but four positions are needed. Grand Isle is currently operating with only two-thirds of its staff. This places a lot of stress on existing staff. An administrative position is necessary for federal aid reports, stocking schedules, permitting, etc. This position was also cut in the past and the work had to be added to the existing staff's workload. An additional technician is needed for the fish health laboratory. Wild fish work inspection, monitoring and detection is becoming a critically important part of fisheries management significantly increasing workloads.

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| 2 Fish Culture Specialists | \$105,596 |
| 2 Fish Culture Health Specialists | \$105,596 |
| 1 Administrative Assistant | \$ 52,798 |
| 1 Fish Health Inspection Scientist | \$ 66,450 |

Fisheries Management:

Fisheries management section faces increased management and restoration challenges with fish passage to suitable habitat, development regulatory reviews, cold water species management, lamprey control program, hydro-relicensing, access area operations, overseeing cold water and warm water regulatory recommendations, increasing fish health and importation issues. The Fisheries Management Division needs to be back up to full staffing (e.g. 1995 levels).

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 3 F&W Specialists (one in each District) | \$183,759 |
| 1 Aquatic Habitat Biologist | \$ 66,450 |
| <i>12 Staff Total Needs Fisheries Division (hatcheries & management) Staffing</i> | <i>\$580,649</i> |

Outreach Division: Information & Education Division:

This program includes news media contacts, displays, fairs, publications, films, video productions, two Conservation Camps, hunter, trapper and aquatic education programs, project WILD and teacher training courses. This program also produces Department hunting and fishing guides, law digests, calendar, specialized posters, brochures and other publications. Vermont's wildlife outreach and educational programs have suffered due to severe staff shortages. Staff shortages on these projects greatly limit the capacity and quality of Department efforts. This Division currently lacks a Division Director due to vacancy savings allocations. However, the Department continues to receive high marks from youth group leaders, private environmental education organizations, conservation organizations, and teachers statewide. The educational staff focuses the bulk of available time on creatively using a variety of techniques: volunteers; existing Department personnel; partnering with existing educational efforts nationally (i.e. Project WILD) and in-state (i.e. Vermont Envirothon, Project Learning Tree); and conducting workshops for teachers and youth group leaders, using the multiplier concept to reach thousands of people annually.

The Fish and Wildlife Department, through directing quality programs such as Conservation Camps, Hunter Education, Becoming an Outdoor Family, Women in the Outdoors, the summer teachers' course, Project WILD, "Let's Go Fishing," and curriculum educational kits, has postured itself as a leader in Vermont's environmental education community. Our greatest challenge today is continuing these programs and maintaining our professional development and knowledge to keep pace with fast changing educational needs of Vermont teachers and schools, and the decline in youth participating in outdoor programs. The Departments biggest fear is not the quality of our programs or the messages we deliver, but rather having the personnel resources and operating budget to continue to deliver these programs given all the Departments needs, and creatively marketing fish and wildlife in educational settings that other organizations are pushing a different message and program than we would.

The demand is high from teachers and other individuals to receive fish and wildlife training. The existing staff levels to deliver these many programs is low. Needed staff would work on communication plans, designing and delivering educational materials on fish and wildlife conservation themes, administer Vermont's Let's Go Fishing program, administer all of the activities, functions and programs at two Department conservation camps. Develop State education standards, teaching pedagogy and teacher

training, fish and wildlife curriculum development, special outdoor education events, coordinate website information, video production needs, and deliver education programs to schools state-wide. Additionally the Department has three trust funds, the Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund, the Duck Stamp Fund, and the Conservation Camp Trust Fund. All three of these funds hold tremendous potential as sources of revenue operating from interest generated by each fund. Unfortunately, none of these funds have been promoted or marketed to their potential to build up the funds as meaningful sources of revenues.

Outreach Division Information and Education:

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| 1 Outreach Division Director | \$ 83,618 |
| 5 District Fish and Wildlife Education Specialists | \$332,249 |
| 1 Let's Go Fishing Coordinator | \$ 66,450 |
| 1 Camp Coordinator/Aquatic Resource Educator | \$ 61,253 |
| 1 Project WILD Coordinator | \$ 66,450 |
| 1 Conservation Camp Director | \$ 66,450 |
| 1 Hunter Education Program Technician | \$ 56,754 |
| 1 Hunter Education Statewide Field Coordinator | \$ 61,253 |
| 1 Marketing Specialist | \$ 66,450 |
| 1 Website Coordinator | \$ 66,450 |
| 1 Video Production Specialist | \$ 66,450 |
| 1 Endowment Fund Marketing Specialist | \$ 66,450 |

16 Staff Total Needs Outreach Division Staffing **\$1,060,276**

Department-wide Total All Positions All Divisions **\$3,581,363**

Additional Information Regarding Department Finances:

The following is additional information for the Committee regarding Department recent efforts and actions in securing more revenues.

New Grants:

Within the past few years the Department has acquired two new Federal grants, the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) and the Landowner's Incentive Program (LIP). In the past five years the Department has had over \$3 million in SWG funds and approximately \$1.6 million in LIP funds available for its use.

Increased Fees:

In FY 02 we instituted fees associated with our regulated moose hunt. The applications for this limited hunt bring in on average \$176,000 each year. In FY 06 we began charging a Permit Fee for the moose hunt itself which generates between \$130,000 and \$135,000 each year. We also initiated a moose auction which brings in an average of \$22,350 a year. The revenues generated from the auction are earmarked for Education. These funds support the Green Mountain Conservation Camp program, a summer educational program for youths 12-14 years old that has reached 1,000 kids annually for the past 40 years. In 2002 we also increased many of our license fees and created a 3 day resident fishing license and youth combo licenses for both residents and non-residents. Currently Vermont's primary licenses are generally less than those of surrounding states.

Trust Funds:

The Department has three “trust funds”: the Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund, supported with lifetime license sales; the Duck Stamp Fund, supported with revenues generated from the sale of Duck Stamps; and the Green Mountain Conservation Camp Endowment Fund which was established by the legislature during the 2003 session with \$45,000 of General Fund.

The Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund ended SFY06 with a balance of \$1,364,289. Of this, only \$88,305 of interest may be used. The Green Mountain Conservation Camp Endowment Fund ended SFY06 with a balance of \$45,615. The GMCC Fund has a fund committee of five members to promote and seek contributions to this fund. The Duck Stamp Fund may be used only for waterfowl acquisition and improvement projects. These funds are governed by a Migratory Waterfowl Advisory Committee.

Additional Facilities Construction Needs

Storage Capacity

The Department is significantly lacking general storage space and storage capacity **\$250,000**
for boats, trailers, snowmobiles, ATV’s, and seized evidence for law enforcement cases.

Conservation Camp Maintenance

Conservation Camps have annual maintenance and facilities costs. Usually these are **\$125,000**
submitted to be addressed by the Departments submission in the state Capital Construction Budgets.

Hatchery Facilities

Hatchery facilities need upgrading and maintenance. Some facilities are 115 years of age, and they need significant capital improvements. In addition, the facilities must be designed to meet the changing needs of fisheries programs. Often this means smaller lot management (triploids, different strains, etc.), not just raising numbers and managing wild stocks that require separate facilities for fish health reasons. Estimated cost for these projects is \$14 million. Hatchery construction is usually secured via state Capital Construction Budgets.

Summary:

The Department has a unique role in state government. It is the only state entity charged with the conserving and managing all fish and wildlife resources for all the people of Vermont. The Department provides services that improve the lives of many Vermonters and it appears there will be no diminishment of public expectations. The above outline is an assessment of funding that will allow us to maximize all available federal funds and to have the resources necessary to accomplish all the tasks the public expects of us. The overall Department needs via this needs based unlimited funding exercise is comprehensive and attempts to address many current challenges we face.

Task Force Memo
November 8, 2006

Total base personnel costs for the 52 new positions described above is \$3,581,362. This level of staffing would actually place the Department at similar staffing levels to New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. However, knowing that funds are not unlimited to any agency or business the Department conducted a prioritization of the above positions (**in bold**) the funding level of increased personnel costs only filling priority positions (37) is a total of \$2,680,515 in new position costs.

Total dedicated base general fund needed to operate at the described full capacity level above with 52 new positions and current positions (assuming Department would continue to receive \$2.2 million of general fund) is \$5,090,662 in SFY2008 and calculated to \$12,959,224 in ten years (SFY2018). The total dedicated base general fund needed with the prioritized new positions (37) and current positions would require \$4,173,322 in general fund in SFY08 (assuming Department continues to receive \$2.2 in current general fund) and would be \$11,786,389 in SFY2018.

The Department remains committed to securing additional federal and private grants, and developing strategies to fully realize the potential of existing endowment funds to generate more monies to pay for Department operations and allow for funding sources to match federal grants.