Commissioner's Column

C. Edwin Meadows, Jr. Commissioner

Maine's "working landscape" has served our state well through the years, providing a diverse economy and unequaled quality of life. Natural resources, the foundation of the working landscape, continue their historical role as a key to our state's economic vitality. The "multiple-use" of Maine's forests as a source of raw materials, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, water and minerals also gives Maine people a close attachment to Maine's natural resources.

How we interact with the landscape is basic to our very lives; our work, play, raising a family and the way we choose to live. Programs dealing with this basic Maine treasure are found in every DOC bureau and division.

We have seen the Maine landscape change rapidly in recent years. The legislature enacted many new laws to deal with these changes--growth management, solid waste and recycling, the Forest Practices Act, endangered species, affordable housing, business development and others.

Implementing these new laws will be a challenge to all of us. Our goal is to establish programs under these laws that will lead toward natural resources of improved quality, diversity, value and vitality. Working with the private sector, citizen groups and the general public will be an important part of our effort to implement these programs.

Good information is essential in making the best decisions on these matters. We have made significant progress in increasing the availability and quality of information on Maine's natural resources, creating the capability to gather and analyze the best data ever compiled on Maine forests for the analysis of long-term trends.

As the pace of economic activity has slowed, easing some of the immediate pressures on the landscape, we will face a different set of challenges. Here too, we will need to pursue solutions in partnership with those who are directly involved with use and enjoyment of Maine's natural resources.

We will be seeking solutions to the investments needed in the state park system to maintain the physical plant. The bond issue for state parks and historic sites did not pass, so we will look for other alternatives for doing the necessary work to keep the parks accessible, usable and safe.

As we continue in changing times, we are confident that the working landscape will again help sustain Maine's economy and contribute to the vitality of our future.

We appreciate your support and interest in natural resource programs.

MGS Landslide Study Draws Praise

Three Maine Geological Survey (MGS) open-file reports on landslide hazards in Cumberland County are among the best produced by any state as part of the U. S. Geological Survey-State Cooperative Landslide Program," according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The reports were prompted by the 1983 landslide in Gorham and many other slides that have occurred in the clay deposits of coastal Maine. The MGS investigation was supported by a grant from the U.S. Geological Survey's Office of Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and Engineering. It includes a map of landslides in Cumberland County (OF 90-22, by Irwin Novak), description of clay chemistry (OF 90-23, by Lawrence Mayer), and a detailed engineering analysis of slide-prone sites in Brunswick and Westbrook (OF 90-24, by Steven Devin and Thomas Sandford). All of these authors are in the University of Maine system.

A major finding of the Devin and Sandford report is that properties of the Presumpscot Formation clays vary from place to place, and the types and sizes of landslides vary accordingly. The most sensitive clays can experience disastrous "flowslides," such as the 1868 slide that swept away 34 acres in Westbrook (see photo). Considering the population density that now exists in the greater Portland area, it is clear that engineering studies are important for construction projects in slide-prone areas.

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