

**From:** Jill Lipoti  
**To:** ER DESH Everyone  
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**Subject:** Commissioner's meeting with managers

All of DESH:

Commissioner Jackson held a meeting with all managers this morning. She talked about the budget. She urged each of us to go out and talk with all staff. Well, in DESH, there isn't a central location for everyone, so I'm going to have a virtual talk with all of you.

Yesterday, the Commissioner sent out a postmaster message detailing the effects of the cuts to the Parks. She said that in general, the fee programs were exempt from any impact of the budget cuts. Today, she clarified a few points.

She is combining the Press and Communications groups. This will result in separations from state government for 4-5 unclassified positions. The classified people will remain, but there will be some changes to the organization.

There have been some recent decreases in the numbers of people in the Commissioner's office itself. Only one position will be back-filled and that is Deputy Commissioner Zellner's old position. Commissioner Jackson hopes to announce the new Deputy Commissioner at the end of this week or beginning of next, and she says we will like "her".

The Division of Science and Research will have some of its personnel moved to fee-funded vacancies in Site Remediation.

Management and Budget will lose 6 classified people.

The Office of Permit Coordination will not change. Although funding was lost for the OPIA account, each of the individuals in this account have been moved to fee-funding, and they will not change their job function or location.

The DEP did not lose any fee-funded vacancies, but we gave up all state-supported vacancies (mostly in parks) to minimize the effect of the budget cuts. However, the number of FTE is still constrained, so we can't add people.

There are no RIFs in Fish and Wildlife.

The largest RIF is to the State Park Service, and there are 80 people on that list. The actual RIF plan is due Friday, but the Commissioner chose to speak with Parks people directly yesterday so they will not be reading about their plight in the newspaper. She said it was very hard to talk to these employees directly, but she felt it was the right thing to do. They were all very professional, and they worried about the impact of the closing of the parks on the millions of park visitors.

May 6 is the date when layoff notices will go out. There will be separate notices for the targeted people and those that are in similar titles and may

experience civil service bumping. The Commissioner is adhering to all Civil Service rules, which dictate how this will occur. We will receive a list of titles that are affected.

Where we are in the process: The Governor proposed his budget and that is what we are reacting to. There were open public hearings. There will be legislative hearings. The Commissioner will testify. The legislature may act to restore cuts in some areas.

The Early Retirement Initiative has been talked about, but legislation will be needed to implement it and no legislation has been sponsored yet.

The Governor has said that he will not increase fees to cover the budget deficit, so increasing fees to subsidize parks is not contemplated.

Managers were instructed that they should consider the staff they have now as the most they will have, and they should look at ways to cut back on non-essential services and prioritize their work. The Commissioner mentioned the Permit Task Force (subject of another postmaster message) as one way that she will get ideas for how to handle things more efficiently. She said that Site Remediation was leading the way, since they have 20,000 contaminated sites in the state. She said that it could take 18 months in SR before a submitted plan for clean-up is reviewed, due to the backlog. Commissioner Jackson said that the Permit Task Force will look at the process of how we do our jobs and try to improve efficiency.

There was a question about Agriculture - will we absorb some of their functions? When? The commissioner said that would be part of the discussion with the legislature. The budget will be in effect July 1, but they may decide to phase in some of the changes at Agriculture over a longer time period.

I think I have summarized the main points of the Commissioner's talk. While it was not particularly uplifting, there were no cuts to DESH. The only change was the funding source for the Permit Coordination folks, and Nancy Wittenberg had already discussed this with them, so there was no surprise.

For individuals in DESH, some may receive layoff notices on May 6 as part of those that could experience bumping. I will try to keep you informed about affected titles so that no one will be surprised. However, our titles are not like the ones in Parks, so the effect should be minimal.

Commissioner Jackson said that the hardest part for most people will be the uncertainty. Will the legislature act to restore funding for Parks? Will we be spared some of the painful reductions in force? However, she said that because of the targeting of the positions, most of the department will largely be spared. Change, she said, will come in the form of permit review efficiencies, as suggested by the Permit Review Task Force, and as a result of our own analysis of what we do and how we do it.

I'm sorry that DESH does not have a central location for a meeting where we could discuss things face-to-face, but I hope this "virtual meeting" will keep you informed. Any questions, please raise them through the Managers. And Managers - if I have left anything out - please let me know.

Jill

**CC:** Ianni, Bryan