

30 YEARS OF LAND CONSERVATION IN MAINE



Maine has a long-storied history of conservation and stewardship. Maine's Indian tribes have lived upon and cared for their lands for thousands of years. Some of Maine's earliest family forest landowners, both large and small, have owned land since the 18th and 19th centuries.



The land conservation movement, as we know it today, was born out of private initiative and philanthropy by the likes of Percival Baxter who, single handily created Baxter State Park, the Rockefellers and others on Mount Desert Island that gave rise to Acadia National Park, Lawrence & Eleanor Smith who played a primary role in the creation of Wolfe's Neck State park, Popham Beach and other treasured lands, Myron Avery one of the principal collaborators in the creation of the Appalachian Trail and Fly rod Crosby, the first registered Maine Guide who brought many people to enjoy the splendors of the Maine Woods.

“The Legislature declares that the future social and economic well-being of the citizens of this State depends upon maintaining the quality and availability of natural areas for recreation, hunting and fishing, conservation, wildlife habitat, vital ecologic functions and scenic beauty and that the State, as the public’s trustee, has a responsibility and a duty to pursue an aggressive and coordinated policy to assure that this Maine heritage is passed on to future generations.”

Land for Maine’s Future



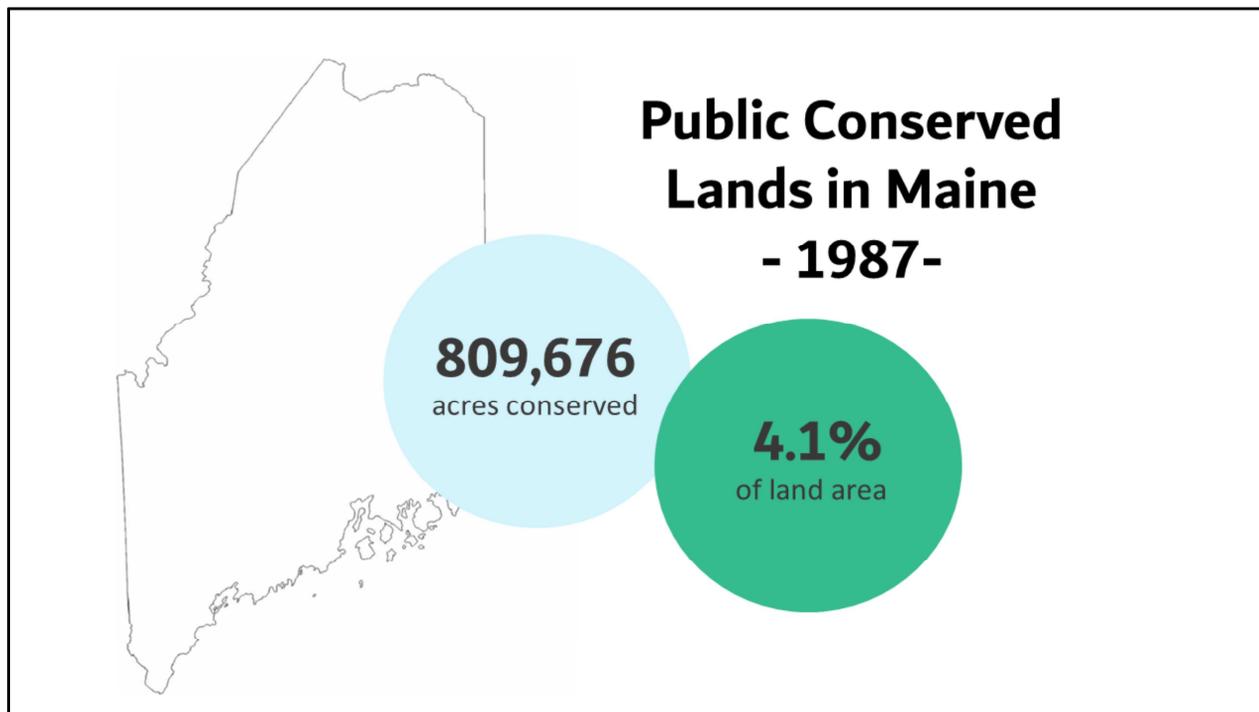
A new generation of land conservation began in 1987 with the creation of the LMF program – the result of a recommendation put forward by a commission not unlike this one. It marked a turning point in land conservation in Maine by: Establishing an ongoing state program focused on the acquisition of conservation lands and...

The Legislature further finds that Maine's private, nonprofit organizations, local conservation commissions, local governments and federal agencies have made significant contributions to the protection of the State's natural areas and that these agencies should be encouraged to further expand and coordinate their efforts by working with state agencies in order to help acquire, pay for and manage new state acquisitions of high priority natural lands."

Land for Maine's Future

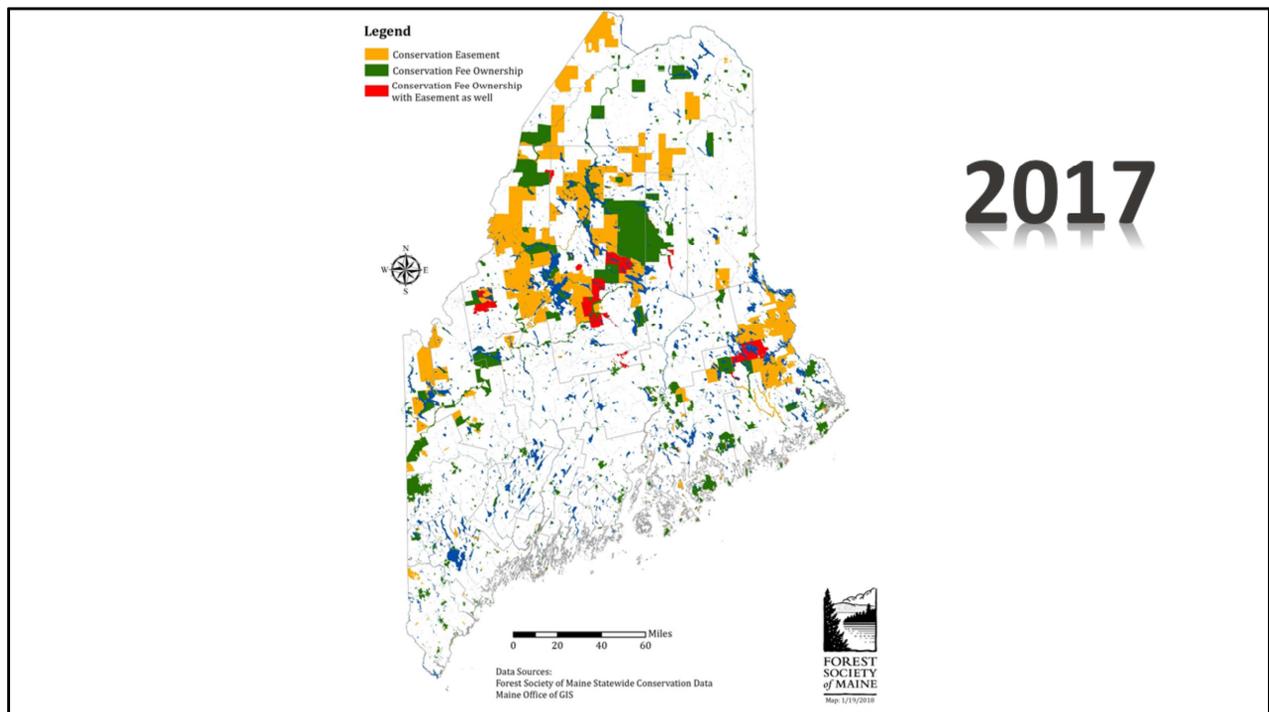


Initiating a public-private partnership between state government and non-profit land conservation groups, municipalities and others that would become the foundation for the next generation of land conservation in Maine.



In 1987, Maine ranked near the bottom among states in percentage of public lands with less than 5% of lands in public ownership.

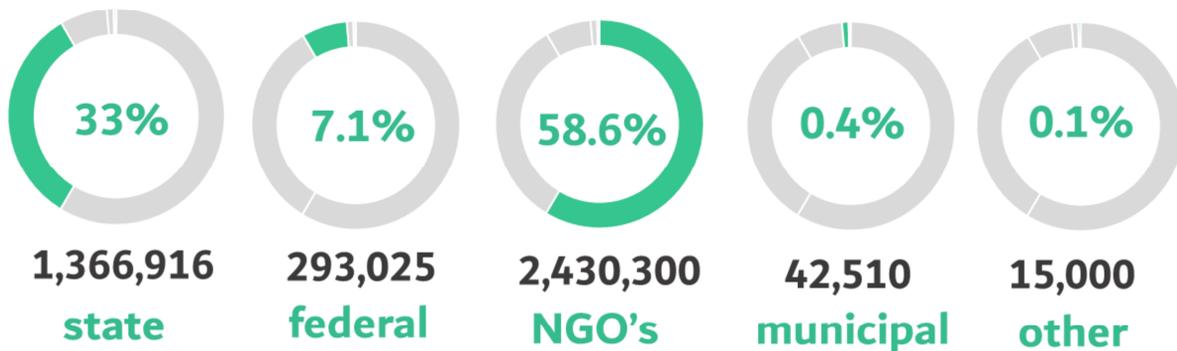
Around this time, land trusts were beginning to pop up around Maine, though most of their work was confined to smaller donated parcels.



The past generation of land conservation, which we define as beginning in 1987 and extending to the present, has been nothing short of remarkable

These sequence of maps spanning this period, illustrate, in dramatic terms, the growth of conserved lands across the state. While the largest acreage gains are in the north, the entire state was the beneficiary of newly conserved lands.

2018 4.1 MILLION ACRES CONSERVED



From less than a million acres of conserved lands in 1987, Maine's conserved land base has grown to over four million acres! From less than 5% to 20% of the state's land area. Land trusts are responsible for more conservation lands than the state and federal governments combined.



Katahdin Lake

During this period, some of Maine's most iconic areas were permanently conserved including:
Mount Kineo, the Bold Coast, the St. John and Machias Rivers, Scarborough Beach, Tumbledown Mountain and Katahdin Lake



Along with important ecological areas including wetlands, unique natural communities and critical wildlife habitat

Economy

Community

Character



But over this generation, land conservation evolved to encompass far more than protecting scenic landmarks. It matured and expanded into many facets of Maine's economy, its communities and the character and traditions of our state.

Working Forests

Over 2.4 million
acres of working
forests conserved

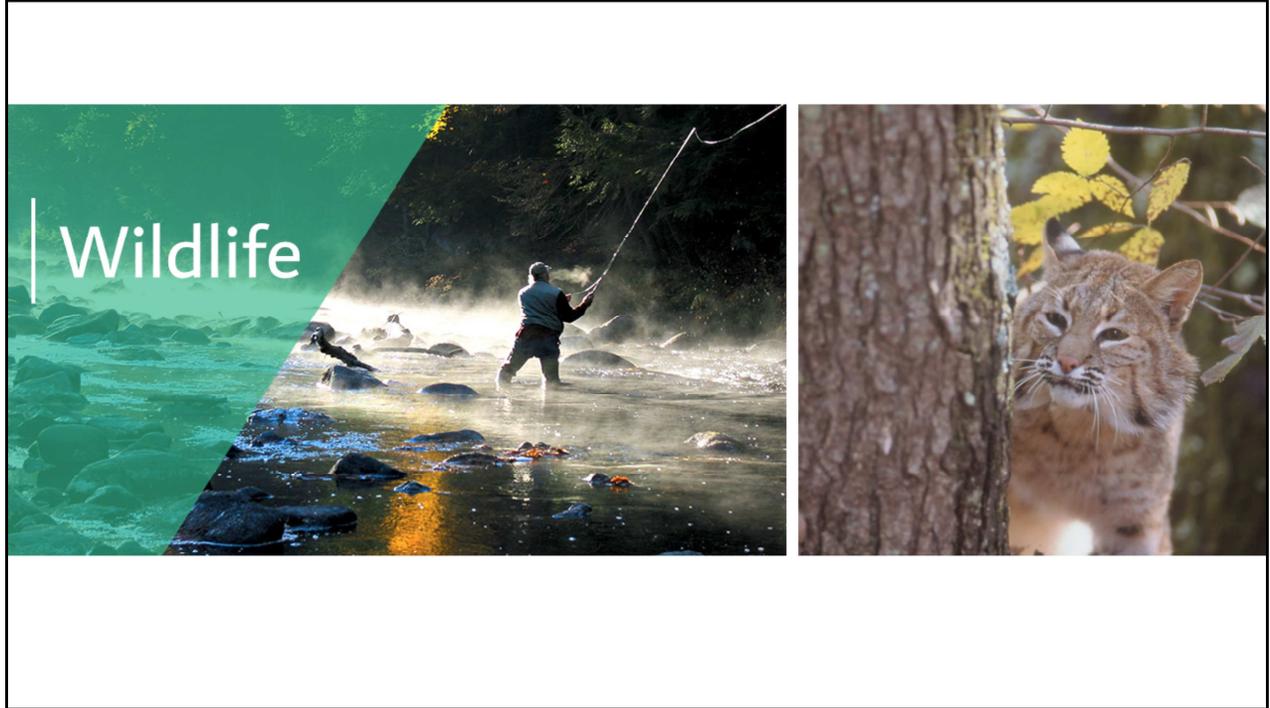


Landscape-scale working forest easements, some encompassing several hundred thousand acres, have secured 2.4 million acres of Maine's wood basket ensuring that these lands will supply Maine's forest products industry for generations to come.

Working Farms



A collaboration of federal, state and non-profit interests has led to the conservation of over 45,000 acres of productive Maine farmland and associated woodlots, allowing farmers to stay on their land and providing affordable opportunities for a new generation of farmers to acquire their own farms.



Acquisitions such as the Cold Stream project were targeted towards protecting key wildlife resources, such as native brook trout waters that are both an essential element of Maine's natural heritage and a major contributor to Maine's tourism economy. Maine is the last true stronghold for wild brook trout. 97% of the intact lakes and ponds supporting native brook populations in the Eastern U.S. are found in Maine.



Land conservation is supporting Maine marine fisheries through securing the future of strategic working waterfront wharfs and guaranteeing access to clam flats. The Land for Maine's Future Working Waterfront Program has helped 1,280 Maine fishing families and 637 fishing vessels.



Maine's tourism industry is inextricably tied to Maine's scenic beauty and the multitude of outdoor recreational opportunities. Land conservation has protected almost 1200 miles of ATV trails and almost 1700 miles of snowmobile trails. Of particular note, over 150 miles of abandoned railroad beds have been converted to multi-use trails.

Land conservation has preserved other traditional recreational uses such as Maine sporting camps as well as new enterprises offering linked networks of backcountry huts such as those provided by Maine Hut & Trails and the Appalachian Mountain Club.



With shorefront lands under ever-growing development pressures, providing the public with boat access to Maine lakes, rivers, ponds and coast has been an ongoing focus of land conservation efforts. Over the past generation, the number of boat access sites owned by the state has at least doubled – growing from 75 to over 150. Recently surveyed land trusts report having conserved over 200 boat launch sites, and the online database maintained by the Bureau of Parks and Lands contains over 570 entries.

Key Elements of Land Conservation Success

New Tools

Statewide & Federal Planning Initiatives

Expanded Funding from Diverse Sources

Partnerships

Public Support

So, how did this golden era of land conservation come about? One reason is that new actors and tools emerged that allowed conservation efforts to exceed expectations.

New Tools: Conservation Easements

“A conservation easement is a perpetual restriction that is voluntarily placed on a piece of property to protect its conservation values”

During the last 30 years, conservation easements became a go-to tool for land conservation. A conservation easement is a perpetual restriction voluntarily placed on a piece of property to protect its conservation values. Over half of the conserved lands in Maine are in the form of conservation easements rather than fee ownership. Easements are appealing because they stretch scarce dollars, keep working farms and forests in production, allow landowners to retain ownership of special properties, and keep the property on the tax rolls.



Statewide & Federal Planning Initiatives

Northern Forest Lands Council

1994 Regional study to develop strategies for conserving the Northern Forest

Land Acquisition Priorities Advisory Committee (LAPAC)

1997 study to develop state land acquisition priorities and refine LMF policies

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Required every five years to be eligible for federal funding; evaluates demand for outdoor recreation and implementation plan to address needs

Ecological Reserves Study

Reports that established and refined Maine's ecological reserve system

Charting Maine's Future: An Action Plan for Promoting Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places

The 2006 Brookings Institute study that proposed a path forward to growing the state's economy while promoting sustainable prosperity and quality places

State Wildlife Action Plan

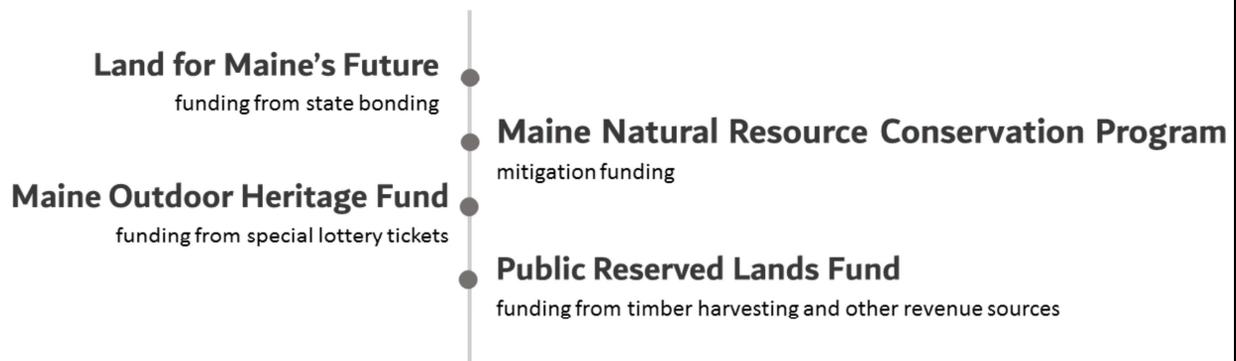
A collaborative plan that identifies strategies to conserve priority wildlife species and habitats.

IF&W Big Game Management Plan

MDIF&W plan for management plans for Maine's big game species (deer, bear, moose, and wild turkey) setting goals for each species and strategies to achieve them.

Land conservation over the past thirty years relied upon numerous ground-breaking studies as well as detailed natural resource planning efforts including, to name a few: The Northern Forest Lands Council of the early 1990's which looked at changing trends in the North Woods; The Land Acquisition Priorities Advisory Committee of 1997 which guided future LMF acquisition efforts; As well as statewide recreation, ecological and wildlife plans that identified needs, priorities and strategies.

Expanded Funding from Diverse Sources: State



Not surprisingly, expanded funding was a primary catalyst for land conservation. While cumulative figures are tough to come by, we know that at least \$600 million has been spent on land conservation over the past generation. On the state side, the most critical funding source was the Land for Maine's Future Program which has conserved over 600,000 acres since its inception in 1987.

Other key state funding programs included:

- the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program which uses state and federal mitigation funds to award competitive grants for projects that protect and restore natural resources across the state; and
- the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund which supports land conservation, stewardship and research through the sale of scratch lottery tickets.
- And funding from timber harvesting and other revenue sources associated with Public Lands

Expanded Funding from Diverse Sources: Federal

Forest Legacy Program

U.S. Forest Service partnership with state agencies to protect privately owned forest lands through conservation easements or land purchases.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act

NAWCA Offers grants to increase bird populations and wetland habitat.

Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

Provides grants to coastal states to restore and enhance coastal wetland ecosystems and associated uplands.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

funds both acquisition of federal lands and provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of recreation areas and facilities.

Federal Aid For Wildlife Management

“Pittman-Robertson” funding (derived from gun and ammo sales) funds conservation and wildlife management.

Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Land Acquisition Grants

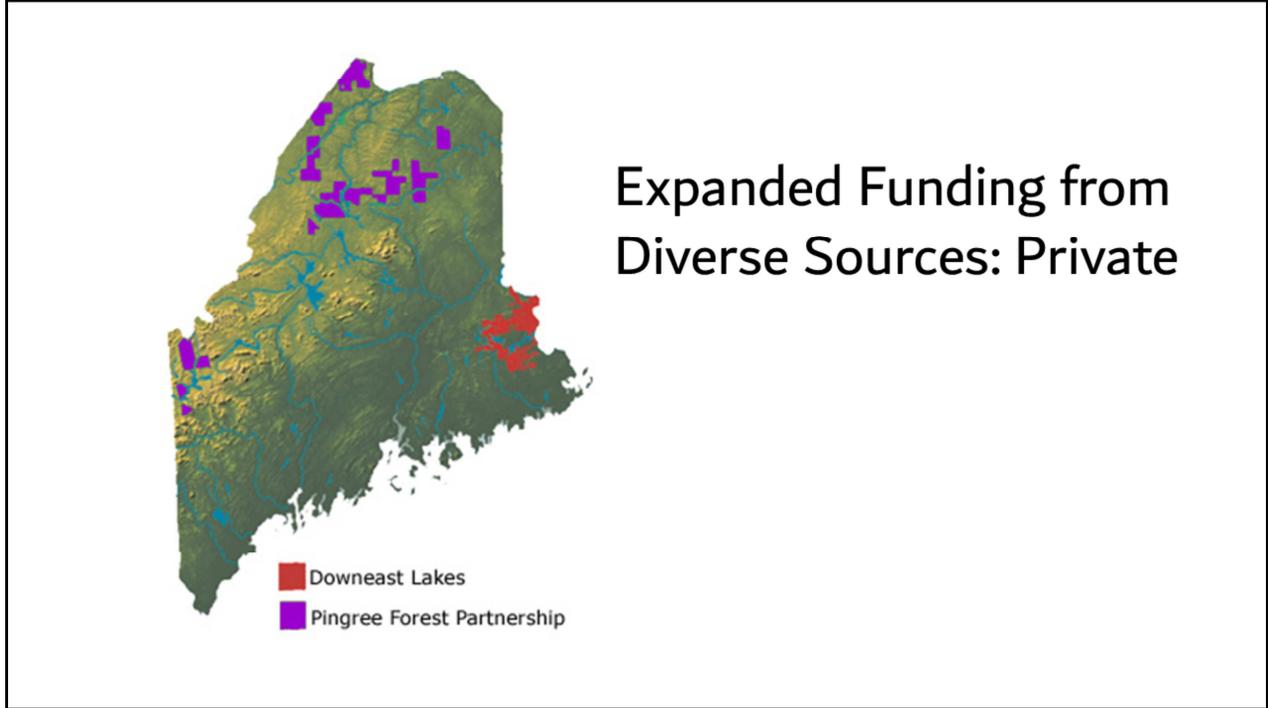
Provides funds for land acquisitions that have important benefits for listed, proposed, and candidate species.

Although Federal acquisition of lands was limited during this period, federal funding was not. The US Forest Service’s Forest Legacy Program, a partnership between state and federal governments, has provided more than \$76 million for 35 working forest projects. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has provided critical funding for parks and open space in the United States for 50 years. In Maine, it provides dollars for key federal acquisitions in such locations as Acadia National Park, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge and the Appalachian Trail, as well as funding that goes to state and municipal projects. In the last 30 years LWCF contributed over \$5 million to land acquisition projects for state and local projects and substantially more for federal acquisitions.



Municipalities also brought funding to the table as illustrated here with the Knights Pond project in Cumberland and North Yarmouth. Between 1996 and 2013, communities, mostly, but not entirely in southern Maine, approved a total of \$15,400,000 in bonds for conservation.

Other towns, ranging from Bremen to Machiasport made contributions to acquisition projects by allocating a portion of the annual budget or by tapping reserve funds. In Southern Maine, over \$3.8 million was allocated for land conservation



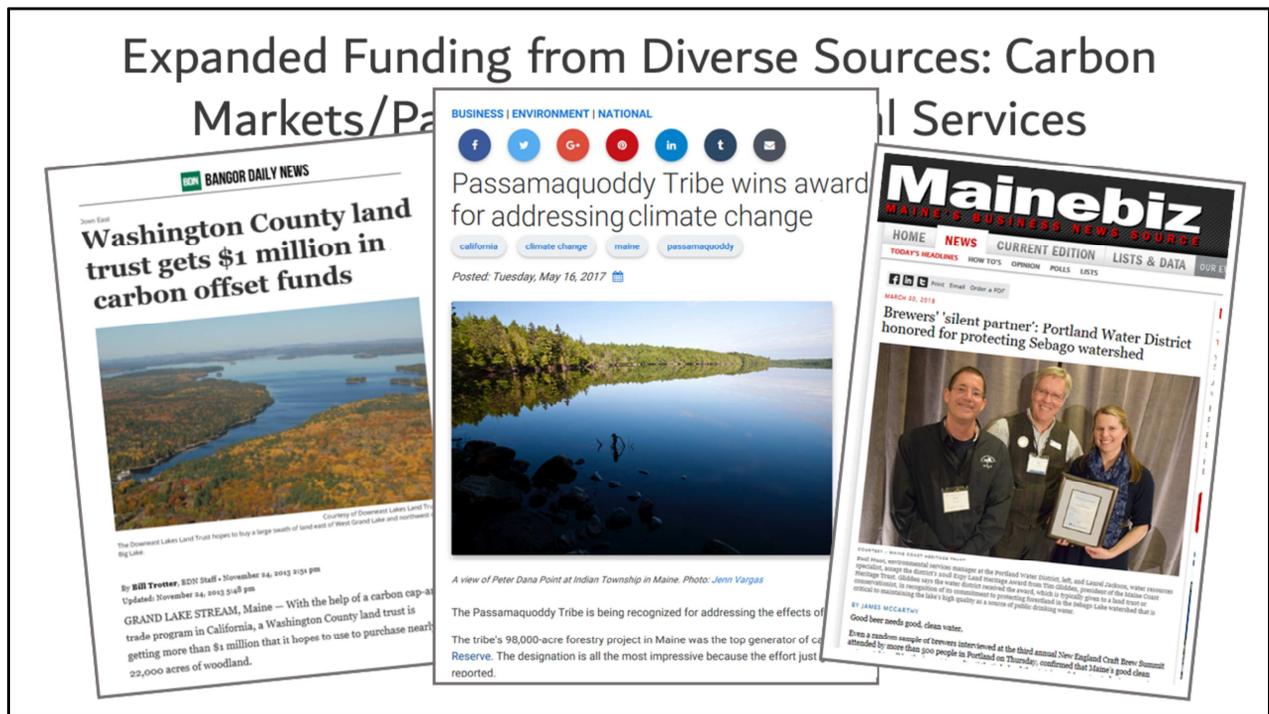
While all of these public sources of funding were critical to land conservation, the fact is that private donations over this period exceeded the total of public contributions – a remarkable achievement and a testament to the commitment of Maine people to preserving their natural legacy.

While complete numbers are difficult to come by, the best information available indicates that at least \$329 million of private contributions were made toward land conservation projects.

As just one of many examples, though a prominent one, New England Forestry Foundation raised over \$28 million of private funding to acquire a conservation easement over three-quarter million acres of forest land owned by the Pingree family, the largest easement in the country.

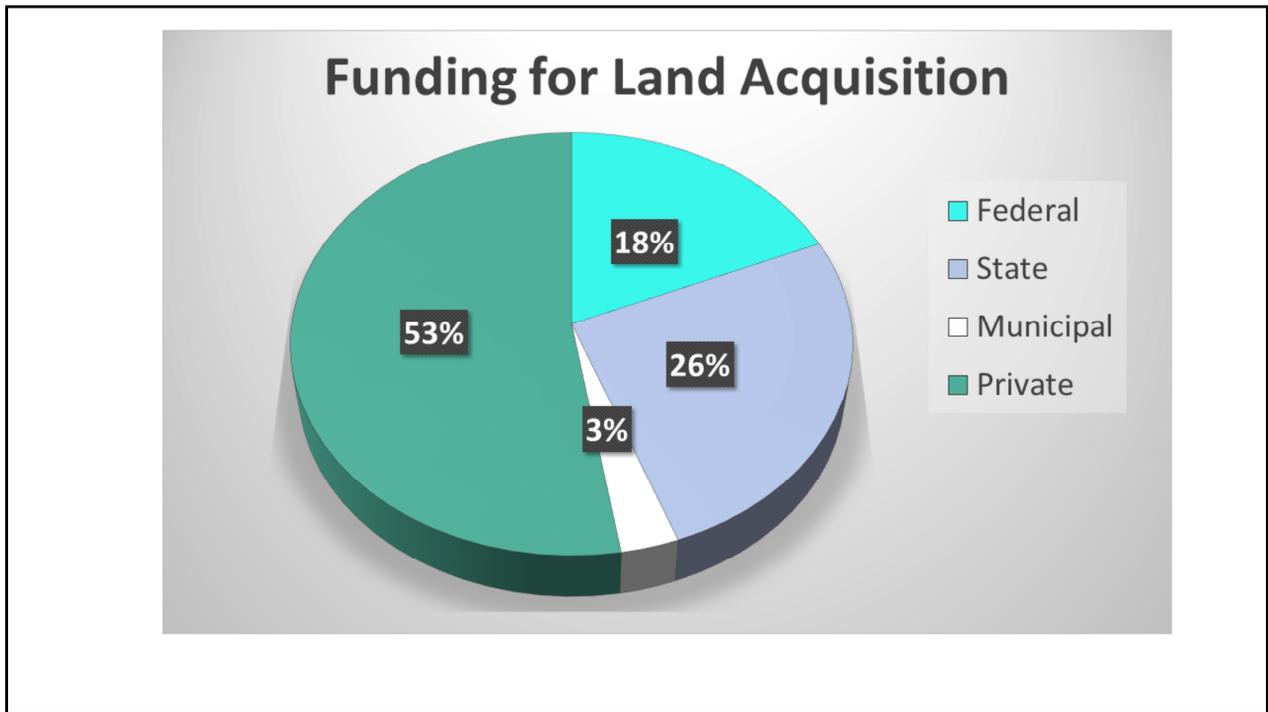
LMF reports that every state dollar spent on land conservation is leveraged with three dollars from other sources – a big bang for the buck of state taxpayers.

Expanded Funding from Diverse Sources: Carbon Markets/Paid Ecological Services



And with each passing year, new sources of land conservation funding are emerging. Over the past few years, the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Downeast Lakes Land Trusts and the Passamaquoddy Tribe have sold carbon credits on their forest lands to pay for both acquisition and stewardship.

In another "payment for ecological services" endeavor, Portland Water District provided \$500,000 for land protection just the last 5 years in order to protect the future water quality of Sebago Lake, the city's water supply.



This chart shows estimated contributions to land conservation over the past decade – though admittedly, precise figures are difficult to come by.

Partnerships

MEDOMAK TASK FORCE AT WORK

The Future Looks Bright for Water Quality

On a lovely afternoon in mid-September, ten of us boarded two boats for an hour's tour of the lower Medomak River and Muscongus Bay. Among those in attendance were Julie Krizek, Waldoboro's new town manager; Abden Simmons, Chairman of the Shellfish Committee and commercial fisherman; Glen Mehlin, a founding member of the Medomak Task Force and commercial fisherman; Bill Bragg, the Waldoboro shellfish warden; Gabbe Hillier, a University of Maine grad student studying ocean currents; Forrest Bell, project consultant; representatives from the U.S. EPA and Maine DEP; and myself, Arnie Reiter, representing MVT as its Interim Executive Director.

part of the grant award process, representatives from the U.S. EPA and Maine DEP came to meet the Task Force and get a first-hand look at the project area. This is how we all found ourselves out on the river that day.

We motored out to the northern line of Meeting House Cove which delineates the permanently closed flats. Glen took center stage. He leaped to the boat's bow to speak passionately about the hard work of the past four years and the real improvements in water quality. Glen reminded us that "the river endows 150 to 175 people and 52 million



SOURCE: Printed March 18 | Updated March 20

The Forester: Partnership between land trust, Maine Forest Service grew into something big

Local Wood Works is honored with the Source Award for Forester, based on its efforts to connect consumers to local wood products.

While many states' land acquisition programs are top-down enterprises, with state government setting priorities and taking primary responsibility for acquisitions; Maine has instead opted for an approach that fully engages the public and depends upon public-private partnerships. For example, the vast majority of proposals to come before the Land for Maine's Future Program do not arise from state agencies, but rather from land trusts and municipalities.



Partnerships: Maine Land Trusts

While Maine's first land trust was founded in 1901, land trusts really came on the scene in the 1970's and exploded in the following decades. Today there are approximately 85 land trusts operating in the state. Collectively these organizations rank second in the nation in terms of the amount of land conserved in their state.

Partnerships



sportsmen



forest landowners



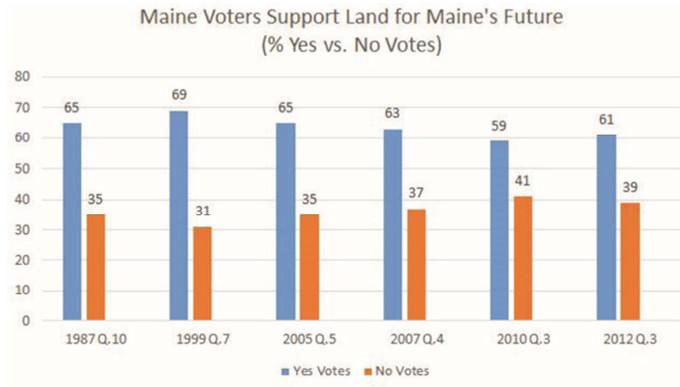
ORV clubs



trails groups

And as the scale and scope of conservation in this era grew and diversified, so too did the partners that were involved in these efforts.

- Sportsmen provided critical support for habitat protection and hunting and fishing access
- Timber investors sought out conservation opportunities as part of their business plans
- ATV and snowmobile trail users became important allies in gaining public support for acquisitions
- Other trail groups, from mountain-bikers to cross-country skiers also linked their objectives with land conservation projects.



MAINE VOTERS STATEWIDE HAVE OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTED LMF BONDS AT THE POLLS IN SIX ELECTIONS.

	1987 Q.10	1999 Q.7	2005 Q.5	2007 Q.4	2010 Q.3	2012 Q.3
Statewide	65% win	69% win	65% win	63% win	59% win	61% win
Yes votes	246,257	282,512	259,475	171,892	331,919	418,555
No votes	133,017	128,972	140,469	100,580	227,182	270,301
Counties won	16	16	16	16	14	15

Ultimately, it all comes down to public support, which can be measured in many ways. One of the easiest, is to look at the level of support which has been given to LMF bond issues over the years – a consistent and resounding message that land conservation is important to Maine people.

It is important to note that these bond issues enjoy strong public support throughout the state, not just in southern Maine.



"If there's a healthy food economy, farmers will be successful, and they will keep their land in farming rather than selling it for development. This benefits the whole community."

Angela Twitchell
Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust

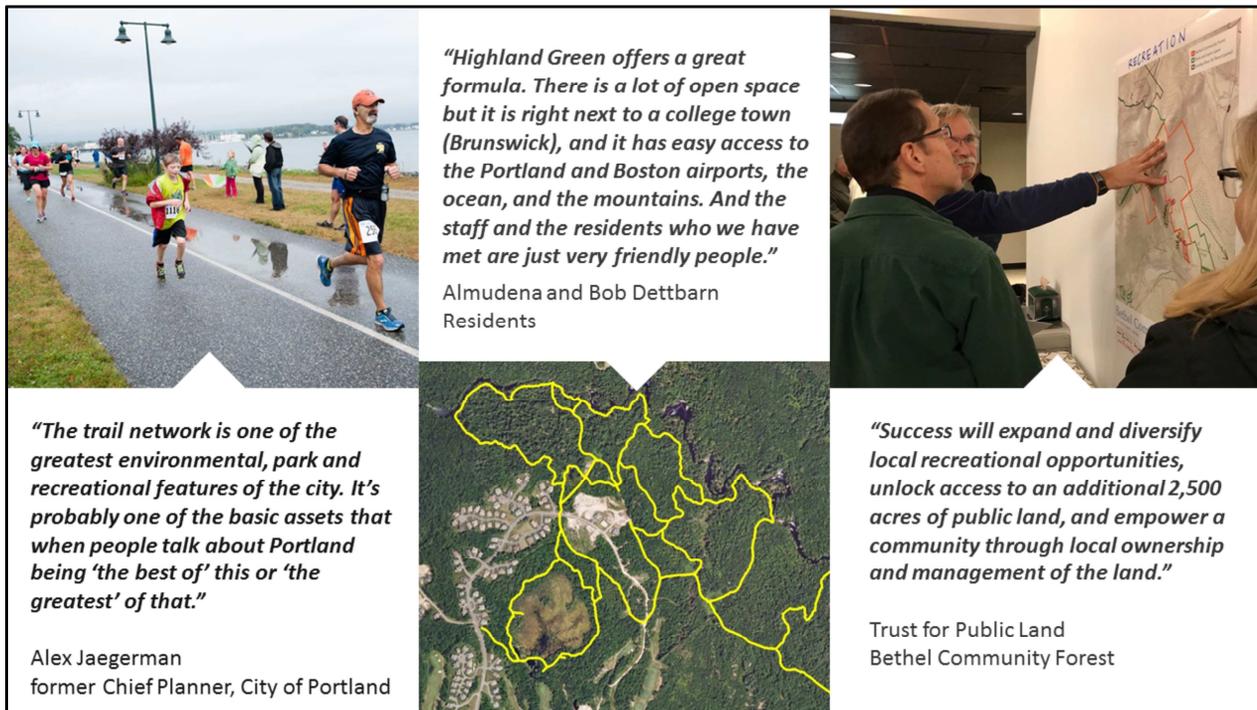
"I don't want to live in a world that doesn't have wilderness but I also don't want to live in rural New England that doesn't have rewards and opportunity. The biggest reward is that relationship to nature and to earn a life through that relationship."

Syd Lea
Grand Lake Stream



As success in protecting land continued and more people came to the table, conservation groups took a closer look at the links between people and place, and at how their work contributed to the larger goals of healthy communities. Some examples include:

- In Brunswick the land trust offered the local farmers market an attractive, central location on a protected farm
- In Grand Lake Stream, the community coming together to protect a renown land-locked salmon fishery and the tourism economy that depends upon it.



In Portland, the Eastern Promenade and other trail projects have greatly enhanced the livability of Maine's largest city.

- In Topsham, the design for the Highlands Senior Living Community included a 285-acre nature preserve along the Cathance River.
- And in Amherst and Bethel, new community forests were established protecting locally cherished lands that were intertwined with community life.

TODAY'S ISSUES ...TOMORROW'S CHALLENGES

Stewardship

Economic Trends & Transitions

Demographics

Strains on Municipal Budgets

Climate Change

On the heels of such a successful generation of conservation, what are some of the challenges and issues for the next generation of land conservation in Maine?

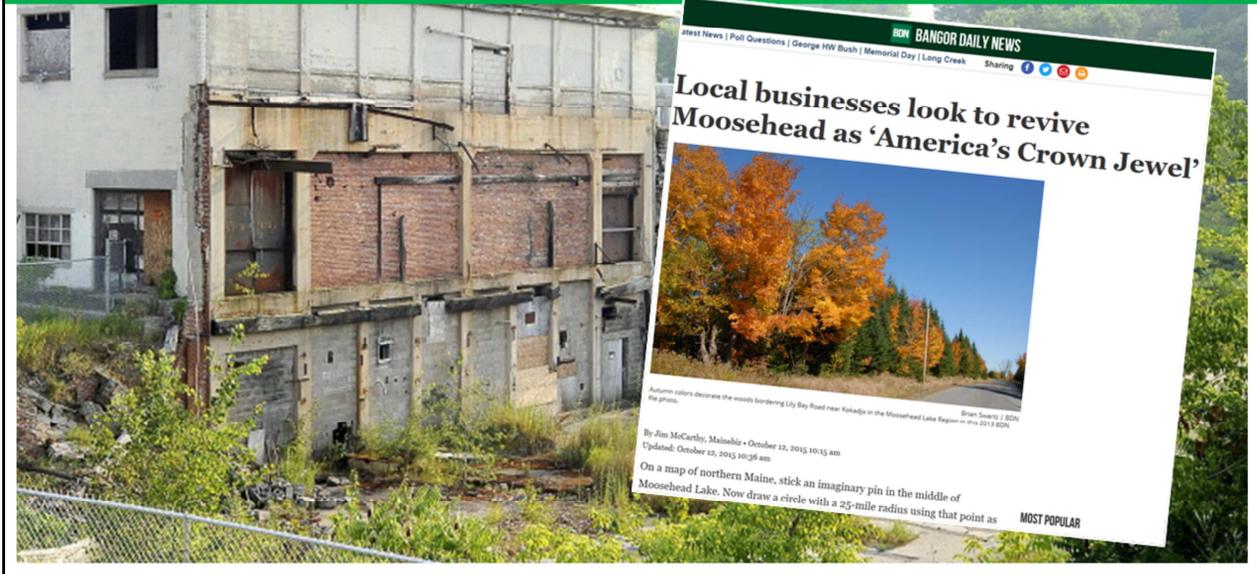
Stewardship



No doubt, one of the biggest challenges will be the costs of taking care of what we already have? According to a recent survey of Maine Land Trusts, over 80% of respondents report their biggest stewardship challenge is ongoing maintenance of lands they already own. Only one in four felt that they had sufficient funds to take care of their conservation holdings. A 2011 Colby study found that Maine's 48 state parks were underfunded especially in capital repairs with more than \$30 million needed.

Not surprisingly, more people are utilizing conserved lands for recreation every year – a good thing for Maine people and the tourism industry, but also a challenge in terms of managing that use. Most prominently, Acadia Park and Baxter Park are wrestling with how to cope with increased demand. But challenges are everywhere. At the same time, many people are becoming more reluctant to spend time outdoors due to fear of tick-borne diseases like Lyme disease. And then there is the continued problem of litter and vandalism on private property by a small number of disrespectful users. According to a 2014 statewide survey, nearly 30% of landowners plan to restrict or prohibit some types of recreation on their land in the future.

Economic Trends and Transitions



Another challenge is the changing face and economies of a growing number of Maine communities. The loss of traditional industries, most notably paper mills, and declining populations, has forced towns to find new ways to maintain a vibrant economy and workforce.

In some cases, like Greenville and Millinocket, outdoor recreation and tourism is a primary focus for future economic development and land conservation can play an important role in making that a reality.

Every dollar invested in land conservation by LMF generates returns \$11 in direct economic activity and other economic benefits.

Demographics



Maine is the oldest state in the nation. What implications might that have in planning the future of land conservation? Take, for example, that in the next decade, it is expected that as many as 400,000 acres of Maine farmland will change hands as farmers age and retire.

The outdoor recreation needs of aging and disabled individuals is becoming an increasing focus on conservation lands.

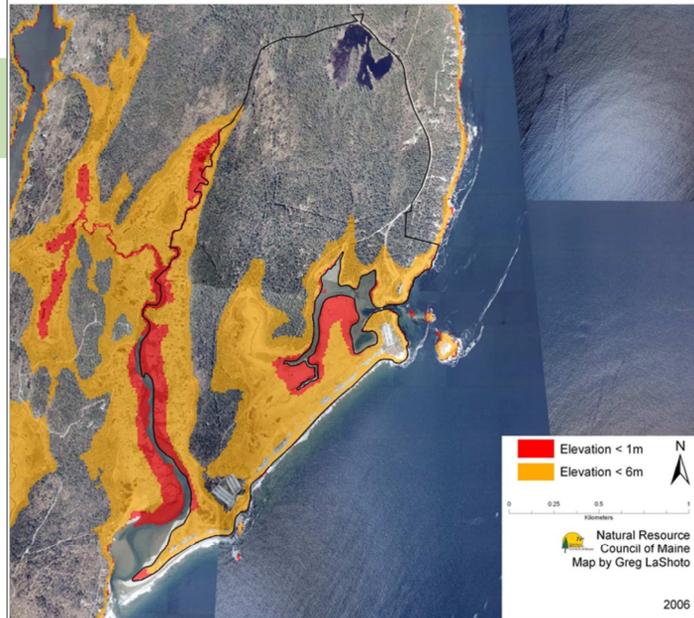
Strain on Municipal Budgets



There has been much talk over the past year about the relationship between conserved lands and the property tax base in Maine communities. As we plan for future conservation initiatives, it will be important to separate fact from fiction, and come up with approaches that are sensitive to the financial strain felt by many Maine towns and cities.

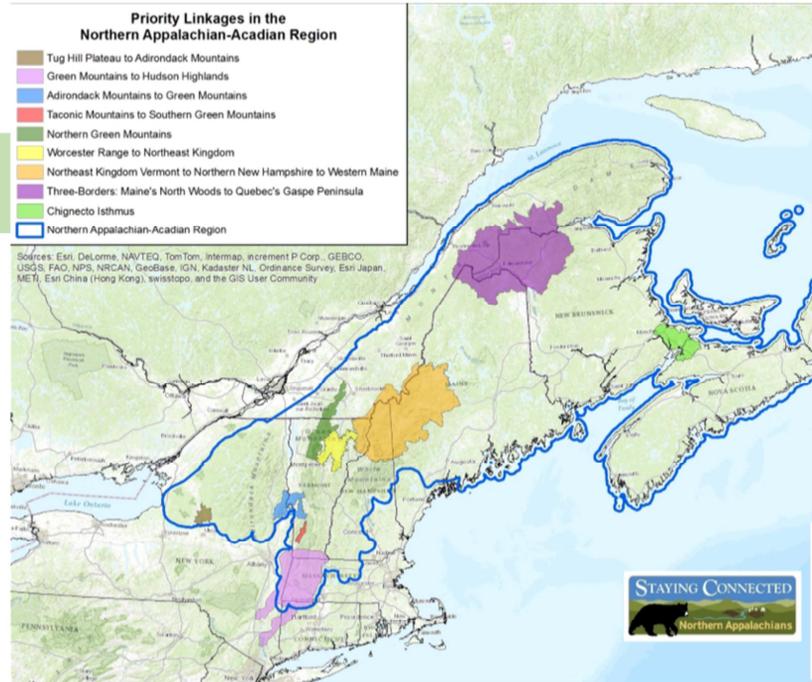
Climate Change

Impact of Sea Level Rise on Reid State Park,
Georgetown, Maine



The realities of climate change are beginning to appear all around us. How can land conservation contribute to our adaption to climate change? Perhaps acquiring coastal buffers and wetlands to adapt to sea level rise...

Climate Change



Or climate corridors to allow movement of plant and animal species as habitats change? These are but a few of the challenges for land conservation in a changing world...a changing Maine.

**30 YEARS
OF LAND CONSERVATION IN MAINE
MUCH TO BE PROUD OF**



Maine people should all be proud of the conservation legacy created over the past generation. Now it is time to build upon that tremendous success and begin to imagine what the next generation of Maine land conservation should look like.