

**TASK FORCE
TO HELP SHAPE THE NEXT GENERATION OF MAINE LAND CONSERVATION**

PUBLIC LISTENING SESSIONS

In 1987, the Maine Legislature created the Land for Maine's Future Program launching a remarkable 30-year period of land conservation in Maine during which the acres of permanently conserved land grew four-fold. These land conservation achievements touched all corners of the state and all facets of life for Maine people. The time is right to assess the accomplishments of this period, as well as its challenges, and to lay the groundwork for a new generation of land conservation in Maine.

Twenty diverse individuals and organizations have formed a Task Force to Shape the Next Generation of Maine Land Conservation, coming on the heels of three decades of unprecedented accomplishments. The group, co-chaired by David Trahan, Executive Director of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, and Tim Glidden, President of Maine Coast Heritage Trust, convened for the first time on May 29th in Augusta and plans to meet throughout the year with the goal of developing a final report in early 2019.

The Task Force has embraced an ambitious agenda, including the following issues:

- Identifying land conservation initiatives that reflect the evolving priorities of Maine people and communities;
- Improving public access to existing conservation lands;
- Enhancing collaboration between economic development organizations, recreational groups, community groups, public health advocates, land trusts, municipalities, businesses, and other civic organizations;
- Maximizing ways in which land and water conservation activities benefit local and regional economies; and
- Proposing funding, strategies, and policy options to support the Task Force's recommendations.

Critical to the Task Force's work is hearing from Maine citizens from all walks of life. At the upcoming public listening sessions, we are asking the public to respond to one or more of the following questions:

1. Maine, through a strong combination of public and private initiatives has achieved great success in conserving lands across the state over the past generation. Would you like to see these efforts continue? Or have we already conserved enough land?
2. What are your priorities and vision for future land conservation efforts? Consider:
 - Particular geographies or regions
 - Lands that meet certain needs (e.g. recreation, agriculture, wildlife habitat, etc.)
 - Lands that can be more inclusive and accessible, particularly to youth, low-income residents, the disabled, new Mainers, people of color, seniors, and others
 - Lands that address local community needs
 - Lands close to where you live and work and in the more remote reaches of Maine
3. What are your experiences utilizing public and private conservation lands? Do they meet your needs? Are they being well managed? What barriers are preventing you or others in your community from accessing them?
4. Few other states demonstrate the breadth of private land stewardship that is found in Maine including free public recreational access. Should incentives be considered to encourage and reward landowners for engaging in sustainable land management and providing public access?
5. Is land conservation creating any challenges (e.g. lost property tax revenue) that need to be addressed either at the state or local level?
6. Are you supportive of providing additional public funding for land conservation in the future? If so, should it be in the form of a new Land for Maine's Future Bond issue or do you have other ideas (other states use a variety of taxes and fees)?