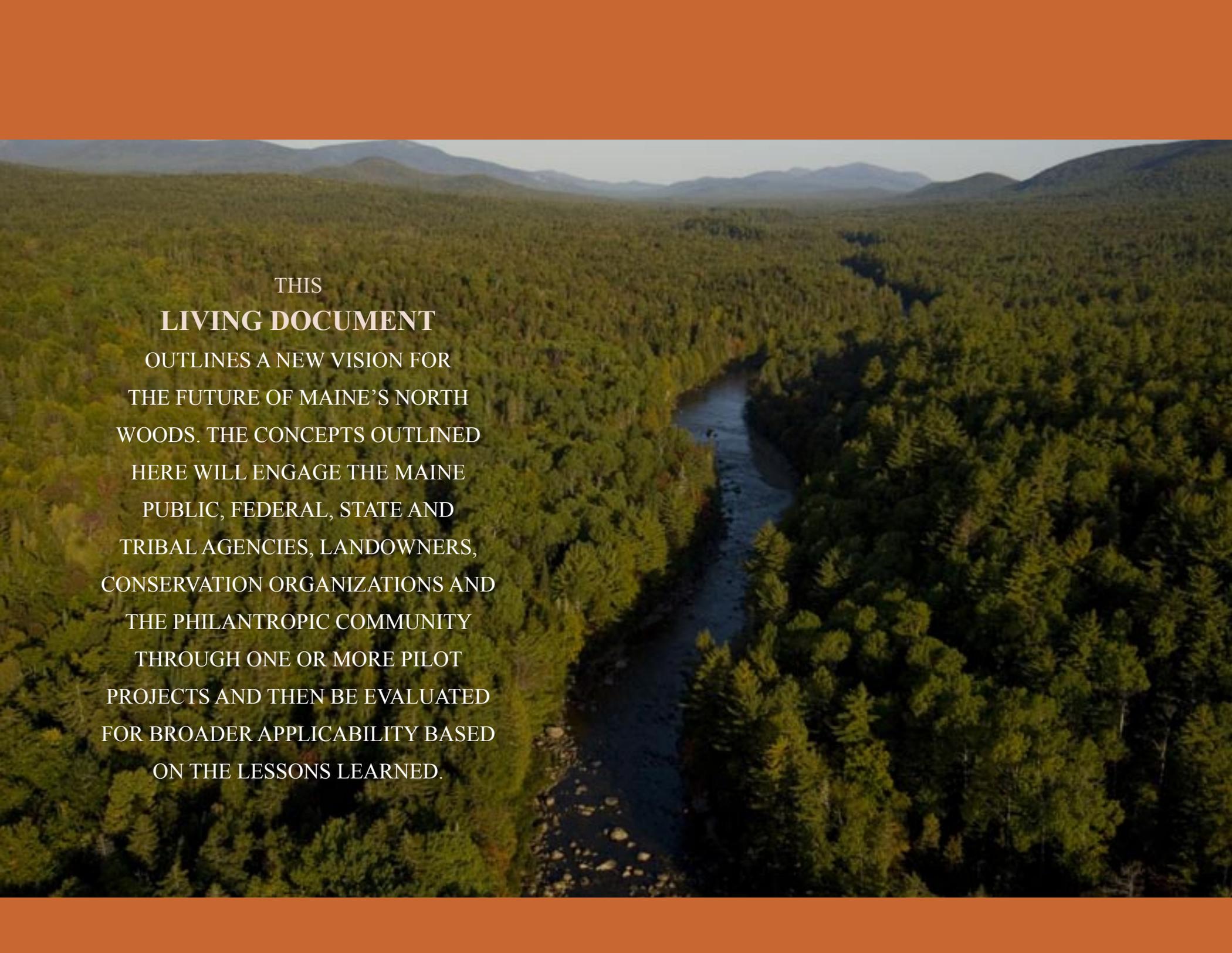


Keeping  
Maine's  
Forests



THIS  
**LIVING DOCUMENT**  
OUTLINES A NEW VISION FOR  
THE FUTURE OF MAINE'S NORTH  
WOODS. THE CONCEPTS OUTLINED  
HERE WILL ENGAGE THE MAINE  
PUBLIC, FEDERAL, STATE AND  
TRIBAL AGENCIES, LANDOWNERS,  
CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS AND  
THE PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY  
THROUGH ONE OR MORE PILOT  
PROJECTS AND THEN BE EVALUATED  
FOR BROADER APPLICABILITY BASED  
ON THE LESSONS LEARNED.



# Keeping Maine's Forests

## A LANDSCAPE FOREST CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Proposed to

**U.S. SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE  
TOM VILSACK**

And

**U.S. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
KEN SALAZAR**

Developed by

**KEEPING MAINE'S FORESTS  
STEERING COMMITTEE**

August 2010

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*“There it was, the State of Maine,  
which we had seen on the map, but not much like that -  
immeasurable forest for sun to shine on...”*

*Henry David Thoreau, The Maine Woods*

## An unprecedented coalition

of groups has joined together under the banner of Keeping Maine’s Forests in an effort to conserve the state’s magnificent forests and maintain a vibrant forest products industry. This proposal to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture is the result of frank discussions among landowners, mills, conservationists, sporting and recreational interests, tribal nations and local communities seeking to identify shared interests and a common pathway forward.

This pathway involves building on the success of previous forest land conservation projects like the West Branch of the Penobscot, Downeast Lakes and

most recently Stowe Mountain near Bethel, Maine; testing out new approaches through one or more pilot projects; and scaling up conservation efforts over time as confidence in the approach builds. This proposal provides the background and broad vision of Keeping Maine’s Forests while describing two potential pilot projects, one in Maine’s Downeast Forest and the other in Maine’s Western Mountains, both of which can be immediately pursued if sufficient resources are available. The pilot projects represent the first phase of Keeping Maine’s Forests after which the objectives and concepts contained in this proposal will be reviewed, assessed and revised as appropriate.

As a result of nine months of deliberations and consultation with a wide variety of interests (see Appendix 1 for more on contacts), the participants of Keeping Maine’s Forests have looked at Maine’s forests – which are predominantly in private ownership – through a new lens. Historically, forest landowners have been asked to shoulder the primary responsibility for maintaining the many values of the forest which directly benefit the public such as wildlife, pristine lakes and rivers, stored carbon, and recreational access. These are important public values and should be treated accordingly, rather than as liabilities which burden landownership. Keeping Maine’s Forests seeks to reframe that relationship so that the public supports the long-term ownership objectives of forest landowners and develops mechanisms to reward them for maintaining and enhancing forest values with demonstrable public benefits for future generations.

## Our Vision

We seek a future that maintains both the environmental and economic integrity of the Maine Woods, the largest continuous expanse of largely undeveloped and unfragmented forest in the Eastern United States. We envision the Maine Woods composed of a matrix of public land, private land permanently protected by conservation easement, land managed under long term agreements for habitat or ecosystem services and other private forest land. This matrix will help assure the vitality and competitiveness of the forest products industry, sustain a healthy and intact forest, protect valuable habitat and provide for public recreation.

This matrix, and its benefits to the industry and the people of Maine, can be

achieved through thoughtful and creative design and use of a variety of financial incentives that reframe the public-private relationship – rewarding landowners for long-term assurances of public benefits provided by these forests, and through investments in acquiring conservation easements and fee conservation lands.

To be successful, Keeping Maine’s Forests must assure all of these continued public benefits:

- Maintain a stable or increasing flow of wood fiber;
- Promote healthy forests – sustainably managed;
- Safeguard key natural resources particularly water resources;
- Conserve and enhance key fish and wildlife habitats;
- Provide abundant recreational opportunities; and,
- Sustain local economies.

In the past, these objectives have often been viewed as being in conflict with one another. Moving forward, it is imperative that they be seen as mutually supportive of one another and pursued collectively.

Keeping Maine’s Forests seeks to involve the US Departments of Agriculture and Interior to test and implement approaches that could be used to achieve these goals. Through a strategic and creative partnership, Keeping Maine’s Forests offers an opportunity for making federal conservation and stewardship programs more relevant and cost-effective than ever before and to make the Maine Woods a model for landscape management and conservation that will provide a sustainable flow of wood to the state’s forest products industry while conserving significant environmental and recreational values.

### **Forests: Maine’s Defining Natural Resource**

Maine’s forests have traditionally been and remain today the very foundation of the state’s economy. In fact, Maine’s forest products industry ranks first in

the country in terms of its contribution to the state’s economy and second in the nation in terms of its contribution to state jobs (based on available data). The more than 200 forest products facilities in the state are both diverse and innovative, including both traditional products such as paper and lumber as well as emerging markets for energy and chemical production. Maine’s forests are also the base for a growing tourism and recreation economy which currently contributes billions of dollars to the state’s economy.

Were Thoreau to return today, he would find that the Maine Woods remain remarkably like they were when he last visited more than a century and a half ago. Today, forests still blanket some 90% of Maine’s area, and are without doubt the state’s single largest natural asset and an extraordinary resource of national and global importance. What we know as “the Maine Woods” is an extraordinary 12 million acre expanse of contiguous forest stretching from the White Mountains along the Maine-New Hampshire border, north to the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and east to the Downeast coast. It comprises the greatest continuous expanse of unbroken forest in the Eastern United States, encompassing the larg-



est intact temperate broadleaf and mixed forest in the nation and one of the best examples in the entire world.

Here one encounters an array of fish and wildlife found nowhere else in the Eastern United States. What Mainers consider common species such as wild brook trout, moose, loons and black bears draw people from around the planet. As the impacts from global climate change grow, the Maine Woods offer an extraordinary opportunity for carbon storage and to facilitate the adaptation of forest ecosystems. The Maine Woods provide an essential base for Tribal Nations to sustain cultural values and contribute to their livelihood. They are also home to world-class outdoor recreation destinations – from the nation’s best wild brook trout fishery to classic Maine sporting camps and the Appalachian Trail.

### **Public Values on Private Lands: Maine’s Unique Forest Management Tradition**

*Why have the Maine Woods retained so much of their special character?*

The fact that a resource of such extraordinary value and national significance



remains intact today is a testament to those who have who have owned and managed these lands through the generations. All of the public values that exist in Maine’s forests today have evolved in the midst of a working forest that has been harvested for hundreds of years. Unlike the vast expanses of public lands elsewhere in the country, Maine’s forests remain largely in private hands while still providing a wealth of public benefits. For generations, the owners of large tracts of Maine’s forests have managed their lands primarily as a resource for the forest products industry. Their stewardship not only furnished natural resources for their mills, it also prevented subdivision of these lands, provided quality habitat for fish and wildlife and maintained public access for outdoor recreation.

### **Maine’s Forests in Transition: Challenges and Opportunities**

*What is the future of Maine’s Woods?* No one person or interest has or should have the answer.

Over the past 20 years, there have been dramatic changes in forest land ownership that had been relatively stable for generations. Previously, most of the Maine Woods was owned by paper companies that relied upon these lands to supply their mills. Today, Maine’s forests are largely owned by a new generation of investors that own these lands independent from the mills, though still relying on vibrant wood markets. This change has generated some public concern that the enormous benefits that these forests have provided for many generations could, over time, be lost. It has also led to unprecedented opportunities for forest land conservation. (see page 21).

In recent decades, Maine has tried to plot a course through often heated debate, through contentious referenda and regulatory proceedings, through a tug of war that has left blisters but no winner or coherent vision. Instead, the answer is emerging from this effort through recognition of shared interests and through collaboration and commitment to joining forces for the sake of the largest contiguous forest east of the Mississippi.

# KEEPING MAINE'S FORESTS

## A Public-Private Partnership to Provide New Direction

As we build a foundation of trust, Keeping Maine's Forests now offers a bold initiative to advance national conservation goals in a manner consistent with the traditions and needs of Maine people. This collaborative initiative honors the full spectrum of values Maine's forests provide - from wood to wildlife - by working with landowners to support their long-term ownership objectives and maintain timber supply while, at the same time ensuring that the forest will continue to provide its many public benefits. It seeks to accomplish this objective through a two-pronged approach of land conservation and stewardship.

Keeping Maine's Forests will focus primarily on creating opportunities for willing forest landowners to ensure that their lands are not developed and can remain an active part of Maine's productive timber base. In addition, it is time to recognize that, while it is reasonable to expect forest land management to meet established regulatory standards, such as protecting water quality, there need to be new mechanisms developed to fairly compensate landowners for the societal benefits provided by maintaining forest attributes such as biodiversity, wildlife habitat, carbon storage, and public recreation. These go beyond legal responsibility of land ownership. This approach builds on the model in place for conservation of public values on private agricultural lands and the emergence of markets for ecosystem services.

*Maine has taken steps to control its own destiny by building trust and dialogue among forest landowners, conservationists, the environmental community, recreational users and others.*



## Wildlife

Maine forests are home to over 85% of the remaining wild brook trout populations in the lower 48 states, and support more moose and bear than any state save Alaska. The Maine Woods harbor such rare, threatened and endangered species as Atlantic salmon, Canada lynx, wood turtles, Bicknell's thrush, black terns, yellow lampmussel and the extremely rare Tomah mayfly. Abundant insect life feeds the young gray jay, the three-toed woodpecker and the spruce grouse. The unbroken forests coupled with thousands of streams, wetlands, lakes and ponds provide habitat for species that stay close to home and those that need to range, accommodating one of the most diverse array of large and small predators in the entire country, including carnivore species from weasels, marten, raccoon and fisher to bobcats, red fox, lynx and coyotes.



Over the past decade, Maine has led the nation in working with large forest landowners on working forest easements and developing shared conservation outcomes. Keeping Maine's Forests seeks to build upon and improve that success. A comprehensive box of conservation tools such as easements, long-term stewardship payments, and fee acquisitions, designed to meet the needs of individual landowners while assuring the continued public conservation and recreational benefits allows a tailored approach to conservation across the Maine Woods.

In contrast to uneven and piecemeal public support for stewardship efforts that have been the norm, Keeping Maine's Forests envisions a stewardship initiative to address comprehensively a broad range of resource management objectives in a coherent and cohesive manner. As part of the pilot project phase, Keeping Maine's Forests proposes to design a practical approach to compensate landowners for the benefits the public derives from their lands. After evaluation following the pilot project phase, this approach could be made available across the region and complement the growth of markets for ecosystem services.

### **Pilot Project Proposal**

Keeping Maine's Forests proposes to test the best approaches to implement these concepts over the next two to three years on specific ownerships and to refine the concepts outlined herein. Two potential pilot projects are outlined in this proposal: one in the Downeast region of Maine and the other in the High Peaks region of Western Maine. Each incorporates multiple landowners that have expressed an interest in participating in conservation and/or stewardship initiatives. Both involve acquisition of both conservation easements and fee lands that would connect existing conservation ownerships resulting in an extraordinary example of landscape conservation.

Endorsement of the potential pilot projects by the Keeping Maine's Forests Steering Committee is intended to qualify the projects to take advantage of the federal programs that support the objectives of Keeping Maine's Forests. The landowner will negotiate the specific terms of any transaction with appropriate buyer representatives. As details for the components of the pilot project are developed, the Steering Committee will review the pilot projects to assess whether

*We seek a future that maintains both the environmental and economic integrity of the Maine Woods, the largest continuous expanse of largely undeveloped forest in the Eastern United States.*

they meet the objectives identified as necessary for Keeping Maine's Forests' success. Based upon this vetting process, the Steering Committee will offer its support for funding and implementation of the pilot projects.

After one or more pilot projects has been implemented, the Steering Committee will evaluate the success of the project(s) in meeting the goals of Keeping Maine's Forests and reassess the long-term objectives of the initiative and whether, and how, the initiative should be expanded to the broader region.

Looking more broadly at the Maine Woods, four "Demonstration Landscapes" have been identified to illustrate the potential future outcomes that could result: Western Mountains & Lakes; Allagash & St. John Rivers; Moosehead to Katahdin, and Downeast. Each of these areas possesses an extraordinary array of conservation values; substantial existing conserved lands; forest landowners who have expressed interest in pursuing forest conservation and stewardship opportunities; and experienced non-profit conservation organizations prepared to take the lead on major conservation initiatives. It is important to note that not all landowners in the demonstration landscapes have expressed interest in taking advantage of potential conservation or stewardship options.

### ***An Investment to Yield Enormous Dividends for the Future***

This proposal identifies those programs within the Departments of Interior and Agriculture that have objectives and track records closely aligned with the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative and which could be utilized to help fund the proposed conservation and stewardship components. Seeking to ensure the future of the Maine Woods represents a major funding challenge that will need

to be sustained over many years. Because these are resources of both state and national significance, and equally or more important to the citizens of Northern Maine, Keeping Maine's Forests proposes that costs be shared by federal agencies and state and private sources.

Keeping Maine's Forests is seeking \$25 million of federal funding (above and beyond what Maine has been receiving for forest conservation and stewardship) to initiate the pilot project phase of Keeping Maine's Forests which will be supplemented by state and private funding. Based upon the success of the pilot project(s) and an assessment of landowner interest in participating in the Keeping Maine's Forests initiatives, long-term funding projections will be developed.

To succeed, the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative will require much more than funding. It will require increased flexibility on the part of federal programs for the use of the funds available. It must create an effective process to make decisions and evaluate progress. It must bring many more groups into the mix to ensure that the outcome ultimately reflects the interests of all who have a stake in it. Keeping Maine's Forests proposes to add representatives of local communities and a range of forest interests, as well as federal agencies, to the existing Steering Committee. This broader group will develop an implementation plan, identifying where and how to focus initial efforts and resources, with projected budgets and a selection process for conservation and stewardship projects. Additionally, it will be critical to closely involve Maine's Congressional delegation throughout the implementation process.

### **Ongoing Assessment and Discussion:**

Over the past months, the Keeping Maine's Forests Steering Committee has made tremendous progress in identifying common concerns and agreeing upon conservation and stewardship strategies to pursue as part of the proposed pilot projects. However, the Steering Committee members view this proposal and the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative as a dynamic effort that will evolve and improve based upon the experience with the pilot project(s), additional research and analysis, and ongoing discussion. The Steering Committee has identified a variety of challenges and issues that require its future attention that can help to refine and improve Keeping Maine's Forests and strengthen the partnership and

resolve of its participants. These issues include:

- Assessing the impact of the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative on wood supply;
- Reviewing, improving and, where possible, simplifying working forest conservation easement standards;
- Assessing the success of the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative in protecting key ecological and recreational resources;
- Encouraging local and regional planning efforts that identify appro-



*Species we consider common in Maine,  
such as moose, loons, eagles and black bear,  
draw visitors from all over the world.*

priate locations for future economic development and areas of high conservation need;

- Exploring forest conservation needs and opportunities in southern Maine;
- Creating an effective framework for programs that pay landowners for ecological services and societal benefits; and,
- Monitoring development pressures in the Maine Woods.

*That a resource of such extraordinary value and national significance remains intact is a testament to those who have owned and stewarded these lands through the generations.*



## Common Ground and Accomplishment

Keeping Maine's Forests offers an innovative new approach to landscape scale conservation and stewardship involving primarily private lands. Unlike efforts that focus on restoration of degraded habitats and polluted water resources, it is a far more cost-effective strategy: acting before the landscape becomes fragmented or loses its unique character. It is equally concerned with maintaining both the natural and economic value of the forest. Keeping Maine's Forests offers a rare opportunity to make a farsighted investment in conservation and stewardship.

While the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative represents an ambitious endeavor, Maine's experience over the past dozen years suggests that it is an achievable undertaking. Since 1998, some 2.1 million acres of the Maine Woods have been permanently conserved through the collaboration of willing landowners, land trusts, Maine communities, and state and federal government. Over \$280 million was been raised from public and private sources to acquire fee lands and conservation easements in the Maine Woods. Of that amount, over \$170 million came from private sources demonstrating the level of commitment that has already been made to conservation of the Maine Woods and providing optimism that a true public-private funding partnership can be successful over the next decade and beyond.

By building trust and encouraging frank dialogue among forest landowners, conservationists, the forest products industry, tribes, communities, recreational users, and others, Keeping Maine's Forests seeks to empower this partnership to shape the destiny of the Maine Woods. Keeping Maine's Forests seeks the partnership of the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to realize an ambitious but achievable outcome that will pay deep and meaningful long term dividends.

## What You Need to Know About Maine's Working Forest

### Forest Condition:

- Maine's **timber inventory has almost doubled in the past fifty years.**
- Maine **is the leading states in the nation with 42% of its forest land base independently certified** as sustainably managed and 100 logging firms attaining Master Logging Certification.
- Maine's **forests are well balanced** into the three stages of development with 29% in the seedling/sapling stage (young forest), 38% in the pole-timber stage (medium-age growth) and 33% in the saw timber stage (more mature growth).

### Maine Jobs:

- Approximately **one in every 15 Maine jobs** are directly or indirectly dependent upon the forestry sector; Maine ranks among the very top states in terms of the contribution of the forest products industry to employment of its residents.
- Average paper manufacturing **wages are nearly twice the state average**; the annual payroll from Maine's forest products industry exceeds one billion dollars.

### Manufacturing and Energy:

- Maine is the **second largest paper-producing state in the nation**; Over the past decade, the output from Maine's paper mills and saw mills has been near record levels.
- Maine's sawmill **production of lumber has increased by 250%** with **hardwood lumber production by about 400%** since 1975.
- Forest products account for approximately **one-third of Maine's manufacturing output** and approximately 18% of the state's foreign exports.

### Climate Change:

- **Maine's abundant natural regeneration perpetuates the cycle of sequestering carbon** in Maine's managed forest lands.
- **Energy production from wood biomass makes productive use of wood waste products**, provides a market for low-quality trees allowing for improved forest management and reduces Maine's dependence on fossil fuels.

### Opportunities for the Future:

- **The Advanced Engineered Wood Composite Center at the University of Maine at Orono is a world-class research initiative** developing technologies that are leading the way to new applications and uses of wood for a variety of structural products. Research indicates that a variety of valuable products can be made from wood including substitutes for a number of fuels and chemicals currently derived from petroleum.



# INTRODUCTION

*Through this proposal Maine offers an extraordinary opportunity* to the Departments of Interior and Agriculture to advance their national goals for landscape conservation as articulated through the *Great Outdoors America* and *All-Lands* policies, while achieving those of the people of Maine. The Keeping Maine's Forests initiative is designed to promote the twin goals of:

1. Maintaining the environmental and economic integrity of the Maine Woods, the largest continuous expanse of largely undeveloped and unfragmented forest in the Eastern United States, a unique productive working forest with a vast array of nationally significant public values that private landowners have managed and the public, from near and far, has enjoyed for generations; and

2. Using Maine as a proving ground for collaborative on-the-ground conservation and stewardship strategies that apply federal programs to stretch tax dollars and conserve the nation's natural legacy far more effectively than ever before.

At its heart, this is a proposal to maintain a sustainably managed forest landscape, which continues to produce wood products and protects ecological and

cultural values, while maintaining and improving recreational opportunities. It is an initiative that is not simply focused on sustaining a natural resource, but equally as important a way of life and an industry that has been the backbone of the state's economy for 150 years.

Maine can provide a new, cost-effective approach to landscape scale conservation that contrasts with some of the federal government's most noteworthy landscape conservation initiatives, such as the Chesapeake Bay, the Great Lakes and the Everglades. In those landscapes, the government faces the important, but costly, challenge of restoring degraded habitat and water resources.

Keeping Maine's Forests advocates for a different strategy that invests upfront and adds value. We can act before the landscape is developed and fragmented. We have the opportunity to invest in the long-term conservation and stewardship of a functioning ecosystem that supports nationally significant wildlife resources, a large timber resource that supplies globally competitive forest products industries, jobs essential to the rural economy, and world class outdoor recreation experiences.

It is time to look at Maine's forests through a new lens. Historically, we have relied upon forest landowners to shoulder the brunt of the responsibility for maintaining the many values of the forest which directly benefit the public such as wildlife, stored carbon, and recreational access. These are invaluable public values and should be treated accordingly – rather than as liabilities which burden landownership. Keeping Maine's Forests seeks to redefine that relationship by offering new options and reward landowners for maintaining and enhancing forest values.

The Keeping Maine's Forests Initiative seeks to create an innovative and robust partnership among private, federal, state, and tribal interests to conserve Maine's forests and enhance stewardship to:

- Maintain a stable or increasing flow of wood fiber;
- Promote healthy forests – sustainably managed;
- Safeguard key natural resources, particularly water resources;



# KEEPING MAINE'S FORESTS

- Conserve and enhance key fish and wildlife habitats;
- Provide abundant recreational opportunities; and
- Sustain local economies.

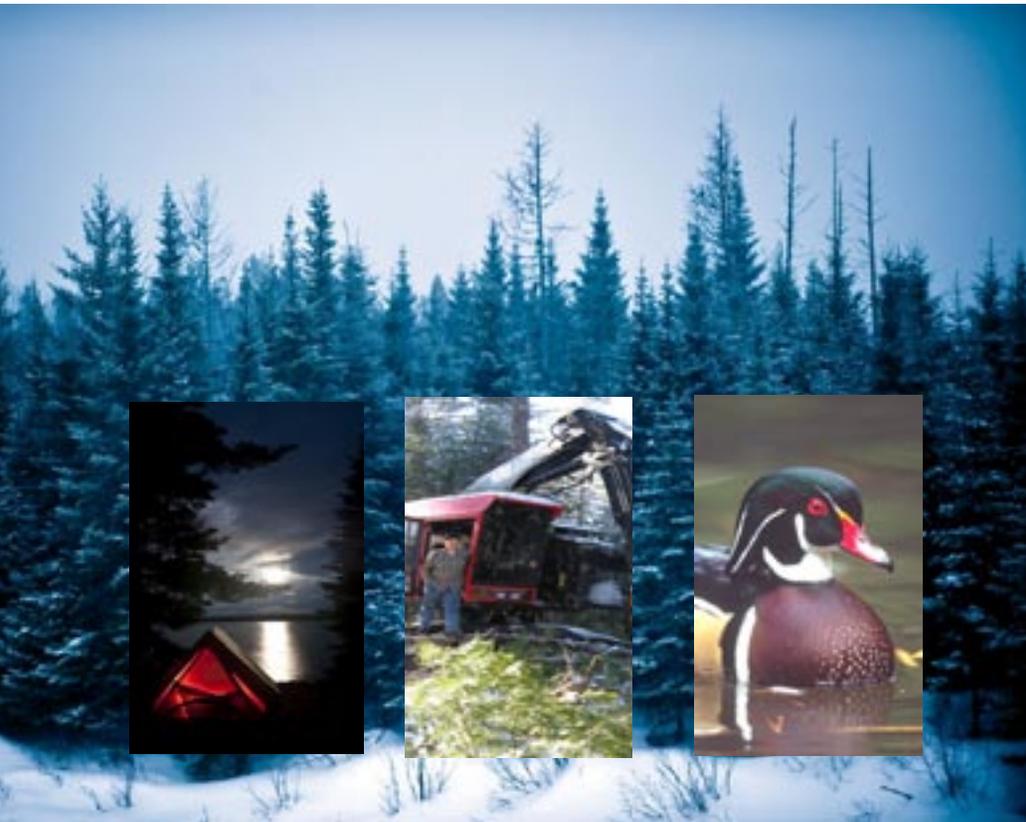
While this might seem a tall order, the Keeping Maine's Forests Steering Committee believes that each of these varied objectives is mutually supportive and essential to the success of this effort. It seeks to demonstrate this conviction through the establishment of one or more pilot projects to be pursued over the next three years.

*With 18 million acres of forest covering some 90% of its land area,* Maine is the most forested state in the country. While known as the Pine Tree State, Maine's forests actually include an unusually diverse range of native hardwood and conifer species that vary in composition based upon location and elevation. These forests are home to a great diversity of plant and animal life and the source of clean water for Maine's 32,000 miles of rivers and streams, 6,000 lakes and ponds, and aquifers. From the days that the first Native Americans came to settle these lands, Maine's forests have shaped the lives and livelihoods of Maine's residents.

Maine's forests have proven to be among the most resilient in the world -- returning with great vigor after farmlands were abandoned, pest outbreaks, and many cycles of harvesting. The Maine forest is truly a sustainable resource that supports almost twice as much standing volume of timber today than it did 50 years ago.

The forests are the very heart and identity of the state. Today, Maine's forest products industry employs tens of thousands of workers who efficiently produce paper, lumber, furniture, along with rapidly emerging opportunities in energy and chemicals. The Maine Woods remain a fabled destination for anglers, hikers, hunters, paddlers, snowmobilers, campers and all who enjoy the outdoors. They provide an essential base for Tribal Nations to sustain cultural values and contribute to their livelihood. With the emergence of climate change as today's greatest environmental challenge, Maine's vast forest resource takes on even greater importance to maintain the storage of carbon to combat the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, to help replace the use of oil, and to maintain a contiguous forest landscape that will allow plants and animals to migrate and adapt to changing climate conditions.

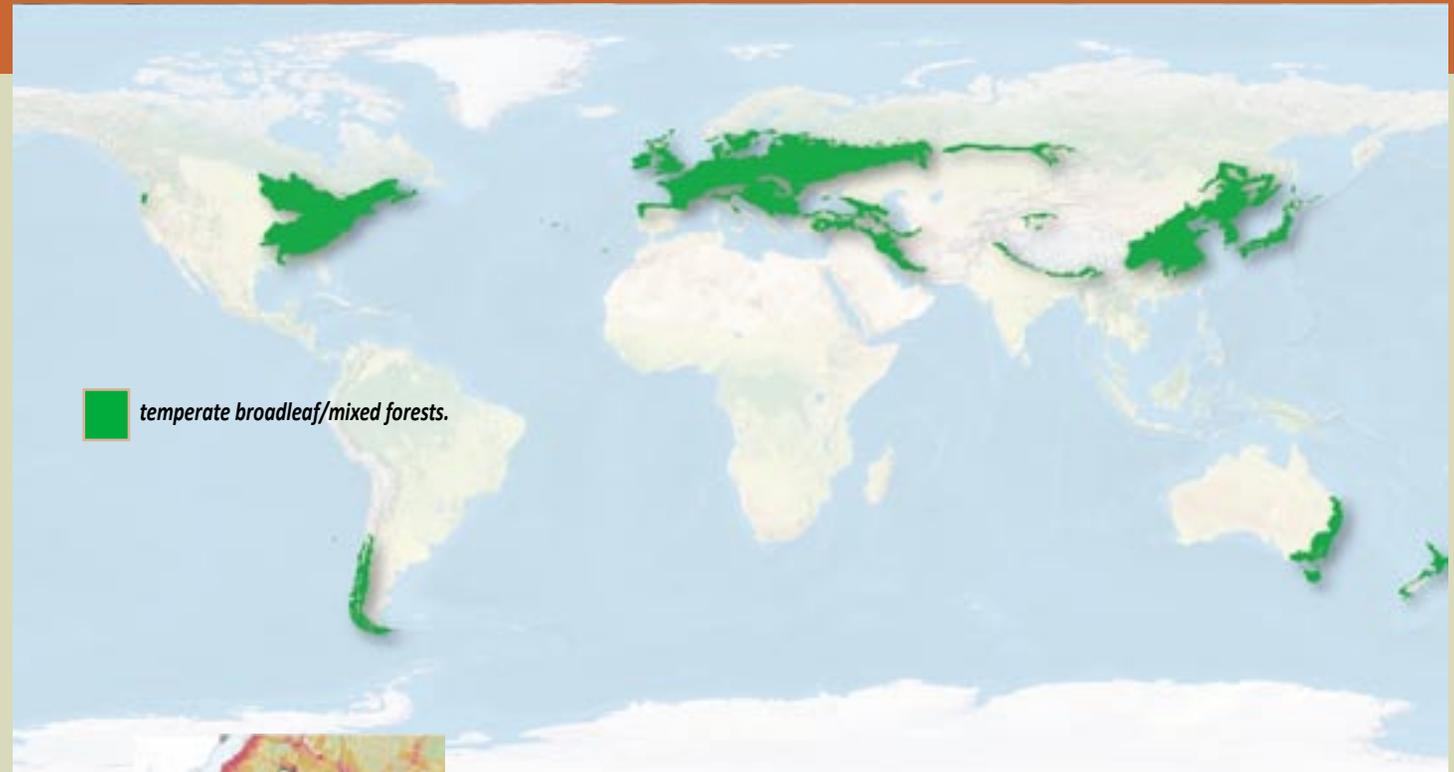
That a resource of such extraordinary value and national significance remains intact today is a testament to those who have owned and managed these lands through the generations. Unlike the vast expanses of public lands in the Western U.S., Maine's forests provide a wealth of public benefits, including recreational access, while largely remaining in private hands. Yet as the 21st century takes shape, there have been dramatic changes in forest land ownership



## MAINE and the World Distribution of Temperate Mixed Forests

*The human footprint worldwide has not been kind to temperate broad-leaf/mixed forests. The extent of these forests worldwide is shown at right.*

*Maine stands out as an exception. With 90 percent of the state covered in forest, the Maine Woods is clearly visible from space. But increasingly these forests are visible specifically because they are surrounded by development. This is clear whether seen from the perspective of human settlement (Map A), the dark at the heart of civilization's illuminated earth (Map B) or as the outline of the state's unorganized territories under the jurisdiction of Maine's Land Use Regulation Commission - LURC - which serves as a planning board for Maine's unorganized territories (Map C).*



Map A



Map B



Map C

that had been relatively stable for decades. Millions of acres of forest land once owned by paper companies as the resource base to feed their Maine mills have been sold to a new generation of forest land investors. This has been a wake-up call that there are no assurances that the valued resources, traditions, and economic enterprises that define Maine's forests will be there in the future.

Landowners, loggers, mill owners, environmentalists, sportsmen and women, and recreationists have not always seen eye-to-eye on forest issues such as forest practices, motorized recreation, and land use regulations. However, these diverse interests joined together in Keeping Maine's Forests because they realize that they share a common goal to keep forests as forests. Inspired by the enthusiasm for landscape conservation voiced by Interior Secretary Salazar and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack and their challenge to Maine to develop a broadly supported proposal involving diverse forest interests, the Steering Committee for Keeping Maine's Forests has worked intensely to develop the project proposal described in this document.

Cooperative endeavors over the past dozen years have led to the conservation of over two million acres of forest land in Maine – nearly 10% of the state's land area -- mostly through working forest conservation easements along with a lesser acreage of fee acquisitions. Key to this success has been the leadership of Maine's Congressional delegation and federal funding made available through programs such as Forest Legacy and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. Keeping Maine's Forests seeks to build upon this success through an initiative that expands use of USDA and DOI conservation and stewardship programs which in turn can leverage additional state and private efforts.

For generations, the public has received a wealth of public benefits from Maine's forests, including access for recreation, with the costs largely being born by forest landowners. This was acceptable to the landowners at a time when many held land largely as a strategic timber reserve for their mills. In today's world, with landowners under increasing pressure to realize returns from their investments, one cannot necessarily expect forest owners to sustain these practices. Keeping Maine's Forests seeks to reframe the relationship with forest landowners so that they are fairly compensated for the full suite of

public values that their lands provide. This can involve purchasing development rights, providing incentives for good stewardship and developing markets for the purchase of ecosystem services. Creating a new partnership with forest landowners will bring predictability and stability back to Maine's forests in a way that will reward mill and woods workers, local residents, hunters, hikers, fishermen, investors, and the general public for many years to come.



# THE MAINE WOODS: An Extraordinary Resource

*While all Maine's forests are truly of great value*, the expanse of contiguous forest that stretches from the White Mountains along the Maine-New Hampshire border, north to the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and east to the Downeast coast is truly unique. Known to most as the "Maine Woods," it is valued as the state's primary source of forest products, home to the state's most revered outdoor recreation destinations, and an expansive unfragmented landscape supporting an array of wildlife found nowhere else in the eastern U.S. It encompasses approximately 12 million acres including most of the 10.5 million acres of unorganized territories unique in this day and age with no local government and few public roads, as well as adjacent forest lands in surrounding towns. It is an area with strong traditions and a rich history.

The old adage, "you can't see the forest for the trees" is an apt description of the Maine Woods. Standing in a mixed hardwood or spruce-fir forest one has only a hint of the true significance of these forests to the state, the country and even the world. To better grasp that significance it is perhaps best to take a look at it from above... way high above. Scientists from the Wildlife Conservation Society have used satellite imagery, census data, and computer mapping technology to create maps showing the impact that humans have had on the world's natural ecosystems -- the human footprint. When viewed in this manner, it becomes abundantly clear that the forest which stretches across the northern half of Maine is indeed unique from a national perspective. The human footprint map shows with great clarity that the Maine Woods is the largest continuous expanse of unfragmented forest in the Eastern United States (see page 11).

According to The Nature Conservancy, this unbroken expanse of forestland comprises the largest intact temperate broadleaf and mixed forest in the country and one of the best examples in the world. As such, it is an ecological resource of global significance providing habitat for a great diversity of plant and animal life. However, the satellite view offers only a glimpse of the worth of the Maine Woods. To gain a better appreciation for the resource, one needs to step inside Moose River Lumber Company, Madison Paper Industries, Old Town Fuel & Fiber or any of the over 200 forest products facilities in Maine that produce paper, lumber, energy and many other products. For two centuries, most of the

Maine Woods has been actively managed for timber feeding an industry that has, and continues to, play a central role in the state's economy. Today, Maine's forest products industry generates \$4.3 billion per year, accounting for over 40% of Maine's manufacturing sales and employing over 18,000 people (and indirectly supporting over 55,000 jobs).

In northern Maine, the forest products industry represents the cornerstone of the local and regional economy. From mill workers to woods workers to truckers, jobs created by Maine's forest products industry provide an important source of income for Maine families, communities and tribes. While global competition and the current recession have impacted these industries like others across the country, there is strong evidence and a conviction that the forest products industry will continue to be a mainstay of the Maine economy for many years to come both for traditional forest products and for new uses of wood for energy and chemicals.

A recent study by the Maine State Planning Office found that Maine's forest products industry ranks first in the country in terms of its contribution to the state's economy and second in the nation in terms of its contribution to state jobs (based on available data). To ensure that the state's working forests remain productive long into the future, Maine's landowners have become national leaders in forest certification. Over 7.5 million acres of the state's forests have been certified by one of three programs that certify forest lands for sustainable forest management (Forest Stewardship Council, Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Tree Farm).

Another valued perspective of the Maine Woods is from a canoe while paddling down such iconic wild rivers as the Allagash, St. John, St. Croix or Machias; or from a mountain ridgeline on the Appalachian Trail in the "100-Mile Wilderness;" or from a snowmobile traveling along some 13,000 miles of maintained snowmobile trails. Since Penobscot Indian guides first led Henry David Thoreau on his exploration of the natural beauty of Mount Katahdin, Moosehead Lake, and the Penobscot River, the Maine Woods have offered the finest of outdoor adventures, attracting recreationists from around the country and the globe. Fly-fishing for wild brook trout on a remote pond, paddling for a week

## Forest of Timeless Possibilities

The Maine Woods are at the core of an undeveloped area stretching from the Adirondacks of New York to the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec. Taken as a whole, the region is the best example of intact, expansive temperate broadleaf biome in world.

Maine's forests remain as the largest contiguous area of undeveloped land in the eastern United States. They provide the source waters for Maine's largest river systems, the Penobscot, Kennebec, Androscoggin and St. John. These rivers and their tributaries in turn provide habitat for Atlantic Salmon and a dozen other diadromous species. Embedded in these forests are abundant wetlands including a diversity of peatland types unparalleled in the country, as well as thousands of lakes and ponds, some of which represent the last great refugia for wild Eastern brook trout populations in the nation. The national significance of Maine's forests can be expressed in many ways:

- **Mountains** - a hundred over 3,000 feet; elevation changes that provide an unusual closeness of varying habitats that would otherwise be separated by hundreds of miles.



- **Freshwater** -3,000 lakes and ponds; 11,000 miles of rivers and streams; hundreds of thousands of acres of wetlands; Unique in the east , a vast amount of undeveloped lake and river shoreline.
- **Wildlife** - Home to rare, threatened and endangered species, including yellow lampmussel, Tomah mayfly, Atlantic salmon, wood turtles, Bicknell's thrush, black terns, and Canada lynx; and the highest numbers of moose, black bear and loons of any state save Alaska. Primary breeding factory for North America's neotropical migratory songbirds because of abundant insects available to feed young
- **Connectivity** - Habitat connections largely still intact for wildlife and plants, providing ample opportunity for movement in the face of climate change, including linkage to extensive forests to the west, north and east. Maine is the only Northeastern state where no frogs, toads or salamanders are on threatened or endangered lists.
- **Tradition** - Maine's centuries old relationship with these forests has fostered a respect for those who earn a hard won living here, and in return forest landowners have welcomed public access to these wild places for generations. No custom quite like it endures anywhere else.

# CHANGING OWNERSHIP PATTERNS: Ensuring a Sustainable Future

on a backcountry river, hunting moose or staying in a century-old sporting camp are experiences that are plentiful throughout the Maine Woods and virtually impossible to find anywhere else in the eastern United States. These extraordinary recreation opportunities support an important segment of Maine's tourism economy including outfitters and guides; inns, motels, restaurants and sporting camps; recreational vehicle and equipment stores, and many other enterprises that serve visitors to the Maine Woods.

The picture would not be complete without looking at the Maine Woods through a cultural lens, as the ancestral lands of Native American tribes including the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet and Micmac who sustainably manage their lands today in a manner that supports the cultural integrity and economic base of the tribes. The Maine Woods are also the backdrop for many Maine communities, like Jackman, Greenville, Fort Kent, Bethel, Rangeley, Millinocket and Grand Lake Stream whose heritage and economic vitality are intertwined with the surrounding woods. More broadly, the Maine Woods are indeed a part of the cultural fabric of Maine and the quality of life for its residents.

In other parts of the country, the only place one can find a similar vast unbroken expanse of forest that has retained its ecological integrity, spectacular natural features, and accessibility to the public is on public land. Yet, the Maine Woods is over 95% privately owned and most is actively managed for timber production. The fact that these tremendous public benefits have been maintained across this entire area is a result of a stewardship ethic that historically runs deep in the private owners of these forests and Maine people who truly view the Maine Woods as a "treasured landscape." The rich natural and cultural heritage of the Maine Woods make it an ideal location to create a new and transferable model for landscape conservation that reinforces traditional uses and, through a public-private partnership of remarkable scope and scale, ensures that they will carry forward into the future.

*For much of the state's history*, the forest landscape of the Maine Woods was predominantly owned by vertically integrated paper companies; they owned vast acreage of woodlands and used these lands to supply their mills. However, over the past two decades land ownership patterns in the Maine Woods have undergone dramatic changes. Many point to the sudden liquidation of the holdings of the Diamond International Corporation in 1988 as the beginning of a profound transformation. Following his hostile takeover of Diamond International, billionaire financier Sir James Goldsmith, seeing unrealized value in forest lands, elected to sell off the company's lands separate from its production facilities. This action initiated a new trend in forest ownership that, driven by global economic pressures and rising land prices, has continued to this day. By the 1990s the shift had begun in earnest. Familiar names such as Great Northern, S.D. Warren, Champion, and later International Paper, Boise Cascade and Georgia-Pacific sold their land and then their mills, ending historic connections that had endured for nearly a century.

When these companies elected to sell their lands, a new generation of non-industrial owners took their place. Many of these lands were acquired by timber investment management organizations (TIMOs) and real estate investment trusts (REITs) that brought investment capital from pension funds, wealthy individuals, endowments and other sources to invest in timberlands, often as a strategy to diversify the portfolio of these investors. Large timber contractors, looking for lands to harvest also have been a significant buyer of industrial timberlands as have some conservation groups such as The Nature Conservancy and The Appalachian Mountain Club (see pages 20-21).

In 1988, industrial owners owned 7.7 million acres of timberland in Maine, while large non-industrial owners held 3.1 million acres. By 2004, however, these proportions were nearly reversed, with 3.2 million acres held by industrial interests and 6.5 million by non-industrial owners. More than half the industrial acreage was held by a single company, Canadian-based Irving, one of the few major timber producers still holding to the integrated model. Maine is also unique in its significant percentage (15% - 20%) of large forest tracts of family owned timberland, many of which have been owned for generations.

Severing of the direct ownership link between the mills and the timberlands means that the lands are treated independently as an investment whereas previously their primary purpose was to provide a secure source of raw material for a nearby mill. In addition to managing for returns from timber production, which relies upon vibrant timber markets, the new timber owners must consider other means of generating returns from the timberland where they exist. Providing wood to a mill is no longer the only focus for forest landowners (though some new ownerships are obligated to providing wood supplies to local mills through wood supply agreements).

The fact that the timberlands are now predominately financial investments instead of raw material supplies also means that ownership is more fluid than it was through most of the 1900's. TIMOs typically structure their forest land investments for 10-15 year durations (though some are longer-term). REIT's typically buy and sell lands when it is most advantageous to their shareholders. Like other investments, such as bonds and stocks, timberland holdings are bought and sold to achieve the overall objectives of an investment portfolio.

Today, there is no clear consensus among forest interests as to what this shift in ownership will mean for the future of Maine's forest resources and traditional uses such as timber production, wildlife habitat and public recreation. Some conservation interests will point to second home developments that subdivide productive forest land and develop pristine lakeshores and maintain that the integrity of the Maine Woods will be lost if action is not taken soon. Some timber interests and motorized recreation groups have voiced concerns that some large tracts of land are being acquired by preservation-oriented owners who are less interested in timber harvesting than previous owners and more restrictive regarding motorized recreational access. Still others will say that while the names of the owners and size of ownerships have changed, the forest landscape looks largely the same today as it did in 1990 and is likely to stay that way.

Inherent in all of these perspectives is the reality that the public seeks assurances that the benefits provided by the forest -- healthy fish and wildlife habitat, wood supply, and public recreation -- will be there in the future. The fundamental challenge is to find ways to provide these assurances in a manner that is

both acceptable and attractive to today's forest landowners and the public.

There is clear evidence that the new ownership regime is ready and willing to engage in conservation partnerships when sufficient resources are available. Selling working forest conservation easements or high value recreational and ecological lands is proving to be attractive to many new owners enabling them to extract important revenue from their land base while meeting the public's desire for forest conservation.

Since 1998, over two million acres of forest land have been permanently conserved either through fee purchase (about 20% of conserved lands) or the acquisition of working forest conservation easements (about 80% of conserved lands). Conservation organizations such as the Forest Society of Maine, The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and the Downeast Lakes Land Trust have found that many new timberland owners are eager to take advantage of the opportunity to sell working forest easements as part of their overall business strategies, as it enables them to achieve their financial objectives while meeting public expectations.

However, taking full advantage of the available opportunities necessitates substantial financial commitments from public and private sources. Today, a forest landowner interested in pursuing the sale of land or a conservation easement funded by the Forest Legacy Program faces the reality that there is a queue of worthy projects in Maine already awaiting funding and that they may have to wait several years or more to have their project funded. Landowner interest in selling land for conservation or working forest conservation easements is outstripping available funding creating situations where conservation opportunities will be lost due to a lack of resources.

The time to act is now. It would be imprudent to wait—once landscape integrity is lost it is prohibitively expensive to restore. We need to heed lessons learned the hard way elsewhere where massive amounts of money are being spent attempting to restore a broken ecosystem. Keeping Maine's Forests believes that a strategic investment in conservation and stewardship of the Maine Woods today will pay huge dividends to the public long into the future.

# A CONVERGENCE OF CONSERVATION GOALS: Community - State - Federal - Tribal

## Keeping Maine's Forests Vision

*The Keeping Maine's Forests Steering Committee is composed of very diverse forest interests.* Included in these ranks are environmental, conservation, hunting and fishing, recreational, and tribal governments, major forest landowners and representatives from Maine's forest products industry. A number of these interests had clashed repeatedly over forest issues in years past. Similarly, Northern and Eastern Maine communities have often been skeptical of land conservation proposals hatched from afar, fearing that such initiatives could threaten the local economy and traditional way of life. Thus, it is no surprise that the steering committee required several months of intensive meetings to build trust among the parties and hammer out a set of objectives for the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative that were acceptable to all. In the end, the group came to consensus on the following objectives, which offer a clear vision for the future of The Maine Woods:

*Fundamental to the success of the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative will be:*

- *Operating at a landscape scale and*
- *Creating a partnership with private landowners to achieve the objectives outlined below through purchases (fee, easements, and potentially other creative mechanisms) from willing sellers, and incentives for sustainable forest management*

*In terms of the specific objectives to be achieved, they include:*

*1. Maintaining the most diverse, robust and economically beneficial forest products industry possible and the jobs that this industry provides. As well as supporting other related efforts to maintain and enhance Maine's forest products industry, this will require, but is not limited to, maintaining the supply of wood from Maine's forests; and, to the extent possible in a free market system, have wood supplies which are both reliable, stable in price, and verified as from sustainably managed forests.*

*2. Contributing to meeting Maine's energy needs by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and high energy costs.*



## Cooperating on Research

Through NRCS's Healthy Forests Reserve Program, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, The Nature Conservancy and the Forest Society of Maine are working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of Maine Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to develop management guidelines for Canada lynx. This voluntary program has a goal of restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, improve biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration. Maine was selected as one of three states nationally to pilot the program back in 2006. Through Healthy Forests Reserve Program funding, NRCS completed contract agreements with landowners in Maine to manage nearly 500,000 acres of working forest lands for the benefit of the Canada lynx.

3. *Protecting biodiversity (such as rare, threatened, and endangered species recognized at the federal, state, and tribal level, unique and exemplary natural areas, late successional forest features in working forests, and others similar, as well as maintaining, and where practicable, restoring viable populations of game and non-game wildlife).*

4. *Maintaining or enhancing existing public access for the full spectrum of existing recreational uses, and attracting an increased number of recreational users by selective investments in improved recreation facilities.*

5. *Preserving special places, e.g., old growth forests, areas with special recreational or cultural values, unique or exemplary natural features, and other similar features.*

6. *Maintaining and increasing carbon storage, thus contributing to reducing levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases.*

7. *Facilitating the adaptation of forest systems to a changing climate particularly by maintaining large contiguous and interconnected areas of forest.*

Keeping Maine's Forests seeks a future that maintains both the environmental and economic integrity of the Maine Woods through a matrix of public land, private land permanently protected by conservation easement, land managed under long term agreements for habitat or ecosystem services and other private forest land. This matrix will help assure the vitality and competitiveness of the forest products industry, sustain a healthy and intact forest, protect valuable habitat and provide for public recreation.

This matrix, and its benefits to the industry and the people of Maine, can be achieved through thoughtful and creative design and use of a variety of financial incentives that reframe the public-private relationship – rewarding landowners for long-term assurances of public benefits provided by these forests, and through investments in acquiring conservation easements and fee conservation lands.

The Keeping Maine's Forests objectives set forth were developed by Maine interests with a focus on Maine issues and Maine people. That said, these goals

are remarkably consistent and supportive of national priorities. In April, President Obama hosted a White House conference to launch America's Great Outdoors Initiative which has as a central objective to "build upon state, local, private, and tribal priorities for the conservation of land, water, wildlife, historic, and cultural resources, creating corridors and connectivity across these outdoor spaces... and determine how the Federal Government can best advance those priorities through public private partnerships and locally supported conservation strategies." More specifically the Departments of Interior and Agriculture have set forth policies supportive of Keeping Maine's Forests including, but not limited to, the following:

## Department of Interior Initiatives

- **Treasured Landscapes and America's Great Outdoors Initiative:** Secretary Salazar and DOI have offered an ambitious and far-sighted agenda for protecting the country's most treasured landscapes stating that "The great outdoors that fuels the American spirit and the American economy is fast disappearing under the pressures of population growth, habitat fragmentation and climate change. Over the last 60 years, as our nation's population has doubled, millions of acres of open land have disappeared to development. We are losing — and losing touch with — the places where we fish and swim, woods where we hunt and hike, and wild lands where we find solitude. This new conservation legacy will protect the places that fuel our nation's spirit and contribute to the health of its people and local economies."

- **Climate Change and Adaptation and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives:** DOI's Climate Change Adaptation Initiative has established the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (along with other regional LCCs) to design plans for sustaining landscapes capable of maintaining healthy populations of fish, wildlife and plants in the face of climate change.

- **WaterSMART:** Through its WaterSMART initiative, DOI seeks to ensure stable, secure water supplies for future generations through a variety of strategies including protecting water resources from land uses that could impact the quality and quantity of fresh water supplies.



- **Empowering Tribal Nations – Improving Trust Land Management:** DOI seeks to strengthen natural resource management on trust lands.

### Department of Agriculture Initiatives

- **All Lands Policy:** Recognizing that the majority of the nation’s forests are in private ownership, Secretary Vilsack has launched USDA’s All Lands Policy to keep private forests as forests to maintain drinking water, rural economies, wildlife and mitigate and adapt to climate change. USDA seeks to partner with conservation groups, forest industry and government agencies “to address the common threat of forest loss on private lands,” building upon their history of cooperative forest initiatives with the states.

- **Expand Stewardship Opportunities for Private Forest Lands:** In its FY ‘11 budget, USDA sets a strategic goal of “ensuring that private working lands are conserved, restored and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources.” One of the most significant changes brought about by the 2008 Farm Bill was to expand existing NRCS programs that have primarily been focused on agricultural lands to include non-industrial forest lands. USDA has proposed expansions of NRCS programs available to private forest land owners. USDA also seeks to develop markets for ecological services

that will compensate landowners for high quality stewardship.

- **Assist Rural Communities to Create Prosperity:** Through its Rural Development programs, USDA is seeking to increase economic innovation, alternative energy production and job creation in rural communities and improve the quality of life of their residents.

- **Wood Energy Production:** USDA has launched programs to spur the development of energy production utilizing biomass from forest lands.

The Keeping Maine’s Forests proposal to establish a model for landscape-scale forest conservation in the Maine Woods would advance each of these federal agency priorities in a meaningful manner. Moreover, the Keeping Maine’s Forests initiative is prepared to move forward immediately in collaboration with USDA and DOI to work with willing forest landowners and enthusiastic and experienced conservation partners, providing the federal agencies the opportunity to demonstrate on-the-ground accomplishments in achieving their priority goals and to establish a model that can be utilized elsewhere in the country (including the forests in the southern portion of Maine which are largely composed of smaller woodlots).



# PILOT PROJECTS AND DEMONSTRATION LANDSCAPES IN THE MAINE WOODS

Keeping Maine's Forests' overarching goal - to maintain the forest resources and traditional uses across the Maine Woods - is ambitious. It will require the collaborative energies of the state, tribal and federal governments along with forest landowners, land trusts and many other private partners. While challenging, the goal is attainable. The past dozen years have seen unprecedented levels of conservation investment in the Maine Woods increasing conservation ownership (both fee and conservation easement) from less than 8% of the Maine Woods in 1998 to around 23% today. The purpose of this proposal is to maintain this momentum by embarking upon a new initiative that offers a comprehensive array of conservation options and stewardship tools for forest landowners who wish to take advantage of them.

Keeping Maine's Forests recognizes that it will be important to demonstrate success in selected areas early on and then build upon that success. Accordingly, Keeping Maine's Forests proposes an initial pilot project phase to test and learn from the concepts encompassed by this proposal. Keeping Maine's Forests seeks to pursue one or more pilot projects (depending upon the availability of funding) that could be immediately pursued which fully embody the objectives of the initiative. Two potential pilot projects, the Downeast Project in eastern Maine and the Western Mountains and Lakes Project in western Maine, are described on the following pages. Both pilot projects involve multiple landowners and the use of both conservation options (purchase of conservation easements and fee lands) and stewardship initiatives.

Based upon the Departments of Interior and Agriculture's interest in participating in the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative, the Steering Committee will solicit other pilot project proposals and initiate a review process to identify and endorse the project(s) that best further the objectives of Keeping Maine's Forests. The specific terms of transactions will be determined by negotiations involving the landowners and buyers representatives. Keeping Maine's Forests will work to ensure that its involvement with projects is closely coordinated with and adds value to the funding process for state and federal conservation programs such as Land for Maine's Future Program and the Forest Legacy Program.

After the pilot project(s) has been established, the Keeping Maine's Forests Steering Committee will evaluate the project(s) and assess how well it has achieved the diverse objectives of Keeping Maine's Forests. Based upon that evaluation, the Steering Committee will decide whether to expand the initiative to other lands and how it should be modified to meet the needs of forest landowners and the public.

## Conservation: A Partnership with Landowners

Conservation in Maine is always a matter of partnerships.

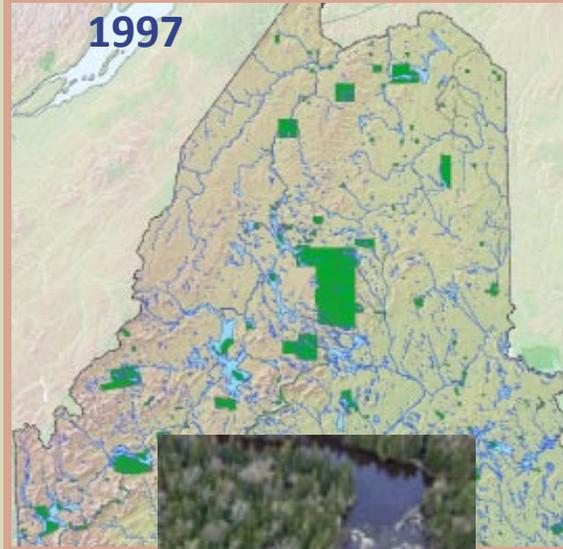
Most involve nonprofit conservation groups and many benefit from the interest of state government and local communities. But all depend on the willingness of landowners to entertain conservation as a shared goal and to devote time and energy to identifying a mutually successful outcome.

Often, by the time newspaper headlines banner the news of a successful project, months of negotiation have passed during which all parties try to find the appropriate balance of such important factors as wildlife habitat, recreational access and local economies - all in the context of the landowner's business plans. And into this mix very often come the requirements of state and federal funding programs and the needs of private foundations. The dialogue can be long, complex and challenging.

Land owners and land managers no less than conservation groups and public officials work hard to keep the conversation moving forward. Fortunately for Maine, patience and perseverance have characterized these partnerships for many years, and the citizens of the state and the country are the beneficiaries.



# 1997 - 2010 Conserving Maine Woods Values



**Pingree Easement Project**  
762,000 acres - New England Forestry Foundation/ Pingree Associates, Inc.



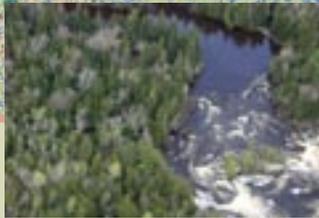
**St. John River Project**  
185,000 acres - The Nature Conservancy/ International Paper



**Katahdin Lake Project**  
6,000 acres - Trust for Public Land/ Bureau of Parks and Lands/ Gardner Land Company



**Downeast Forestry Partnership Project**  
342,000 acres - Downeast Lakes Land Trust/ New England Forestry Foundation/ Wagner Forest Management/ Typhoon LLC



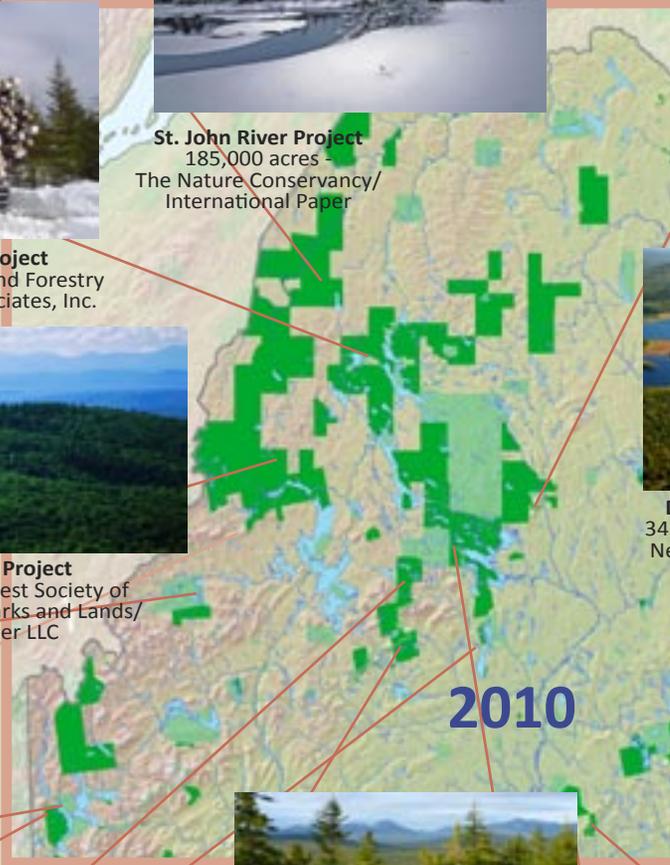
**Moose River Project**  
15,000 acres - The Nature Conservancy/ Bureau of Parks and Lands/ Plum Creek Timber Company



**West Branch Project**  
329,000 acres - Forest Society of Maine/ Bureau of Parks and Lands/ Merriweather LLC



**Boundary Headwaters Project**  
22,000 acres - Forest Society of Maine/ International Paper



**Machias River Project**  
39,000 acres - The Nature Conservancy/ Downeast Lakes Land Trust/ Bureau of Parks and Lands/ The Conservation Fund/ International Paper/ Timbervest, LLC



**Stowe Mountain and Robinson Peak Projects**  
10,000 acres - Trust for Public Land/ Bureau of Parks and Lands/ LBA Forest Stewardship Initiative



**Roach Ponds Project**  
29,000 acres - Appalachian Mountain Club/ The Nature Conservancy/ Plum Creek Timber Company

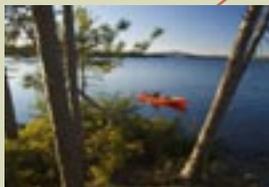


**Katahdin Forest Project**  
250,000 acres - The Nature Conservancy/ Bureau of Parks and Lands/ Great Northern Paper



**Grafton Notch Project**  
3,700 acres - Trust for Public Land/ Bureau of Parks and Lands

**Seboeis Lake West Project**  
3,500 acres - Trust for Public Land/ Bureau of Parks and Lands



**Katahdin Iron Works Project**  
37,000 acres - Appalachian Mountain Club/ Trust for Public Land/ Bureau of Parks and Lands/ International Paper



**Amherst Community Forest**  
5,000 acres - Forest Society of Maine/ Town of Amherst/ Bureau of Parks and Lands/ Lyme Timber



**Sunkhaze Corridor Project**  
12,000 acres - The Nature Conservancy/ GMO Renewable Resources



## Recreation in the Maine Woods

Recreation in the Maine Woods wears a lot of different faces. There's the look that seems equal parts terror and exhilaration rafting through a Maine river gorge; the wide-eyed, breath-holding surprise at seeing a moose step into the pond just yards from your canoe; the steady eyed expression of the hunter staring down his sights; the goggled-helmeted bearing of the snowmobiler; the quiet intensity on the face of the fisherman setting her fly; the satisfaction in the face of the camper pounding in the last tent stake. These, and the faces of ATV riders, cross-country and downhill skiers, birdwatchers, mountain climbers, botanists, and camp owners are all reflections of the dual roles recreation plays in Maine's Woods.

Recreation embodies so many of the time-honored traditions of Maine people, whether the annual camping trip to Baxter State Park or the once-in-a-lifetime family trip down the best wilderness canoe rivers in the East. But just as importantly, recreation as an industry allows Maine guides, outfitters, sporting camp owners, restaurateurs and others to make their livings here as their families have for generations.

Whatever one's reason for coming, much of the experience will be thanks to the condition of these forest resources, to the foresight of conservation interests and the stewardship of private landowners. Recreation in the Maine Woods wears a lot of different faces, but the one worn most frequently by Maine people is pride.



### Pilot Projects

Maine landowners and conservation partners have demonstrated their ability to work together with state and federal agencies and accomplish forest conservation at a landscape level. The West Branch Project (329,000 acres), Katahdin Forest (Project (246,000 acres), and Downeast Forest Partnership (339,000 acres) are three of the most prominent examples of the extraordinary conservation partnerships that have occurred in recent years.

Keeping Maine's Forests seeks to build upon the foundation and momentum created by these efforts through one or more pilot projects that:

- Connect together and expand upon existing conservation ownerships;
- Provide attractive alternatives for landowners who have elected not to sell conservation easements under the existing programs;
- Offer forest stewardship opportunities that are attractive to landowners and sustain and enhance the public values of Maine forests; and
- Utilize federal stewardship and conservation programs in creative and coordinated ways.

By developing and implementing one or more pilot projects over the next three years, Keeping Maine's Forests looks to test its vision for the Maine Woods with on-the-ground projects. Two potential pilot projects – one within the Downeast landscape and the other within the Western Mountains and Lakes landscape are described here. Both involve multiple landowners who have discussed their interest with conservation partners. However, such discussions and negotiations are, understandably still preliminary, until the Departments of Agriculture and Interior express their interest and support for Keeping Maine's Forests. When that occurs, more detailed proposals of these projects, and potentially others, will be developed and evaluated by the Keeping Maine's Forests Steering Committee.

## Downeast Pilot Project

**Overview:** The proposed Downeast Pilot Project seeks to maintain the working forest in the region. It also builds upon a existing core of conserved lands of more than 500,000 acres which protect some of the region's most important large lake and wetland complexes, endangered Atlantic salmon rivers, popular backcountry canoe routes, and world-class fisheries, along with productive working forests critical to numerous mills which ring the Downeast forest. Based upon discussions with several of the region's major forest landowners, there appear to be excellent opportunities to pursue conservation and stewardship initiatives that will connect existing conservation lands, protect valued natural and recreational resources, and maintain the working forest landscape necessary to fuel the region's industry.

**Recent Projects and Projects Already Underway** (not part of proposed pilot project):

- The 21,700-acre West Grand Lake Community Forest is the nationally top ranked Forest Legacy project currently being considered by Congress for FY '11 funding. By protecting 17 miles of lakeshore, it conserves the last large unprotected shores of West Grand Lake and Grand Lake Stream, a world-class angling destination that supports many nature-based tourism jobs.
- Atlantic salmon restoration efforts, such as those led by Project SHARE (Salmon Habitat and River Enhancement), have received almost \$5 million of federal funds over the past decade from multiple federal agencies including the National Marine Fisheries Service, NRCS, USFS, USFWS, and National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, along with a tremendous amount of technical assistance from several of these agencies. Existing NRCS programs have been effectively used by Downeast forest landowners, such as the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, and the Downeast Lakes Land Trust, who are eligible under existing program criteria.



### Selected Potential Pilot Conservation Opportunities:

One of the region's largest forest landowners is interested in selling a working forest conservation easement over major portions of its extensive Downeast ownership (totaling several hundred thousand acres). An initial focus would be a large block of forest land which stretches from Sunhaze National Wildlife Refuge on the west to Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge on the east. The landowner's forest lands benefit from a wood supply agreement for pulpwood assuring good silviculture and a continued timber flow for the foreseeable future. These lands also encompass critical habitat for Atlantic salmon, exemplary natural communities, significant wading bird and waterfowl breeding and deer wintering areas, and many miles of established snowmobile and ATV trail networks. The proposed easement acquisition would connect many existing conservation areas and create a continuous corridor of permanently conserved forest land from the Penobscot River to the Bay of Fundy.

(Potential federal programs: Forest Legacy Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Recovery Land Acquisition Grant, State and/or Federal side LWCF)

- A proposed 12,000+-acre conservation initiative in the East Grand Lake watershed would conserve over 27 miles of pristine lakeshore on East Grand Lake and five other ponds along with an expansive wetlands complex along the international border in the Upper St. Croix River region. Preliminary plans call for a working forest conservation easement while assuring public recreation opportunities on East Grand Lake.

(Potential federal programs: Forest Legacy Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Act; Community Forest & Open Space Conservation Program, Healthy Forest Reserve Program, Stateside LWCF)

#### **Potential Pilot Stewardship Opportunities:**

- Several Downeast landowners, owning several hundred thousand acres of forest land, have expressed strong interest in participating in a pilot stewardship program that would provide fair compensation for management practices that address a range of ecological and recreational benefits derived across the forest landscape. New approaches to habitat management utilizing umbrella wildlife species would be tested while incorporating federal wildlife priorities such as Atlantic salmon restoration, migratory bird habitat and wetlands conservation. The Manomet Center for Conservation Science has offered to help lead a pilot stewardship initiative in the Downeast region that would establish a payment for ecosystem services program. Manomet's efforts would be tied into national efforts being pursued by USDA's Office of Ecosystem Services and Markets and the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative.

(Potential federal programs: Environmental Quality Improvement Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, Healthy Forest Reserve Program, Cooperative Forestry Assistance Program, Office of Ecosystem Services & Markets, North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, Partners for Fish & Wildlife, Gulf of Maine Coastal program, Tribal Wildlife Grants and Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program.)



## **Western Mountains and Lakes**

**Overview:** The Western Mountain and Lakes landscape totals over one million acres, encompasses both the Mahoosuc and Rangeley Lakes/High Peaks Regions, links the Northern Appalachians as they pass from New Hampshire to Maine, and serves as a bridge between the White Mountain National Forest to the south and the Maine Woods. This region comprises the southwestern boundary of the Maine Woods closest to population and tourism centers making it the demonstration landscape that is most vulnerable to development pressures that could fragment the forest. Loss of lands from the timber base and severing recreation corridors, such as snowmobile trails, would undermine the area's local economy which relies primarily upon forest products and tourism.

Recent conservation successes in the region using Forest Legacy funding are exemplary for striking an effective balance at maintaining the working forest, providing high-value recreational opportunities (motorized and non-motorized), and protecting water quality and critical habitats. Looking ahead, the region is well suited to meet new national conservation directions that recognize a landscape view of forest land conservation, both to maintain the forest economy and to provide a corridor of habitat across the landscape that will allow plants and animals to travel to suitable habitat in order to keep pace with climate change.

**Recent Projects and Projects Already Underway** (not part of proposed pilot project):

- The recently completed 3,600-acre Stowe Mountain project in the Mahoosuc Mountains provides an excellent example of how strategic use of conservation funding can maintain a wide range of important public values. In an area where surrounding forest ownerships had been subdivided and developed, a working forest conservation easement was purchased that kept the property in active timber production, preserved critical links in regional hiking and snowmobile trails, and preserved high elevation ecological areas. The project was funded through a combination of Forest Legacy, state and private funds.

- Nearby to Stowe Mountain in Riley Township, a timber investment company donated a working forest conservation easement on 6,700 acres surrounding Robinson Peak adjacent to state lands in 2008. This project demonstrates how the changing ownership patterns in the Maine Woods have created new conservation opportunities and how federal and state tax laws can encourage forest land stewardship (the owners received a tax benefit for their donation).

**Selected Potential Pilot Conservation Opportunities:**

There exists substantial landowner interest and a strong local constituency to support a sequence of forest conservation initiatives over the coming years throughout the Western Mountains and Lakes. The following conservation effort is well positioned to be developed as a pilot project over the next couple of years.

- Heart of the High Peaks – The High Peaks region of Maine’s Western Mountains (the mountainous area located between Carrabassett Valley and Rangeley) is one of three high mountain regions in Maine and the only one without significant conservation protection. It includes nine of Maine’s 4000+ foot peaks, the largest contiguous block of land in Maine above 2,700 feet, and one of the largest roadless areas in the state. The high elevation of the headwaters to five river systems means this region has the clearest and coldest free-running waters in Maine, supporting the state’s largest concentration of wild brook

trout streams.

Landowners of nine parcels of land totaling over 50,000 acres in the High Peaks area (straddling Crocker Mountain, Mount Abram, and Saddleback Mountain), have expressed interest in conservation transactions. These lands include extensive high mountain terrain near the Appalachian Trail, documented habitat for Canada Lynx, Peregrine Falcons and the Bicknell’s Thrush, Brook Trout, and successful spawning streams for sea-run Atlantic salmon. Negotiations with some landowners have progressed further than others. A Forest Legacy application has recently been submitted for two candidate projects, a 12,000-acre ownership along Crocker Mountain, in Carrabassett Valley, and a nearly 6,000-acre parcel along Orbeton Stream.

(Potential federal programs: Forest Legacy Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Recovery Land Acquisition Grant, State and/or Federal side LWCF)

**Potential Pilot Stewardship Opportunities:**

Numerous Western Maine landowners, owning tens of thousands of acres, have responded positively to the potential opportunity to participate in a pilot stewardship program that would compensate them for the public benefits derived from their land. One area which would benefit from such a program is the Orbeton Stream valley (near Saddleback Mountain). Orbeton Stream, a headwater stream of the Kennebec River, is well known for brook trout fishing and is a traditional spawning ground for sea run Atlantic salmon. One of the major landowners in the valley has indicated a willingness to consider participation in stewardship programs that would both improve timber operations and enhance recreational opportunities along Orbeton Stream.

(Potential federal programs: Environmental Quality Improvement Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, Healthy Forest Reserve Program, Cooperative Forestry Assistance Program, Office of Ecosystem Services & Markets, North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, Partners for Fish & Wildlife, Tribal Wildlife Grants and Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program.)

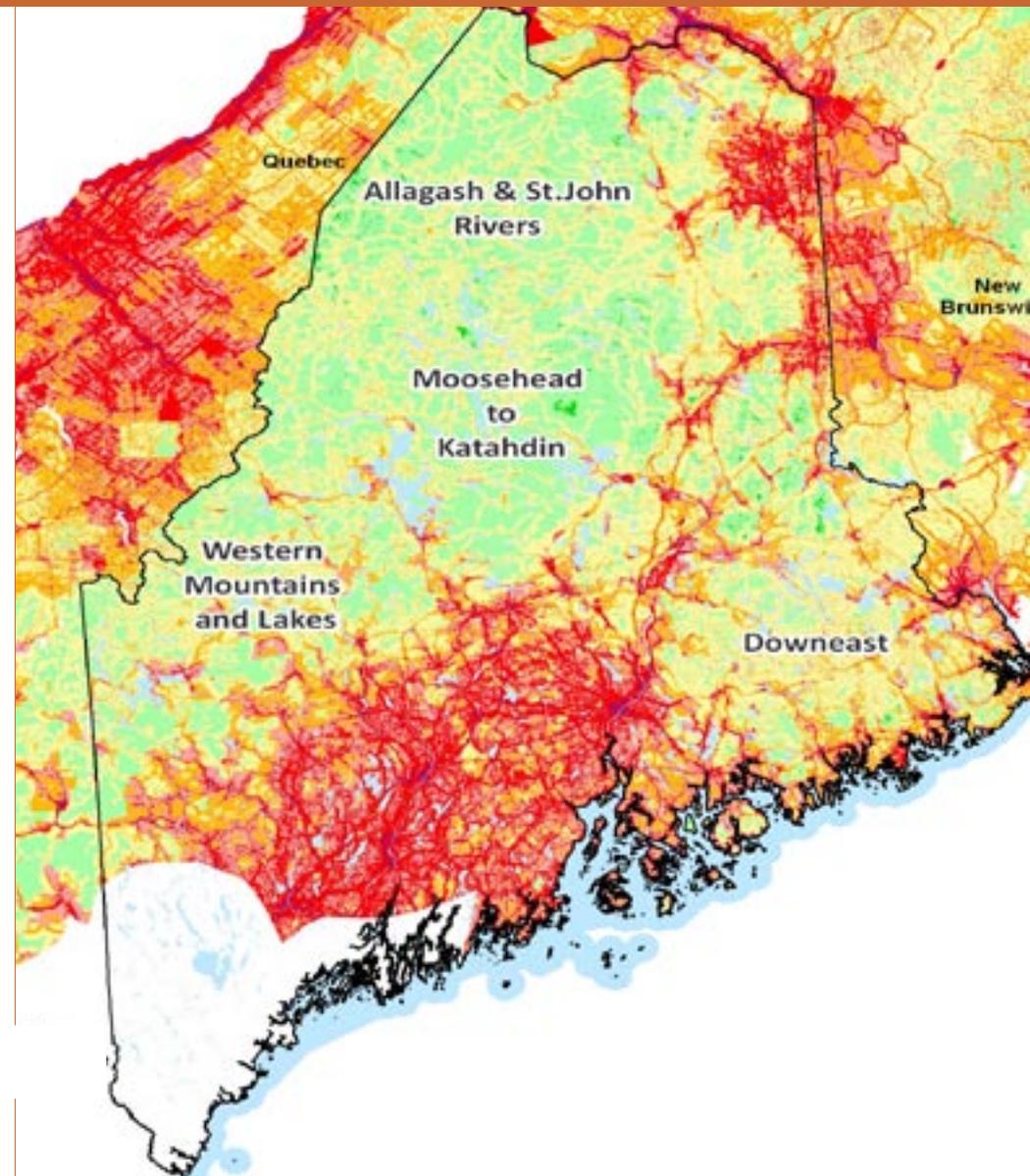
## Demonstration Landscapes

Looking more broadly at the region, Keeping Maine's Forests has identified four "Demonstration Landscapes" within the Maine Woods ranging in size from 925,000 acres to 2,600,000 acres to illustrate the potential outcomes that could be achieved through the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative. In each of these areas, which are described on the following pages, there exists:

- An extraordinary array of conservation values of statewide, tribal and national significance;
- An existing base of conserved lands (23% - 35%);
- Forest landowners owning substantial acreages who have expressed interest in pursuing forest conservation and stewardship opportunities; and,
- Experienced non-profit conservation organizations prepared to take the lead on major conservation initiatives within the region.

It is important to note that not all landowners in the demonstration landscapes have expressed interest in taking advantage of potential conservation or stewardship options. Some would prefer to not participate in any government programs and others have indicated that they need additional details before determining their level of interest.

As resources and landowner interest permit, Keeping Maine's Forests is prepared to pursue pilot projects in all of the Demonstration Landscapes and beyond, as there are a wealth of exceptional places and resources on lands outside of the identified demonstration landscapes that are essential to the overall integrity of the Maine Woods and fully deserving of conservation and stewardship efforts



## Allagash & St. John Rivers



*“Canoe trips on The Allagash and the St. John Rivers set the standard by which other river trips are measured. These two intact watersheds provide - undeniably - the finest canoe trips in the Northeast.”*

*Greg Shute, Executive Director, Maine Wilderness Guides Association*

**Size:** 2,100,000 acres

**Description:** This demonstration landscape is defined by two great wild free-flowing rivers, including the longest free-flowing river in the eastern U.S., and the remote forest lands that surround them. The 92-mile Allagash Wilderness Waterway, the first state-managed “wild” river in the national Wild and Scenic River System, was created through a cooperative state-federal effort in the 1960’s and conservation of the St. John River has become a top national priority for The Nature Conservancy over the past decade. These intact river systems and the unfragmented forest landscape provide critical habitat for the federally threatened Canada lynx, the endangered Furbish’s Lousewort and other rare species. Stretches of the St. John River corridor contain some of the highest concentrations of rare plants in Maine, along with week-long backcountry paddling opportunities with exciting whitewater. These remote rivers and forests offer some of the finest backcountry recreational experiences anywhere and

support the employment of many local guides. These forest lands have been harvested for many generations providing surrounding mills with a continual flow of raw material.

**Conserved Lands:** Approximately one-third of the Allagash & St. John Rivers Demonstration Landscape is currently conserved, mostly through working forest easements. The primary fee ownerships include the state’s ownership within the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and The Nature Conservancy’s ownership along the St. John River.

**Near term conservation opportunities:** Over 200,000 acres are currently on the market and available for possible conservation easement or fee acquisition.

## Moosehead to Katahdin



*“These woods are Maine’s heritage - and mine. For five generations, my family has had the privilege of sharing our life in a Maine sporting camp, a unique Maine tradition, with our guests.”*

*Eric Stirling, Owner, West Branch Pond Camps*

**Size:** 925,000 acres

**Description:** This demonstration landscape extends between two extraordinary places of national renown – from the eastern shore of Moosehead Lake, Maine’s largest lake, to the boundary of Baxter State Park and Mount Katahdin. It encompasses the famed “100-Mile Wilderness” section of the Appalachian Trail (AT), the most remote section of the entire route between Georgia and Maine. It includes over 200 lakes and ponds, including the largest concentration of remote ponds in Maine many of which support wild native brook trout populations which are unique in the U.S. and which have spawned the establishment of many traditional Maine sporting camps over the past century that continue to flourish and attract clients from near and far. The area includes abundant critical habitat for the threatened Canada lynx. In addition to 100 miles of the AT, the Moosehead to Katahdin Demonstration Landscape is also a haven for motorized recreation interests with over 150 miles of maintained snowmobile trails, along with extensive opportunities for cross-coun-

try skiing and snowshoeing. This demonstration landscape is surrounded by diverse forest products facilities including hardwood and softwood saw mills, paper mills and wood energy plants.

**Conserved Lands:** The Moosehead to Katahdin Demonstration Landscape has been the focus of public and private conservation initiatives over the past decade led by The Nature Conservancy, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and The Trust for Public Land. They, along with other federal, state, and local partners, have facilitated strong federal investments through the Forest Legacy Program with both TNC and AMC becoming major conservation landowners in the region. To date, approximately one-third of the demonstration landscape is under conservation ownership or easements.

## Western Mountains and Lakes



**Size:** 1,200,000 acres

**Description:** The Western Mountains and Lakes Demonstration Landscape encompasses a spectacular array of remarkably accessible natural features including the Rangeley Lakes, the Mahoosuc Mountains, the Upper Androscoggin River Headwaters and the High Peaks Region (10 of the 14 highest mountains in Maine). The region serves as the key conservation connection between the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire and the Maine Woods. The Appalachian Trail traverses the demonstration landscape encompassing some of the AT's most noteworthy features such as Saddleback Mountain and Mahoosuc Notch. The diverse landscape provides critical wildlife habitat ranging from expansive alpine ridges to the wetland complexes of the Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge. The area is a favorite destination of outdoor enthusiasts including angling on the Rangeley Lakes, Rapid River, and other pristine waters, hiking the region's many mountains, skiing and snowmobiling scenic trails, and sightseeing along the Rangeley Lakes National Scenic Byway. The counties en-

*"I can walk out my back door and not cross a road until I come to the Canadian border. These large parcels of forestland need to survive if our North Woods towns are to survive."*

*Rob Welch, Chair, Rangeley Comprehensive Plan Committee*

compassing this Demonstration Landscape have the highest percentage of jobs in the forest products industry of anywhere in Maine. The Penobscot Indian Nation has 42,000 acres of trust land in the area that it managed for forestry, wildlife, and other natural and cultural values.

**Conserved Lands:** About one-third of Western Mountains and Lakes Demonstration Landscape is under permanent conservation ownership or easement. Federal ownership includes the White Mountain National Forest, Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Other federal investments include several successful Forest Legacy Projects in the Grafton Notch and Rangeley region and over 110,000 acres of the Pingree forest conservation project.

**Near term conservation opportunities:** Ten different parcels totaling approximately 57,000 acres, approximately half easement projects and half fee projects, are in various stages of negotiations with a wide variety of landowners.

## Downeast



*“For over a hundred years, we’ve made our living from these beautiful lakes, unspoiled streams and well-managed forests. With these, our guiding services and sporting camps will prosper for many years to come.”*

*Louis Cataldo, Registered Maine Guide, Grand Lake Stream*

**Size:** 2,600,000 acres

**Description:** This area is distinctive for its large lake and wetland systems and is renowned for its outstanding outdoor recreation destinations ranging from the world-class angling opportunities at Grand Lake Stream to the backcountry Machias River canoe route. It includes the Downeast coastal river watersheds, the U.S. portion of the St. Croix International Waterway, and eastern headwaters of the Penobscot River. Five federally designated free-flowing Atlantic salmon rivers occur here, along with significant brook trout and landlocked salmon fisheries. The area features Maine’s greatest diversity of peatlands, which is unequalled in the nation, Globally Important Bird Areas designated by the American Bird Conservancy, and 17 extensive Beginning with Habitat Focus Areas, which are of statewide wildlife significance. The Downeast Priority Landscape serves as a primary wood basket for a diverse forest products economy including mills in Baileyville, Bucksport, Chester, and Old Town, as well as several biomass plants. The Penobscot Indian Nation and Passamaquoddy Tribe have

49,000 and 69,000 acres of trust lands respectively in the area that they manage for forestry, wildlife, and other natural and cultural resources.

**Conserved Lands:** Over one-half million acres of the Downeast Priority Landscape are currently conserved. Federal conservation lands include the Moosehorn and Sunhaze National Wildlife Refuges as well as over 94,000 acres conserved through the Forest Legacy Program. The Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership “Sunrise” easement is one of Maine’s largest working forest easements permanently conserving over 300,000 acres of sustainably managed forest lands. The area includes two large community forests.

**Near term conservation opportunities:** Seven parcels totaling approximately 285,000 acres, primarily easement projects, are available for conservation.

# COLLABORATION: A Landscape Approach to Forest Conservation

*Maine is an opportune place* to advance the Departments of Interior and Agriculture's national goals, while also achieving those of the people of Maine. The essence of this proposal is an innovative and robust public-private partnership specifically tailored to Maine circumstances. Keeping Maine's Forests seeks to establish a new model for forest land conservation and stewardship for the country that sustains the forest landscape and the forest products industry, rural communities and fish and wildlife populations that depend upon it. It has been designed to be scalable based upon available resources with initial efforts identifying pilot projects within the Maine Woods where forest landowners have indicated a strong interest in taking part.

This proposed partnership must include private landowners, the state, tribal, and federal governments, local communities, non-profit organizations, and the philanthropic community. It should encompass all relevant state and federal programs in a synergistic fashion to secure an outcome where the Maine Woods provide for future generations the goods, services, jobs and values it has provided for generations. Success will require unprecedented levels of understanding, communications, and cooperation among a variety of partners over a sustained period.

As cited above, there have been important conservation accomplishments in the Maine Woods over the past decade, so it is reasonable to ask why a new federal/state/ private partnership is required. Keeping Maine's Forests is different because:

- It calls for the creation of a **true partnership between private forest landowners and the public** that maintains or enhances a sustainable timber supply and rewards landowners for maintaining and enhancing ecological and recreational values;
- It is focused on landscapes rather than individual projects; It calls for increased flexibility in programs and **new ways of meeting state and federal agency missions**;
- It calls for a **coordinated interdepartmental and interagency approach** – each agency contributing a part to a larger whole;

- It calls for **landscape scale stewardship** (improved management) to maintain wildlife habitats, maintain clean water, sequester carbon and provide other ecosystem services;
- It ensures that **community interests and needs are supported**; and,
- It requires a **greater federal investment in The Maine Woods** which can in turn leverage state and private contributions.

The specifics of the Keeping Maine's Forests proposal are divided into two categories: Conserving the Forest Landscape and Enhancing Forest Stewardship. These are two of the three legs of the stool upon which the future of the Maine Woods depends. The remaining leg is sustaining rural economies through strategies that will maintain and expand forest based industries, including traditional forest products, energy and forest based tourism. These rural development strategies will be presented in a separate proposal that is currently under development. Within each category, Keeping Maine's Forests has identified its primary goals, the federal programs that share these goals and the current suitability of those programs to operate successfully in the Maine Woods.

## Conserving the Forest Landscape

Keeping Maine's Forests Long-term Objectives: The Keeping Maine's Forests Initiative seeks to support private ownership of actively managed forest lands utilizing a range of conservation tools that keep them as forest, protect significant ecological values, ensure sustainable forest management and guarantee public access. Where high value ecological, cultural, and recreational lands exist, fee acquisition from willing sellers will likely be the most appropriate strategy to protect the public's interest. These could include areas such as riparian corridors, old growth forests, wetland complexes and other unique natural communities, trail corridors, popular recreation destinations, critical wildlife habitat, and areas that include a high concentration of these resource values. In addition, where there is community interest, Keeping Maine's Forests would support the establishment of community forests.

It is a goal of Keeping Maine's Forests to maintain or increase the overall timber output from Maine. Acquisition of working forest easements in the

Maine Woods will help prevent the loss of land from the timber base that would otherwise be subdivided or developed. However, in addition to simply keeping forests as forests, the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative proposes to pursue measures that will help to ensure that, in accord with landowner objectives, the opportunity for timber production is maintained on these lands for the foreseeable future such as:

- Creating an easement template that does not diminish the ability of landowners to provide a sustainable flow of timber to Maine's forest products facilities;
- When evaluating potential forest conservation projects, the highest priority projects will be those which protect exceptional ecological or recreational values, and/ or maintain active forest management consistent with sustainable forest management principles;
- Assessing the feasibility and cost of other mechanisms such as incentives for stewardship that will help support an active forest products industry consistent with sustainable forest management principles. .

Of the 2.1 million acres of forest land conserved in Maine since 1998, about 80% has been through conservation easements and the remainder in fee acquisitions. Of those lands acquired in fee by both the State and non-profit organizations, most have continued to be actively managed for timber production (though typically in a less intensive manner), a practice which Keeping Maine's Forests seeks to continue so as to minimize impact on timber supply. While it is anticipated that timber production may be reduced on some of the fee lands acquired, efforts can be made to offset this through enhanced productivity elsewhere. Over the past 50 years, Maine's landowners have doubled the harvest from their timberlands while, over the same period, almost doubling the standing volume of timber in the woods. With a concerted effort to increase productivity, this trend can, and should, continue into the future. In particular, smaller ownerships (mostly in the southern portion of Maine) are a seriously underutilized resource growing more than twice as much wood than is currently being harvested.

*This partnership must include private landowners, local communities, state, tribal and federal governments, non-profit organizations and the philanthropic community.*

If the pilot project phase proves successful, the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative is intended to be a sustained effort over many years, learning and improving along the way, with the ultimate goal of a broader landscape of conserved forest lands that are privately owned and sustainably managed for timber production with selected fee conservation lands embedded within this landscape. The extent of the conserved landscape and the mix of conservation and stewardship tools utilized across that landscape will depend upon the results of the pilot project phase described earlier and the refinements made to the approach outlined here based on what is learned from the pilot project, as well as landowners' desire to participate (all transactions are on a willing seller basis) and availability of resources to implement the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative.

This landscape vision recognizes that there is an appropriate place and need for well-sited residential and tourism related development within the Maine Woods in and near established communities and resort facilities. Moreover, strategic siting of resource-dependent industrial facilities and alternative energy generation such as wind power should be provided for within the Maine Woods. The Keeping Maine's Forests initiative would greatly benefit from efforts that identify high priority conservation areas and appropriate sites for future development to ensure that conservation initiatives do not, inadvertently, preclude important opportunities for economic development necessary to maintain sustainable communities.

In the following table, Keeping Maine's Forests has identified many existing federal programs that could potentially play an important role in achieving its stated objectives.

**Federal Land Conservation Programs That Could Contribute To The Keeping Maine's Forests Initiative**

Program	Sponsor	Program Objectives	Past Use in Maine Woods	Potential Future Use in Maine Woods
<b>Forest Legacy</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - U.S. Forest Service	FLP protects working forests, water quality, habitat, forest products, opportunities for recreation and other public benefits. FLP makes funding available to states on a matching basis primarily for the acquisition of conservation easements though can also be used for acquisition of fee lands that will be managed for multiple uses	Forest Legacy has been used extensively in Maine with great success – providing some of the nation’s highest scoring projects and those with the greatest conservation impact for the price.	There is a multi-year backlog of quality Legacy projects in Maine awaiting funding. Maine has nationally significant project opportunities due to its high proportion of private forest ownership. Current caps on Legacy funding (\$10 million/state and \$7 million/project) limit the use of Legacy in Maine. An exemption from these caps for high priority conservation areas such as the Maine Woods would allow additional high quality projects to be funded.
<b>Healthy Forest Reserve</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service	HFRP was established to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, improve biodiversity and enhance carbon sequestration. Funds can be utilized for the acquisition of term and permanent conservation easements and other conservation practices.	HFRP, a relatively new program, has been used in Maine for Canada lynx management but not easements.	The requirement that HFRP easements be held by federal government and an easement template that includes holder approval of all harvests and strictly limits motorized recreation makes the easement option, as currently proposed, unattractive to many Maine timberland owners. However, the management side of HFRP (listed in the stewardship table) has been successful in Maine.
<b>Community Forest and Open Space Conservation</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - U.S. Forest Service	This new program makes funds available to local governments and non-profits for establishing community forests.	New program.	When substantial funding is established for this program, it would be very beneficial to selected communities located on the edge of the Maine Woods. Its use in Maine could be enhanced if there were the flexibility to utilize conservation easements.

Program	Sponsor	Program Objectives	Past Use in Maine Woods	Potential Future Use in Maine Woods
<b>Land &amp; Water Conservation Fund</b>	U.S. Dept. of the Interior	The country's most important funding source for acquisition of conservation lands is used for the acquisition of federal lands and easements related to federal units. The stateside portion of LWCF makes funds available directly to states for state-selected projects.	Past federal-side LWCF investments have focused on the limited federal holdings in the Maine Woods including the White Mountain National Forest, three wildlife refuges, and the Appalachian Trail. Limited state-side LWCF funding has contributed to other projects.	Keeping Maine's Forests would benefit if federal-side LWCF could be used to acquire conservation easements to buffer national wildlife refuges and other federal lands. Increasing LWCF funding for stateside programs would also benefit Maine's ability to utilize funds for other projects.
<b>North American Wetlands Conservation Act</b>	U.S. Dept. of the Interior - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	NAWCA grants to states, tribes or land trusts are used to acquire fee and conservation easements that protect significant wetlands.	With wetlands so prevalent throughout the Maine Woods, NAWCA grants (typically for \$1 million) have been used extensively in Maine with great success both for fee and easement acquisitions.	NAWCA has recognized the value of landscape level conservation and has embraced working forest easements as an effective strategy for wetlands and wildlife habitat conservation.
<b>Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund – ESA Sect. VI</b>	U.S. Dept. of the Interior - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	This program includes Recovery Land Acquisition Grants (RLAG) that can be used to acquire fee or easements on critical habitat for threatened and endangered species.	RLAG grants have been used successfully to protect Atlantic salmon habitat both by fee and easements.	Additional acquisition opportunities exist along salmon rivers and there is the potential to use RLAG funds for projects involving conservation of Canada lynx habitat.

Funding from many of these programs could be utilized to fund the conservation acquisitions described in the two potential pilot projects.

## Enhancing Forest Stewardship

Working with willing landowners, Keeping Maine’s Forests seeks to create new opportunities for forest landowners to benefit from enhanced stewardship of their lands that provide an important suite of public benefits including maintenance or improvement of wildlife habitat that benefits a broad array of forest species, storage of carbon, protection of water quality, and assurance of public recreational access (generally referred to today as ecosystem services). Today, landowner stewardship programs are fragmented and in many cases unavailable or of limited value to large landowners in the Maine Woods. The federal agency that currently has the greatest responsibility for forest stewardship, the

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has eligibility requirements for many of their programs that exclude large forest landowners or income limits that limit their appeal, even though their lands encompass important habitat, valued waterways, and popular recreation areas that would greatly benefit from stewardship incentives. Programs that have substantial potential to benefit the Maine Woods (e.g. Healthy Forest Reserve Program) have received minimal funding at the national level. The federal programs that could potentially assist in developing an effective stewardship initiative are included in the following table.

Program	Sponsor	Program Objectives	Past Use in Maine Woods	Potential Future Use in Maine Woods
<b>Environmental Quality Improvement Program</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service	EQIP assists landowners to implement conservation practices that can range from water quality protection to recreational trail development, to forest management practices that will improve forest health and productivity.	Landowner participation in EQIP in the Maine Woods has been limited, with the exception of tribal and land trust ownerships, because most large forest landowners do not meet the adjusted gross income eligibility requirement and landowner payment limits are too low to be attractive to large ownerships.	With modifications to eligibility requirements and payment limits, EQIP could play a greatly expanded role in the Maine Woods.
<b>Conservation Stewardship Program</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service	CSP provides payments to landowners for maintaining existing conservation activities and adopting additional ones that will improve soils, forest health, habitat, clean water.	Landowner participation in CSP in the Maine Woods has been limited, because most large forest landowners do not meet the adjusted gross income eligibility requirement and landowner payment limits are too low to be attractive to large ownerships.	Given adequate resources and program modifications to eligibility requirements and payment limits, CSP could be used extensively throughout Maine Woods to provide a wide range of public benefits from private forest lands.

Program	Sponsor	Program Objectives	Past Use in Maine Woods	Potential Future Use in Maine Woods
<b>Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service	WHIP assists landowners, as well as non-profit organizations, to improve habitat for species of state, tribal and national significance	WHIP has been an important contributor to Atlantic salmon restoration efforts through the involvement of non-profit organizations and also greatly benefits wildlife management on tribal lands. However, the annual \$50,000 cap on payments greatly limits the ability of organizations to initiate major habitat conservation efforts. Landowner involvement is limited by the adjusted gross income requirements.	With modifications to eligibility requirements and payment limits, WHIP could play a greatly expanded role in enhancing wildlife habitat in the Maine Woods.
<b>Healthy Forest Reserve Program</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service	The stewardship side of this program assists landowners with management for threatened and endangered species, biodiversity and carbon sequestration.	HFRP, which is not subject to the same limitations as other NRCS programs, has played an important role helping a number of large landowners develop forest management plans that will sustain or improve Canada lynx habitat.	Additional resources could expand the Canada Lynx work to other large ownerships as well as lands associated with the endangered Atlantic salmon. Expanding HFRP efforts to biodiversity and carbon storage issues would open up many new opportunities for landowners to participate including, for example, lands located within the state's Habitat Focus Areas.
<b>Voluntary Public Access &amp; Habitat Incentive Program</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service	A new program authorized under the 2008 Farm Bill that has yet to be established that would make grants available to states to support public recreational access on private lands.	Program yet to be implemented by agency.	Program has yet to be established by USDA. This program, if developed effectively, could provide enormous benefits to the Maine Woods where public recreation predominantly occurs on private land.

Program	Sponsor	Program Objectives	Past Use in Maine Woods	Potential Future Use in Maine Woods
<b>Cooperative Forestry Assistance Program</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - U.S. Forest Service	This program supports many state efforts that help get forest conservation done on the ground, particularly in situations that do not lend themselves to fee or easement acquisition. For example, the Forest Stewardship Program provides assistance to owners of forest land and other lands where good stewardship will enhance and sustain the long term productivity of multiple forest resources.	The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Program has proven an effective tool in engaging family forest owners in active management of their woodlands, creating long-term relationships between family forest owners and private consulting forester, and enhancing access to the USDA conservation programs listed herein and/or forest certification programs.	With increased funding; program could reach more small forest landowners that would benefit from stewardship initiative.
<b>Office of Ecosystem Markets</b>	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - U.S. Forest Service	This new USDA office is exploring national opportunities to advance markets and payments for ecosystem services including forest biodiversity, clean water, and carbon sequestration.	New program	Emerging markets for forest ecosystem services could create significant new income streams for forest landowners and communities. The proposed KMF pilot stewardship project offers a potential proving ground for an ecosystem services model.
<b>North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative</b>	U.S. Dept. of the Interior - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	The North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative to form a conservation science – management partnership focused on collaboratively developing science-based recommendations and decision-support tools.	New program	This stewardship model proposed by Keeping Maine’s Forests fits in perfectly with the LCC. Keeping Maine’s Forests would hope that its stewardship initiatives could become a demonstration area for the LCC’s efforts.
<b>Partners for Fish &amp; Wildlife</b>	U.S. Dept. of the Interior - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	The Partners for Fish & Wildlife seeks to work with landowners, tribes and non-profit organizations on projects that will benefit federal trust species. These projects often focus on restoration of degraded habitats.	To date, Maine projects, due to limited funding, have focused primarily on restoration of degraded environments and projects on tribal lands.	Given adequate resources, Partners projects could be greatly expand to enhance habitat for a broader array of federal trust species that utilize the Maine Woods.

Program	Sponsor	Program Objectives	Past Use in Maine Woods	Potential Future Use in Maine Woods
<b>Gulf of Maine Coastal Program</b>	U.S. Dept. of the Interior - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	The Coastal Program works with a variety of partners to share information, knowledge and capabilities for habitat conservation on a landscape scale to support healthy populations of fish and wildlife.	The program has played an important technical assistance and advisory role for implementation of conservation projects in the Maine Woods beginning with the Pingree project in 2002 providing habitat information and assisting with grant funding through USFWS programs.	The Keeping Maine's Forests initiative will increase demand for the program's advisory and technical assistance services.
<b>Tribal Wildlife Grants</b>	U.S. Dept. of the Interior - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	These grants provide essential funding for the natural resource management programs of Maine's tribes.	Maine's tribes have substantial forest land ownerships and have been integrally involved in major conservation initiatives such as the Penobscot River Restoration Project. TWG grants have enabled the tribes to take a leadership role in resource stewardship.	As active participants in the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative, Maine's tribes will look to expand stewardship activities on their forest lands.
<b>Rivers, Trails Conservation Assistance Program</b>	U.S. Dept. of the Interior - National Park Service	When requested by a community, non-profit organization or other partners, RTCA provides technical assistance on trail, river and conservation projects. RTCA seeks to serve as a catalyst for projects where there is strong community support.	RTCA has played an important supporting role in the development of numerous recreation projects in the Maine Woods such as the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.	RTCA could play an expanded role in developing and implementing river and recreation initiatives that evolve from the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative and are supported by surrounding communities.

Traditionally, stewardship incentive programs have been focused on specific activities that provide a particular benefit or are limited to small areas. Increasingly, applied scientific research has been looking at stewardship benefits in a more holistic and integrated manner. For example, wildlife biologists are finding that in certain forest ecosystems, management for certain “umbrella species,” such as Canada lynx and pine marten benefits a tremendously broad spectrum of wildlife species from neotropical warblers to moose and provides an array of other ecosystem services as well. Likewise, managing cold water habitats for species like brook trout may offer the same benefit to a broad range of aquatic species. As we wrestle with new challenges such as adaptation of forests and wildlife to climate change, it is time to rethink the design and administration of forest stewardship programs in the Maine Woods.

Keeping Maine’s Forests proposes a ground-breaking collaborative effort involving USFS, NRCS, USFWS, and NPS working together with their state and tribal counterparts, landowners and non-profits to create a new model for stewardship incentives that is: 1) based upon the latest and best science; 2) available and attractive to forest landowners; and 3) provides a cost-effective approach to maintaining and enhancing a wide range of ecosystem services found in the Maine Woods. Utilizing the latest science regarding the habitat requirements of certain umbrella species could serve as a foundation for the stewardship program.

We anticipate that stewardship agreements with forest landowners will be for extended durations to ensure that the conservation objectives are successfully achieved and the public receives lasting benefits. Payments would be made specifically for management activities that extend beyond requirements of existing laws and conservation easements. To achieve the greatest possible impact, it would be highly desirable to pool available funding from existing stewardship programs and administer it as a single comprehensive effort, rather than have numerous programs operating independently. In doing so, it would be easier for landowners to participate and more cost-effective at meeting the full range of stewardship objectives.

Initially, Keeping Maine’s Forests proposes to test this approach as part of the

pilot project(s). The Manomet Center for Conservation Science has expressed strong interest in leading a pilot initiative to develop a payment for an ecosystem services program that would compensate landowners for actions taken to sequester carbon, protect water resources (beyond what is required under existing law), maintain forest biodiversity and make the forest more resilient to climate change. Manomet’s efforts are a perfect fit for Keeping Maine’s Forests – as are national efforts being pursued by USDA’s Office of Ecosystem Markets and the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative. Once the model is working well, it could be expanded to other areas.

Such an initiative would further the objectives of all the federal stewardship programs described above and could potentially be pursued through funding from one or multiple programs involving the U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Along with compensating landowners for the expense of providing important ecological benefits from their forest lands, Keeping Maine’s Forests also seeks to address the costs incurred by landowners who allow the public to recreate on their lands. In most other states, large forest landowners profit from the recreational use of their lands. In Maine, landowners typically bear the cost of recreational use. This issue needs to be addressed. If the important tradition of public recreational access to Maine’s forest lands is to continue, new mechanisms will be needed to reward landowners who make their lands available for public recreation. Ideally, Maine could develop the inaugural effort of the Voluntary Public Access & Habitat Incentive Program authorized in the most recent Farm Bill or utilize funding from an already established NRCS program.

Creating a stewardship program that provides landowners with fair compensation for the public benefits derived from the forest allows landowners to focus their financial resources on producing timber and increasing the productivity of their land base which, in turn, will benefit the long term health of the state’s forest products industry. A landscape-level approach to managing recreation, wildlife and environmental services across property lines also promises to be more cost-effective and successful in serving public interests than is the present mosaic of individual efforts.

# What Maine Brings to this Partnership

A well designed stewardship incentive program could potentially address resource management issues that have proven problematic in recent years. For example, there has been an ongoing public dialogue about expectations for forest landowners to manage deer wintering habitat and other habitat for important game and non-game species. Also, concerns have been raised whether current forest practice regulations can provide the diversity of habitat necessary to support forest biodiversity. Rather than have such issues become contentious public debates, it would be far more productive to develop a program that appropriately rewards landowners that manage their lands to meet identified public objectives and create a new model for how to achieve responsible stewardship.



*Ensuring a secure and productive future for the Maine Woods* is a daunting challenge. In asking USDA and DOI to make a major commitment of resources to Keeping Maine's Forest, Maine realizes that it must make a commensurate pledge to the effort, both monetarily (discussed in a separate section below) and in other equally important ways including the following:

## **An Existing Collaborative Framework**

Keeping Maine's Forests began two years ago with the idea that diverse forest interests, many of whom have been on the opposite side of issues in the past, could find common ground on the goal of keeping forests as forest. That idea was put to a test when Secretary Salazar visited Maine in June 2009 and sat down with a delegation to learn about the Maine Woods. He challenged those present to bring forward a proposal to DOI that had buy-in from conservation interests, recreation groups, forest landowners and the forest products industry. That challenge helped to transform Keeping Maine's Forests from an exercise without a clear path to implementation to a hard-nosed discussion about specific forest initiatives. Over the past months, the Keeping Maine's Forests Steering Committee has wrestled with developing a set of common principles and translating those principles into this proposal. It has not been an easy process, and the group is aware that many challenges lie ahead. Nonetheless, we have created a foundation for collaborative action on forest issues that is unprecedented in Maine. In these times of political polarization, this achievement is noteworthy.

## **Willing Landowners Interested in Conserving Their Lands**

Every year, Maine's Forest Legacy Committee needs to make difficult choices among high quality forest conservation proposals put forward by Maine landowners and their conservation partners. Landowner interest in selling conservation easements (and in some case fee interest in high value ecological and recreational lands) has consistently outstripped available funding for such projects. As part of the process of developing this proposal, Maine landowners owning more than 10,000 acres within one of the four Demonstration Landscapes were surveyed to gauge their interest in pursuing conservation or stewardship op-

portunities that might become available through Keeping Maine's Forests. Of 42 landowners surveyed, approximately half expressed an active interest in pursuing either a conservation and/or stewardship project, another third wanted to see how the program evolves before pursuing a project, and less than 15% expressed no interest in Keeping Maine Forests opportunities.

### **Experienced and Committed Land Trust Partners**

Maine has one of the strongest land trust communities of any state in the nation including numerous groups whose mission and expertise focuses on conserving forest lands, such as the Forest Society of Maine and the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine Land Trust. Additionally there are key land trusts whose geographic focus centers on the Maine Woods such as the Downeast Lakes Land Trust, Mahoosuc Land Trust and the Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust. Regional and national organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, Appalachian Mountain Club, The Conservation Fund and the New England Forestry Foundation have all taken on major forest conservation initiatives involving hundreds of thousands of acres in Maine over the past decade. There is no question that Maine has non-profit partners capable of taking on the challenges and opportunities contained within this proposal.

### **An Engaged Scientific Community**

Landscape conservation, climate change adaptation, sustainable forestry and payments for ecosystem services are just a few of topics that are at the forefront of the environmental research agenda and of direct relevance to Keeping Maine's Forests. Maine's scientific community has taken a leading role in the inquiry of these issues, developing on-the-ground programs to apply their findings. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife in collaboration with Maine Natural Areas Program, Maine Audubon and others initiated

a statewide approach to landscape conservation in 2000 through their Beginning with Habitat initiative and the development of a State Wildlife Action Plan. Since 1975, the Cooperative Forest Research Unit at the University of Maine, a landowner-university cooperative whose members own over 8 million acres of the Maine Woods, has been conducting on-the-ground research on sustainable forestry. The scientists at CFRU seek to answer real questions about real management challenges such as how to best sustain quality habitat for the Canada lynx. The Climate Change Institute at the University of Maine is a national leader in researching the impacts of climate change on forest ecosystems and the Manomet Center for Conservation Science has focused its recent research initiatives on developing a science-based approach to payments for ecosystem



services for forest landscapes. These and other highly regarded Maine institutions are prepared to assist in the implementation of the Keeping Maine Forest initiative.

### **State Programs and Public that Support KMF Goals**

The Keeping Maine's Forests initiative is a natural outgrowth of other endeavors of state government that have focused on the Maine Woods. For the past 40 years, Maine's Tree Growth Tax Program has helped Maine landowners maintain their property as productive woodlands and supported Maine's wood products industry by assessing property taxes on enrolled forest lands on the basis of forest productivity value, rather than market value. The Maine Department of Conservation has worked with Maine landowners and the forest products industry to make Maine the national leader in certifying forest lands for sustainable management with over 7.5 million acres now certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative or the Tree Farm program. The Maine Bureau of Parks & Lands has dual certification of its public reserved lands and has managed those lands for multiple uses with a minimum of public controversy.

Since its creation in 1988, the Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF) has contributed \$130 million to land and easement acquisitions including many large projects in the Maine Woods, often providing the state-required match for federal land acquisition funding programs. Maine voters have demonstrated their strong conservation ethic by consistently passing land acquisition bonds with support typically topping 60% including strong support from the state's northern counties. Maine's senators and congressional representatives have been stalwart supporters of federal funding for Maine's forest conservation projects. Over the past 35 years, the policies of Maine's Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC), which has responsibility for planning and regulation of the 10.5 million acres of unorganized territories, have sought to maintain a forest land base that will continue to support a forest products industry, wildlife and outdoor recreation including a unique transfer-of-development-rights program that allows large forest landowners to develop suitable portions of their ownership in exchange for permanent conservation of other lands.

### **Tribal Initiatives that Support KMF Goals**

The forests of what is now Maine had sustained the native tribes, and had been sustainably managed by the tribes, for 10,000 years. Tribes continue to practice culturally and traditionally appropriate natural resources management practices today on Indian Territories and Trust lands acquired under the terms of the 1980 Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement Act and 1991 Micmac Settlement Act. Income from the sale of timber provides much needed revenue for tribal government operations and the harvesting of raw materials for culturally relevant activities allows tribal people to continue practicing indigenous traditions. Many of the tribes' land management initiatives support the goals outlined in the Keeping Maine's Forests project. The tribes manage their land holdings for long term sustainability while providing a range of beneficial uses. Indian Territory and Trust lands are managed to maintain and enhance ecological integrity, respectful of the diverse fish, wildlife, and plant populations that depend on these forests for their survival. The protection of riparian buffer zones, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive areas are given special recognition in the development of tribal forest management plans.

*Keeping Maine's Forests began with the idea that diverse forest interests, many of whom had been on the opposite side of issues in the past, could find common ground in the goal of keeping forests as forests.*

# Implementing the Keeping Maine's Forests Initiative

## Institutional Framework

*With the submission of this proposal*, the Keeping Maine's Forests Steering Committee will expand its membership to develop an implementation plan and structure for the pilot project phase of the initiative. The expanded Steering Committee will include representation from local communities and other forests interests (e.g. loggers and wilderness guides), as well as staff representatives from Maine's Congressional delegation. If USDA and DOI find merit in this proposal, it is recommended that the partnership be established by having representatives from the federal agencies join the membership of the committee. Ultimately, a smaller governing body may be preferable, but it is critically important that it remain a diverse and balanced committee representing land-owners, the forest products industry, recreation interests (both motorized and non-motorized), Maine's tribes, land conservation and wildlife interests along with state, local, and federal government representatives. Additionally, it will be critical to closely involve Maine's Congressional delegation throughout the implementation process.

The implementation plan for the pilot project phase of Keeping Maine's Forests would focus on the two areas discussed above: Conserving the Forest Landscape and Enhancing Forest Stewardship (with a parallel effort undertaken on enhancing the forest-based economy and rural communities). Expertise in each subject area would be recruited to assist with development of an implementation plan. For example, a work group developing the stewardship plan might include representatives from the Cooperative Forest Research Unit, Manomet Center for Environmental Science, managers of large timber holdings including tribes, NRCS and USFWS stewardship experts, along with others.

The implementation plan for the pilot project phase will include:

- **Budget based upon anticipated federal, state and private funding:**

The plan will establish a budget for the pilot project phase of Keeping Maine's Forests.

- **Solicitation and selection procedures for pilot projects:** The plan will establish a set of project selection criteria that build upon the following



Keeping Maine Forest project principles:

- Maintaining timber supply to support a diverse and robust forest products industry (priority to be given to projects that include mechanisms to ensure this outcome)
- Promoting healthy forests – sustainably managed;
- Reducing Maine’s dependence on fossil fuels;
- Protecting biodiversity;
- Maintaining public access for diverse recreation opportunities;
- Preserving special places;
- Maintaining or increasing carbon storage; and
- Facilitating adaptation of forest systems to climate change.

A selection process for pilot projects will be designed that utilizes the criteria and gives priority to projects that can be undertaken within the 2011-2012 budget cycles. This process should be carefully coordinated with the selection process for existing programs such as the Land for Maine’s Future Board and the Maine Forest Legacy Committee.

• **Modifications to federal programs required to achieve desired outcomes:** The plan will propose any modifications needed to federal programs to effectively implement the Keeping Maine Forests agenda.

• **Research needs:** The plan will identify research tasks that need to be completed in order to effectively implement Keeping Maine Forests as more specifically presented below.

• **Outreach to forests interests, local communities and the general public:** The plan will lay out a public information program designed to keep stakeholders and the public fully informed about the objectives and progress of Keeping Maine’s Forests and solicit public input at key points in the process.

• **Collaboration with other efforts such as the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative:** The success of Keeping Maine’s Forests

will be, in part, dependent on how well its efforts are coordinated with other efforts around the region and country.

• **Management/Stewardship needs:** The plan will address the substantial monitoring and stewardship responsibilities and costs that will result from the proposed easement and fee acquisitions and the proposed stewardship initiative.

• **Expected project outcomes:** The plan will identify short-term and long-term project goals and expectations.

• **Evaluation mechanisms to strengthen the model:** The plan will include specific methods and criteria by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot projects and to revise strategies in order to strengthen the Keeping Maine’s Forests initiative.

Keeping Maine’s Forests believes that the core of the implementation plan can



be developed within a six month timeframe because so much work has already been completed to date. At the same time that the Steering Committee is developing the implementation plan, forest landowners and their conservation partners can be working out details for the pilot project(s). Similarly, resource managers can be working with the scientific committee to construct the framework for a model forest stewardship program.

The pilot project phase of Keeping Maine's Forests is expected to last approximately three years. After the completion of the pilot projects, the Steering Committee will conduct a detailed evaluation of Keeping Maine's Forests, determine whether it should be expanded to new areas and recommend any changes that are needed to better achieve the established goals and vision.

Fundamental to the underlying principles of Keeping Maine's Forests is that landowner participation in stewardship and conservation efforts is purely voluntary. The purpose of the initiative is to create new opportunities for forest landowners that they can elect to pursue. No landowner will be required to take any action or penalized for not participating. Keeping Maine's Forests acknowledges and applauds the fact that many large forest landowners have proven to be stewards of their lands without any governmental involvement and may elect to continue in this manner.

## **Funding for Keeping Maine's Forests**

To implement both the land conservation and stewardship components of the Keeping Maine's Forests Initiative will require substantial federal, state and private support over an extended period of time. Keeping Maine's Forests recognizes that a number of existing federal stewardship programs are critically important to Maine farms, woodlots and tribal lands. Funding for the Keeping Maine's Forests should supplement, not reduce or reallocate, funding from these existing programs.

Maintaining the environmental and economic integrity of the Maine Woods (of which approximately 2.8 million acres have already been protected along with approximately 200,000 acres of tribal Trust lands) represents a major funding challenge in the best of times to say nothing of today's current environment of

scarce resources. Keeping Maine's Forests brings this proposal to USDA and DOI knowing that a substantial share of federal funding is essential to its success and appropriate due to its national significance. Furthermore, a major commitment to conserving a vast landscape of forests, lakes, rivers and mountains in the East would restore some equity for federal land conservation programs that, understandably, have allocated major resources to the western states.

However, Keeping Maine's Forests also acknowledges that this is an initiative that is vitally important to the people of Maine and accordingly requires that there be a commensurate commitment from state and private interests. In keeping with the sense of partnership embraced by this proposal, Keeping Maine's Forests proposes that the cost of the land conservation component of the initiative be shared between federal agencies and state and private sources.

We understand that a sustained effort will be required to meet the objectives of Keeping Maine's Forests. The initiative is structured to be scalable depending upon available funding with the expectation that the effort will begin with one or more pilot projects that prove their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of this effort before additional investments are made. There is sufficient landowner interest and organizational capacity to work in several areas and on multiple land acquisition and stewardship efforts simultaneously should there be available project funding. Projects will be selected through a competitive process with funding to be provided only to projects that successfully achieve the goals of Keeping Maine's Forests and meet the requirements of the federal funding program.

Keeping Maine's Forests is seeking \$25 million of federal funding to initiate the pilot project phase of the initiative with additional contributions to occur from state and private funding sources. This request is in addition to the funding Maine currently receives through existing federal programs including Forest legacy, LWCF, NAWCA and NRCS stewardship programs.

While the estimated cost of the potential pilot projects is substantial, the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative represents one of the most cost-effective opportunities for land conservation that exists in the country today. Consider that:

- The cost of restoring the Everglades, an ecosystem of comparable

size to the Maine Woods, is now estimated at \$10.9 billion (approximately \$1000/acre);

- In 2008, Congress spent \$250 million (50% of total cost) to protect 310,000 acres of forest land in Montana (at a cost of over \$1,600/acre for fee purchase of lands);

- The cost of working forest conservation easements in the Maine Woods has averaged less than \$150/acre (easements in southern Maine have been more expensive);

- Maine's forest products industry and forest-based recreation tourism in Maine together generate approximately \$6 billion annually in economic output.

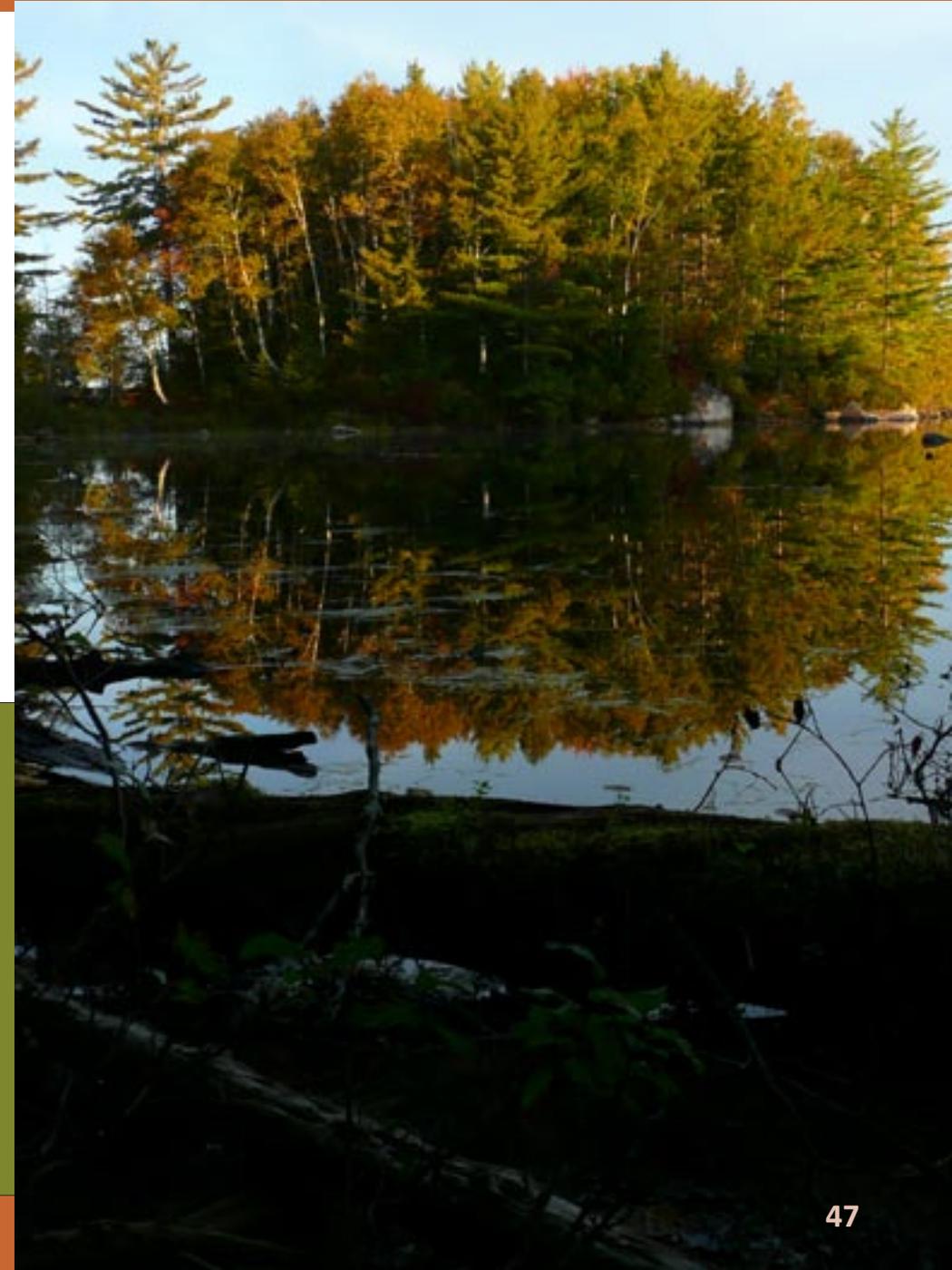
Perhaps most revealing is the fact that **since 1998, over \$280 million has been raised from public and private sources to acquire fee lands and conservation easements in the Maine Woods.** Of that amount, over **\$180 million came from private sources.** These figures demonstrate the level of commitment that has already been made to the conservation of the Maine Woods and provides optimism that a true public-private funding partnership can be successful over the next decade and beyond.

### Ongoing Assessment, Research and Discussion:

Over the past months, the Keeping Maine's Forests Steering Committee has made tremendous progress in identifying common concerns and agreeing upon conservation and stewardship strategies to pursue as part of the proposed pilot projects. However, the Steering Committee members view this proposal and the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative as a dynamic effort that will evolve and improve based upon the experience with the pilot project(s), additional research and analysis, and ongoing discussion. The Steering Committee has identified a variety of challenges and issues that require its future attention that can help to refine and improve Keeping Maine's Forests and strengthen the partnership and resolve of its participants. These include:

- Evaluating how the different elements of the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative (fee acquisition, conservation easement acquisition, and stewardship programs) may impact wood supply over the long-term (positive or negative) as compared to anticipated wood supply in the absence of such programs and strategies that can be used to increase wood supply;
- Evaluating how the different elements of the Keeping Maine's Forests initiative achieve:
  - Biodiversity, protection of significant wildlife habitat, and preservation of unique ecological areas including exemplary natural communities and late successional forests; and
  - Availability of diverse high quality outdoor recreation opportunities (including motorized and backcountry recreation); and
  - Sustainability of forest management practices.
- Reviewing existing working forest conservation easement standards and assessing:
  - How to provide the best "bang for the buck" for conservation easement investments (e.g. where to target conservation easement acquisitions and what rights to purchase, including simple no-development easements);
  - How to ensure that working forest conservation easement requirements do not impede the flow of timber off well managed, conserved properties;
  - Identify those easement standards that have been most problematic for landowners and determine whether the public's interests can be adequately protected through alternative approaches that better align with landowners' needs; and

- How to provide conservation easement standards that are not cost prohibitive for the easement holder to administer or for compliance by the landowner.
- Encouraging local and regional planning efforts that identify appropriate and strategic areas necessary for future economic development or that are the highest priority for conservation so that conservation acquisitions can be sited and designed to protect valued resources without precluding important future economic development opportunities;
- Exploring how the objectives and strategies of Keeping Maine's Forests can be applied to the forest landscape in southern Maine;
- Determining how best to establish an economic and legal framework for stewardship programs that pay for habitat management and other ecological services that benefit society; and
- Monitoring development pressures and trends to help ensure that Keeping Maine's Forests efforts are designed and focused in a cost-effective manner.



*Ensuring a secure and productive future for the Maine Woods is a daunting challenge. We have created a foundation for collaborative action on forest issues that is unprecedented in Maine.*

# CONCLUSION

“Why would you go west,” asked Henry David Thoreau over 150 years ago, “when Maine has everything?” In his travels through Maine’s lakes, rivers, mountains, and forests, Thoreau recognized that he was experiencing one of the country’s greatest natural treasures comparable to the grand landscapes of the west. Remarkably, the forest landscape witnessed by Thoreau is still largely intact today. Since Penobscot guides led Thoreau through the Maine Woods, the forests have grown multiple stands of timber sustaining Maine’s forest industry. With a few exceptions, the trees, plants and wildlife witnessed by Thoreau in his rambles still can still be found in abundance. The sense of awe that Thoreau experienced is still common today among those who recreate there.

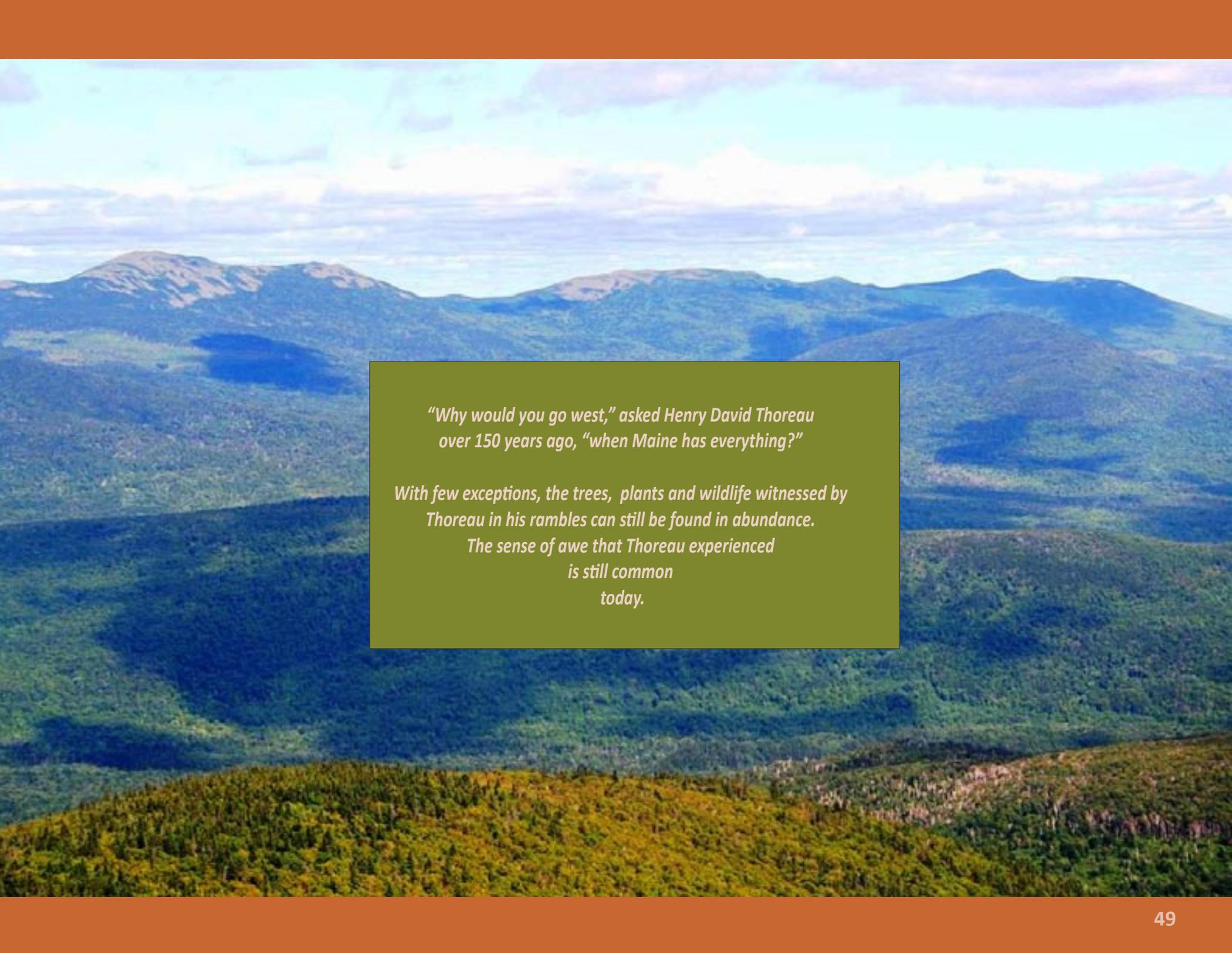
Through this proposal, Keeping Maine’s Forests seeks to initiate an unprecedented partnership—a partnership that will work to ensure that, in 150 years, the Maine Woods are still providing the wealth of public benefits, from wood to wildlife, that they do today. Keeping Maine’s Forests would help to sustain the tradition of private ownership and stewardship that has characterized this region and fueled Maine’s economy. To do so requires that we develop new

approaches to share the responsibility for maintaining the valued resources and outstanding recreation opportunities that the Maine Woods provide.

The challenges facing the Maine Woods are greater than ever before, ranging from global competition in the woods industry to climate change to the ever-increasing pressure to develop our country’s last remaining open spaces. Without concerted actions to maintain the Maine Woods and ensure the wise stewardship of all its resources, these and other forces will inevitably diminish the integrity and viability of this forest landscape over time.

The greatest strength of Keeping Maine’s Forests is the diversity of forest interests that have come together to pursue a common vision for the Maine Woods. We now seek to involve the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to further strengthen this endeavor. Through a strategic and creative partnership, Keeping Maine’s Forests offers an opportunity for making federal conservation and stewardship programs more relevant and cost-effective than ever before and to make the Maine Woods a model for landscape conservation.





*“Why would you go west,” asked Henry David Thoreau over 150 years ago, “when Maine has everything?”*

*With few exceptions, the trees, plants and wildlife witnessed by Thoreau in his rambles can still be found in abundance. The sense of awe that Thoreau experienced is still common today.*

# APPENDIX

## LIST OF CONTACTS WITH ORGANIZATIONS, GROUPS, AGENCIES, AND INDIVIDUALS (2010)

1/8	Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, Executive Director Acadia National Park, Superintendent Environmental Funders Network USDA NRCS, Farm Bureau	3/12	Congressman Mike Michaud
1/12	Natural Resources Network, Members	3/16	Congressman Michaud's Office Intergovernmental Liaison
1/14	Maine Forest Products Council, Board	3/17	Maine Woods Coalition
1/19	Tribal Nations Penobscot Indian Nation, Natural Resources Director Passamaquoddy Tribe, Chief Forester Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Planner USDA Rural Development, Director	3/19	Congresswoman Chellie Pingree Moosehead Region Futures Committee Natural Resources Network Members
1/20	Small Woodlot Owners Association of Maine, Annual Meeting	3/23	Congresswoman Pingree Office, State Director
2/4	USDOI Fish and Wildlife Service Director USDA Undersecretary	3/24	Senator Susan Collins Office, State Office
2/12	USDI Fish & Wildlife Service Director	3/25	Senator Olympia Snowe Office, State Director
2/14	Millinocket Area Community Meeting & Event Congressman Mike Michaud Elected officials from Medway, Millinocket, East Millinocket Northern Timber Cruisers Connect ME Maine Snowmobile Association	3/29	Maine Woods Coalition, Director and President
2/14	USDI Secretary	3/31	Natural Resources Educational Center Greenville, Board
2/19	Acadia National Park, Superintendent	4/5	Bangor Daily News, Editor
2/23	Governor's Nature-based Tourism Initiative	4/5	Town of Greenville, Town Manager Piscataquis Tourism Development Authority
2/26	Sportsmens Forest Landowner Board	4/7	Maine Pulp and Paper Association, Board: Lincoln Paper & Tissue Katahdin Paper Co. Fraser Papers Madison Paper Industries NewPage Old Town Fuel and Fiber Sappi Fine Paper Verso Paper
3/3	Piscataquis County Economic Development Council, Executive Committee	4/7	Maine Land Use Regulation Commission, public meeting
3/4	Forest Resource Association Open Meeting	4/8	Maine Woods Consortium Board: Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce Sunrise Co. Eco. Dev. Council Northern ME Dev. Comm. Kennebec Valley Council of Government
3/9	Portland Press Herald, Editorial Board		

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Androscoggin Valley Council of Government  
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.  
Maine Office of Tourism  
Maine Rural Partners  
Northern Forest Ctr  
Mountain Counties Heritage. Inc  
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences

4/9 Wildfire Television Program, Appearance  
4/10 Maine Snowmobile Association, Annual meeting  
4/12 Senator Susan Collins, Video Conference Call  
4/27 Western Mountains Alliance  
5/6 Maine Woods Coalition Board of Directors  
5/7 International Appalachian Trail Meeting, 60 people  
5/12 Maine Congress of Lakes Association, Board of Directors  
5/18 Maine Snowmobile Association, Board of Directors  
6/8 Greenville, Town Manager  
6/10 Maine Woods Forever Spring Forum  
6/17 Piscataquis County Commissioners, phone briefing  
6/17 Professional Logging Contractors, Board of Directors  
7/13 Land for Maine's Future Board

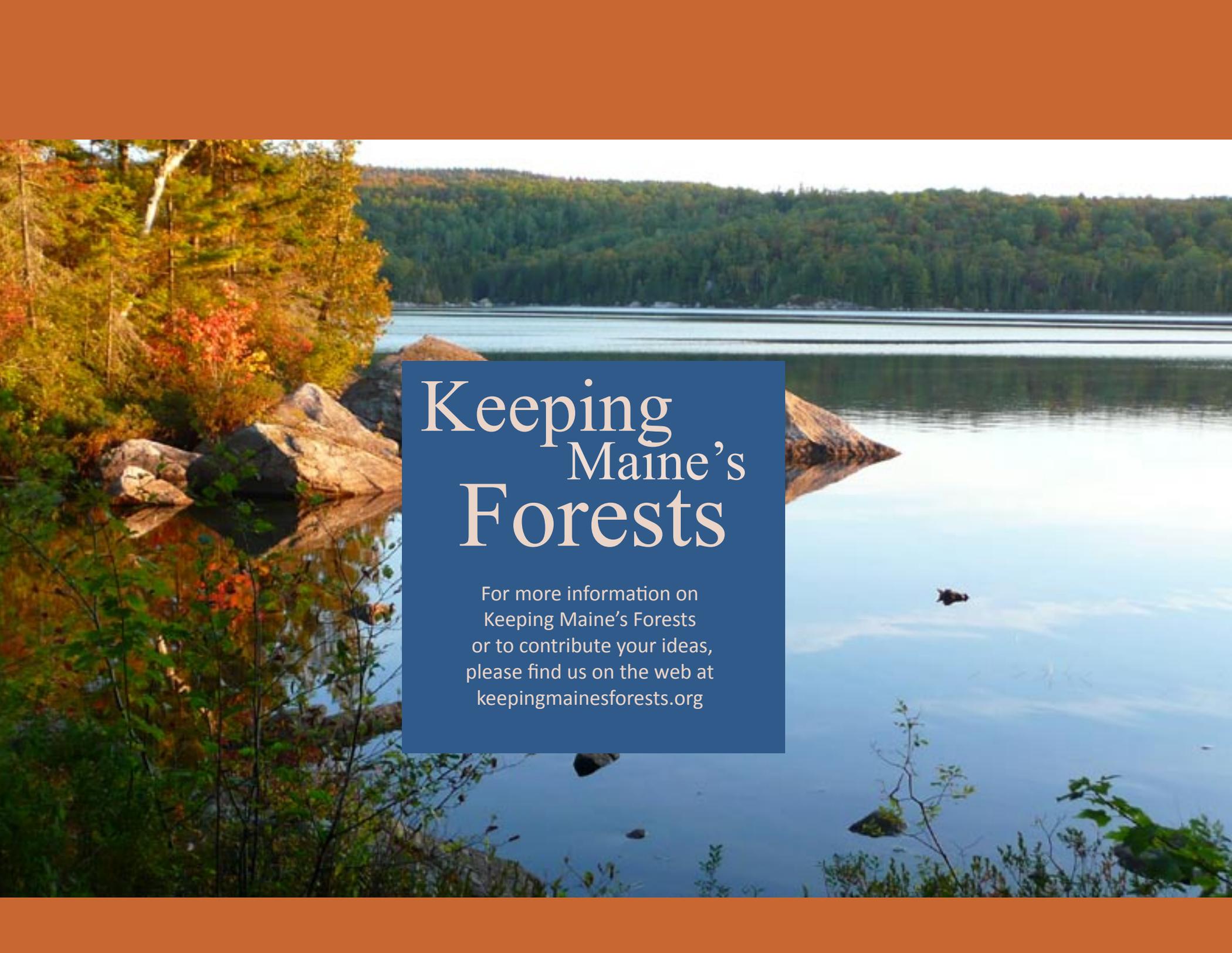
Multiple Consultations:  
Downeast Lakes Land Trust  
Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust  
The Wilderness Society  
Mahoosucs Land Trust  
Manomet Center for Conservation Science  
Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust

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Forest Society of Maine  
Prentiss & Carlisle  
Seven Islands Land Company  
Sierra Club  
The Nature Conservancy



# Keeping Maine's Forests

For more information on  
Keeping Maine's Forests  
or to contribute your ideas,  
please find us on the web at  
[keepingmainesforests.org](http://keepingmainesforests.org)