

Maine's North Woods

Changes, Challenges and Options to Protect Maine's Heritage



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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Maine's North Woods: Largest Undeveloped Forest in the Eastern United States

"Today in the Maine Woods the pace is accelerating towards an unknown future as mills close and loggers park their machinery."

Roger Milliken,
Baskehegan Timber Company¹

"The likely alternative for the [Maine's North Woods] rim counties is an acceleration of the present trend toward 'wilderness sprawl,' with more prime real estate irreversibly transformed into private playgrounds, mixing large kingdom lots and extensive subdivisions."

David Vail,
Bowdoin College²

"One of the most striking results... is the emergence of Maine's forests as the ecological core of the entire region, a compelling finding because these forests are also the least protected – not from the effects of forest management but from conversion to development."

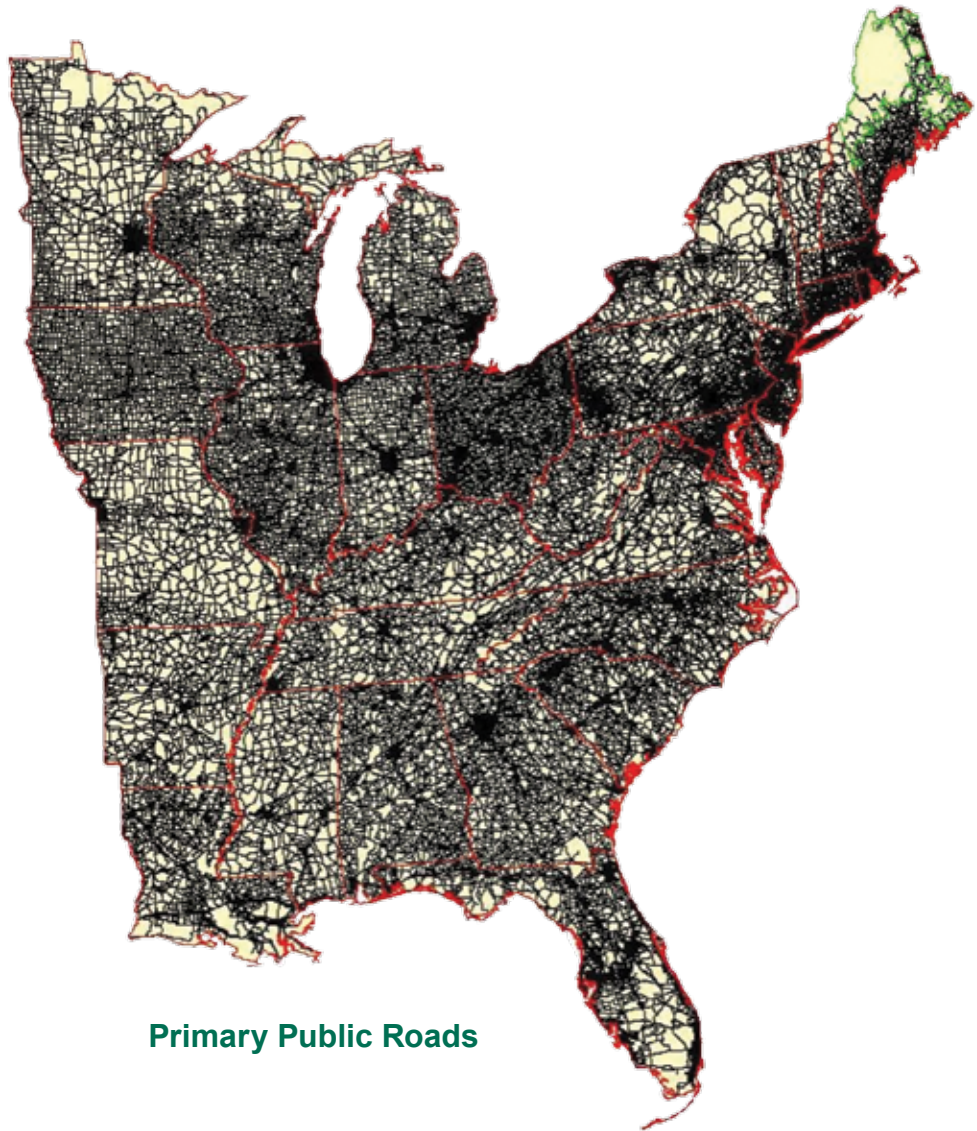
Robert Baldwin,
Clemson University³

"Hanging over this big country is an almost equally big question: What is the future of the Maine Woods? What will happen to this place?"

Tom Slayton
Author⁴

"There is the real possibility that within 20 to 40 years what now appears as a mostly forested unsettled landscape will be increasingly fragmented by paved roadways and clusters of housing and other developments."

Robert Baldwin
Clemson University⁵



Primary Public Roads

Maine's North Woods in a Time of Change



Maine's North Woods. There is literally no place like it left in the Eastern United States. Maine's 10 million acres of undeveloped woodlands represent the largest remaining contiguous block of forest east of the Mississippi. These forests provide major economic value for timber production and tourism. They include healthy ecosystems for a vast array of plant and wildlife species, and large swaths of uninterrupted backcountry cherished for remote recreation, camping, hunting, fishing, and motorized access. Maine's history, culture, and identity reflect the heritage and values of these forests, but the future of these forests is uncertain.

For most of the past 100 years, Maine's vast forests – the North Woods – were owned by a relatively small handful of timber companies. Great Northern, International Paper, and Boise Cascade are a few of the household names once synonymous with northern Maine. These traditional timber companies owned millions of acres of woods, and they managed those forests for paper production and lumber, often produced in their own mills.

Such companies generally opposed selling land for real estate development, preferring an unbroken landscape for timber operations – which helps explain why Maine's North Woods exist as they are today.

But times are changing and these traditional timber companies are mostly gone. Now Maine's North Woods are largely owned by a new breed: private investors, institutional pension funds, timber investment management organizations, and real estate investment trusts. These entities are working to deliver profits to shareholders on a shorter timeframe than the old timber companies, and through activities that extend beyond just timber management.

Ownership motivations fundamentally changed as companies that previously owned integrated woodlands and mill operations divested their land holdings. Many forest products mills have closed or been severely downsized, as employment in the forest products industry has plummeted. Large land blocks have been

divided into smaller parcels, and the number of owners of Maine's forests has increased dramatically.

In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of seasonal homes built in previously remote areas of Maine's forestlands. Some large landholdings have become speculative investments for anonymous investors, increasing the cost of Maine woodlands. In a pattern seen elsewhere across the U.S., land prices in Maine's North Woods increasingly are tied more to the prospect of subdivision and development than to the value of these woods as commercial timber lands.

These trends have caused a growing number of foresters, policy analysts, and industry observers to question whether sustainable forestry is economically viable in Maine over the long-term – given the investment returns expected by the landowners. If not, then the interests of Maine people and the interests of the new forestland owners could sharply diverge in coming years, as the new land owners seek higher rates of return on their investments, harvesting wood at an unsustainable rate, damaging wildlife habitat, accelerating the conversion of forestland to development, and embracing other new forms of revenue generation across the North Woods, potentially diminishing the character of the region forever.

Plum Creek's proposed development in the Moosehead Lake region is emblematic of these changes. Organized as a Real Estate Investment Trust, Plum Creek actively and aggressively seeks revenues from real estate development – something that Great Northern or International Paper never did. But now that the path for this type of development has been pioneered in Maine, it is highly likely that other large-scale development proposals will follow, further shaking the confidence that Maine's North Woods will remain intact for future generations.

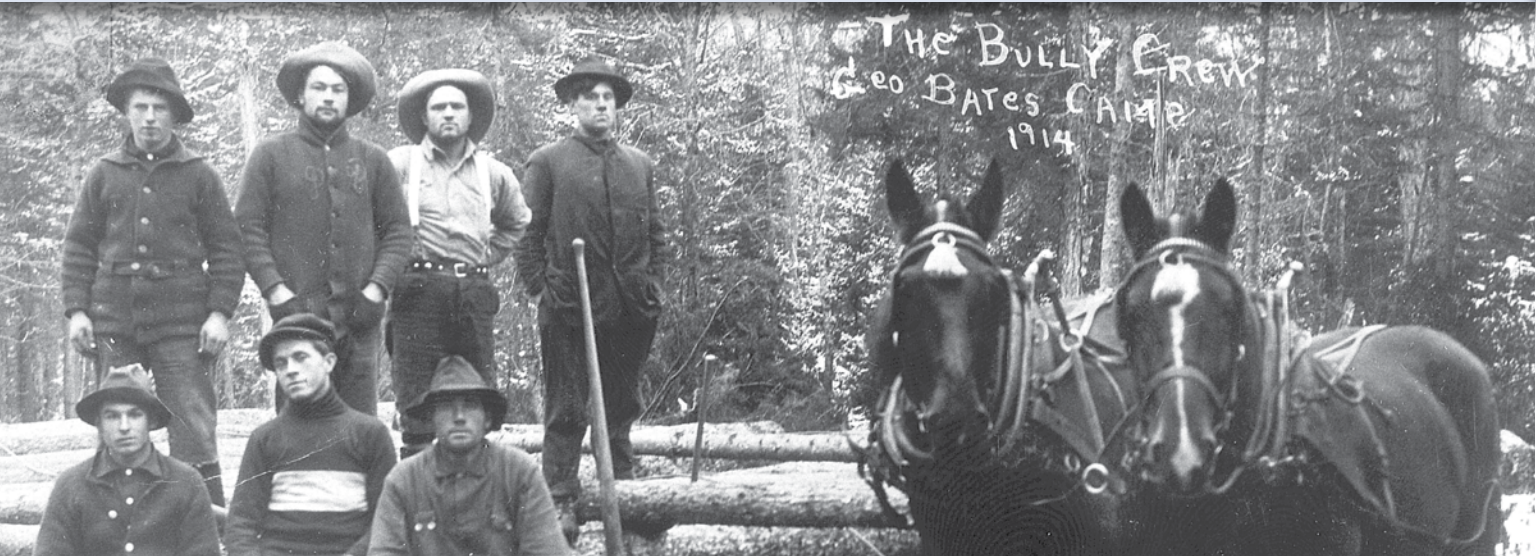
In the face of these developments, there is growing concern about whether Maine's current public and private

institutions and policies are adequately equipped to safeguard the North Woods from experiencing steady, irreversible decline as a vast unbroken forest. Maine's laws and regulations have helped maintain and protect multiple features of Maine's forestlands for commercial, ecological, and recreational purposes, as have a host of public and private land protection initiatives. But Maine people also have relied upon voluntary actions by many large landowners who have now departed from the state and, in some cases, no longer exist.

Change has come to Maine's North Woods, and further changes are looming. Energy costs, economic conditions, and development pressures all could result in further transformations in the region. Is Maine ready for those changes? Is Maine positioned to preserve the values and character of the North Woods that have been such a defining part of the state's history and identity? Is Maine prepared to strategically adopt policies and approaches that would help keep the forestlands in northern and downeast Maine primarily in their current condition as unbroken forests to retain their broad range of economic, recreational, and ecological values?

Now is the time to be considering options for future land ownership and management, and to evaluate the benefits and shortcomings of each. The era when Maine's timberlands were managed by a small handful of owners is over. The new landowners are operating in a very different fashion, and cannot be relied upon to look out for the long-term interests of Maine. That is not the priority of their shareholders, but it is the priority of the people of this state. The task before Maine is to develop and adopt the best tools and approaches for sustaining the values and resources that matter to the state in this vital region of national significance: Maine's North Woods.

A Unique History



Maine's North Woods exist today as a unique product of a unique history. First inhabited by Native Americans, the area was explored by Europeans in the 17th century. Efforts over the next 200 years to settle the region resulted in massive land sales of publicly-owned lands by Massachusetts and then Maine. However, instead of the area being settled as had been hoped, Americans migrated westward, and Maine's North Woods fell into the domain of timber barons and land speculators. Thus, Maine's forestlands remained largely uninhabited and in private hands, with the resulting, predominant economic and land use being production of forest products from a network in timber mills in timber towns such as Greenville and Bangor.

About a century ago, ownership patterns in Maine's North Woods changed. Timber barons and families sold their timberlands to paper companies. A long period of stability in land ownership ensued, with mill towns and residential development concentrated near the edges of commercial forestland, leaving the interior core substantially undeveloped. The stability of land owners and their

motivations – and a variety of cultural, political and economic influences – combined to keep Maine's North Woods in private ownership yet open to public access for many forms of backcountry recreation.

In the 1970s, two changes occurred that were to alter the course of the area's landscape and political history. River log-drives, long the primary means to transport wood from forests to mills and markets, were replaced by a network of private logging roads, which now stretches over twenty thousand miles throughout the North Woods. These roads have made previously remote shorefront properties accessible for subdivision and vacation home development.

In 1971, the state responded to the threat of increased development in the North Woods by creating the Land Use Regulation Commission. For the first time, a state entity was responsible for managing the multiple uses and values of Maine's North Woods.

North Woods: Shifting Ownership



Over the past decade, the status quo that characterized Maine's forestlands for the past century has come to an end. Since the late 1990s, there has been a wholesale change in the ownership of Maine's forestlands. Vertically integrated forest products companies, those owning both forests and mills, have virtually disappeared.⁶ The forest products industry, which once owned 60% of Maine's North Woods, now owns just 15% -- with most of this land held by one Canadian firm. During this period, the amount of Maine forestland owned by investment companies such as Plum Creek, GMO, LandVest and Brascan grew tenfold.⁷ Meanwhile, thousands of house lots have been sold under LURC subdivision exemptions, greatly increasing the number of landowners.⁸ Reduced ownership size has particular significance because smaller parcels are more difficult to manage for sustainable forestry, wildlife habitat and public recreation.⁹

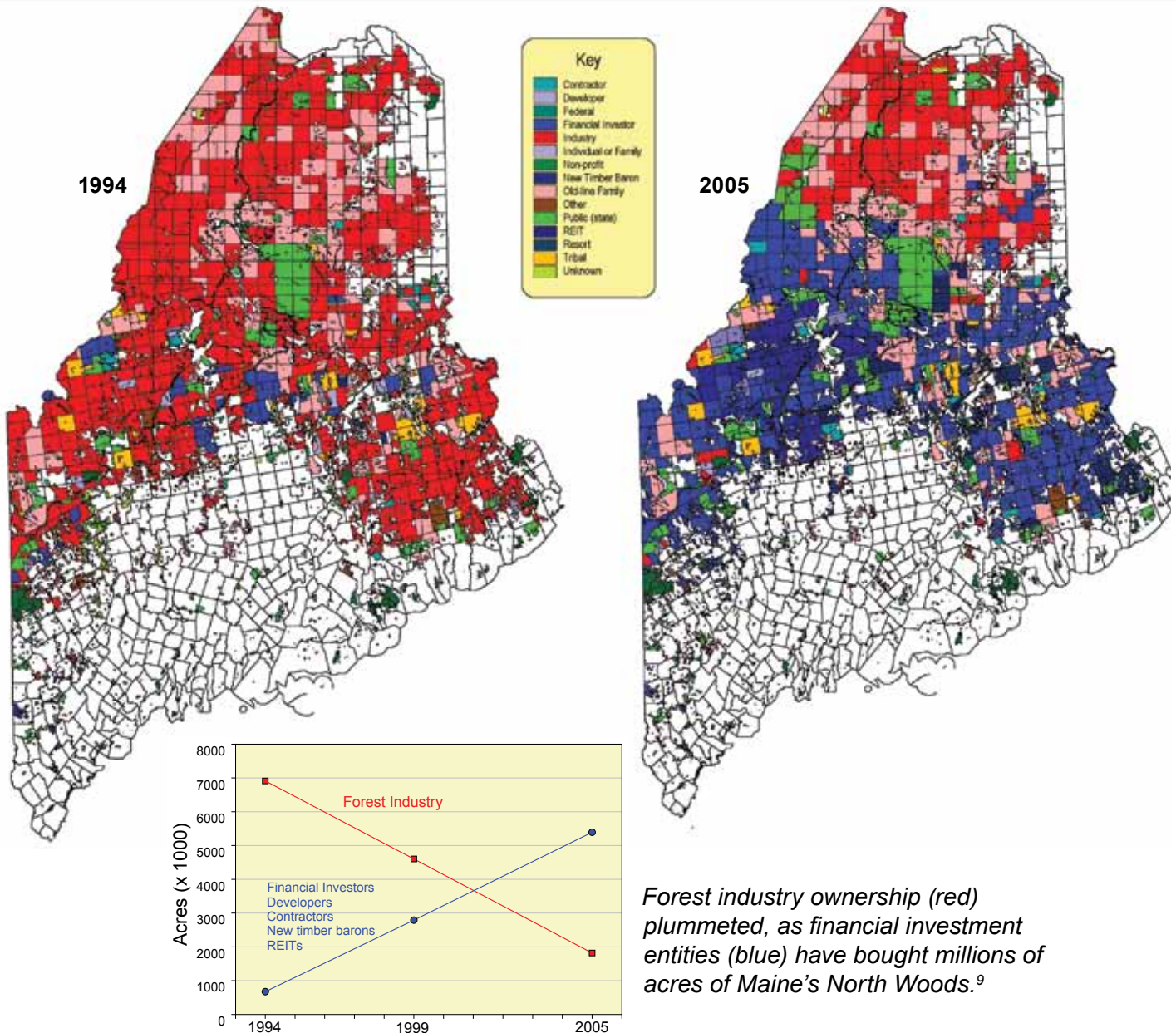
Unlike traditional Maine forestland owners, the new investment entities, many of them highly debt-leveraged,

need to realize substantial returns in short timeframes.¹⁰ J.W. Sewall reports that land prices relative to timber values have reached all-time record levels.¹² The escalating prices paid by the new buyers have been out-of-line with sustainable timber harvesting values, and appear to be based more upon speculative valuations for development, unsustainably aggressive logging, and the sale of 'kingdom lots' and conservation easements.

"Most [of the new investment ownerships] are short-term. They are bought by funds—groups of investors—that purchase land over three or four years, manage it for five to seven years, and then sell it over two to three years. Since much of the investors' return comes from the appreciation of the value of the land, the land must be sold for the investors to get their returns. Thus a typical timber investment company holds any given piece of land for 12 years or less."

Jerry Jenkins, Wildlife Conservation Society¹¹

Investors Have Largely Replaced the Forest Industry as Landowners in Maine's North Woods



Shifting Economics



Nature-based tourism provides an opportunity for new economic growth as mill and forest industry jobs decline.

The recent turnover in land ownership is both the cause and effect of shifting economics in Maine's North Woods. In what amounts to a vicious cycle, as forest land prices increasingly represent valuations that far exceed those based upon sustainable forest management, new landowners must find ways to realize investment returns that may require unsustainable harvesting, subdivision, real-estate development, and sale of conservation easements. Easement prices have risen sharply, as they are appraised at increasing values based upon the prospect of non-forestry uses.¹³

Even if real estate values begin to fall in Maine, following national trends, the effect will likely be temporary. Much of Maine's forestland has been separated from its traditional

link to the forest products industry. The new breed of owner appears to be treating its involvement in Maine's forest products business as a source of short-term cash, while awaiting opportunities for higher returns from other pursuits.

The net effect of this speculation on rising land values is that Maine is entering an era when it will be increasingly difficult to keep forests as forests in order to sustain wood products, tourism and other natural resource-based industries that lie at the core of the State's economy.¹⁴ This is truly a paradigm shift, and one with significant potential implications for Maine people, communities that depend on Maine's forests, and future generations.

Moreover, the new short-term, bottom-line-oriented landowners are much less likely to invest in silviculture, sustainable management, forest certification or forestry research.¹⁵ The Maine Forest Service reports a 60% drop in forest management techniques such as planting and pre-commercial thinning.¹⁶ Over time, this lack of investment will harm the quality and value of Maine's forests. As large ownerships are broken into smaller ones in these remote areas, good forest management becomes more challenging and less likely.¹⁷

Maine's forest products industry also faces other economic pressures. This sector of the global economy increasingly has been moving to other parts of the country and overseas, where the costs of raw materials, energy, labor, transportation, and processing are lower. The result is an increasingly competitive market for raw as well as manufactured products.¹⁹ In the face of international competition and a weak economy, some mills in Maine have closed or curtailed production, while others, despite relatively high output, have experienced significant losses in employment, causing economic hardships in communities that traditionally have depended on Maine's forests and its products for employment.²⁰

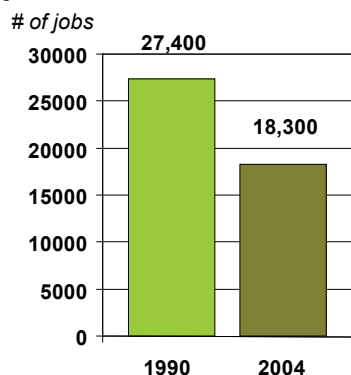
"I think you're going to see continued downward pressure on the forest products industry in the region due to more competitive mills elsewhere in the world.... [Meanwhile,] land costs have risen to the point that returns have fallen to levels that cannot justify ownership for timber production."

Clark Binkley, retired, Hancock Timber Resources Group¹⁸

From 1990 to 2004, more than 9,000 jobs disappeared from Maine's forest products industry, as the number of jobs declined 33% from 27,400 to 18,300.²¹

Forest industry jobs are continuing to decline as the industry seeks to minimize costs by increasing mechanization and as energy costs threaten mill operations. The owners of Maine's mills have neglected capital investments to modernize operations and reduce operating costs, a problem that has become even more severe with the economic downturn. Communities in the North Woods are already economically hard-pressed, with higher levels of poverty than the statewide average.²² In the face of these downward trends, towns that have relied on the forest products industry face increased urgency to diversify their economies.

Employment in Maine's Forest Products Industry



Development Trends and Pressures



Traditionally dotted with the occasional Maine hunting camp, Maine's North Woods are now seeing the arrival of multi-million dollar mansions and private air strips.



Years in the making, 'wilderness sprawl' has come to Maine's North Woods, made possible by over twenty thousand miles of logging roads that now provide access to previously inaccessible areas, and abetted by the new landowners who are actively interested in selling land for seasonal homes. During the period of LURC's existence since 1971, the number of houses in its jurisdiction has grown by over 8,000 (70%), considerably faster than the resident population. Seventy percent of the housing stock remains seasonal, but increasingly modernized, enlarged, and converted to year-round use.²³ Residential growth in the unorganized townships has outpaced averages among the organized towns surrounding the jurisdiction, as well as statewide.²⁴

New residential lots and development in Maine's North Woods have been creeping into previously inaccessible and isolated areas, disconnected from surrounding organized towns and communities.²⁵ Development has occurred in 72% (331) of the 459 townships in the LURC jurisdiction, including townships in the interior of the North Woods.²⁶

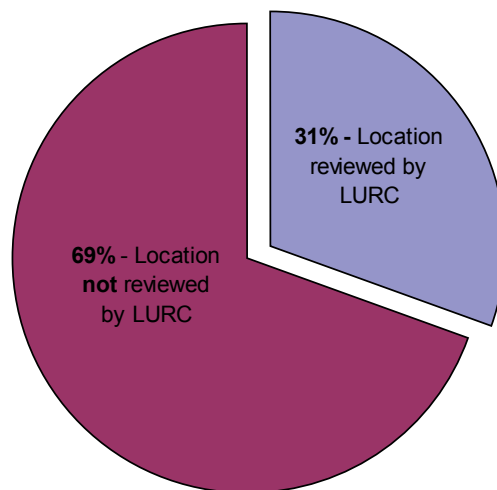
LURC has adopted and/or expanded 667 residential development zones and approved 2,469 subdivision lots over the past 35 years. Even more notable, though, there is a remarkable amount of development taking place in Maine's North Woods without LURC zoning or subdivision approvals or control. More than two-thirds of

the new houses in LURC jurisdiction have been built on lots that have never been reviewed for appropriateness of location. This is because these houses were built on lots that were either legally exempt or grandfathered.

While one of these exemptions in the LURC subdivision law (the forty-acre lot exemption) has now been eliminated, others remain, such as the provision that allows division of any property into two lots every five years, without review.

Much of the dispersed development in Maine's forestlands has been occurring on water bodies, steadily reducing the number of lakes and ponds that have the rare, classic essence of an undeveloped destination for recreation. Nearly half of all residential building permits ever issued by LURC are for construction on lots within 500 feet of the water. Primitive camps also are being torn down and converted to elaborate winterized structures that have a much larger impact on scenic and natural values.²⁷ Kingdom lots also have emerged as a new occurrence in Maine's North Woods, as wealthy landowners purchase thousands, sometimes tens of thousands, of acres for their private piece of Maine's North Woods. Huge seasonal homes, private landing strips, and "No Trespassing" signs have cropped up in Maine woods where there used to be just forest.

New Dwellings Permitted in the Unorganized Territories, 1971-2005



More than two-thirds of the new houses in LURC jurisdiction have been built on lots that have never been reviewed for appropriateness of location



'Conversion' of an old camp in Maine's North Woods through tearing down old structure



Public Access At Risk



The rapid changes in forestland ownership in Maine, coupled with related pressures to subdivide and develop, threaten the continuation of Maine's tradition of public access.²⁸ "No trespassing" signs are cropping up in more and more places, and some major landowners have suggested that they may seek to be paid in the future for the types of public access that traditionally have been a free North Woods experience.

The loss of access to Maine's North Woods could have serious economic repercussions. Spending on outdoor recreation in Maine is estimated to be as much as \$3 billion annually.²⁹ Hunting alone brings in an estimated \$240 million to the State, with almost all of this activity involving private lands.³⁰ Wildlife viewing contributes another \$300 million.³¹ These activities depend on Maine's tradition of public access – a tradition that could be whittled away with future land sales and changes in landowner policies.

Unlike publicly-owned places like New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest, access to Maine's privately-owned forests rests entirely on the good will of the landowners. Maine's State Planning Office has concluded that, "As lands are fragmented and developed, the likelihood that they will not be available for public access grows."³² Permanent public access can only be counted on for the 7% of Maine land that is in public ownership, and another 5% where "working forest" easements guarantee access.

A growing number of recreational users of Maine's North Woods are now experiencing problems from diminished public access, as trails for hiking and motorized access are discontinued, destinations for hunting and fishing are posted, and places that have been enjoyed by Maine people for generations are purchased for private use. Working forest easements do not necessarily protect public access. For example, the largest working forest

easement ever, which includes nearly half of all land currently within such easements in the entire State, does not provide a right of public access.

In sum, Maine people now have little ability to control whether access will continue to be allowed in Maine's North Woods, or at what user-fee or taxpayer cost it may be provided in the future. To a large extent, these decisions will be made by the investor landowners who have no presence or interest in Maine other than their financial investment. Because public access to Maine's North Woods is vital for recreation, traditional uses, economic activity, and quality of life for Maine people, continued reliance by the State on the benevolence of private landowners may turn out to be a highly risky bet. However, an effective plan to guarantee continued public access has so far eluded the State.

"This loss of access to private land threatens many traditional outdoor activities that are important to Maine's culture and quality of life. Furthermore, these activities are vital to the economic health of some regions of the state."

Michael LeVert, Maine State Planning Office²⁷



Habitats At Risk



The changes that have beset Maine's North Woods are likely to threaten the integrity and bounty of its significant habitats and biodiversity. As the largest continuous forested region in the eastern U.S., Maine's North Woods contain a wide array of large, substantially undeveloped, intact and interconnected habitats. This land is home to many species, including bear, moose, and loon, some of which may depend upon the preservation of large blocks of interconnected woods, lakes, and streams.

Some species found in Maine's North Woods are rare or endangered, including wildlife such as the Canada lynx and plants such as Ram's-head Lady-slipper. Others, like brook trout, require a pristine environment that few places still afford, with Maine's North Woods being one of their last strongholds.³⁴

Fragmentation of ownerships tends to result in fragmentation of habitats and attendant disruptions in connectivity. It is much more challenging to practice



Heavy harvesting has destroyed many deer wintering areas in Maine's North Woods

sustainable forestry and carefully manage wildlife on a landscape divided into smaller parcels, because the parcels owned by different owners may be managed completely differently.³⁵ Of additional concern, the new investor-landowners in Maine seem to have little interest in voluntary third-party certification of sustainable forestry practices, probably because of their short-term ownership horizons.³⁶ Yet, consumer demand for products from sustainably harvested, independently certified forestlands is growing.

Ideally, more of Maine's forests would be preserved for their mature stands of timber and eventual old growth forest potential. Maine forests contain very few older forest stands and even fewer old growth stands (areas which have never been harvested.) Only 1.8 percent of Maine's forest is classified as "late successional" or older forests³⁷ and only .01 percent as "old growth."³⁸

According to the Maine Forest Service, old growth forests function as "reservoirs of biological diversity," yet the integrity of these stands is a "growing concern"³⁹ because they are "prime candidates for harvest in the

near future."⁴⁰ Management on the very long rotations necessary to maintain older, "late successional" forests requires the long-term commitment of owners who are relatively impervious to the need for quick generation of cash. Unfortunately, this is the type of ownership that in recent years has largely disappeared from Maine's North Woods.

Of additional concern, the traditional form of "working forest" easements that have been utilized in recent years in Maine may be of little help in protecting biodiversity and the broad array of habitat values in Maine's forests. This is because most such easements do not provide habitat protection. One study found that these easements to date may not have even resulted in better biodiversity practices.⁴¹ It would be a mistake for the public to assume that working forest easements are protecting biodiversity in Maine's forest, because they are not designed for that purpose. First and foremost, such easements protect the forest as an industrial working forest by limiting development. Some easements include provisions designed to protect wildlife habitat and biodiversity, but these are rarely effective.

Land Conservation Initiatives



Katahdin Lake, once at risk of development and heavy harvesting, was added to Baxter State Park in 2007.

As Maine's traditional timber companies have sold their land to investment entities, opportunities have emerged for land conservation in Maine's North Woods. Since the late 1990s, the State has made significant additions to Maine's publicly-owned lands, with purchases such as the Katahdin Lake addition to Baxter State Park. The State and non-profit conservation organizations have partnered to purchase large-scale "working forest" easements, with funding from the federal Forest Legacy program, Land for Maine's Future program, and private donors. Non-profit organizations

also have purchased land for conservation purposes, with notable initiatives by The Nature Conservancy in the headwaters of the St. John River and the Appalachian Mountain Club's purchase of 35,000 acres east of Moosehead Lake.

Despite these initiatives, Maine still has a low level of public ownership relative to other states. Total public land ownership in Maine has increased only slightly in the past 20 years, from about 5.5% to 7%. And although working forest easements have helped curb development

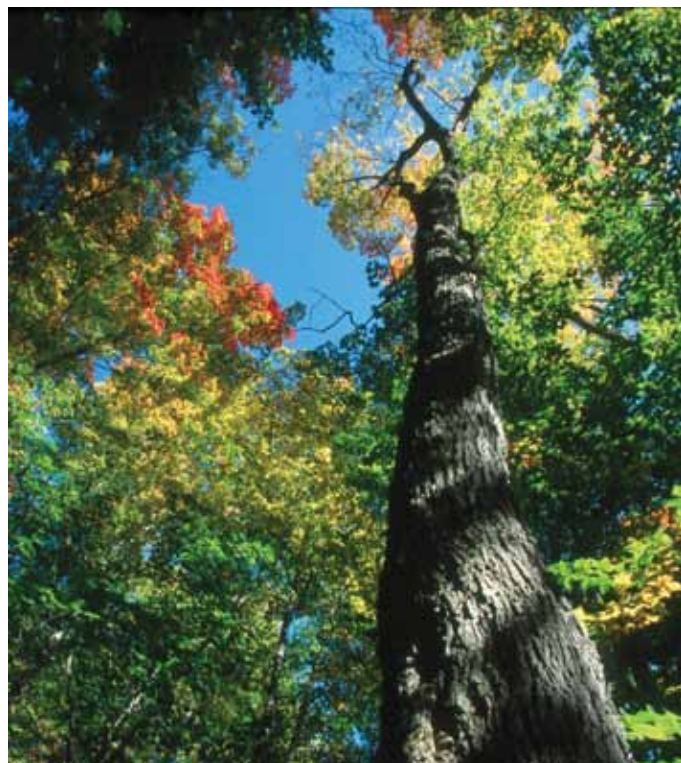
on 1.6 million acres in Maine's North Woods, these easements do not provide the same level of protection of public values, such as wildlife habitat and guaranteed public access, as publicly-owned land.

Working forest easements are designed primarily to prevent development while allowing the landowner to continue forestry operations. Unlike land in public ownership, the land under working forest easements is privately owned and:

- May or may not provide public access rights or allow for the development of recreational amenities such as trails and campsites;
- Can be difficult and costly to monitor and enforce, especially if the land is later divided into multiple ownerships;
- May impede opportunities for outright purchase of public conservation land;
- May not assure sustainable forestry practices or provide meaningful protection for wildlife habitat or biodiversity; and,
- May provide minimal value for tourists, since these easements explicitly allow ongoing industrial timber operations.⁴²

Several of the new landowners of Maine's forests have shown an ongoing interest in selling land and/or easements for conservation purposes, primarily through the sale of working forest easements. However, the

orientation of such firms toward high development value of land has resulted in escalating expectations about property values in Maine's forests. Some conservation purchases of interest to the State have not occurred due to some unrealistic sales terms, and land and easement sales that have taken place have contributed only marginally to the overall protection of recreational, economic, and ecological values in Maine's North Woods.



Maine's Forests at a Crossroads



Maine's North Woods are at a crossroads. The nearly wholesale change in ownership of Maine's forestlands has resulted in an entirely new context for Maine's North Woods. The new landowners in Maine's forests are interested in maximizing revenues from any and all types of activities, including timber harvesting, subdivision, real estate development, conservation sales, energy development, and water and gravel extraction.

Plum Creek's proposed development around Moosehead Lake, the largest in Maine history, exemplifies the increased pressures in areas historically managed exclusively for timber. Long cherished traditions of public recreational access to vast areas of private forest land are increasingly in danger of slipping away. Even on those lands that have received some protection from development through working forest easements, biological diversity and wildlife habitat are not necessarily protected. As the timber industry in Maine has drastically reduced its workforce – by more than 33% in the past 20 years – rural communities that have depended on the forest products industry have struggled with high unemployment, out-migration, declining town

budgets, and uncertainty about their economic futures.

The simple continuation of existing policies and programs is not sufficient to protect for future generations many of the values that historically and currently define Maine's North Woods. Existing forest-related laws and policies do not ensure that:

- Maine's forest will be managed sustainably;
- Scattered development and "wilderness sprawl" will be kept from spreading across the North Woods;
- Wildlife habitat will be protected;
- Maine people will continue to have public access to Maine's North Woods for traditional recreational activities.

Fundamentally, Maine's existing policies, laws, and patterns of ownership will not assure the continuation of Maine's forest as a vast, unique, unbroken forest. As a result, now is an important time to consider options for the future as described on the next few pages.

Paths for the Future of Maine's North Woods



If managed properly, Maine's North Woods could continue to provide wildlife habitat, a full variety of recreation opportunities, and a sustainable supply of wood for future generations.

Maine's North Woods are valued by a broad range of landowners, businesses, woods workers, recreational users and communities. The lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, wetlands and wildlife within Maine's forests are a public resource. Thus, there is a complex array of interests and values to pay attention to as Maine considers the future of the North Woods. Land conservation efforts in recent years – both through acquisition and working forest easements — have attempted to address these many interests, with varied degrees of success.

Looking forward, there are five potential paths for additional conservation efforts in Maine's North Woods, some of which may be pursued simultaneously. Provided below are some basic summaries of these options, with preliminary assessments of the benefits and drawbacks of

each. For future planning purposes, these options should be compared with current methods of managing Maine's North Woods, in terms of their ability to protect values and uses important to Maine people.

Current Condition: The majority of Maine's North Woods are owned by financial investors and institutions, developers, contractors, and real estate investment trusts with likely ownership horizons of only 10-15 years before selling their Maine lands.⁴³ These companies expect significant revenues from non-timber activities, including the sale of appreciated land for development purposes or conservation, the sale or lease of land or access to resources for energy projects, and extraction of resources such as water or gravel. This path does not assure that the undeveloped character of the region

will be preserved, does not assure sustainable forestry, does not guarantee public access, and provides limited protections for fish and wildlife habitat.

Options for Helping Secure Public and Ecological Values in Maine's North Woods

- 1. Increase working forest easements.** This option would protect the undeveloped character of the forest, but would not necessarily ensure sustainable timber harvesting, public access for a variety of recreational activities or the protection of fish and wildlife habitat. Decisions about how the land is managed would remain primarily in the hands of the private entities owning the land, which most likely would be out-of-state investors or companies, although the easement holders might have some input or approval powers. Maine people would not have a right or opportunity to participate in decision-making about management of the land. No entity would be responsible for managing recreational uses across multiple ownerships. Local communities would have no assurance that the land was managed sustainably and would likely see little new tourism activity from the easement lands. Existing landowners would be fairly compensated for any rights they sell. Easements are less expensive than full purchase of the land, because they protect fewer values.
- 2. Increase state ownership.** This option would protect the undeveloped character of any forestlands purchased by the state, would likely ensure sustainable timber harvesting, would provide public access for a variety of recreational activities, and would likely protect fish and wildlife habitat. Decisions about how the publicly-held land would be managed would be in the hands of state agencies, and Maine people would have the right and the opportunity to influence those decisions. A state agency would have authority for recreation management, although it may have limited resources to do so. Local communities would benefit from the sustainable management of the publicly-owned forests and would likely see some new tourism activity connected with the additions to Maine's public lands. Existing landowners would be fairly compensated for any land sold to the state. The state likely would not have sufficient funds to buy large-scale parcels, and would likely face financial challenges in managing the lands, once purchased.
- 3. Increase private non-profit ownership.** This option would protect the undeveloped character of the forest, and fish and wildlife habitat. It would likely provide public access for a variety of recreational activities. Where timber harvesting continues, it would likely ensure that harvesting is sustainable. Decisions about how the land would be managed would be in the hands of private non-profit organizations, and the public would not have a role. No entity would be responsible for managing recreational uses across multiple ownerships. If timber harvesting were to take place, local communities would benefit from the assurance that it was sustainable. Local communities might benefit from increased tourism, although this is less likely than if the land were publicly-owned. Existing landowners would be fairly compensated for any land they sell. It is unclear whether private non-profits have sufficient funding to purchase large parcels in Maine, given the amount of money spent by such entities in recent years on working forest easements and what appears to be a growing challenge to fund such projects.
- 4. Increase federal ownership.** This option would protect the undeveloped character of the forest and guarantee public access for a variety of recreational activities. It would likely ensure sustainable timber harvesting, and protect fish and wildlife habitat. There are a wide variety of federal ownership options including National Forest, National Wildlife Refuge, National Park, National Recreation Area, and National Monument. Different options emphasize forest

management, protection of wildlife habitat, and various recreational opportunities to different degrees [See chart below]. Decisions about how any federally-owned land would be managed would be in the hands of federal agencies, who would have offices in Maine, and the public would have the right and the opportunity to influence those decisions. Federal agencies would have the authority and likely the funds necessary to invest in recreation management. Local communities would benefit from increased tourism visitation due to the national visibility and any investment in recreation infrastructure that federal ownership affords. Existing landowners would be fairly compensated for any land they sell to the federal government. It is more likely that the federal government could purchase large parcels as, for example, National Forest designation, as recently demonstrated in a \$500-million addition of land to National Forests in Montana [See above].

In Montana, a \$500 million conservation deal, finalized in 2008, increases conservation land by 320,000 acres. Most of the land will become part of the National Forest system. The federal government is contributing \$250 million with the remainder of the funds coming from state and private conservation sources.

be possible to combine options.

Moving Forward

In its North Woods, Maine has a resource of national, state, and local significance, the largest undeveloped forest in the country east of the Mississippi. This vast landscape of forestlands, lakes, rivers, mountains and wildlife has played a central role in the history and development of Maine. On a daily basis, Maine's North Woods contribute to the quality of life of

Maine's residents and the strength of Maine's economy. Visitors come to the North Woods from distant regions for experiences that they cannot find elsewhere, because there are few places like it, anywhere.

The future of Maine's North Woods is uncertain. Changes in ownership over the past 10 years have been rapid, and there is a real chance that many of the North Woods' most important values – economic, recreational, ecological and aesthetic – could be at risk in the years ahead. Now is the time to consider all options for protecting and enhancing these values, for the benefit of today and future generations.

5. Some combination of the above. While each of the above options has its benefits and drawbacks, it may

Federal Land Options and Allowed Uses

Federal Land Options	Management Agency	Primary Use	Logging	Hunting	Fishing	Wilderness	ATVs	Snowmobiles
National Forest	US Forest Service (Agriculture)	Multiple use	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
National Wildlife Refuge	USFWS (Interior)	Wildlife Protection	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited
National Park	National Park Service	Land Preservation	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Limited
National Preserve	National Park Service	Land Pres./Rec.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
National Recreation Area	NPS, BLM, USFS, Public/Private	Recreation	No	Yes	Yes	No	Limited	Limited
National Heritage Area	Local, State, Non-profit w/ NPS help	Cultural	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Highlands Act	Federal Funding Program	Funding	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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