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Experts agree: Plum Creek's plan for Moosehead will adversely affect
wildlife and wildlife habitat

Maine Audubon Executive Director Kevin Carley's remarks for November 8, 2007, press conferences

For the people of Maine, and for all the nation, there is value in protecting the Moosehead region, a national treasure.

When you fly over rural areas of the Northeast today, you see land crisscrossed by roads and patched with housing subdivisions. It's only flying over Moosehead and the rest of Maine's Northern Forest that you can look down on an undisturbed green forest. This area is the largest undeveloped area east of the Mississippi, with wild qualities on the ground that must be conserved and sustained.

The costs of the Plum Creek plan

The largest commercial land owner in the United States, Plum Creek owns 8 million acres—20 times the amount of land that's in its concept plan for Moosehead.

Plum Creek bought the land in its Moosehead plan for \$200 an acre, and there is now talk of selling waterfront house lots for \$150,000 to \$200,000. The bottom line is that when it comes to developing and conserving its land in Moosehead, Plum Creek can afford to do it right—and Maine can't afford not to.

A state that is dependent on tourism dollars generated by visitors from all over the world can't afford to damage the outstanding natural resources that draw those visitors—thousands of acres of important wildlife habitat for treasured species, the quality of its clear, clean Class A fishing streams, and lands for sustainable timber harvesting and recreation.

Maine Audubon continues to oppose Plum Creek's plan because it still does not protect the region's natural assets or ensure a promising future for the region's nature-based tourism economy. It is still not the plan this company can well afford to create.

What the experts found

Maine Audubon and the Natural Resources Council of Maine worked with 12 scientists and other experts to evaluate the most likely impacts of Plum Creek's plan on the region's wildlife and habitat, its prized natural character, and its burgeoning nature-based tourism economy.

Here are highlights from what those experts found:

- Proposed conservation does not balance development in the plan.
- Development is overwhelmingly too large. Compared to what currently exists in the Moosehead region, Plum Creek's proposed development is the equivalent of two or three towns.
- Some of the development is still planned in prime habitat and other special natural areas where it doesn't belong.
- Though clustering development is far better for wildlife than spreading it out over miles of habitat, Plum Creek's plan stretches development over 20,500 acres, increasing traffic on 550 miles of new and upgraded roads.
- Increased development, boating and fishing will reduce breeding and increase mortality rates for loons, which already have unusually low breeding success in the Moosehead Lake region.
- Water quality in several Class A streams and ponds will drop and no longer be suitable for native wild brook trout, a unique national treasure.
- Prime Canada lynx habitat will be lost and collisions with vehicles will increase lynx deaths to an unacceptable level for a threatened species with only about 500 animals left east of the Mississippi.
- Increased traffic will degrade habitat, interfere with movements of many wild animals, and result in local extinctions of wood turtles.
- High-value wetlands for waterfowl and rare species like the least bittern and rusty blackbird are not adequately protected.
- Primitive recreational options, a priority for both residents and visitors, will be diminished.

What Maine does, and doesn't, need

Accepting Plum Creek's plan for the region would be irresponsible—because Plum Creek has the capacity to create a plan that would truly serve the residents, visitors, and wildlife of the region.

With a plan very different from Plum Creek's proposal, the Moosehead region could concentrate growth in or adjacent to existing development. Careful planning of development could avoid high-value habitat, at the same time protecting resources that are key for nature-based tourism. Conservation agreements could be written with the standard language of strong Maine agreements that better guarantee protection of wildlife and habitat.

Maine Audubon strongly believes that this is what the people of Maine want, and what the residents and businesses of the Moosehead region need and deserve.