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Bob Cummings

2015 Conservation Leadership Award, Lifetime Achievement

For his extraordinary contributions to the conservation of Maine lands

Tumbledown. Cutler's "Bold Coast." Bigelow Preserve. The Kennebec Highlands.

Chances are you recognize these as some of Maine's most treasured places. But did you know that these gems are part of our state's Public Reserved Lands system? This system encompasses more than 600,000 acres that make up 37 different parcels in the North Woods, Down East, and elsewhere across the state. For more than a century, these lands as we know them today were unknown. They were reclaimed starting in the 1970s thanks to the work of a dogged environmental reporter with the *Portland Press Herald* who discovered that "reserved public lands" had been "reserved" to the people of Maine when our state was separated from Massachusetts in 1820. His outstanding series of articles described how these lands had been subsumed into those of large land owners, including paper companies, and managed by them as though they owned them. The reporter's work led to the recovery of these lands, and subsequently to their consolidation into larger units that make up the spectacular Public Reserved Lands system we have today.

That journalist is here with us tonight. His name is Bob Cummings, and his contributions to Maine's environmental record extend far beyond his unearthing of our lost public lands. As the first journalist in Maine (and perhaps in New England) focused specifically on environmental issues, Bob also reported on issues like the proposed oil refinery in Eastport, the establishment of the Land Use Regulation Commission (now the Land Use Planning Commission), and Maine's Clean Water Act. After his retirement, Bob hiked the entire Appalachian Trail and has helped maintain the trails he has enjoyed so much. It's no surprise, then, that he has served as editor of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club's newsletter, the *Mainetainer*, for years. His testimony on a range of issues has resonated through the halls of the State House and hearing rooms across Maine. Such testimony included his opposition to Plum Creek's massive development proposed for the Moosehead region in 2005, and his support for the Land for Maine's Future program. He further demonstrated his passion for Maine's environment by founding and serving as president of the Phippsburg Land Trust, and as executive director of the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions.

Decades ago, we presented Bob with an environmental award. But as you can see, his work has multiplied in the years since. He is the consummate conservationist, and the people of Maine have been the beneficiaries for decades and *will* be for generations to come. For these reasons and many more, on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, I am thrilled to present a 2015 Conservation Leadership Award for Lifetime Achievement to Bob Cummings.