Part Three

Guidelines for Including Forest Land in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Forest Land Conversion: *Tracking where growth is occurring in your town may be your most important tool in determining the future of forest land within town boundaries.*

Is forest land being converted to residential or other land uses? Check subdivision and building permits for the last 5 to 10 years to quantify the amount of activity on recent farm and forest lands. Locate new development on a map, preferably a zoning map. Is this trend likely to continue? Is most of the development occurring in the designated growth areas, or is it spread out across the rural areas of town? The analysis should also include an inventory of land uses around existing farms and commercial forest land and an assessment as to whether these are compatible uses. Incompatible uses typically include residences, strip commercial activities and commercial/industrial uses that are not serving forestry operations.

This section of the guide focuses specifically on the comprehensive land use plan. Development or revisions of a comprehensive plan can be daunting for volunteer committees that are just getting started, but assistance and guidance is available from several sources, including your regional planning council *(see Part Four)*. Discussions with comprehensive planning committees or conservation commissions from other towns about what obstacles they faced and how they proceeded can provide valuable guidance for a fledgling comprehensive planning effort.

Planning committees should give some thought to the role each member will play. Will the committee coordinate work that will be done by an outside contractor (hired with assistance from a regional planning council), or will members look to complete all the work themselves? If so, how will this be accomplished? A discussion about what needs to be accomplished and how the committee should go about it may keep the process from getting bogged down.

The inventory and analysis stages can be time consuming and deplete valuable energy if committee members try to do all the work themselves. Consider working with a regional council or with volunteers *(see Importance of Educating the Public, below)* on inventory tasks. The inventory guidelines provided in Part 2 of this publication will serves as a guide for what to consider — even if the actual inventory work is not done by committee members.

Policy Development and Implementation are more contentious than collecting data, but completing them is essential for the plan to be effective. Often the comprehensive planning effort stops when the inventory is finished, but it is not enough to identify problems; the committee must move on to the solution and recommendation stages of planning. In addition to the guiding questions offered in this publication, seek out guidance from sources mentioned here and refer to the Additional Resources section for information on topics of specific concern. Keep in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all model comprehensive plan for a municipality. Each town is different, even though they may share similar concerns, so each town must craft a unique comprehensive plan that is flexible enough to guide land use policy effectively and strong enough to uphold the land use values held by the majority of the community.

The Importance of Educating the Public

Involving citizens early in the process of developing a comprehensive plan is a crucial, and often overlooked, part of the planning process. Too often, municipalities wait until well into the process and use only one outreach strategy *(such as public meetings)* to get public input. The result can be a poorly supported comprehensive plan that fails at the vote or is adopted but then put on a shelf and ignored.

An outreach strategy need not be complicated, but one person on the committee should be responsible for coordinating it so it is not overlooked.

Simple education outreach strategies include:

Citizen Input

Recruit teachers and their students, local bird watching and garden clubs, and other citizen groups to complete one specific aspect of the natural resources inventory in their area of interest. Their effort will provide valuable data, encourage them to care about the planning process and get them talking to other community members about the planning effort. Don't lose track of them when the inventory is finished. Invite them to provide input during the Policy and Implementation steps that follow.

Easy Newspaper Columns

Ask your local paper or weekly periodical if they will run a series of guest columns on natural resources and planning. Excerpts from this publication or from the Maine Forest Service publication *The Woods in Your Backyard* can be used verbatim, as long as the Maine Forest Service is credited. For example, a scenario from Part 1 of this guide could be split into three pieces, with one piece published weekly along with a couple of introductory sentences that make the information relevant to the local comprehensive planning effort. The Maine State Planning Office may also be able to provide publications to excerpt.

Surveys

Survey town residents to see what land use values are important to the majority. See *Development of a Comprehensive Plan in a Southern Maine Town* in this publication *(see table of contents)* for a creative example that resulted in a high return rate of surveys and a publicly supported comprehensive plan.

Workshops

Work with your regional planning council to bring in experts to talk on misunderstood topics such as conservation developments, cluster housing, forestry and natural resources and economics.

Videos

Book a night on your library speaker series to introduce topics such as how forests, natural resources, economics and subdivision planning fit together. Contact the Maine Forest Service to borrow videos on *What Do Trees Have To Do With It? Forestry and Planning* and *Growing Greener: Putting Conservation into Development Design.*

Focus Groups

Get several small discussion groups of less than twenty people each *(including people of varying viewpoints in each group)* to discuss a specific issue and propose alternatives. A trained, outside facilitator may be useful if the issue is contentious. A note keeper should be assigned in each group so a record of key points can be included in the Analysis part of the planning process.

Neighborhood Meetings

Small group meetings give citizens a chance to provide input during the policy development stage rather than react to a nearly finished plan. One possibility is to recruit the contacts made with birding and garden clubs to see if individual members are willing to host a neighborhood potluck followed by an information and discussion meeting run by members of the committee. Invite those with a wide range of views. Again, assign a note taker so the discussion is recorded.

Public Hearings

An effective moderator who keeps discussion focused is crucial for an effective larger meeting. If other public outreach efforts are already well underway, attendance at the larger public forum will be greater and less contentious.

Inventory and Analysis

Careful and thorough analyses provide planning committees with an understanding of their town trees, local forests, important ecological areas, development trends and the condition of forest land within municipal boundaries.

Some data can be collected at town offices, county offices and state and federal agency offices, but local resources are also extremely important. Local forest products industries, hunting and fishing clubs, homeowner and camp owner associations and local landowners can provide a wealth of information about changes in land use that will help identify current trends. Analysis of development trends is critical for gaining an understanding of threats to forest land as well as providing insights for strategies to address the threats.

Some of the inventory can be conducted by those without forestry training, but it would be useful to have a licensed professional forester to assist in gathering and analyzing information, and identifying trends in future land use. If a forester is not a member of the group that is collecting data

Questions for Forest Land Owners

Questions a committee member might ask a forest land owner:

What is it like to own and manage forest lands in this town?

How does development affect your lands and operations?

What could the community do to make it easier for forest land owners and managers to keep their land in forest production?

What would heirs likely do with the land?

What types of products do you manage your lands for?

Where are the markets for your forest land products?

for the comprehensive plan, contact the Maine Forest Service for information on how to retain a licensed professional forester in your area.

The Study Area Map

Most of the information collected during the inventories can and should be organized on a map. Current land use trends and potential land use changes are easier to spot on a map. If Geographic Information System *(GIS)* services are available to your municipality, GIS maps are especially useful, since data sets can be layered by selection. Soils, wetlands, roads, utilities, schools and other municipal features can be selected and easily viewed in any desired combination on a GIS map.

While not as versatile, synthesizing data on a non-computerized base map will effectively illustrate land use. A 7.5 minute US Geological Survey *(USGS)* map serves as a useful base map since it shows topographical features like hills, valleys,

Inventory of Existing Forest Land Use

STEP 1 ***How Is Your Forest Land Used? Identify the Following Uses in Your Municipality.***

Managed Forest land — Forest lands primarily devoted to forest management and the periodic harvest of timber on a commercial basis. This could be a subcategory of all timberland, including unmanaged forest land. These lands may also support recreational use.

Recently Converted Forest Land — Record forest land recently *(within the last 5 years)* converted to other uses.

Wildlife Habitat and Biologically Significant Areas — Include forest lands identified as important or protected wildlife habitat areas or critical natural areas by the Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife and/or the Maine Natural Areas Program.

Permanently Protected Forest Land — Identify forest lands under permanent protection *(such as conservation easements)*. Separately identify those that do and do not allow forest management.

Regulated Forest Land — Identify forest lands where the allowed uses are regulated by state law or local ordinance in order to protect specific natural resources *(e.g., shoreland protection zones around lakes and rivers and riparian zones near streams)*.

Designated Open Space — Lands designated as open space may be owned or managed by the municipality, county, state, or a not-for-profit organization. They also may overlap with other categories of land use.

Recreation and Scenic Areas — Identify forest lands occupied by parks, public campgrounds, trail systems, etc. and any locally important scenic vistas or viewsheds.

Non-Timber Forest Products — Forest land managed for maple syrup, ginseng, mushroom cultivation, woodland herbs or other forest products fall under this category. Balsam tips and other products also should be accounted for when it is possible to obtain information about them.

Commercial Non-Timber Uses — Forest lands where the primary use is commercial, but non-timber oriented. Examples include commercial campgrounds and hunting preserves.

Municipal Water Supply Protection — Forest land that surrounds and protects municipal water supplies and acts as a water recharge area.

Municipal Special Use — Forest land that is partially or completely converted for special municipal

streams, marshes and related elevations. Most major and some minor roads, power lines, bridges, houses and forested areas are also on USGS maps, but accuracy of these features depends on when the map was last updated. Many USGS maps have not been updated since 1959, and many roads and houses have been built in the intervening forty years. Forested areas have either grown up or been cut down. Older prominent community buildings or landmarks on a USGS map can be used as reference points to orient the viewer if they are labeled. New roads and other changes can be added as needed.

USGS maps are available from local outdoor stores or from the Maine Geological Survey. It may take more than one map quadrangle to cover your municipality.

A city or county road map is another alternative, but lacks the topographic features and infrastructure details found on the USGS maps.

As inventories are completed, data that can be directly related to specific areas of the municipal landscape should be recorded on the map. Sets of landscape data can be separated by adding each type of data to a transparent mylar sheet that can be layered over the base map. Some mylar separates with streams, roads and other landscape features are available from the Maine Geological Survey. Using different colored markers for each data layer makes information easier to interpret.

Inventory of Existing Forest Land Use

The inventory should include the current use of forest land: what it is, where it is, and what current impact it has on the town. Data that can be illustrated in map form should be recorded on the base map. It may prove useful to record all data in tabular form or in narrative form for future reference in the Analysis and Implamentation phases of the process, or to refer to when presenting the mapped information to the public. The State Planning Office's Comprehensive Planning Manual lays out the basic steps for con-

uses, such as a sewage treatment lagoons and spray dispersal of treated sewage.

STEP 2 *Map Different Forest Use Areas*

Enter data into the GIS program or draw in the boundaries of different land use areas on your base map, or on mylar separates that can be layered over it.

Where to Get the Information

Maine Forest Service 1-800-367-0223 Provides information on forest lands under the Forest Stewardship Program and on forest regulations. Can provide summary information on timber harvesting activity in the area as a whole.

Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife (207) 287-8045 : Provides information on wildlife habitat, including maps of significant and essential wildlife habitat.

Maine Natural Areas Program (207) 287-8044: Provides information on the location of important natural features.

Town or City Office: Provides information on forest land enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Law program and on tax exempt lands *(e.g., The Nature Conservancy land or church-owned land)*. Tax maps show state, county, or municipally owned land. The assessor also keeps records on Farm and Open Space.

Maine Department of Conservation/Bureau of Parks and Lands (207) 287-4905: Will provide information on state-owned public land in your area.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust (207) 729-7366: Will be able to answer questions regarding conservation easements and can provide a Land Trust Network list that has all land trusts in the state. Your closest land trust should be able to help you identify many properties under conservation easement.

Non-Timber Forest Products: No centralized source of information exists. Local contacts may know who is actively cultivating or harvesting products. Contact local loggers, hiking or bird watching clubs, local Cooperative Extension offices and farmers markets to find out who is growing, harvesting and selling non-timber products.

Maine State Planning Office (207) 287-3261: The booklet *Comprehensive Planning: A Manual for Maine's Communities* offers additional guidelines on how to collect local information.

ducting the inventory and analysis of forest lands and forestry resources, which includes: a) Identify the resource base *(soils, land cover, etc.)*; b) Inventory commercial forestry activity; c) Identify ownership patterns; d) Identify related activities *(e.g. Biomass boilers, mills, etc.)*; e) Assess the contribution of forestry to the local and, if applicable, regional economy; f) Analyze how land use trends may be affecting, or in the future are likely to affect, forest operations and forest land ownership; and g) Identify trends affecting the long-term viability of existing forest operations.

A more detailed listing of items the committee may wish to consider follows.

Analysis of Existing Forest Land Use

Analysis of the inventory data will reveal general trends in recent land use that will help the town foresee what is likely to happen in the next ten years. The following questions should help encourage dialogue that will lead to creating effective land use policies.

Forestry Activities — Once commercial forest land is inventoried, the analysis should include future trends. Is forest land being converted to other uses? Will it continue? At what rate? Are land uses adjacent to existing forest lands compatible with forest management? Are abandoned farms and fields being allowed to revert to forests? Will parks, open-space and campgrounds remain the same size, expand, or decrease?

Existing Regulations and Zoning — Do existing regulations or zoning encourage or inhibit

Inventory of the Local Economy

STEP 1 *How do Forests Contribute to the Local Economy?*

Forest Products Industry — Identify pulp and paper mills, sawmills, bolt mills, veneer mills, burners or biomass fuelwood processors and other forest products industries in your study area. It would be helpful to know their resource requirements, number of employees, payroll, taxes, etc. It is also important to consider forest industries beyond town boundaries since they often rely on wood suppliers and provide employment to adjacent towns.

Employment — Determine how many men and women work in the woods harvesting trees. Local licensed professional foresters that manage private forests should also be counted.

Non-Timber Forest Products — The contribution of non-timber forest products *(e.g., maple syrup, woods-grown mushrooms, medicinal herbs, balsam fir tips, etc.)* to local economies is worth trying to determine, but may be difficult to measure.

Commercial and Noncommercial Recreational Areas — Forested recreation areas located in or near a municipality attract visitors who shop at local retailers and eat at local restaurants.

Hunting and Fishing — These may also be important economic activities related to forest land in your area. If development patterns are resulting in rural lands being broken up into residential lots, is this diminishing the hunting and fishing opportunities in your community?

STEP 2 *Tabulate Data*

Organize the data in table form, including numbers of people employed in each category, number of visitors and local revenue associated with each category where that data is available.

Where to Get the Information

Maine Forest Service 1-800-367-0223: Provides information on forest products and on mills. District field foresters can provide information on loggers and foresters in the area.

Individual Companies: Provide information on the number of employees, payroll and income generated.

Department of Conservation/Bureau of Parks and Lands (207) 287-4905: Provides information on number of visitors to state parks and recreation areas.

Non-Timber Forest Products: No centralized source of information exists about who or how many people cultivate or collect non-timber forest products. Contact local loggers, hiking or bird watching clubs, local Cooperative Extension offices and farmers markets to find out who is growing, harvesting and selling non-timber products.

sound forest management? Is the development that is occurring in town being directed effectively by existing local policies, programs and ordinances? In many Maine towns, the majority of new homes are located in rural areas and, if the trend continues, more and more larger forested tracts will get subdivided and taken out of forest products production. Is this the trend in your town? If it is the trend, is it the desire of the town to encourage and maintain the forest land resource and forest based economy?

Commercial Use — Will current commercial uses remain the same, decrease, or expand? Are new commercial enterprises in the planning stages? Are current trends good for the town or should they be redirected?

Inventory and Analysis of Forestry Activity in the Local Economy

After collecting the inventory data and organizing it so it is easily readable, consider the following questions:

- Is there sufficient land available to meet the other goals and trends that have been identified?
- What can the town do to encourage better forest management that balances economic values *(direct values such as income from forest products and indirect values such as a reduction in costs associated with stormwater run-off, for example)* and environmental values *(such as water quality improvement, wildlife habitat protection, soil conservation and recreation)*?
- Does the town want to encourage more forest recreation in the area? How can that be achieved in an environmentally friendly way? What strategies might help preserve these opportunities? For example, is establishment of a local recreation committee an option?
- How can the town promote wildlife habitat protection? For example, is a local or regional land trust available to accept gifts or to purchase land or land development rights?
- Does the town want to encourage the production and marketing of non-timber forest products such as maple syrup or gourmet mushrooms? If so, how can forest-related entrepreneurship be encouraged?

Inventory of Important Natural Features Associated with Forest Land

Forests are not separate from the rest of the municipality. Identifying the following natural resources associated with forest land is essential to have the background information necessary for effective planning. Contact your regional planning council for assistance. The assistance of a licensed professional forester would also be useful.

Analysis of Natural Features

Forests are complicated ecosystems that grow slowly. They are also one of our few truly renewable natural resources. Without human intervention, our forests will perpetuate themselves forever. If we intervene in the natural process, we may obtain many goods and services while protecting the forest's ecological integrity, but a long-term outlook is necessary for effective and comprehensive forest management. What we do today significantly impacts the future forest.

To analyze forest-related natural resources consider the following questions:

- What are the needs of the town or region: more forest land, more wildlife habitat, more protection of the soil, water and air?
- Will forest lands meet these needs for the next 10 years? The next 50 years? The cycle of a forest extends far beyond traditional town planning cycles, so a "build-out" projection here *(based on current or planned growth trends and recent development patterns in the town)* will provide insight into future effects on the availabilty of forest values. Check subdivision and building permits for the last 5 to 10 years to quantify the amount of activity on recent farm and forest lands. Locate new development on a map, preferably a zoning map. Is this trend likely to continue? Is most of the development occurring in the designated growth areas, or is it spread out across the rural areas of town? The analysis should also include an inventory of land uses around existing farms and commercial forest land and an assessment as to whether these are compatible uses.
- Do forest industries in the town/region need help? What role should the town play?
- Do we need to help landowners manage public recreational use of their forest land?
- Are municipal street and landscape trees being maintained? Do we need to plant more street trees? Do we need to have more trees in residential developments?
- Do we need to encourage special forest management practices in riparian forest buffers, around aquifers and water discharge areas, near open water, along steep slopes and in other sensitive areas?
- Are there areas with highly erodable soils that require special attention?

Inventory of Important Natural Features Associated with Forest Land

Step 1 *What are the Natural Features in Your Municipality?*

Age of Forest Stands — As a minimum the town should, using local knowledge, define those lands classified as commercial forest lands. Towns may want to work with a licensed professional forester to further classify the age and health of forests in order to identify potential effects on future supply of forest products, recreation options, safety, etc.

Topographic Features — Topographic features that affect forest management *(including steep slopes, rivers and stream beds, bogs, marshes and ponds)* should be identified. The "lay of the land" will affect a landowner's ability to manage the forest and protect sensitive areas. Use of improper harvesting equipment on sensitive soils or areas (such as steep slopes) may result in unnecessary damage to the site and pollution of nearby waterways. It may also cause unnecessary expense to the timber harvester or to the landowner who is required to repair the damage.

Soils — Prime forest soils as defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service need to be identified and located. Productivity of forest lands are directly related to soil types, soil quality and depth.

Watershed Protection — In addition to lands specifically designated to protect municipal water supplies, identify forest land that is especially important for protecting water quality. Well planned and implemented forest management activities are far more protective of water quality and quantity than other land uses.

Wildfire Potential — Forested areas with forest fire potential should be identified. This includes areas with dead or dying conifers, windblown trees and homes or developments with inadequate road access for emergency vehicles to enter, turn around and leave the site during a fire. Do roads and driveways meet the minimum requirements for emergency vehicle access? *(All roads should be at least 16*

- What do we need to do to reduce wildfire potential and minimize damage if a wildfire starts? For example, do we need to require two escape routes from cul-de-sac development areas? Will road networks support fire suppression equipment at all times of the year? How can we encourage smart building and homesite maintenance to reduce risk?
- Do we need to provide buffers between the forest and incompatible land uses? If so, how?
- What do we need to do to encourage residential development in appropriate areas in order to protect forest lands?

Summarize Inventory and Analysis

The inventory and analysis of forests and other important natural resources should be summarized. The maps, tables, narrative and, if available, GIS models, should provide a sound basis for developing well informed land use policies that incorporate local interests and goals. This is a good stage to review the level of public participation in developing or reviewing the comprehensive land use plan. The sooner the general populace is aware of and encouraged to provide input into the process, the more likely that the finished comprehensive plan will be adopted by town vote.

While the inventory and analysis stages of developing a comprehensive plan are essential, some of the hardest work is using that information to develop effective land use policy guidelines in the face of conflict between stakeholders. Inventory and analysis is only the beginning. There will most likely be conflicts. And incompatibilities between different town objectives. For example, how will the forestry goal be fulfilled while fulfilling the need to provide affordable housing or recreational needs? These value conflicts will have to be resolved. Each component of the plan must be workable. Don't give up. Prepare to compromise in the interest of a strong and workable comprehensive plan that can effectively guide your municipality into the future and stand up to opportunistic challenges to weaken it.

Plans that are developed should be in effect for the next 10 years; however, plans should be reviewed every two to five years to

feet wide to allow for easy entrance of fire trucks, dead-end roads should have a minimum turn-around radius of 60 feet, and bridges should be able to hold 30,000 pounds).

Street and Landscape Trees — Inventory street and shade trees with the assistance of the Maine Forest Service Community Forester or a local arborist. How many are there? Are they healthy? The important contributions provided by street and shade trees need to be recognized during the planning stage of community development, since they require regular care and maintenance to look good and stay healthy.

STEP 2 ***Map Natural Features***

Add the components above to the map of your study area. If GIS is available for your data collection and analysis, this section lends itself particularly well to GIS data layers. Additional narrative on the age of forest stands and street and landscape trees will provide useful details that would be difficult to read on a map.

Where to Get the Information

Maine Geological Survey: (207) 287-2801. 7.5 minute topographical maps can be ordered for a small fee. Review the web site at *www.state.me.us/doc/nrimc/mgs/mgs.htm*

Maine Forest Service: 800-367-0223. Can provide information on community forestry, fire prevention and control, forest health and more. See Clip-n-Copy pages at the back of the guide for more information on programs and services.

Natural Resources Conservation Service: (207) 990-9100. Contact this general information number to be directed to the office in your area. The local office has soil maps and can provide a wide range of information on the connection between soils and land use.

Maine Office of Geographical Information Systems (OGIS): (207) 287-6144. Call with technical questions. For information about services and products offered, review the Web site at *appollo.ogis.state.me.us/ogisper.asp*

determine whether updating or revisions are necessary.

Guiding Questions: Policy Development for Forest Land Use

The comprehensive plan provides the background and framework for land use ordinances, so it is essential that natural resources and factors related to them *(e.g., economic, scenic, recreational, etc.)* be inventoried and documented. Once the inventory and analysis stages are complete, those involved in the development or review of the comprehensive plan have the opportunity to step back and look at the whole municipality. They also have the opportunity to take the long view and envision the future of the municipality five or ten years from now, given current land use trends, current regulations and incentives.

Future land use trends can be represented by a map which "builds out" potential development on currently undeveloped forest land that could be developed under current codes, and a companion "build out" map that illustrates the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan. This may include areas designated on the map as protected open space, commercial forest land, conservation developments and other areas. Forest Land needs to be considered in the context of other comprehensive plan features like traffic, sewage and storm water infrastructure, housing and economics.

Sufficient information should have been collected during the inventory and analysis stages to identify municipal goals and objectives. When those steps are completed, current local codes *(or the lack of current codes)* can be assessed to determine if they effectively meet the desired goals and objectives and non-regulatory options explored.

Policies that come out of this process should encourage landowners to protect the forest without overburdening them. Policies in one town should complement those in adjacent towns as much as possible, since what happens in one town will affect neighboring towns. One way to facilitate policy development across town boundaries is to work closely with regional planning commissions.

Policies promoting resource conservation and sustainable uti-

lization will help direct the course of municipal planning during the next ten years. While policies must address the state goal of protecting forest land from inappropriate and incompatible development, they also come directly from the analytical work considered earlier.

As you draft forest land use policy, keep in mind that many local comprehensive plans recognize the importance of forest land, but few effectively protect it. According to the Maine State Planning Office, there are several reasons for this:

First, the notion that a rural landscape is a working landscape has been lost in many areas of the state. Instead, the definition of a rural landscape is one with enough trees or fields to create some distance between neighboring houses. Large lot residential zoning has been adopted by many towns as the least controversial way to retain a "rural" feel. By doing this, towns have unintentionally promoted a sort of wooded suburban sprawl by requiring two, three, or five acre minimum lot sizes. Large lot sizes fragment forest land — a process with a host of ecological, environmental, aesthetic and economic impacts outlined in Part One and Part Two of this guide.

Second, farms and working forests need acreage to be viable. While estimates vary, 25 acres is the size often cited as the minimum acreage for sustainable forestry. A five acre houselot is not a self-sustaining unit of manageable forest land.

Third, land use conflicts arise between forestry and farming operations and nearby residential areas. Increased taxes for increased municipal services (like sewer lines and road maintenance) cut into the often slim profits made by working farmers and woodlot owners. Disputes over noisy machinery, the smell of manure, and other rural characteristics also arise between new residential landowners and farmers and

Development of a Comprehensive Plan in a Southern Maine Town

Inventory. – Citizens in a small southern Maine town volunteered to do the inventory for the comprehensive land use plan. Following State Planning Office guidelines, and with additional guidance from a professional planner from the Greater Portland Council of Governments, the Comprehensive Planning Committee inventoried traffic patterns and volume, growth in residential and commercial development, existing natural resources and other aspects of the town.

Citizen Participation – The committee decided it was important to include input from town residents at an early stage of the process, instead of waiting until the inventory and analysis were finished and presenting the information in a public meeting. The committee developed a public opinion survey in order to find out what taxpayers thought was important to the town's future. To encourage participation, the town offered the chance to win a $200 cash prize to everyone who filled out and returned the survey. This cash incentive resulted in a high return rate *(over 50%)* of surveys.

Data Analysis and Town Objectives – Once the data and public opinion surveys were collected, a planner from the Greater Portland Council of Governments assisted with data analysis and worked with the committee to develop objectives that would help create policies to guide planning decisions during the life of the comprehensive land use plan *(CLUP's must be updated every ten years)*. Many objectives were identified, including a desire by town residents to have more open space and have public access to Sebago Lake. Stopping further commercial development or expansion south of the Route 302 corridor was proposed in the interest of protecting the lake and the natural resources and aesthetic values associated with it. When fully developed, the town voted to approve the plan.

Implementation – In an effort to follow the objectives identified in the plan, the comprehensive planning Committee held neighborhood "Living Room Meetings" to try to involve landowners in identifying land protection options and working together to make crucial land use decisions. It didn't work. People were unwilling to tell their neighbors how they ought to use their land. They didn't particularly want their neighbors to tell them what to do with theirs, either.

Efforts to actively promote the objectives of the plan faded after this failed effort, but they didn't stop. A few town members started a local newsletter and wrote newspaper articles highlighting the

woodlot owners.

Fourth, owners of larger parcels of forested land often view their land as an emergency savings account or retirement fund that can be tapped when need arises or real estate prices are high. They often don't want any restrictions against selling their land for the highest market value.

The Maine State Planning Office publication *Comprehensive Planning: A Manual for Maine's Communities* includes a full discussion in the Agriculture and Forestry Chapter of key issues that planning committees must address. It also provides guidance in policy development by offering four categories of strategies designed to protect and manage forest land a) protecting the resource, b) enhancing economic ability, c) protecting the right to manage woodlands and d) encouraging markets. These groupings help to organize the local approach to land use planning and consider regulatory and non-regulatory options.

In addition, consider the guidelines on the following page to ensure your comprehensive plan incorporates the wide variety of benefits offered by forest land.

The Maine State Planning Office publication Comprehensive Planning: A Manual for Maine's Communities *is an essential tool for planning committees and conservation commissions. It includes a full discussion of key issues in the Agriculture and Forestry Chapter and provides guidance in policy development.*

concerns of rapid development and municipal costs associated with sprawl.

Challenges to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan

After the plan was approved by voters, a candle making business approached the town planning board for a permit to expand. The planning board approved the request. There was only one problem. The candle factory was on the south side of Route 302 — an area designated in the comprehensive plan as closed to further commercial development. The town attorney stepped in to make the planning board aware of the prohibition; if they wanted to approve the expansion of the candle factory then it required a change to the comprehensive plan.

The planning board decided to pursue a change in the plan to allow the candle factory to expand, and the attorney started the process that would allow this to happen.

This effort re-energized the volunteer comprehensive planning committee that had worked to develop the plan from start to finish. They published numerous articles on the proposed expansion and the challenge to the plan. As a result of their commitment, and the strong directions outlined in the plan itself, the town rejected the vote to allow a zoning change favoring increased commercial development on the lake side of Route 302.

How the Comprehensive Plan Guided Other Town Planning Decisions

Mobile Home Park – Locations where mobile home park could be developed were identified in the comprehensive plan, even though there were no proposed developments when the plan was completed and approved. When a developer decided to locate a mobile home park in a non-approved area, the attempt was shot down by the strong direction of the plan. He decided to develop the park in an approved area, instead.

Purchase of a Town Beach – One major town objective that became part of the plan was increasing public access to Sebago Lake. Under the guidance of the plan, beach property was purchased by the State of Maine through the Land for Maine's Future program, which is administered by the State Planning Office. The town continues to manage the land through the proceeds from fee collections.

Morgan Meadow – Following the objective to acquire more public open space, 1100 acres were also acquired through the Land for Maine's Future program.

1. Assure a Sustainable Supply of Forest Products — What strategy will the town take to encourage landowners to practice ecologically based stewardship on their land in the interest of the continuous production and the long term protection of forest land?

2. Protect Significant Natural Areas — What are the public trust resources and important public values at stake? What are the most effective strategies to protect them? How can landowners be encouraged to voluntarily protect these areas? What kinds of forest management activities can protect or enhance these values?

3. Encourage Lands Enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Program or Farm and Open Space Program — These areas should be designated as rural lands. How will the municipality encourage maintaining current use of this land? It would be inconsistent to include working rural areas within a larger growth area designation.

4. Protect Forested Urban Areas — How will the town encourage owners and developers to include trees in their landscaping plans? Will the town include trees while planning open spaces or parks? How will the town help protect or maintain these areas?

5. Protect Vernal Pools, Wetlands and Water Resources — Protection can occur through proper management *(which includes sensitive harvesting of timber surrounding these areas)*. What policies will the municipality adopt to protect water resources while still allowing timber harvesting? What forms of forest recreation are compatible in these areas?

6. Protect Prime Forest Soils — Often these soils are prime soils for development, waste disposal, or other non-forest uses. What policies will the municipality develop to encourage land owners to keep these prime soils in an undeveloped condition?

7. Protect Sensitive Natural Features — It may be necessary to limit forestry activities on sensitive sites. What policies will the municipality adopt to protect these sites while still allowing for careful forest management?

8. Provide Affordable Housing. — How will the municipality guide residential development while protecting the integrity of local forests? Will the municipality encourage intensive residential development *(such as conservation developments or "cluster housing")* near or in forests, or will it allow non-intensive development *(such as standard style subdivisions)*? What will be the impact of either choice?

9. Discourage Forest Fragmentation — Forest fragmentation *(breaking up large tracts of forest lands into small pieces which compromises biodiversity and forest management opportunities)*, should be avoided as much as possible. The town can encourage adjacent owners of small parcels to cooperate in forest management activities by developing collaborative management plans so larger forested areas can be managed as a unit.

10. Protect Against Hazards — How will the municipality reduce wildfire risk and forest insect and disease epidemics? For example, the town can require logging slash to be lopped and scattered, require that roads be constructed to standards that support fire suppression equipment, and require access to and protection of strategically located sources of water for fire control. Consider requiring two road exits large enough to accommodate fire engines in all new developments located in or near forested areas so fire fighters have access and escape routes.

11. Promote Street and Shade Trees — The town may also want to undertake a community forest/shade tree pruning and maintenance program as an effective way to reduce vulnerability to destructive insects and disease, enhance downtown or village areas, and take advantage of other benefits derived from community forestry. How will the municipality promote this?

12. Discourage Incompatible Development — How will the town discourage incompatible development in forested areas? If an analysis of where new development is occurring indicates that new development, especially residential development, is occurring in rural areas more than anticipated, how can existing policies and programs be improved? For example, local building requirements are often more strict for village areas than they are for rural areas, which tends to discourage growth in the villages and encourage it in the rural areas.

Once recommended policies are identified by the committee, a

discussion of strategies that a comprehensive plan may include to implement recommended policies is the next step in the process. Again, refer to the Maine State Planning Office manual for additional guidance.

Implementation: Practical Strategies to Reach Municipal Goals

The implementation section of the comprehensive plan provides a practical work plan that will translate policies into on-the-ground changes. Strategies may include non-regulatory approaches such as: landowner incentives and assistance, buying forest land with state or local funds, or buying development rights from willing private forest land owners. Educational outreach to landowners may be another non-regulatory strategy to stimulate community discussion and raise awareness about how best to manage natural resources *(See the Clip-n-Copy pages in the appendix section of this guide for information handouts that are easy to copy and distribute to landowners)*. Regulatory ordinances are another tool for reaching town goals. They need not create unnecessary hardships for forest land owners, developers, or the town, but creative thinking is essential in moving beyond traditional strategies for using, conserving, or protecting land.

Strategy Requirements

According to the Maine State Planning Office, specific strategies designed to carry out policies should do the following in order to be effective:

- Describe the specific activity or activities that support a specific policy.
- Designate responsibility for coordinating or conducting each specific activity.
- Provide a schedule for completing each activity.
- Estimate the cost of each activity.
- If a cost is associated with an activity, identify funding sources.

Coordinating with Neighboring Towns

Since forestry and natural resource planning concerns don't stop at municipal boundaries, it is important to work with neighboring towns to achieve the goals outlined in the planning process. For example, the protection of drinking water supplied from lakes, reduction of stormwater run-off, wildlife habitat protection and other natural resource considerations often require the cooperation of several municipalities. Assistance in developing strategies for cooperation with neighboring towns is available from your regional planning council and additional assistance may be available from the Maine State Planning Office.

Critique of Existing Land-Use Regulations

A thorough critique of existing land use regulations, including state mandated zoning, will identify codes that do not meet policies identified in the Comprehensive Planning process. Changes should be identified and prioritized. If codes exist that do not meet policy objectives, identify how they can be improved to do so.

While model ordinance language is beyond the scope of this supplemental guide, assistance is available from a variety of sources. An effort to develop model ordinances that reduce sprawl and its associated impacts is currently underway at the Maine State Planning Office and will be available to guide municipalities in drafting or updating their own ordinances. Your regional planning council should be able to point out neighboring towns, or towns further afield, that can provide useful models. Refer to the Additional Resources section of this guide to find specific resources that provide model ordinance language and contact the Maine Forest Service for information on municipal forestry ordinance guidelines and assistance, and for model street and landscape tree ordinance information.

Evaluating Plan Effectiveness

Individual members of the planning committee or conservation commission may come and go over the course of ten years, so it is important to include guidelines within the plan to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation strategies in reaching identified goals and policies. Also state how often the plan should be reviewed and updated for effectiveness *(every two to five years is recommended by the Maine State Planning Office)*.

Summary

Finally, the town must approve or reject the comprehensive land use plan. Since the policy development and implementation phases of the comprehensive plan process are likely to be the most contentious and discouraging, it is

in the best interest of those developing or updating the plan to engage the public early in the process, preferably during the inventory phase. Including key community leaders on the planning committee will help promote public dialogue during the early stages of development. If disagreements between stakeholders threaten to halt the process or significantly weaken the proposed plan, consider acquiring the services of a professional facilitator to get the process back on track. Newspaper columns, radio spots, public suppers and other outreach communication strategies are also well worth the time and effort.

The standard outreach strategy of holding comprehensive plan public meetings to gather citizen input rarely attracts large audiences, so it may seem to many that the finished plan was developed without public participation. Springing the comprehensive plan on an unprepared public at a public meeting or at the final town meeting where the plan is up for a vote does not bode well for success. The best chance of adopting a comprehensive plan and having it actively used as a guide for future development hinges on wide community involvement from the beginning of the process.