

Regional Landscape Conservation in Maine

Best Practices for Enhancing Quality of Place



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Introduction

Maine's sprawling land use patterns threaten to transform many of the state's rural areas into suburbs. Between 1960 and 1990, the percentage of Maine's population living in service centers declined from 59 percent to 44 percent.¹ Between 1970 and 1990 land development in Maine occurred at four times the rate that population increased.² Between 1964 and 1997, Maine lands in agricultural production declined by more than 50 percent,³ and over 20 million acres of Maine's northern forest have changed ownership since 1980.⁴

These dramatic trends degrade working lands, public access to outdoor recreation resources, scenic vistas and wildlife habitats that, along with Maine's appealing downtowns, define the state's quality of place. In response to these growing challenges, more than 100 land trusts have sprung up throughout the state since the 1980s.⁵ The Maine Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1989 mandating comprehensive land use planning. While the GMA encourages multi-municipal land use planning,⁶ Maine's "home-rule" traditions continue to hamper collaboration among towns at the regional level. Fortunately, forward-thinking conservation activists and organizations are banding together, engaging town governments and, through these efforts, are demonstrating that collaboration allows partners to achieve landscape-scale successes that could not be accomplished alone.

Building on the lessons of the past, evolving regional conservation partnerships in Maine are pioneering strategies that facilitate effective collaboration, engage broad community support and integrate landscape-scale open space networks with local economic development. In support, the Land for Maine's Future program is prioritizing conservation projects that integrate landscape-scale conservation with regional economic development strategies. According to Robin Zinchuk, Executive Director of the Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce, "We should not continue to focus our all our efforts on land conservation without devoting at least the same time and resources toward related economic development. Land conservation at the expense of local prosperity is short-sighted. Local prosperity will lead to locally driven land conservation."

The Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place identified Maine's natural landscapes and traditional downtowns as unique assets that will attract tourists and skilled professionals to bolster the state's economy. Land conservation has been recognized as an integral component of smart growth approaches and complementary to municipal land regulation as a tool for controlling sprawling growth patterns.⁷ While not a replacement for strong state and town incentives and regulations, landscape conservation can thus be considered an important tool for preserving both Maine's rural landscape and its unique downtowns. The best practices offered in this report highlight lessons learned over the last two decades for effective collaboration to preserve and enhance Maine's quality of place.

¹ Land and Water Resources Council 2002

² Ibid

³ Smith 2003

⁴ Hagan, J.M., L.C. Irland, and A.A. Whitman. 2005

⁵ Maine Land Trust Network: www.mltn.org

⁶ State of Maine 2007

⁷ Daniels and Lapping 2005

Overview

In December 2007, the Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place recognized that we are losing the regional landscapes that are essential to our future economy. The Council recommended that regional landscape conservation be recognized, incentivized, and rewarded. It directed the State Planning Office to study current regional conservation initiatives for the purposes of identifying best practices in Maine today. The purpose of this report is to provide guidelines that can be used across the state to organize effective regional landscape planning and conservation efforts.

This report opens with a definition of "regional landscape conservation" synthesized from the broad spectrum of regional conservation partnerships operating in Maine as well as existing academic literature on the subject. A summary of best practices for landscape conservation was derived from interviews with regional conservation leaders and practitioners is then provided. Three case studies are then explored to identify how these best practices were employed in differing regions and specific planning contexts. Throughout the report, sidebars are offered to highlight important aspects of strategic conservation planning and celebrate unique conservation and development successes achieved in Maine. Finally, regional landscape conservation initiatives in Maine are inventoried.

Methodology

A literature review was conducted to inform the definition of regional landscape conservation in Maine. A series of 40 interviews was then conducted with a broad spectrum of leaders in Maine's regional conservation partnerships. Standard questions were employed to enable relevant comparisons among the diverse projects reviewed. Key lessons learned by participants in regional initiatives were compiled. The identified best practices represent a synthesis of the lessons shared. Following the initial interviews, three case studies were selected to explore a cross section of the regional planning contexts identified in the definition of regional landscape conservation.

Summary

Definition of Regional Landscape Conservation in Maine

Landscape conservation initiatives in Maine seek to conserve a regional network of open space and shared natural resources for the ecological, economic and cultural values they provide through collaborative partnerships transcending political boundaries and organizational service areas.

Regional conservation initiatives in Maine span the state from the Mount Agamenticus to the Sea collaboration in southern Maine to the Mahoosuc Initiative straddling the western border with New Hampshire, and eastward to Cobscook Bay and the Downeast Lakes in Washington County. The varying landscapes identified for conservation in Maine are shaped by the local planning context and linked by interconnected ecological and human systems that “hold the region together.” Ecological qualities used to identify focus regions in Maine include biodiversity or watershed integrity. Economic and transportation networks are human systems tying regional service centers with surrounding rural open space and working lands.

Ecological objectives for regional landscape initiatives in Maine include the conservation of large habitat blocks, connecting corridors and riparian areas that preserve biodiversity and watershed integrity. Development of recreational tourism and the conservation of working lands and waterfronts that underpin forest products, farming and fishing employment in the state are economic objectives for regional initiatives. Cultural objectives for landscape conservation include ensuring public access to treasured recreational lands and the conservation of scenic resources and traditional natural resource-based livelihoods.

Maine is a “home rule” state with much land use control vested at the local level. Successful landscape conservation initiatives are thus dependent on productive partnerships across municipal jurisdictions and organizational service areas. The cooperative management of natural resources at the regional scale creates shared benefits that motivate regional partners to work together.

Findings

1. Landscape-scale conservation initiatives are shaped by the ecological characteristics, stakeholder priorities, political and socioeconomic conditions, and land tenure and development patterns of the respective region.
2. Successful regional partnerships in Maine are often initiated by local champions and recognize the need to engage local residents and decision-makers as key contributors in the formulation of conservation goals and implementation strategies.
3. Diverse partnerships are well positioned to raise public awareness and support, recruit significant human resources and varied organizational expertise, and leverage funding from public and private sources to execute regional strategies.
4. Funders, including the Land for Maine’s Future Program and private foundations, prioritize collaborative projects when awarding grants, and regional partnerships have an advantage when competing for the existing pool of funds, but additional monies are needed to increase the number and effectiveness of landscape conservation initiatives in Maine.

5. To date, regional conservation partnerships have been weighted toward traditional natural resource stakeholders, including land trusts, statewide non-governmental conservation organizations, and state and federal agencies.
6. Proactive municipal land use planning, regulation and incentives utilized in concert with voluntary conservation will advance broader protection of wildlife habitats, working and recreation lands, and scenic viewsheds at the landscape scale.
7. Integrating landscape conservation within broader regional asset-based economic development strategies can expand the constituency and deepen the pool of resources for conservation.

Recommendations

1. The State of Maine should allocate additional funding targeted for regional landscape conservation and investment initiatives.

State conservation allocations are a sound investment. Regional collaborations are effective at leveraging state funds with additional federal contributions, private foundation grants and individual donations. To date, \$72,010,053 in Land for Maine's Future (LMF) funds have been leveraged with matching contributions approximating \$115,929,677, creating a total of \$187,939,730. These funds have protected 444,557 acres, representing a match of \$1.61 for each LMF dollar. On average, one acre of public or working lands has been successfully conserved for the bargain price of \$161.98 in taxpayer funds.

Many regional collaborations are anchored by a state park or a state trail network—core assets which require capital investments beyond acquisition. Examples include Cobscook Bay State Park (*See Cobscook Bay, Appendix II*); Popham Beach State Park (*See Kennebec Estuary, Appendix II*); and Grafton Notch State Park (*See Mahoosuc Initiative, Appendix I*). The 2007 State Park Bond and recent MDOT trails bonds have provided an infusion of funds for long-delayed capital investments to “polish the gems” that anchor many regional collaborations. Sustained or increased state and federal capital investments in parks and trails are a necessary component of making best use of conservation lands.

2. The State of Maine should provide resources to regional planning entities and should align state agency resources to offer technical assistance and meeting facilitation for regional conservation partnerships.

The Executive Order to Create a Maine Quality of Place and Jobs Investment strategy identifies six Councils of Governments (COG) designated as federal economic development districts (EDD) to coordinate Quality of Place Councils in their respective region. The COG / EDDs should facilitate cooperation among regional partners to create landscape-scale networks of conservation lands surrounding and linked to revitalized downtowns. Breaking down barriers between conservation and economic development stakeholders provides opportunities to create comprehensive and coordinated regional strategies.

In addition to resources for regional entities, conservation land owners must keep pace with momentum for planning and acquisition. The State of Maine—especially Maine Department of

Conservation's Bureau of Parks and Lands and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife— provides natural resource data, capacity to acquire lands, management expertise and more. State agencies are necessary participants in regional partnerships.

3. The State of Maine and Quality of Place Councils should undertake concerted planning efforts and target strategic investments to establish corridors and enhance connectivity within and between landscape-scale networks of conservation lands.

Permanently conserved corridors facilitate the development of regional trail networks, identified by the Quality of Place Council as a state priority, and migration routes and habitats for wildlife and plant species needed to preserve the diversity of Maine's flora and fauna. Corridors foster an interconnected system of open space that amplifies the value of each conserved parcel and enhance regional ecosystem, recreation and economic values.

4. The State of Maine should sustain the Beginning with Habitat program to disseminate natural resource data to town governments and conservation organizations in a user-friendly format and, in collaboration with federal, non-governmental and local partners, should seek to expand the scope of available data to include prime agricultural soils, productive timber lands, and outdoor recreational, scenic and land-based cultural assets.

Recent research demonstrates that the Beginning with Habitat (BwH) program is creating benefits. Kartez and Casto found that BwH successfully informed resource protection policies during comprehensive planning processes among towns surveyed in 2004. The authors also found that the greater the number of policymakers and stakeholders who have access to BwH data, the greater the influence of the natural resource information on comprehensive plans.⁸

Expanding the scope of spatial data provided by the State of Maine to include priority working lands and natural, recreational and cultural sites will increase the capacity of towns and regional partnerships to preserve Maine's unique brand. The proposed Quality of Place Councils can help disseminate data about ecological, outdoor recreation, scenic and land-based cultural assets to a range of stakeholders and encourage integrating landscape conservation and economic development in comprehensive regional strategies.

Best Practices for Regional Landscape Conservation

The following best practices are offered as a synthesis of insights and lessons learned over the last two decades by participants of regional landscape conservation initiatives in Maine. Due to the varied ecological, social, political and economic characteristics of each region, these practices are designed to be broad in nature, allowing replication in differing planning contexts.

Vision

1. Engage a diversity of stakeholders representing varied constituencies, perspectives and organizational capacities.
2. Invest necessary time and resources early on to create a clearly defined, consensus-driven vision.

⁸ Kartez and Casto 2008

Collaboration

3. Designate a clear organizational structure, including an entity responsible for sustaining coordination and momentum among partners.
4. Create time to have fun and build personal relationships.

Planning

5. Identify the assets and skills of participating organizations and plan to fill capacity gaps with outside consultants where needed.
6. Inventory and analyze ecological and natural resources when determining landscape conservation priorities, taking advantage of existing information and data where available.
7. Solicit public input and include community priorities for cultural, recreational and scenic resources when determining conservation goals.

Outreach

8. Establish a concise identity to clearly and consistently communicate the scope and vision of the project.
9. Utilize existing social relationships and networks within the region to generate awareness.

Implementation

10. Employ a variety of conservation tools including fee acquisition, easements, regulation and public education.
11. Treat landowners with respect.
12. Establish phases and benchmarks during implementation, allowing pauses for evaluation and celebration of successes.

Management

13. Include long-term management and stewardship of conserved lands during the early planning phases and subsequent capital campaigns.
14. Recruit volunteers to expand the capacity of the organization to monitor and enhance conservation lands.

Case Study Abstracts

Three case studies – the Mahoosuc Initiative, Central Penobscot Greenprint and Portland Trails – are explored to demonstrate the diversity of landscape scales, regional collaborations and conservation objectives identified in the definition of regional landscape conservation in Maine.

Mahoosuc Initiative

The Mahoosuc Region straddles the rugged, forested border between New Hampshire and Maine's Oxford County. Local, state and national conservation organizations are partnering to link landscape-scale conservation with economic development grounded in the region's productive working landscapes and quality of place. The Mahoosuc Initiative is a collaborative effort to empower local communities with asset-based development strategies that preserve natural resource-based livelihoods while enhancing and promoting the region's recreation assets that span the four seasons and range from highland hiking trails to skiing, paddling, snowmobiling, hunting and angling.

Central Penobscot Regional Greenprint

Twelve municipalities and various conservation organizations in the greater Bangor area are undertaking a regional open space planning initiative. The landscape is a mosaic of urban and rural lands linked by economic and transportation networks along the Penobscot River corridor. With support from The Trust for Public Land and Penobscot Valley Council of Governments, the partnership has created an equitable collaborative structure to overcome the "mutual suspicion" among participating towns and "home rule" traditions that currently hamper regional planning in Maine. The Central Penobscot Regional Greenprint seeks to advance evolving conservation collaborations and regional planning synergies in the greater Bangor area.

Portland Trails

Capitalizing on a compelling vision and local political will in the early 1990s, a passionate and persistent group of citizens formed Portland Trails (PT) to implement an eight-decade-old plan for connecting the city's green spaces with a network of trails. Since the organization's inception in 1991, PT has collaborated with a range of partners to create a 30-mile network of trails that ensure public access to conserved lands in the largest city in Maine and foster pedestrian connectivity within a rapidly urbanizing landscape. In 2008, PT engaged stakeholders throughout the region to plan an expanded trail system creating connectivity between Portland and the neighboring communities of Falmouth, Westbrook and South Portland.

Defining Regional Landscape Conservation in Maine

Characteristics of a Replicable Model

According to pioneering landscape ecologist, Richard Forman, a landscape is “what one sees out the window of an airplane.” The geographic scale, conservation objectives and stakeholder dynamics of current regional efforts in Maine reflect the diversity of planning contexts statewide. Landscape-scale conservation initiatives are shaped by the natural resources, stakeholder priorities, political and socioeconomic conditions, and land tenure and development patterns of the respective region.⁹ These ecological or human qualities that link partners in collaboration are largely the circumstances that define focus regions for conservation in Maine.

In seeking to identify a replicable model from these myriad characteristics, the following definition employs a three-pronged framework advanced by James N. Levitt:

- 1) a regional system of interconnected qualities;
- 2) organized to achieve specific conservation objectives; and
- 3) a collaborative process.¹⁰

Landscape conservation initiatives in Maine seek to conserve a regional network of open space and shared natural resources for the ecological, economic and cultural values they provide through collaborative partnerships transcending political boundaries and organizational service areas.

Regional System of Interconnected Qualities

Regional conservation initiatives in Maine span the state from the Mount Agamenticus to the Sea collaboration in southern Maine to the Mahoosuc Initiative straddling the western border with New Hampshire, and eastward to Cobscook Bay and the Downeast Lakes in Washington County. The varying landscapes targeted by these initiatives are defined by interconnected ecological and human qualities that “hold the region together.”¹¹

Ecological qualities: The conservation of regionally shared ecosystems is a prevailing principle that guides landscape scale initiatives in the United States and across the globe.¹² In Maine, the preservation of wildlife habitat necessary to maintain biodiversity is an ecological characteristic that has shaped regional landscape conservation. The protection of surface waters and riparian areas at the watershed-scale is another regional model. Ecological properties transcend borders and create shared benefits that motivate regional stakeholders to collaborate for their conservation and stewardship.

Human qualities: Landscape conservation in Maine has also been initiated within regions defined by existing human economic patterns and transportation networks linking regional service centers with surrounding rural open space and working lands¹³. Integrating shared open space planning within these existing regional frameworks positions the “green infrastructure” of conserved lands and recreation corridors as one important asset within a comprehensive regional planning framework.¹⁴

⁹Perlman and Milder 2005.

¹⁰ Levitt 2004

¹¹ “Hold the region together” is a phrase that emerged in multiple interviews

¹² Low 2003, Kazmierski et al. 2004, Margules and Pressey 2000, Perlman and Milder 2005.

¹³ See Appendix I: Bangor Service Area Case Study; Appendix II: Sagadahoc Regional Rural Resource Initiative

¹⁴ Benedict and McMahon 2006

Green infrastructure planning within a region linked by interconnected human properties merging municipal land use planning with private, voluntary conservation can advance landscape conservation and stewardship by:

- Mitigating competition among land uses through unified planning for the siting of development and prioritization of open space¹⁵
- Minimizing redundant investments for infrastructure and amenities¹⁶
- Building on established and emerging relationships to enhance longterm regional collaboration

Scale: Land tenure and development patterns, and resulting conservation opportunities and threats, inform the scale of regional landscape conservation initiatives in Maine. Defining the scale of the focus region also entails striking a balance between going large enough to maximize conservation benefits while remaining small enough to keep effective collaboration, coordination and fundraising feasible.

In less-developed regions where there are fewer landowners but large tracts of land, larger regional focus areas reflect larger conservation opportunities.¹⁷ In more highly-developed regions where a mosaic of smaller parcels are held by multiple landowners, the smaller relative scale of regional conservation initiatives tend to reflect greater threats to open space, higher land values and greater staff requirements to identify willing landowners and execute land deals.¹⁸

How much conserved land is enough: The targeted quantity of land to be conserved within the defined landscape has generally been determined in Maine by the objectives identified during a collaborative planning process.¹⁹ Rather than targeting a set number of acres for conservation, benchmarks for measuring success and targeting investments are linked to ecological, recreational and cultural values as prioritized by partners and stakeholders on a case by case basis.

Objectives

Landscape initiatives seek to create a connected network of conserved lands that link lands affording ecological, economic and cultural benefits.

Ecological: The preservation of ecosystem services is an ecological objective for landscape conservation.²⁰ The protection of biodiversity

Principles of Conservation Network Design

Core blocks: large unfragmented zones providing key habitats for interior species, intact natural systems and valuable ecosystem services such as groundwater recharge and headwater stream protection

Sites: small conserved features that provide a place for native species, such as unique plant communities and vernal pools, and human activities including pocket parks, prime farm lands and unique scenic resources

Corridors: connectivity of natural systems is an important aspect of landscape health, and linear corridors connecting core zones help preserve biodiversity by facilitating the movement of animals and plants while providing outdoor recreation opportunities

Riparian areas: corridors adjacent to water bodies functioning to protect water resources, facilitate animal and plant migration and human recreation

- Mark A. Benedict & Edward T. McMahon
Green Infrastructure

¹⁵ Gustavo et al 2005, Benedict and McMahon 2006

¹⁶ Randolph 2004

¹⁷ See Appendix II: Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership

¹⁸ See Appendix II: Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Initiative

¹⁹ Benedict and McMahon 2006

²⁰ Perlman and Milder 2005

and watershed health are examples of ecosystem-based goals. Sound ecological data and information, such as that provided by Maine’s Beginning with Habitat program, is essential for designing a regional network of conserved lands.

Economic: Recreational tourism development strategies and natural resource-based industries can compliment ecological priorities within landscape-scale conservation efforts when addressed during the planning stages. Maine’s expansive forest lands, productive farmlands, pristine rivers and ponds, and scenic vistas offer a cornerstone for future economic development.²¹ Public access to conserved lands has been an organizing objective of regional conservation initiatives in Maine to date.

Integrating landscape conservation with economic objectives will require investments in infrastructure facilitating public access and awareness.²² Expanded recreational trails, amenities and signage information in Maine’s remote rim counties will be essential to making the state a truly world-class tourist destination.²³ The conservation of recreational corridors in proximity to southern Maine service centers will help protect and enhance the quality of place identified by the Brookings Institution as Maine’s chief competitive advantage in the national and global economy.

The conservation of working forestlands, farmlands and waterfronts that underpin forest-products, farming and fishing employment in Maine is another objective of regional landscape conservation. These priorities demonstrate that natural resource conservation and economic vitality are closely linked in Maine and that natural resource-based industries, along with abundant wildlife and outdoor recreation, remain a defining characteristic of the state’s brand and cultural heritage.²⁴

Cultural: Mainers have a historic and ongoing connection to the land.²⁵ Maine’s rural character and traditions of public access to private lands and natural resource-based employment have shaped the state’s culture and attracted visiting tourists for generations. Maine’s village centers historically developed as compact downtowns dispersed among the state’s rural landscapes. The sharp contrast between the state’s traditional downtowns and rural open spaces was described by the Brookings Institution as the state’s “alluring brand.” Strengthening the vitality of Maine’s downtowns will enhance opportunities to conserve rural open space. Landscape-scale conservation initiatives help

Cobscook Trails

Cobscook Trails is a cooperative project of conservation landowners and community partners to expand opportunities for nature-based recreation and tourism in eastern Washington County. It began in 1996 and has been coordinated by the Quoddy Regional Land Trust since 1997 (*See Cobscook Bay, Appendix III*).

Cobscook Trails partners include Quoddy Regional Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Department of Conservation – Bureau of Parks and Lands, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, and 34 local sponsoring businesses, 14 organizations and five individuals.

The project has two main elements: the trail guide, and the trail maintenance and conservation activities of the Cobscook Trails Steward and supporting volunteers.

From: *Cobscook Trails: A guide to walking opportunities around the Cobscook Bay and Bold Coast Region*

²¹ Fermata, Inc. 2005, Brookings Institution 2006, Governor’s Task Force on Maine’s Quality of Place 2007

²² Governor’s Task Force on Maine’s Quality of Place 2007

²³ Vail 2007

²⁴ Brookings Institution 2006, See Appendix I: Mahoosuc Initiative

²⁵ Market Decisions 1989

preserve the unique relationships between Maine’s built and natural environments that are an enduring cultural attribute “important to the current and future economy.”²⁶

Collaborative Partnerships

Community-led landscape initiatives that celebrate Maine’s cultural traditions increase opportunities to foster regional consensus and successfully protect and manage a network of conservation lands for ecological and economic benefits. Successful regional partnerships in Maine recognize the need to engage local residents and decision-makers as key contributors in the formulation of conservation goals and implementation strategies.

Maine is a “home rule” state with land use controls largely vested at the municipal level. The Land Use Regulation Commission serves as the land use regulatory authority over Maine’s townships, plantations and unorganized territories,²⁷ which provide unique natural assets and conservation opportunities. Successful landscape-scale conservation initiatives are thus dependent on productive partnerships across municipal and regulatory jurisdictions and organizational service areas. Regional partnerships are well-positioned to raise public awareness and support, recruit significant human resources and diverse organizational expertise, and leverage funding from public and private sources to execute regional strategies.²⁸

Heritage Area Model

The Heritage Area model for regional conservation, economic development, and marketing links conserved landscapes and built environments into a cohesive regional brand that integrates natural, cultural and historical qualities. Creation and management of a heritage area can facilitate broad partnerships between the private and public sectors.

From Maine’s coastal communities to the Northern Forest, the state enjoys an abundance of recognized heritage assets.

“Native American crafts and lore, Benedict Arnold’s Revolutionary War expedition, Thoreau’s wilderness sojourns, the intermingling of Franco and Anglo-American cultures, and the stories and places surrounding the forest industry (Paul Bunyan mythology, lumber camps, river drives, mill towns carved from the forest). From Norway to New Sweden, the region is also dotted with fascinating 19th century towns. And the heritage area could extend to nearby metropolitan areas: the classic mill towns of Lewiston-Auburn and the world capital of the 19th century lumber industry, Bangor.”

- David Vail
Tourism Strategy for the North Woods

“Any inhabited landscape is a medium of communication.”

- Kevin Lynch
Managing the Sense of a Region

Regional partnerships in Maine largely consist of independent organizations that collaborate to leverage resources in the portions of their service area that overlap with other partners. Collaborative planning assists regional partners to target investments for shared priorities that maximize conservation benefits. Independent partners must also sustain their conservation activities and unique identity throughout the remainder of their service area. Thus, in addition to shared natural resources and conservation objectives, regional focus areas are limited to a scale at which reaching consensus remains feasible and collective planning affords shared benefits.

²⁶ Brookings Institution 2006

²⁷ Land Use Regulation Commission: www.state.me.us/doc/lurc

²⁸ Randolph 2004

To date, landscape-scale conservation initiatives in Maine have focused on voluntary conservation involving willing landowners. Partnerships have been weighted towards traditional natural resource stakeholders, including land trusts, statewide non-governmental conservation organizations, and state and federal agencies. Proactive municipal land use planning, regulation and incentives utilized in concert with voluntary conservation will advance broader implementation of landscape conservation.

Looking forward, integrating landscape conservation within broader regional asset-based strategies provides the opportunity to expand the constituency and deepen the pool of resources for conservation.²⁹ Regional Quality of Place Councils structured to include representation of the various stakeholders for regional asset based development could provide such a vehicle.³⁰

Land for Maine's Future State Support for Regional Landscape Conservation

As part of the 2007 Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Bond, the Maine Legislature specifically directed the LMF Board to give preference "to acquisitions ... that achieve benefits for multiple towns and that address regional conservation needs including public recreational access, wildlife, open space or farmland."

The concept of regional significance is pervasive throughout LMF scoring system. Increasingly the Board has tied its evaluation of regional significance to independent regional planning and resource assessment efforts. In addition, projects that form critical links to larger (landscape) conservation efforts are recognized for that contribution. More recently, the Board has begun to consider the potential economic benefits of land conservation projects.

The 2007 LMF Proposal Workbook requires applicants for funding to demonstrate how the applicant is affirmatively working to connect the proposed project to larger local and regional (multi-town) conservation efforts. Opportunities for proposed projects to achieve preference by LMF include promoting connectivity between conservation lands and expanding a contiguous conservation area or supporting conservation goals identified in an approved town comprehensive plan.

²⁹ Levitt 2005

³⁰ Office of the Governor 2008, Governor's Task Force on Maine's Quality of Place 2007, Ibid 2008

Best Practices

The following best practices are offered as a synthesis of insights and lessons shared by participants in regional landscape conservation initiatives in Maine over the last two decades. The best practices are organized by six phases of regional initiatives: vision, collaboration, planning, outreach, implementation and management. These phases are not necessarily chronological: the participants of landscape conservation interviewed for this report suggest that regional initiatives go through many iterations with multiple tasks undertaken simultaneously. Due to the varied ecological, social, political and economic characteristics of each region, the practices are designed to be broad in nature, allowing replication in differing planning contexts.

Vision

1. Engage a diversity of stakeholders representing varied constituencies, perspectives and organizational capacities when creating a regional conservation vision.

Participants representing varied perspectives, specialized knowledge and regional constituencies can strengthen the respective vision for landscape conservation initiatives and increase the likelihood of gaining public support through the implementation phase. Participation by interest groups not traditionally associated with conservation demonstrates broad buy-in for regional conservation planning. The participants in landscape conservation initiatives interviewed for this report suggest that a proactive and personalized approach is essential to recruit the diverse perspectives and organizational assets necessary for success.

While traditional conservation groups and land managers have demonstrated a willingness to participate in regional collaborations, other important constituencies, such as the business and economic development community, require more convincing. Direct personal invitations and presentations to town select boards, planning commissions and the leaders of chambers of commerce and other community organizations are proactive strategies for recruiting partners. Personalized approaches entail initiating a dialogue to understand the motivations of potential partners, or opponents, and how values shape their view on conservation.

Diversity in participation can lead to a stronger vision and partnership, but it can also result in less harmony among partners. While participants in regional conservation initiatives in Maine generally expressed support for large and diverse collaborations, they identified a need to carefully assess potential partners for their ability to work together respectfully, and to balance inclusiveness with efficient decision-making.

2. Invest the necessary time and resources early on to create a clearly defined, consensus-driven vision.

Participants in regional conservation partnerships in Maine find that a clearly defined vision is an important foundation for effective collaboration. While reaching consensus can be time-consuming and require concessions among partners, the collaborative process of establishing a shared vision is an important early exercise that provides an organizing focus for future action. The resulting vision statement becomes an important tool for public outreach during later phases of the initiative. A vision that includes economic and cultural objectives, in addition to conservation goals, helps to broaden public support during the early phases of the initiative. Integrating an economic theme,

such as the preservation of the working forests and farms that support natural resource-based livelihoods, helps to achieve buy-in from stakeholders beyond the traditional conservation community. Articulating cultural goals, such as preserving the region’s rural character and public access for outdoor recreation, helps demonstrate that conservation partnerships seek to preserve the open space and scenic views that underpin these cultural assets.

The process of reaching consensus on a shared vision fosters trust and creates a common vocabulary for articulating shared goals. In order for the visioning process to be productive, champions for regional conservation must seek a range of opinions and be genuinely prepared to listen to and incorporate the ideas, concerns and hopes of all stakeholders. Based on the experiences of participants in regional initiatives, it can be helpful to actively engage individuals or organizations with a history of opposing conservation during the early visioning phase in the hopes of avoiding stronger opposition during later stages of the effort.

During challenging times, the vision, and the participatory process that engendered it, can serve as a touchstone, reminding partners to focus on the big picture of shared natural resources and conservation goals that inspired and shaped the collaborative partnership.

Role of Local Land Trusts

Land trusts play an important role as local champions for regional landscape conservation initiatives in Maine. As residents of the region, land trust staff and volunteers possess knowledge of the local landscape, and they often have established relationships with decision-makers and community leaders that assist regional collaborations in overcoming public opposition and political inertia. This local knowledge is also useful in identifying and building trust with willing landowners to execute voluntary conservation.

Land trusts are well positioned to:

- Provide unique knowledge of the landscape’s resources and treasured places
- Mobilize local support through existing social relationships and networks
- Identify and cultivate willing private landowners for voluntary conservation
- Raise funds for conservation from private foundations, individual donors and state and federal agencies
- Acquire and manage conservation lands and establish easements on private parcels from willing sellers
- Recruit and coordinate local volunteers to monitor and steward conservation lands
- Represent conservation interests in local town comprehensive planning processes

Collaboration

3. Designate a clear organizational structure, including an entity responsible for sustaining coordination and momentum among partners.

Effective collaboration is a hallmark of successful regional initiatives. An organizational structure that clearly defines the role of participating organizations and identifies the tasks to be accomplished helps maximize the attributes and assets of each partner while enhancing overall efficiency. The designation of an organization or individual charged with coordinating the collective effort and the identification of funding and resources to sustain the coordinator’s participation over the long-term, helps to maintain cohesion and momentum for the effort.

Landscape initiatives in Maine largely consist of a collaboration of independent organizations that play to the strengths of each partner. Individual organizations capitalize on established identities and existing relationships within their respective service area to identify willing landowners and navigate the politics surrounding local land use. By linking their work to a broader landscape, each partner benefits from the additional capacity of other organizations to increase conservation benefits.

Designating committees, in which sub-groups within the broader regional effort take the lead on specific tasks, has been a common and effective organizational structure for regional collaborations. Topical committees organized by tasks allow partner organizations to utilize existing strengths and contribute most meaningfully to the broader effort.

Coordination between participating organizations and committees is an important component of effective collaboration. Regional initiatives often designate an entity or individual to provide this service. The coordinator ensures that lines of communication remain open among partners and emphasizes deadlines. A coordinator who is able to attend to daily operational details while recognizing and enhancing collaborative synergies throughout the region is a valuable asset to landscape conservation initiatives. Earmarking funding to support the coordinator's time prevents gaps in staff capacity and the resulting loss of momentum.

4. Create time to have fun and build personal relationships.

Staff and volunteers engaged in regional conservation initiatives are often drawn to the work because they are passionate about the landscape. The scope of work and daily demands, however, can push organizations and individuals to the brink of burn-out. Providing time to build personal relationships and to have fun helps sustain the cohesive action and energy of the partnership.

A sense of fun enhances collaborations by broadening the foundation of personal relationships, allowing individual partners to disagree respectfully during challenging times and resolve conflicts toward consensus. By developing personal relationships, partners better understand each other's values and motivations. Each partner is thus better able to anticipate the opinions and preferred strategies of others, and to avoid strong positions that will create friction.

Shared meals and potluck dinners have been one way for participants in landscape initiatives in Maine to get to know and enjoy each other outside the work environment. Celebrating conservation victories allows the participants to view their hard work through the lens of success. Taking time to visit the landscape and enjoy the woods and waters that inspired their conservation efforts are important ways identified by staff and volunteers to have fun, rejuvenate and remember the importance of their work.

Planning

5. Identify the assets and skills of participating organizations, and plan to fill capacity gaps with outside consultants where needed.

Regional landscape conservation initiatives require diverse talents of paid staff and volunteers, varied technical and planning expertise, strategic outreach to cultivate public awareness and support, and funding from multiple sources. Recognizing the unique strengths of participating partners helps to

determine the best role for individuals or organizations within the collaborative effort, and identifies additional skills that will be required for a successful regional initiative.

Some regional initiatives in Maine have found it beneficial to articulate the various roles and responsibilities of partner organizations in a formal document, or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). While not a replacement for trust and solid working relationships among organizations, an MOU fosters clear understanding and accountability, and provides a framework for continuity in case of staff turnover during the course of the partnership.

The foresight to recognize specific needs for additional expertise, and to effectively secure it, has contributed to the success of various landscape initiatives in Maine. To obtain needed technical skills, partnerships have invested precious funds to hire consultants or additional staff. Consultants are often retained to execute specific tasks related to natural resource inventories, planning processes and GIS mapping, fundraising, and negotiating with landowners.

6. Inventory and analyze ecological resources when determining conservation priorities, taking advantage of existing information and data where available.

Analysis of the region's natural resources and ecological assets provides a foundation for informed conservation planning. Participants in landscape-scale initiatives in Maine have found that

Beginning with Habitat

Beginning with Habitat is a conservation planning resource administered by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to assist local towns and regional conservation partnerships in identifying wildlife and plant conservation needs and opportunities at the landscape scale. The goal of the program is to provide each Maine town with a collection of maps and accompanying information depicting and describing various habitats of statewide and national significance found in the town. These maps consolidate ecological data from various state and federal natural resource agencies and provide key information in a user-friendly format to foster conservation of habitats sufficient to support all native plant and animal species currently breeding in Maine.

To assist town planners, elected officials and conservation organizations build a system of interconnected and conserved lands, the Beginning with Habitat program provides habitat data and conservation recommendations in three primary areas: riparian habitats, high value plant and animal habitats including rare or exemplary natural communities, and large habitat blocks.

Recent research demonstrates that the Beginning with Habitat (BwH) program is creating benefits. Kartez and Casto found that BwH successfully informed resource protection policies during comprehensive planning processes among a majority towns surveyed in 2004. The authors also found that the greater the number of policymakers and stakeholders who have access to BwH data, the greater the influence of the natural resource information on comprehensive plans.

For more information visit: www.beginningwithhabitat.org

resource inventories documenting the presence and status of wildlife species, rare plant communities, water resources and prime agricultural soils, for example, help prioritize parcels within a designed network of conservation lands. Resource inventories also provide tangible details that illustrate the region's unique character and make a compelling case for support to potential partners and funders.

State and federal agencies and conservation organizations have compiled ecological data for many regions

in Maine. Regional collaborations take advantage of these resources to identify ecological priorities for conservation investments. Utilizing Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping technologies to overlay data layers with the locations of large habitat blocks, priority watersheds, unique ecological communities, forest resources and productive agricultural soils is a common approach for identifying parcels of highest conservation value.

Where resource inventories are lacking, retaining a consultant or knowledgeable staff to prepare an analysis will often provide a sound return in the form of better planning and broader support. Documentation of ecological and natural resources provides an objective foundation that, when integrated with community priorities, guides design for a network of conservation lands.

7. Solicit public input and include community priorities for cultural, recreation and scenic resources when determining conservation goals.

Successful regional initiatives seek public input when establishing priorities for conservation, particularly related to prized scenic, cultural, historic and recreation lands. Participants in landscape conservation efforts interviewed for this report indicate that local policymakers often appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback during the planning stages. Incorporating the ideas and goals of policymakers and the public is often a significant step in generating greater trust and support from local communities within the respective region, and increases the likelihood of successful implementation.

Regional initiatives employ both traditional and innovative approaches to soliciting direct public input. A common practice is to publicize and host public meetings at which local residents share ideas and identify special locations, such as an informal trail, swimming hole or favorite scenic view. Distributing surveys through the mail or at local festivals and events are a tool for capturing input. Engaging local residents and youth through the creative arts by sponsoring an art contest within the region, or asking school groups to paint or draw their favorite places, is an innovative way to capture the priorities of diverse age groups and generate awareness for landscape conservation.

Role of Statewide and National Conservation Organizations

Statewide and national conservation organizations in Maine contribute professional expertise and organizational capacity to regional landscape conservation initiatives in the state. Maine Coast Heritage Trust, The Nature Conservancy, the Forest Society of Maine and The Trust for Public Land offer invaluable experience to assist local partners in strategic conservation planning processes and public outreach campaigns. Statewide and national organizations are experienced in negotiating with willing landowners and leveraging funds from multiple sources to execute a variety of conservation strategies.

Where interests converge, statewide conservation organizations are well positioned to:

- Integrate the efforts of local champions in a broader regional scope
- Provide and draw from existing ecological inventories of regional resources
- Assist during negotiations with private landowners
- Contribute expertise in a variety of voluntary conservation tools including fee acquisition, easements, and public education
- Identify and leverage monies from local sources, private foundations, and state and federal agencies

Presentations to local select boards are also a common tactic in Maine for engaging municipal leaders. Participatory use of GIS, where community priorities are displayed in relation to ecological data on a base map, is an innovative approach to merging ecological and community priorities applied by regional initiatives in Maine. Another method of integrating community priorities in the design of a regional conservation network is to proactively recruit partner organizations that have strong links to constituencies within the region.

Outreach

8. Establish a concise identity to clearly and consistently communicate the scope and vision of the project.

Regional conservation partnerships must compete with a variety of worthwhile public initiatives for the attention and support of potential partners, funders, municipal decision-makers, media and the general public. The large scale of landscape conservation initiatives, and the distinctive natural features that often help define it, provides an engaging vision that differentiates regional collaborations from the activities of individual organizations. A concise and comprehensible name that captures the partnership's vision and identity enables repetition of a compelling message to enhance awareness within the region and across Maine.

Landscape initiatives unite partners representing various constituencies, service areas and organizational attributes. A descriptive project name that can be quickly grasped and intuitively understood by a broad spectrum of the general population is an important tool for creating an identity for the respective landscape conservation initiative. An effective identity conveys the linkages between the various service areas and the grand scale of the conservation activities.

When a diversity of organizations and stakeholders communicate a united message through multiple media and with many voices across the region, it conveys broad support for regional conservation that helps capture funding, media coverage and public buy-in.

9. Utilize existing social relationships and networks within the region to generate awareness and support.

When competing for the attention of regional stakeholders, the messenger can be just as important as the message. Different constituencies within a region harbor their own preconceived notions about conservation and differing vocabularies for describing their assumptions about the benefits, costs and tradeoffs of preserving open space. Existing social relationships and networks are a useful vehicle for generating awareness of a landscape initiative and for breaking down barriers to support among regional stakeholders and potential supporters.

People are often more receptive to ideas that come from their friends. Cultivating trusted community leaders to serve as ambassadors for landscape conservation is a productive approach identified by participants in regional initiatives for spreading awareness through social networks. Empowering supporters to host fundraising parties for friends at their private residences is a prominent example of this strategy in action.

Personal ambassadors for landscape conservation can also be an effective strategy for minimizing opposition from non-traditional conservation constituencies. Members of stakeholder groups share perspectives and vocabularies with their peers that are shaped by common experiences and goals. Using one frequent example, a local business leader who speaks the language of economic development can be an effective champion within the business community for conserving scenic resources and recreational lands.

Implementation

10. Employ a variety of conservation tools including fee acquisition, easements, regulation and public education.

A focus region often contains a mosaic of land uses, from expansive open space to working lands and undeveloped corridors between residential areas. Regional initiatives have employed a variety of conservation tools, including fee acquisition, regulation, easements and public education to integrate these varying landscape patches into a network of public and private conservation lands. The conservation strategy employed for each parcel should be tailored to the priorities and conservation opportunity afforded by the landowner, ongoing management regime for the respective parcel, and proximity to sensitive ecological resources.

Role of Municipalities

Proactive land use planning at the town level is the central regulatory tool in Maine for preventing the sprawling development patterns that fragment rural landscapes. Town select boards, planning boards and comprehensive planning committees are legally enabled to direct commercial and residential development to protect natural resources and open space. Collaborative regional open space planning among neighboring towns helps identify and preserve large habitat blocks and corridors that straddle municipal boundaries, while minimizing redundant investments in infrastructure.

Town governments are positioned to:

- Integrate municipal open space planning with strategic conservation goals established by local land trusts and regional and state partners
- Establish a conservation commission to advance open space planning and inform town review of proposed development
- Adopt regulations and levy impact fees to minimize development occurring away from existing infrastructure and outside designated growth areas
- Offer incentives for development clustered near existing infrastructure and away from sensitive ecological resources
- Appropriate funds to support land acquisition and conservation easements on private lands
- Adopt property tax policies that conserve open space and working lands.

Large land tracts with high ecological and recreational values and willing landowners can be prioritized for fee acquisition. Municipal land use regulations, such as natural resource protection zoning, may be required for lands with high ecological values held by landowners unwilling to sell their holdings for conservation.

Working forest and agricultural lands are best suited for conservation easements that maintain open space and existing habitat values, while allowing traditional natural resource-based economic activities. Easements can be structured to stipulate sound management practices to preserve ecological values, such as sustainable rotational

harvest for timber lands to maintain wildlife habitat values, or buffer strips in riparian areas to mitigate agricultural runoff to adjacent surface waters.

Public education campaigns can motivate and assist private landowners and the general public to voluntarily protect the natural resources of the regional focus area. Best management practices for controlling polluted runoff in priority watersheds or residential shoreland zones is an example of strategic outreach. Another common educational goal is to foster a stewardship ethic in local youth. Regional initiatives in Maine have partnered with nature centers and other educational entities to deliver hands-on conservation lessons in an outdoor setting.

11. Treat landowners with respect

Regional conservation initiatives in Maine to date have largely focused on voluntary conservation through fee acquisition or easement with a willing landowner. Positive relations between conservation entities and private landowners are therefore essential to achieving conservation at the landscape scale.

Participants in landscape initiatives find that respecting the economic interests of landowners and recognizing that landowners have a significant financial stake in their properties is crucial when initiating a dialogue about conservation. Landowners in Maine who are “land rich” and “cash poor” are not uncommon. While some landowners will sell land at a reduced value for conservation, it is assumed that conservation organizations should anticipate paying fair market value as a starting point for negotiations with landowners.

Many participants stated during interviews that landowners communicate with their neighbors and other landowners through informal social networks. One unfortunate episode or bad experience can undermine relations and conservation opportunities throughout the region. Meeting landowners on their own terms with a patient, thoughtful approach to relationship building is a good way for regional conservation partnerships to develop a reputation of integrity. Having a trusted peer of the landowner initiate the dialogue about conservation can also break down barriers.

12. Establish phases and benchmarks during implementation, allowing pauses for evaluation and celebration of successes.

Landscape scale initiatives can take years, or even decades, to plan and execute. Strategies, priorities, and even the partners involved, can change over time as conservation threats and opportunities emerge. Regional planning and implementation phases often go through multiple iterations as collaborators adapt to changing conservation contexts. Participants in regional initiatives in Maine have found that periodic pauses to evaluate the effectiveness of current strategies, maintain cohesive collaboration among partners, and reflect on and celebrate collective successes are important.

Establishing project phases clearly linked to organizational and conservation objectives identified during the planning process creates a natural timeframe for evaluation. Periodic assessments are

important to measure the success of the partnership's actions, maintain common understandings and efficient teamwork among partners, ensure that investments of human and financial resources are aligned with the original vision, and adapt strategies to increase effectiveness.

The permanent conservation of special places within a regional open space network requires a unique combination of skill, perseverance and opportunity. Taking time to celebrate milestone achievements, and the value they afford to future generations, is not only worthwhile for its own sake, but also helps to renew the energies of staff and volunteers. Public events that celebrate conservation victories raise awareness for the initiative and can attract new volunteers and supporters.

Management

13. Include long-term stewardship and enhancement of conserved lands during the early planning phases and subsequent capital campaigns.

The preservation of a regional network of permanently conserved lands requires one set of individual talents and organizational capacities, and the stewardship and enhancement of that network for ecological and recreational values requires additional skills and resources. The identification of long-term management objectives, and the organizations responsible for implementation, should be included in the initial planning process. Clear management goals assist regional collaborations in generating the financial and human resources necessary to steward ecological assets and construct appropriately sited trail infrastructure for recreational uses.

The ecological inventories that shape the design of a regional conservation network can also inform stewardship goals for wildlife habitat and ecosystem services. Stewardship goals should be linked to maintaining or enhancing the ecological values of the respective parcel within the network. Based on these goals, a management plan is established, needed resources calculated, and the organization best suited for implementation identified.

Role of State and Federal Agencies

State and federal natural resource agencies have established staff, planning frameworks and funding mechanisms to protect the habitat of endangered species, manage populations of game species, and preserve ecological resources such as wetlands, riparian areas and unique plant communities in Maine. These programs advance regional conservation initiatives when state and federal management objectives are integrated with regional conservation priorities.

State and Federal Agencies provide:

- Ecological data on habitat requirements and management techniques for keystone species
- Natural resource inventories
- Mapping and spatial analysis of valuable and sensitive natural resources
- Acquire and manage conservation lands and establish easements on private parcels from willing sellers
- Differentiated taxation that incentivized conservation on private land
- Funding streams and grant programs that award priority to regional collaborations

Ecological inventories and spatial analysis also inform the types of recreational uses that can coexist with sensitive natural resources, and the siting of trails and other infrastructure required to facilitate those uses. During the participatory planning process, participants should identify corridors that provide the best recreational experience and access to scenic resources without degrading sensitive ecosystem processes.

Capital campaign budgets should include needed resources for stewardship of conservation lands. Participants in regional initiatives in Maine have found that it is more challenging to generate management funds through additional requests to funders once the land is already conserved. Raising funds for an endowment to provide a sustained yield of stewardship dollars is a solid long-term strategy for maintaining the ecological and recreational values on conserved lands.

14. Recruit volunteers to expand the capacity of the organization to monitor and enhance conservation lands.

In addition to fundraising during capital campaigns and establishing endowments, stewardship of ecological resources and maintenance and construction of recreational infrastructure requires sweat and blistered hands. Recruiting volunteers helps regional conservation partnerships meet their stewardship goals while providing residents with social opportunities and hands-on experiences that enhance the landscape they treasure.

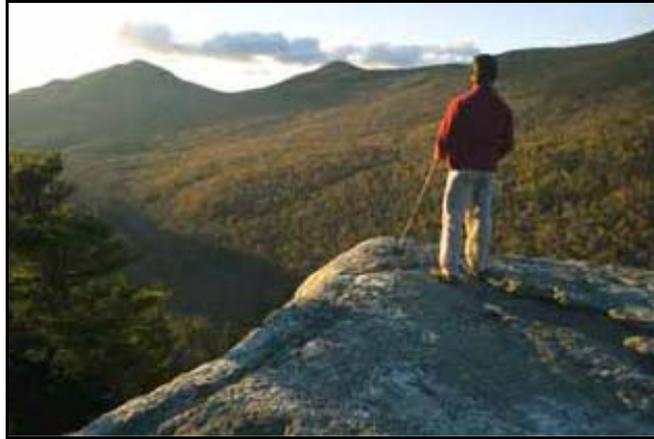
Volunteers within the region are an important resource for the management of ecological communities on conservation lands. With training, volunteers can gather baseline data on plant and wildlife species, monitor for invasive species infestations, and conduct water quality sampling. Over time, information gathered by volunteers can assist scientists in tracking ecological changes and health of the landscape.

Recreational users of conservation lands form a pool of willing labor to construct and maintain trail infrastructure. Trail design and construction requires expertise and materials, but volunteers have played an important role in expanding trail networks by providing sweat equity in regional efforts across Maine.

Providing volunteer opportunities builds the capacity of regional partnerships to meet their stewardship and management goals, and creates opportunities to get local people on the landscape where they will interact with the natural world. Facilitating rewarding volunteer opportunities thus empowers and attracts supporters for landscape conservation.

Appendix I: Case Studies

Mahoosuc Initiative



Introduction

The Mahoosuc Region, which straddles Oxford County's and Maine's western border with New Hampshire, is in transition like communities throughout the 26 million-acre northern forest. For generations, Mahoosuc residents could depend on a thriving timber industry to provide stable livelihoods and a traditional way of life that fostered strong connections to the region's rugged, forested landscape. Industrial timber companies owned extensive forest tracts with long term commitment to managing the land and providing public access for the region's residents.

Natural resource-based industries are still an important part of the economy in Oxford County, but have faced challenges over the last two decades following trends in the United States' forest products industry. The long-stable land base in the Mahoosucs is becoming fragmented and communities are seeking new strategies to revitalize local economies and stem the out-migration of the region's young people.

Despite these challenges, the Mahoosuc Region contains an abundance of ecological, recreational and cultural assets. The Mahoosuc Initiative is a collaborative partnership seeking to empower local communities to link landscape-scale conservation with economic development by preserving and promoting the region's quality of place.

The Mahoosuc Region

The regional focus area for the Mahoosuc Initiative encompasses approximately 600,000 acres straddling Oxford County's and Maine's western border with New Hampshire. The productive forestlands of the Mahoosuc Region and the headwaters of the Androscoggin River are defining natural features that cross the boundaries of 12 organized and nine unorganized towns.³¹ The abundant natural resources continue to define the culture and economy of the region as they have

³¹ Polak, List and Siegel 2007a

for two centuries, even as the region's residents have come to rely less on forestry employment and more on tourism and service industries.

Quality of Place: The Mahoosuc Region claims an abundance of natural assets from productive forest lands to a range of outdoor recreation opportunities and fish and wildlife species. The region's soils are ideal for producing a variety of both hardwood and softwood timber species, positioning the region as "a wood basket for northern New England and the nation."³² The Mahoosucs boast a wealth of hiking, skiing, and paddling opportunities that connect local residents to the landscape and attract tourists. In addition to fish and wildlife game species that draw hunters and anglers, the Mahoosuc Region provides habitat for 36 wildlife species identified as endangered, threatened or at risk.³³

Persistence of Traditional Timber Industry: Despite a downturn in the American timber industry and changing global markets, the forest-products industry remains an economic engine for the Mahoosuc Region. Coupled with the region's expanding outdoor tourism economies, natural resources play a central role in livelihoods of residents. According to Volume I of the *Mahoosuc Region Resources Report*, an analysis of the region's resources solicited by the Mahoosuc Initiative, "global and economic forces have caused a slow decline in the processing sector of the regional forestry industry, harvest volumes have actually spiked recently in Coos County, and have declined only slightly in Oxford County." The forest-products industry continues to employ approximately 22 percent of the work force in the Maine section of the Mahoosucs.³⁴

Growing Tourism Industry: Between 1969 and 2004, as the forest-products industry has declined from its traditional prominence, tourism-related employment in the Mahoosuc Region has more than doubled.³⁵ The Town of Bethel is a catalyst for this growth and serves as a gateway to many of the region's attractions. Tourism is a four-season endeavor in Oxford County, with skiing at Sunday River Resort during the winter and fishing, paddling, hiking and hunting during the remainder of the year.

Catalyst for Regional Approach

Since 1980, over 20 million acres of Maine's northern forest have changed ownership, much of it several times.³⁶ Across the northern forest there is a trend away from ownership of large forest tracts more supportive of biodiversity towards more forest owners with smaller parcel sizes, resulting in greater fragmentation of wildlife habitats.³⁷ Paralleling changing land tenure in the northern forest and the downturn of the American forest-products industries, fragmentation of timberland ownership has occurred in the Mahoosuc Region. These trends threaten the rural landscape that provide the foundation for the region's natural resource-based livelihoods and traditional way of life,³⁸ and the public access to outdoor recreation opportunities upon which the emerging tourism industry is based.³⁹

³² Ibid

³³ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

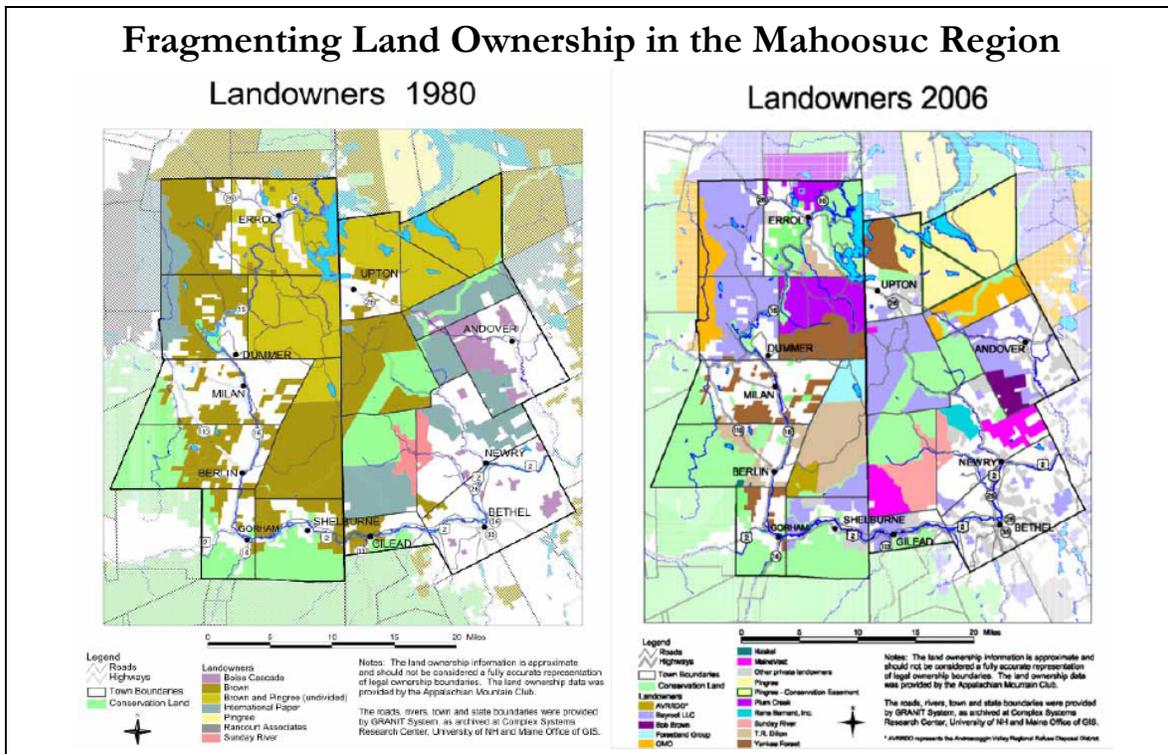
³⁶ Hagan, J.M., L.C. Irland, and A.A. Whitman. 2005

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Polak, List and Siegel 2007a

³⁹ Polak, List and Siegel 2007a

Changing Ownership of Forest Lands: The sale of 650,000 acres by MeadWestvaco in 2003 raised awareness among Mahoosuc residents about the dramatic shifts occurring in the land base, and the growing vulnerability to reduced public access coupled with increased residential development.⁴⁰ In many instances, forest lands that were once owned by industrial timber companies with a long-term economic interest in managing the land for sustained timber yields, and an established commitment to providing public access for recreation, are now owned by financial investors with shorter term management horizons and greater tendency towards parcel subdivision and large lot development of previously rural lands.



Changing Demographics: In addition to growing fragmentation of land ownership, the demographics of the Mahoosuc Region are changing. There is a trend of residents below the age of 64 leaving the region, with the greatest attrition among young people under the age of 19 years old, resulting in a declining work force.

The only age group that is increasing are individuals 65 years and older, raising the burden for increasing health care and service costs associated with an aging population.⁴¹ Relative newcomers and in-migrants to the Mahoosuc Region often are stronger supporters of permanent, formal conservation in contrast with native residents who have a greater tendency to favor private property rights and utilitarian land uses.

Conservation Synergies: The Mahoosuc Region contains and is located among state and federal conservation lands, and a variety of conservation organizations have been active in conserving lands with ecological, recreation and scenic values. Located to the north of White Mountain National

⁴⁰ Mitchell, J. personal communication, Appalachian Mountain Club 2006
⁴¹ Polak, List and Siegel 2007a

Forest, the Mahoosucs contain a popular stretch of the Appalachian Trail (AT) corridor and Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge. The Appalachian Mountain Club has been active in the region since the 1870s, while the Mahoosuc Land Trust,⁴² a local organization with strong community ties, has been actively conserving prized lands for nearly 20 years.⁴³ More recently, the Androscoggin River Watershed Council, The Trust for Public Land, The Conservation Fund, and the Northern Forest Alliance's member organizations—Appalachian Trail Conservancy and The Wilderness Society—have taken an active interest and invested resources in the Mahoosuc Region.

Many recent conservation efforts have been focused in proximity to the AT corridor and the creation of spur trails to increase recreation opportunities. A prime example, the Grafton Loop Trail, is a 42-mile long loop trail that will encompass portions of the AT in connection with trails in Maine's Grafton Notch State Park.

Collaboration

The Northern Forest Alliance coordinates the Mahoosuc Initiative (MI) in partnership with a steering committee of key partners and with support from an advisory board of regional stakeholders. Conservation partners have collaborated in the region for years and, more recently, have engaged local decision-makers and residents to identify strategic conservation priorities for preserving the region's traditional way of life. The Tri-County Community Action Community Action Program that serves New Hampshire's Coos County, the Northern White Mountains Chamber of Commerce, and the Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce participate as ambassadors to economic development constituencies for linking landscape-scale conservation with economic prosperity.

Leveraging Organizational Strengths: The Mahoosuc Land Trust is a local, grassroots organization that brings established relationships and local knowledge of natural assets and conservation opportunities.⁴⁴ State and national partners offer extensive organizational capacity for conservation planning, outreach and fundraising.⁴⁵

Committee Structure: The Northern Forest Alliance and its member organizations, Appalachian Mountain Club, Appalachian Trail Conservancy and The Wilderness Society, serves as coordinator for the Mahoosuc Initiative.⁴⁶ The MI has three committees: Outreach, projects, and public policy. Partner organizations are represented and participate on each committee to maintain effective communication and collaboration.

Public Participation: The MI seeks to facilitate community-lead approaches to regional conservation. An advisory board has been formed consisting of more than 30 representatives of local officials, business owners, and outdoor enthusiasts.⁴⁷ The Advisory Board is a network of community stakeholders that provide feedback on the partnership's activities and can assist in championing the effort in the region. To date, the Advisory Board largely consists of strong supporters of conservation and there is limited participation by a broad spectrum of regional residents with diverse viewpoints and goals.

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Mahoosuc Land Trust: www.mahoosuc.org

⁴⁴ Mitchell, J., Zinchuk, R. personal communication

⁴⁵ Mitchell, J. personal communication; Mahoosuc Initiative 2007

⁴⁶ Wentzell, B., Mitchell, J., Lea, F., personal communication

⁴⁷ Mahoosuc Initiative: www.mahoosucinfo.org

Outreach

The goal of actively engaging local residents and generating public support for a network of conserved lands was an important impetus for forming the MI.⁴⁸ To this end, the MI has prioritized local participation during the conservation planning process and invested significant time and resources to engage local residents and stakeholders. Involving stakeholders with diverse goals, however, is acknowledged as one of the most difficult aspects of gaining broad support. Though public input has been a top priority for the MI partners, one challenge to date is that outreach has largely engaged existing conservation allies.

Despite its proactive efforts, the MI has struggled to involve residents who are concerned that regional conservation efforts will hamper resource-based industries and traditional private property rights. As a result, consensus on the role of landscape-scale conservation as an important tool for preserving the quality of life and fostering economic development is yet to emerge. Looking forward, educational outreach that enhances broader understanding of the MI's objectives and the connection between landscape-scale conservation and economic strategies will be important for expanding support from local residents.

Soliciting Public Input: The MI employed the innovative approach of gathering feedback on a Mahoosuc Region map. The public was asked to mark special areas on the map, which were compiled by the Center for Community Geographic Information Systems (CCGIS) in Farmington, Maine.

MI partner organizations proactively distributed the maps during early 2006 through “newsletters, emails, mailings, face to face conversations outside grocery stores, post offices, people’s living rooms, and at community events, we conducted mapping exercises with a diverse group of local residents that included loggers and wilderness advocates, hunters and hikers, snowmobilers and ATVers, anglers and birders, seniors and students, town residents and country folk.”⁴⁹ A mass mailing was also distributed by the Mahoosuc Land Trust and Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce.⁵⁰

Personal Relationships: In addition to proactive outreach to the general public, the MI and its partners utilized existing relationships and social networks to ensure that the opinions of key stakeholders were incorporated. Representatives of participating conservation organizations reached out to influential community members, while the region’s Chambers of Commerce reached out to business constituencies seeking input.⁵¹ This strategy will remain important as the MI seeks to foster broader understanding and support for community-led conservation that enhances the region’s quality of place and asset-based economic development.

Planning

The MI seeks to facilitate community-lead approaches to landscape scale conservation. The planning process to date generates information and planning tools to foster common understandings and collaborative approaches among the region’s town governments, non-profit organizations, and stakeholders. Participatory GIS mapping was employed to demonstrate community conservation

⁴⁸ Lea, F. personal communication

⁴⁹ Polak, List and Siegel 2007b

⁵⁰ bid

⁵¹ Polak, List and Siegel 2007a

priorities in relation to ecological and natural resource data. An extensive report, *Mahoosuc Region Resources Report*, compiles and analyzes the region's assets and opportunities for capitalizing on its quality of place.

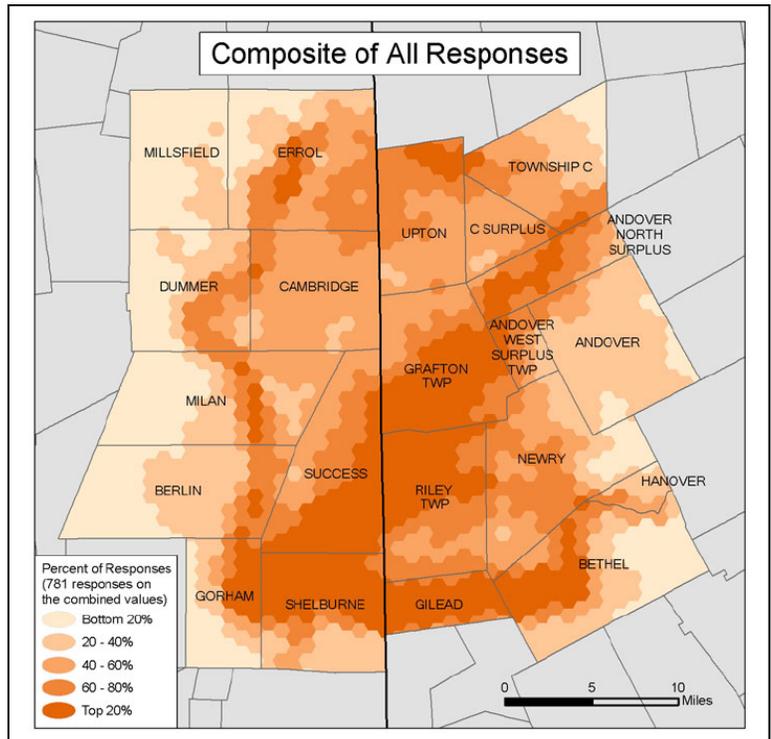
Participatory GIS: More than 1,500 regional maps were distributed throughout the Mahoosuc communities and 174 were returned with public comments.⁵² Community responses compiled by the CCGIS centered around five key themes: Regional heritage, open space, recreation, forestry and ecological resources.⁵³

Treasured community open spaces were compiled and depicted in the composite map at right. Conservation priorities centered around existing recreation trails in the Mahoosuc Range and the Androscoggin and Rapid River corridors.⁵⁴ Heritage priorities include long-established fishing camps along the region's waterways and the region's traditional village centers including Bethel.

Mahoosuc Region Resources Report:

In addition to the participatory GIS mapping, the MI collaboration contracted with consultants to produce a two-volume comprehensive planning document called the *Mahoosuc Region Resources Report*. The first volume, *Resource Values*, details the Mahoosuc Region's transitioning land uses, demographics and economic drivers.

The second volume, *Tools for Conservation and Community Development*, identifies planning resources and strategies that Mahoosuc communities can implement to enhance landscape conservation and sustainable economic vitality within a regional context. The *Mahoosuc Region Resources Report* will be an important tool to initiative collaborative planning amongst the region's municipalities, conservation organizations and economic development stakeholders.



Implementation

Building on earlier and ongoing conservation activities, the MI seeks to implement a community-driven vision for landscape-scale conservation that preserves the region's natural resources and fosters asset-driven economic development. The MI partnership will empower community engagement, strengthen natural resource-based economies and conserve and promote the region's quality of place assets.

⁵² Polak, List and Siegel 2007b

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Lea, F. personal communication

Empower Community Engagement: The rural towns of the Mahoosuc Region are largely managed by municipal staffs with limited planning and regulatory capacity.⁵⁵ Providing local communities in the region with the tools and information needed is a central goal of the MI. According to a grant proposal submitted by the MI, “Mahoosuc Initiative members will help to fill this gap and foster a sense of hope among local citizens that they are in control of their own futures.” The *Mahoosuc Region Resources Report* will be an important tool for advancing this implementation strategy.⁵⁶

**Downeast Lakes Land Trust’s
Farm Cove Community Forest**

The Farm Cove Community Forest consists of more than 27,000 acres adjacent to Grand Lake Stream and within the 342,000 acres of woods and waters conserved by the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership (*See Appendix II*). Farm Cove is owned and managed by the Downeast Lakes Land Trust (DLLT) as a community resource to provide sustained yields of timber and other natural resources, public access for residents and visitors, and habitat for a diversity of wildlife.

DLLT attained Forest Stewardship Council Forest Management certification from the Rainforest Alliance’s SmartWood program in 2007 by establishing a management plan that meets environmental, social and economic benchmarks. Under a permit system, local residents and crafts persons are allowed to harvest timber and gravel from Farm Cove to sustain traditional economic activities, including construction of the Grand Laker canoe, a unique symbol of the region’s cultural heritage.

In partnership with state resource agencies and the neighboring Passamaquoddy Tribes, DLLT is integrating long term stewardship of Farm Cove with landscape-scale management of ecological and habitat values.

Strengthen Natural Resource-Based Livelihoods: Working in partnership with local communities, the MI partners will proactively conserve productive and strategically located timber and agricultural lands that underpin natural resource-based economies. Planned initiatives toward this end include the “Community Wood Energy Pilot Project,” a community-scale biomass energy demonstration project that will source wood from local forest lands, and a “Local Wood Resource Guide” that will promote the purchase of local wood products for new construction of new homes and businesses within the region.⁵⁷

Conserve and Promote Quality of Place Assets: Building from the MI partner organization’s ongoing conservation work in the Mahoosucs, private parcels have been identified to add to the regional network of conservation lands, including five properties in Maine totaling more than 4,600 acres.

The properties will provide additional trail connectivity while protecting wildlife habitats and riparian areas. To promote the Mahoosuc Region’s recreation assets, the MI will create a “Scenic Driving Loop Map” and “Outdoor Recreation Resource Guide” in partnership with the region’s chambers of commerce, local businesses and conservation landowners.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Ibid

⁵⁶ Mahoosuc Initiative 2007

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Ibid

Management

The in-migration of new residents and tourists seeking natural amenities and services offers opportunities for local communities to capitalize on the Mahoosuc Region's quality of place. The promotion of recreational and scenic resources and creation of infrastructure to facilitate public access is an essential component for this economic development strategy. Building from existing hiking and water trail networks, the Mahoosuc Initiative's approach seeks to link landscape conservation with economic development. Following are a few examples of initiatives currently underway.

Androscoggin River Trail: Capitalizing on increasing water quality in the Upper Androscoggin River and using grant funds from the National Park Service,⁵⁹ the Mahoosuc Land Trust created the Androscoggin River Trail in 2001 in collaboration with the Androscoggin River Watershed Council, the towns of Shelburne, Gilead, Bethel, Newry, Hanover, Rumford, and the Maine Department of Conservation.⁶⁰ The trail offers access points at five-mile intervals and the Mahoosuc Land Trust has produced a trail guide to promote the water trail and facilitate its use by both residents and visitors to the region.

Bethel Trails: In contrast to the demanding paths that traverse the rugged Mahoosuc range, a network of trails is under development, linking the Bethel village center to surrounding natural amenities. The Mahoosuc Land Trust coordinates the Bethel Area Trails Committee, a partnership of local business owners, the Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce and local residents, that is working to provide recreation opportunities in the gateway community. According to the *Mahoosuc Region Resources Report*, "In the future, some these town trails may be connected to the more ambitious mountain trails. In the meantime, village trails are a critical amenity for local people and allow visitors who stay in the many lodgings to take a leisurely walk in town."⁶¹

Upper Andro Anglers Alliance: Game fish, including brook, brown and rainbow trout, have made a strong comeback in the Upper Androscoggin thanks to improving water quality and stocking efforts by the Maine Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.⁶² The Upper Andro Anglers Alliance is a collaboration of local business owners and the Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce to promote the river as a destination for anglers and outdoor tourism. The organization is currently focusing its efforts on marketing the trophy-size trout available in the river and providing information on public access points.⁶³

Maine Huts and Trails: The Maine Huts and Trails project will create a 180-mile recreation corridor linking Bethel with Moosehead Lake. The trail system will create opportunities for hiking, biking, and skiing. Huts along the trail will provide rustic lodging for recreational users including meals, beds, and showers. This unique resource will preserve some of Western Maine's best backcountry for the purposes of conservation and environmentally sensitive economic development, and ensure public access for generations to come.⁶⁴ The Land for Maine's Future Board has provided support for the project, clearly signaling its interest in future projects which have clear ties to economic development planning efforts.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Mitchell, J. personal communication

⁶⁰ Mahoosuc Land Trust: www.mahoosuc.org

⁶¹ Polak, List and Siegel 2007a

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Pich, Wendy. Comments made on August 24 *Wild Fire* television show.

⁶⁴ Maine Trails and Huts: www.mainehuts.org

⁶⁵ Glidden, T. personal communication

Central Penobscot Regional Greenprint



Introduction

When asked during the early visioning stages of the Central Penobscot Regional Greenprint what the 12 towns of Bangor, Bradley, Brewer, Eddington, Hampden, Hermon, Holden, Milford, Old Town, Orono, Orrington and Veazie had in common, a local official answered, “mutual suspicion.”⁶⁶ The official’s answer sums up the current challenges for regional planning in Maine, a state where land use decisions are guided by local autonomy and “home rule” traditions.

In spite of local reservations, the 12 towns are currently engaged in a collaborative planning process to identify open space priorities within a region that is rich in natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities. From the Orono Land Trust’s founding in 1986 to the City of Bangor’s decision to develop an open space plan in 2006, threats have emerged to the region’s forests, bogs and streams and residents have taken action to conserve locally treasured resources and quality of life. The Central Penobscot Regional Greenprint (CPRG) represents the latest stage of evolving conservation collaborations and regional planning synergies in the Bangor area.

The Central Penobscot Region

The landscape addressed by the CPRG initiative is a mosaic of urban and rural lands defined by the economic and transportation networks that link the region’s core service centers with open space in surrounding towns. Bangor and Brewer are located at the heart of the region and provide economic opportunities and essential services for residents throughout the region.

⁶⁶ Harriman 2008

Service Centers: The towns participating in the CPRG recognize Bangor, Brewer and Old Town as the regional hubs and largely fit within the Bangor Labor Market Area.⁶⁷ The urban towns provide employment, health care and social services, as well as educational and cultural opportunities.⁶⁸ These communities have local open spaces, including the 650-acre Bangor City Forest and conserved lands in the Penjawoc Marsh/Caribou Marsh in Bangor, and a network of community parks and forested riparian corridors. Bangor and Brewer are 44.8 percent and 31.5 percent developed respectively,⁶⁹ and municipal officials recognize the need to collaborate with neighboring towns to create a viable open space network to provide natural and recreational amenities and enhance quality of place.⁷⁰

Rural Open Space: The surrounding towns within the CPRG landscape provide scenic views, forest and agricultural lands, and existing recreational trails that contribute significantly to quality of life for residents of the region.⁷¹ The rural open spaces also provide important ecological values including habitat for a variety of wildlife and plant communities, watershed protection and working forest and agricultural lands.

Transportation networks: The service center and rural communities are linked together by roads, including I-95 and Routes 1-A, 222 and 2, the Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System, and, to some extent, trails.

Penobscot River: Since the mid-nineteenth century when Bangor was known as the Lumber Capitol of the World, the Penobscot River has been an important natural feature that shaped the settlement patterns and economic and cultural history of the landscape. The Penobscot is a shared resource that remains a unifying feature of the landscape.⁷²

Catalyst for Regional Approach

In 2006 the City of Bangor prepared to initiate an open space planning process in the context of development pressure and emerging regional conservation and planning synergies largely associated with land trusts in the region. To maximize open space benefits, Bangor's City Manager recognized the need to plan on a regional basis to link Bangor's open space with the scenic, recreational and ecological assets of the surrounding rural towns.⁷³ The Central Penobscot Regional Greenprint took shape within a network of established relationships and emerging opportunities to create shared benefits through regional collaboration.

Sprawling Service Center: Bangor's population has remained relatively stable over the last two decades, but development patterns are disproportionately consuming open space. Between 1982 and 1997, Bangor's population grew by 5.4 percent, while the conversion rate of land from rural to urbanized land was 46.9 percent. The result was a 28.3 percent reduction in density.⁷⁴ Between 2000 and 2006, Bangor's population is estimated to have declined by 1.5 percent while nine of the

⁶⁷ Noll, J. personal communication

⁶⁸ Trust for Public Land 2007a

⁶⁹ Trust for Public Land 2007b

⁷⁰ Barrett, E., personal communication

⁷¹ Trust for Public Land 2007a

⁷² Barrett, E. and Noll, J., personal communication

⁷³ Gooch, J., Quimby, L. personal communication

⁷⁴ Brookings Institution 2001

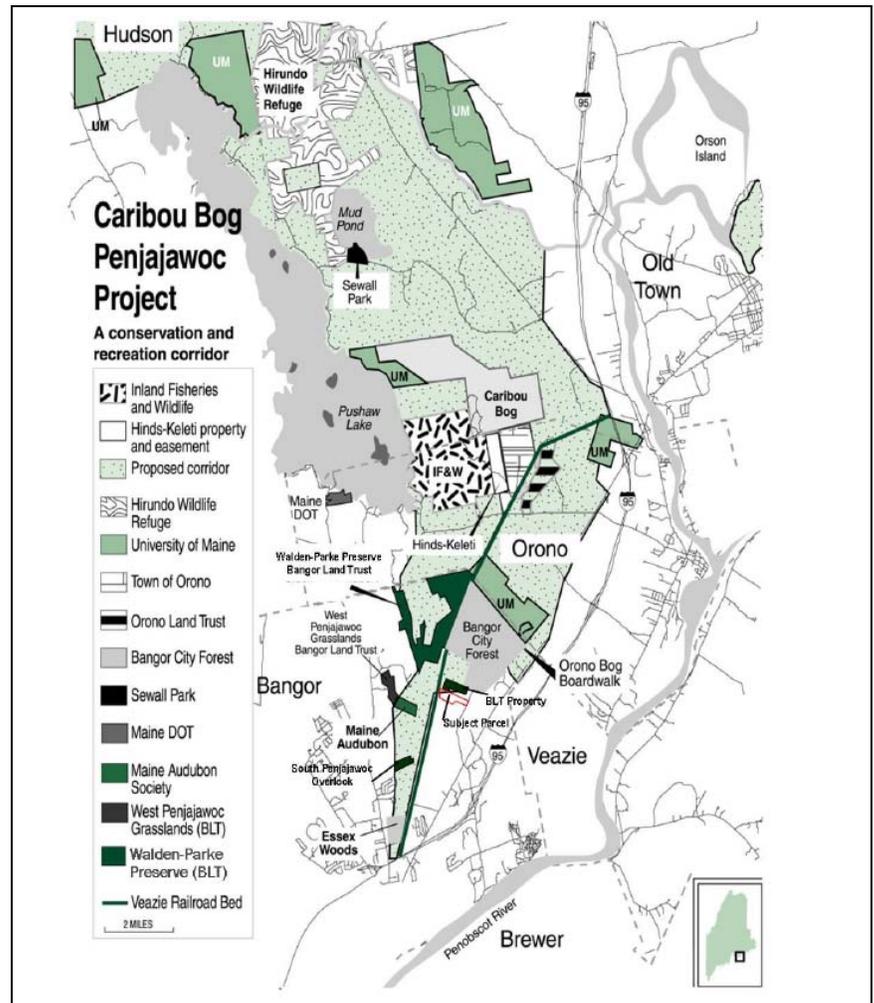
surrounding towns experienced population growth in a range from 2.7 percent in Orrington to 16.5 percent in Hermon.

Development Pressure: Around 2000, a controversial proposal to develop a large Wal-Mart franchise in proximity to the Bangor Mall and the sensitive Penjajawoc Marsh/Caribou Marsh threatened this wetlands complex. The proposal polarized development and conservation interests and became the catalyst that spurred discussions about the future of the region.⁷⁵

Conservation Collaborations:

The Orono Land Trust has focused on conserving the northern Caribou Bog –Penjajawoc Marsh complex⁷⁶ and trails in and around Orono for over 20 years.⁷⁷ The Wal-Mart proposal awakened conservationists in Bangor to the need for a proactive approach to conserve the area’s special places, and the Bangor Land Trust was subsequently founded in 2001.⁷⁸ Since that time, the Orono and Bangor land trusts, along with other partners and municipalities in the region, have leveraged two Land for Maine’s Future grants with additional funds to preserve 839 acres within Penjajawoc Marsh.⁷⁹

Simultaneously, the Lower Penobscot Watershed Coalition was formed as a collaborative partnership including conservation stakeholders and municipalities from the CPRG region. In recent years, the Penobscot River Restoration Partnership has captured national attention and federal funds to restore the ecological and habitat values of the river.



Penjajawoc Marsh –Bangor Mall Task Force: The dispute over proposed development near the Bangor Mall motivated the City of Bangor to create the Penjajawoc Marsh - Bangor Mall Task Force

⁷⁵ Quimby, L. personal communication
⁷⁶ Bangor Land Trust 2006
⁷⁷ Orono Land Trust: www.aronolandtrust.org/history.htm
⁷⁸ Quimby, L. personal communication
⁷⁹ Bangor Land Trust 2006

to resolve conflict between development and conservation interests.⁸⁰ The task force sought to formulate policies to prevent degradation of the bog-marsh complex while accommodating commercial development in the mall area.

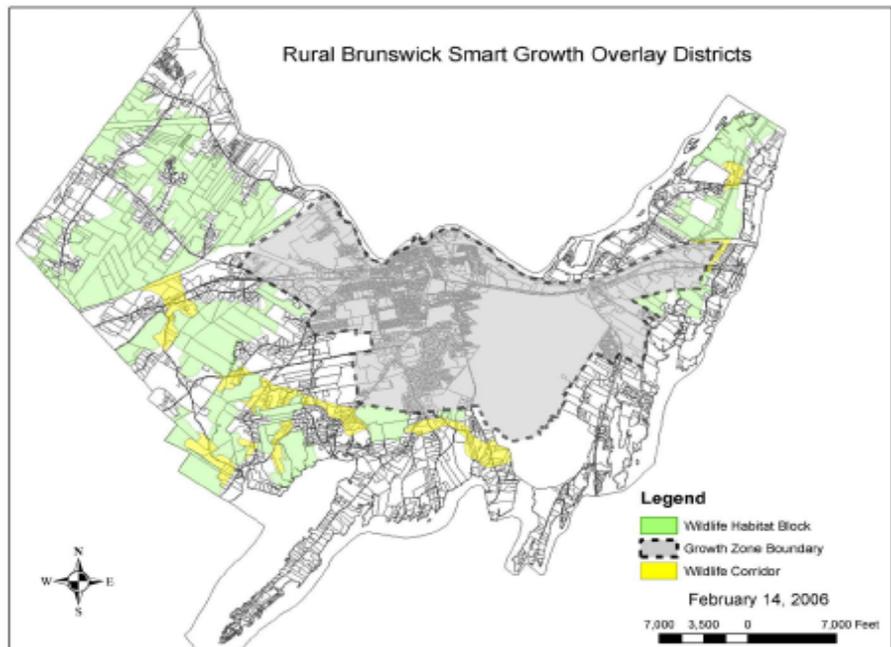
In 2005, the task force, reconstituted as the Penjajawoc Marsh – Bangor Mall Management Commission, reached consensus to establish a marsh overlay zone requiring minimum setbacks for new development to mitigate stormwater runoff entering the marsh complex and requiring that new residential development in the zone be “clustered” away from the marsh.⁸¹ The commission also established a mitigation fund where 25 percent of new real estate tax revenues from commercial development in the overlay zone will fund land conservation and water quality improvements over a ten year period.⁸²

Rural Brunswick Smart Growth Overlay Districts

Taking an innovative step to conserving existing open space, the Town of Brunswick adopted the Rural Brunswick Smart Growth Overlay Districts in March 2006 to create a tool for conserving continuous habitat blocks and naturally vegetated wildlife corridors linking the existing blocks. Habitat blocks of 150 acres were strategically identified because of “potential to be used by most if not all forest species that occur in eastern Cumberland County.”

Brunswick’s zoning ordinance amendment employs a density bonus incentive and mitigation requirement for lands developed for new buildings, subdivisions and supporting infrastructure. Bonuses are awarded for site plans that cluster development to minimize habitat disturbance within the overlay districts. Mitigation for development disturbance is achieved through the permanent protection of lands within the same continuous habitat block or corridor.

To support natural-resource based livelihoods and accommodate limited development, standard management practices for agriculture and forestry lands, and single family residential development on less than or equal to one acre, are exempt from the overlay district stipulations as are single family residential development on one acre or less.



⁸⁰ City of Bangor: www.bangormaine.gov/cc_planmarsh_pg.php

⁸¹ City of Bangor 2008

⁸² Penjajawoc Marsh- Bangor Mall Management Commission 2007

Precedent for Regional Planning: In 2002 while the controversy around the Bangor Mall – Penjajawoc Marsh was playing out, “. . . MDOT Commissioner John Melrose and Gov. Angus King decided that the greater Bangor region held the greatest potential for bringing together urban and rural communities to collaborate on implementing a regional plan, which would then serve as model for similar projects elsewhere in the state.”⁸³

As a result of that decision, a regional planning process was initiated, known as Penobscot Valley Prudent Investments Linking Our Towns (PV PILOT). PV PILOT, organized by the Eastern Maine Development Corporation and Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System and funded with federal transportation dollars, brought together 15 communities in the greater Bangor area. The regional partnership employed a participatory process to overcome isolated local town planning and identify shared priorities. The result was a consensus-driven list of strategies to integrate transportation investments and land use, setting a precedent for collaborative planning on a regional scale.⁸⁴

Collaboration

The collaborative organizational structure for the CPRG includes a steering committee that enables direct management by key partners, a larger stakeholder group to capitalize on existing conservation synergies and personal relationships in the region, and engagement of local residents to foster public support. The organizational structure is designed for equitable decision-making and efficiency of operations at the steering committee level, with oversight from the stakeholder committee and input from the general public.

Coordinator: The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is the contracted coordinator for the CPRG process; however, the municipal contributions cover only a portion of the total project budget and TPL is investing staff resources to raise the balance. Thus, before devoting significant organizational resources to the regional planning effort, TPL needed demonstrated support that communities would participate throughout the project’s duration. The willingness of the 12 participating towns to invest a per capita cost-share assured TPL and ultimately defined the CPRG focus area.

Regional Planning Entity: Penobscot Valley Council of Governments (PVCoG), which is housed in the Eastern Maine Development Corporation, a federally designated Economic Development District, serves as fiscal agent for the CPRG and will hold the planning documents and maps upon completion of the effort. PVCoG’s grasp of local planning issues, coupled with its regional planning mission and historical work to integrate transportation and land use planning as evidenced by the PV PILOT effort, makes it well-suited to play a continuing role in collaborative open space planning.

Steering Committee: The steering committee provides project management. Through concerted outreach, the CPRG steering committee has been formed with two representatives from each participating town in the region.

⁸³ Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System 2002

⁸⁴ Noll, J., personal communication

Equity Among Key Stakeholders: Bangor’s City Manager anticipated that some towns might be reluctant to participate based on an expectation that more populous communities might exercise disproportionate influence during the planning process. To overcome these reservations, the experienced City Manager offered a decision-making and financing structure was developed that assured equity among all partners and proposed early in the process of recruiting municipal cooperation. The steering committee is comprised of two representatives from each town regardless of population, leads the CPRG. Each town has an equal vote on all decisions made by the partnership.

While voting power is equal among all towns, each town financially participated on a per capita basis at \$.50 cents per resident. After a community agreed to participate and the process began, each town continued to retain the option to withdraw at any time, though the per capita contribution will not be refunded.

Outreach

As momentum grew for the regional open space planning process and the collaborative structure began to take shape, the early champions of the CPRG initiative recognized the need for meaningful buy-in from municipal leaders, conservation groups and the general public. Strategic outreach included personal contacts and presentations to municipal decision-makers, requests to participate through existing organizational and social networks, and promotion to the general public through a variety of media.

Town Staff: Town governments, because of their municipal planning, land use and budget authority, were recognized early on as key partners. Municipal staff and town managers in particular, were identified as the point of first contact because of existing relationships among the managers within the region,⁸⁵ the managers’ professional understanding of shared benefits made possible by regional collaboration, and their influential position as sources of information and counsel for elected town officials.⁸⁶

Personal Relationships: The City of Bangor actively recruited various town managers while TPL made supporting presentations to local select boards about the Greenprinting planning process and its potential to preserve and enhance open space assets throughout the region. Essential in gaining buy-in from towns was Bangor’s assurance that the decision-making and cost-sharing structure would be equitable⁸⁷ and TPL’s established track record in open space conservation initiatives.⁸⁸

The process of recruiting steering committee members was time consuming and required personal contacts through established relationship networks.⁸⁹ Those efforts were largely rewarded, and CPRG steering committee currently consists of approximately 30 individuals, including two representatives from each participating town in the region.

⁸⁵ Barrett, E., personal communication

⁸⁶ Gooch, J., personal communication

⁸⁷ Barrett, E., Gooch, J., Noll, J., personal communication

⁸⁸ Quimby, L., personal communication

⁸⁹ Barrett, E., personal communication

Social Networks: The conservation organizations active in the CPRG region are natural participants in the planning process and provide an established outreach network to generate awareness among their respective members and supporters. As the steering committee conducted outreach for the public listening sessions, meeting notices and fliers were distributed by these organizations to promote participation.⁹⁰

Media: In addition to outreach through participating organizations, CPRG partners undertook broader promotional efforts to raise awareness among the general public of the regional planning process. A particular goal was to attract attendance to two community “listening sessions” in late June 2008, where residents provided input on open space and conservation priorities. Personal relationships were utilized to cultivate media coverage in the *Bangor Daily News*,⁹¹ which promoted the listening sessions in advance and covered their results. The *Daily News* also published an op-ed by Ron Harriman, resident of Brewer and participant on the Regional Open Space Steering Committee, who made the case for the shared benefits of collaborative regional planning.⁹²

Results: The CPRG outreach was generally effective. The two “listening sessions” hosted at high schools in the region attracted a total of 107 people.⁹³ This level of participation represented one of the highest attendance levels for TPL-hosted public meetings nationwide.⁹⁴ A stakeholder committee of approximately 45 individuals and organizational representatives, who provide input and support for the steering committee within the broader effort, was successfully recruited.

The business community is one stakeholder group where outreach has achieved limited success. The steering committee recognizes the need to actively engage business leaders in the planning process and made a concerted effort in the lead up to the “listening sessions” in June 2008.⁹⁵ One business, an outdoor outfitter, has been the only participant in the CPRG to date. Members of the steering committee will, however, continue personal contacts with leaders in the business community and maintain an “open-door” approach in hopes that they will participate as the planning process proceeds toward implementation.⁹⁶

Planning

Greenprinting is TPL’s “comprehensive approach to helping communities identify land for conservation and priorities for protecting it,” and is the regional open space planning framework for CPRG.⁹⁷ Greenprinting is a collaborative planning process that solicits input from stakeholders and representatives in the region. TPL employs a web-based mapping tool that depicts community priorities overlaid on natural resource data to assist communities within the region to prioritize open space for conservation. The regional map will assist communities throughout the region to prioritize conservation investments and link municipal open space plans within a landscape-scale network of core blocks, sites, and corridors.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ Regional Open Space Planning Steering Committee 2008

⁹¹ Gooch, J. personal communication

⁹² Harriman 2008

⁹³ Trust for Public Land 2008

⁹⁴ Quimby, L. personal communication

⁹⁵ Regional Open Space Planning Steering Committee 2008

⁹⁶ Barrett, E. personal communication

⁹⁷ Bangor Land Trust 2006b

⁹⁸ Trust for Public Land 2007a

Community input: The CPRG collaboration has solicited public input through a variety of mediums. More than 100 individuals and stakeholder representatives attended two public forums, or “listening sessions,” to share open space priorities. TPL conducted a series of interviews with community decision-makers⁹⁹ and contracted with a research firm to conduct a “citizen perspective survey” of more than 1,000 regional residents.¹⁰⁰ TPL also reviewed the existing municipal comprehensive plans of participating communities. The results from the listening sessions, interviews and survey will ultimately be analyzed by the stakeholder committee to determine regional conservation priorities.¹⁰¹

Participatory Mapping: The next stage of the planning process will be to create a Geographic Information System composite map that spatially represents the region’s conservation priorities by merging identified community priorities with hard ecological data and current land uses. The various type of prioritized land, be it a community park, large habitat block, riparian zone, or scenic resource, for example, is weighted based on the ranking of each collaboratively-defined open space priority. The CPRG is using mapping data from Maine’s Beginning with Habitat program to represent existing wildlife habitats and unique natural communities.

The ultimate result is a composite map that demonstrates areas of the landscape best suited for strategic investments to create a network of conserved lands that fulfills the priorities of the region’s residents and stakeholders. If the creation of new community parks emerges from public input as the highest open space priority, for example, areas that contain valuable ecological assets and are well suited for parks will be highlighted when displayed on the regional map.¹⁰²

The final stage of the Greenprinting process is to “groundtest” the mapping results with each local community. Stakeholders can adjust the weighting of each conservation priority to create a composite map that best represents their desires for future open space. This capacity to adjust the maps in real time allows direct participation during the planning process through the final stages of the planning process. The flexibility of the mapping technology also allows each community to weight various priorities differently to best represent local open space goals within a regional network.

Implementation

The result of the CPRG process will be a regional open space map that spatially represents the local conservation priorities within the broader context of a regional network. The regional map will provide an important planning tool to assist local municipalities in linking their open space plans across town borders and help local conservation organizations and land trusts to integrate their strategies and investments with broader community and regional priorities. Conversely, determining regional opens space priorities identifies areas within the region best suited for development and designation as municipal growth areas by neighboring towns.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Barrett, E. personal communication

¹⁰⁰ Critical Insights 2008

¹⁰¹ Gooch, J. personal communication

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Barrett, E. personal communication

Going forward: The CPRG map is only the first step toward regional landscape conservation. Towns and organizations will need to continue effective collaboration and invest resources to successfully create a regional network of conservation lands linking the urban amenities of the region with the scenic resources, working lands, wildlife habitats and recreational opportunities of the broader landscape. Building on existing conservation synergies exemplified by the Caribou Bog/Penjajawoc Marsh and Lower Penobscot Watershed Coalition collaborations, the regulatory model created by the Penjajawoc Marsh – Bangor Mall Management Commission, and regional planning strategies that integrate transportation and land use decisions such as PV PILOT, the CPRG process and products are important steps for moving beyond the current isolated local land use decisions towards a future landscape-scale network of conservation lands.

MtA2C Municipal Outreach

The Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C) in York County crosses the municipal boundaries of Eliot, York, Kittery, Ogunquit, South Berwick and Wells (*See Appendix II*). The MtA2C collaboration, including ten partners from local land trusts to statewide and national conservation organizations and state and federal resource agencies, recognizes the essential contribution that town governments can make through open space planning, land use regulation and allocation of conservation funding. To capitalize on the collaboration's success to date, which includes the conservation of 33 properties as of 2006,¹ MtA2C is devoting 60 percent of the program coordinator's staff time for outreach to town governments seeking to expand the conservation planning capacity.

To date, MtA2C municipal outreach has generated \$2,000 contributions from each of the six towns to match a regional planning grant from the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission. The Town of York has established a precedent for municipal funding for conservation projects in the region by allocating \$350,000 in recent years.¹ Moving forward, the MtA2C program coordinator will conduct concerted outreach to engage local town officials, foster regional collaboration, provide regular updates on MtA2C activities, and offer technical assistance for conservation planning.

Portland Trails



Introduction

The vision for a trail network connecting parks and open spaces in the City of Portland originated with the Olmsted Brothers in 1905 when their landscape architecture firm released the *General Plan for Park System*.¹⁰⁴ The document was an ambitious open space plan that included the existing hubs of Portland's park system: large green spaces on the book ends of the Portland peninsula and a spacious park centered at the gateway from the mainland, linked together by trails.¹⁰⁵

While the Olmsted Brother's design for prominent open spaces came to fruition as the Eastern Promenade, Western Promenade and Deering Oaks Park, their vision for a network of trails throughout Portland would largely lie dormant for another eight decades until it was resurrected by a proactive city council and a passionate, persistent group of citizens who became the founders of Portland Trails (PT). Since its inception in 1991, PT has collaborated with a range of partners to create a 30-mile network of trails that ensure public access to conserved open space in the largest city in Maine, foster pedestrian connectivity within a rapidly urbanizing landscape, and cross municipal borders to enhance quality of place in neighboring towns in the Greater Portland region.

The Greater Portland Region

The Greater Portland region is largely defined by the interface between water and land. The Portland peninsula is bound by Casco Bay and consists of dense, historic neighborhoods interspersed with open green patches. Moving inland along the Fore and Presumpscot Rivers, the urban core gives way to residential areas stretching over the city line to the neighboring communities of Falmouth, Westbrook and South Portland.

Quality of Place: Portland's natural assets and built environments provide residents of and visitors to the Greater Portland region with a mix of recreational opportunities and urban amenities that

¹⁰⁴City of Portland 2002

¹⁰⁵Hopkins 2005

offer a high quality of life and attract national exposure. In 2005, Outdoor Magazine ranked Portland in its top ten of “new American dreamtowns.”¹⁰⁶

Sprawling Development Trends: Despite the accolades, current land use patterns threaten Greater Portland’s unique quality of place. Between 1982 and 1997, Portland was the fastest urbanizing city in the Northeast, and the ninth fastest in United States. During that time, the city’s population grew by 17.4 percent while land consumption rose by 108 percent, resulting in a nearly 48 percent loss of density.¹⁰⁷

According to a 2006 report from the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation Committee, Falmouth, Portland’s neighbor to the north, is characterized as a fast growing suburban town with a low population density and sprawling land use patterns. While Westbrook, located adjacent to Portland’s western border, has slower growth patterns associated with older urban cities, suburban style development is occurring in many sections of the community. South Portland’s population has remained stable since 1960 but, after a lull in the 1990s, housing development has picked up in recent years and the Maine Mall is a hotspot for automobile congestion in Greater Portland.¹⁰⁸

Auto Dependence Threatens Quality of Place: The region’s sprawling development undermines quality of life by reducing access to outdoor recreation opportunities and contributing to obesity, asthma and other human health challenges.¹⁰⁹ In correlation with sprawling land use trends, vehicle miles traveled in the region increased by 20 percent between 1997 and 2007, exacerbating air and water pollution.¹¹⁰

Catalyst for Regional Approach

In the midst of changing land use patterns, Portland Trail’s initial focus centered on an interconnected trail network in its namesake city. As PT matured as an organization and early successes generated public support throughout Greater Portland, unique conservation and trail-building opportunities in neighboring communities expanded its activities beyond Portland’s borders.¹¹¹ More recently, PT has conducted strategic planning with local, regional and state partners seeking to connect the Greater Portland region with trail corridors.¹¹²

A Strong Local Vision: Portland City Council’s passage of the Shoreway Access Plan in the late 1980s provided an organizing focus for local conservationists. The planning process produced a powerful vision for a 30-mile network of trails, but lacked meaningful strategies for implementation.¹¹³ Local trail advocates recognized the need to fill this void.¹¹⁴ Alix Hopkins, PT’s founding executive director, describes the early days of the organization as a time of unique synergies: a compelling vision, political will, and the energies of talented, motivated people.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁶ Grudowski 2005

¹⁰⁷ Brookings Institution 2001

¹⁰⁸ Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation Committee 2006

¹⁰⁹ Portland Active Transportation Task Force 2008

¹¹⁰ Greater Portland Council of Governments 2007

¹¹¹ Cumming, N. personal communication

¹¹² Portland Active Transportation Task Force 2008

¹¹³ Cumming, N. personal communication

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Hopkins, A. personal communication

Local success breeds regional opportunities: In 2007, PT and partners successfully completed the original goal for 30-mile system of trails in Greater Portland. A multi-use trail in the Falmouth, a the acquisition of a small parcel in Westbrook providing a key connection for a riparian trail in Westbrook, and a scenic “Harborwalk” connecting Portland Harbor to South Portland’s Bug Light Park, joined trails throughout Greater Portland and provided a catalyst for PT’s regional scope.

A New Regional Scope: Building on regional successes, PT formed the Portland Active Transportation Task Force in 2008 in partnership with local organizations, municipal governments, Greater Portland Council of Governments and Maine Department of Transportation. The Task Force has initiated a campaign to transform transportation opportunities in Greater Portland. Multi-use trails connecting open spaces and urban service hubs are a central strategy identified by Task Force members to provide pedestrian connectivity and enhance the region’s quality of place.

Outreach

Throughout its existence, Portland Trails has employed varied outreach strategies that successfully engage local residents and officials while capturing support from state and national partners. Beginning with the founding board members and staff, PT has cultivated relationships and a network of allies throughout the community. The organization’s simple but descriptive name is an asset, and fun community events featuring public trails raise the organization’s profile.

Personal Relationships: PT was founded by motivated, civically active individuals who possessed “associations with people of influence.”¹¹⁶ The conservation of Jewell Falls, Portland’s sole natural waterfall, is an example of value provided by personal relationships. Jewell Falls was donated to PT by the parents of co-founder Tom Jewell, and subsequently named in honor of the family.¹¹⁷ The early leaders also sought to raise awareness in Portland through direct personal contacts. “We called to introduce ourselves to everyone suggested to us—a time-consuming practice that reaped long-term benefits as we slowly began to build relationships with people, businesses, agencies, and other nonprofit organizations in the Portland area.”¹¹⁸ Proactive personal contact remains a successful approach for PT.¹¹⁹

An Effective Identity: “Portland Trails” is a name that is readily understandable, and captures the organization’s vision and goals. Early versions used to describe the organization included the Shoreway Access Coalition and the Forest City Land Trust, which lack the same simplicity.¹²⁰ Including “trails” in the name, described by Alix Hopkins as the “great common denominator” for uniting a broad conservation constituency,¹²¹ also captures the inclusive nature of the organization and its mission.

Events: Public events that showcase the trails and promote PT and the community benefits of its work are another prominent aspect of PT’s outreach approach. The Portland Trails “Discovery Trek Series” invites residents to take guided interpretive walk to learn about the culture and history of Portland. In September 2008 PT will host the 9th Annual Trail to Ale Race/Walk event. The race

¹¹⁶ Hopkins 2005

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Cumming, N. personal communication

¹²⁰ Hopkins 2005

¹²¹ Ibid

is held in partnership with various local business sponsors, local Shipyard Brewing Company most notably, and it grows in participation each year. In 2007, nearly 800 runners participated.¹²²

Local Schools: PT has initiated partnerships with local schools through its Outreach and Community Education program. The program is an experiential learning project with three goals: to help students become more aware of the place where they live; educate them about the importance of their role in preserving the environment, and promoting alternative transportation; and encourage them to become active stewards for the future. The program makes available to local teachers a “Trails as Classroom” curriculum for students learning about trail design and stewardship. PT also partners in school greening projects to provide natural playscapes at Portland area schools.

Business community: PT has gained support from local businesses, such as the Shipyard Brewing Company, by finding ways to provide public recognition for their support. One example is the “Adopt-A-Trail” program, which generates sponsorship funds from local businesses to provide trail maintenance equipment and salary for PT’s fulltime Trails Manager. Signage recognizes the trail’s sponsor. Thus, PT gains important resources to support its mission, and the sponsor creates positive impressions in the community.¹²³

**Tanglewood Learning Center & the Ducktrap Coalition:
Fostering a Stewardship Ethic**

The Ducktrap Coalition has permanently conserved 84 percent of the riparian buffers adjacent to the Ducktrap River, one of only seven Maine rivers that support wild runs of Atlantic salmon (*See Appendix II*). The Coalition has also taken steps to create a constituency for the long-term stewardship of the Ducktrap watershed. The Tanglewood 4-H Camp and Learning Center has been a key coalition partner that educates local youth about the unique ecological assets of the Ducktrap and best practices for protection of the watershed.

Tanglewood hosts students each year who participate in educational programs such as “Freshwater Exploration,” which provides lessons on the species that inhabit the Ducktrap watershed, and “Watershed Connections” that provides hands on experiences to help students understand how individual actions impact the quality of the watershed in their own community.

Coalition members have supported the “Fish Friends” program, whereby school groups raise salmon fry in classroom tanks and release the fry into the Ducktrap. Though it has seen limited use, the coalition also developed the *Ducktrap Watershed Curriculum Guide* to provide stewardship lessons for schools within the watershed and nearby communities.

Collaboration

Public trails are a valued amenity that provide benefits for and attract support from broad segments of the community.¹²⁴ With trails at the core of its mission, PT has forged partnerships with a multitude of organizations and agencies and renewed its ranks of capable volunteers time and again

¹²² Aley, I. personal communication

¹²³ Cumming, N. personal communication

¹²⁴ Hopkins, A. personal communication

over the organization's 18-year existence. Though it is a lean organization, effective collaboration has empowered PT with capacity much greater than many organizations of comparable staff size.

Volunteers: PT has successfully recruited and empowered volunteers with diverse skills and expertise over the course of its history. With a small staff varying in size from one to three employees, talented volunteers have been vital to the organization's success. According to Hopkins, "PT engaged writers, engineers, artists, educators, architects, landscape architects, conservationists, planners, investment advisers and politicians" among many other skilled individuals. The collaborative spirit of PT expands the collective abilities of the organization while providing rewarding experiences for volunteers.¹²⁵

Organizations and Agencies: From PT's first project, the Capisic Brook Trail, to TPL's partnership in creating the Eastern Prom trail, and through the completion of the 30-mile trail system, partner organizations and agencies have played vital roles in each of PT's projects. Rather than coordinating a standing coalition of collaborators, PT identifies partners for individual projects based on shared goals and opportunities to leverage organizational capacities for mutual benefit.

Regional Partnership: PT's strategic planning initiative in partnership with Portland Active Transportation Task Force to connect Portland and neighboring towns demonstrates the organization's ongoing commitment to collaboration throughout the Greater Portland region. In total, 32 partners including towns, region planning organizations, local groups, and state agencies submitted letters of support for the Portland Active Transportation Task Force proposal, including expanding trail networks throughout Greater Portland.

Planning

The Shoreway Access Plan of the late 1980s identified 30-miles of trails providing access to and connecting the special places in Portland. Building from that organizing focus, the founders of PT developed a vision map for the trail network. Trail corridors were identified by opportunities to enhance public access in existing conservation lands and to create connections between open spaces. As PT has grown, the organization's planning activities involve striking a balance between opportunistic and strategic selection of projects, and expanding the scope of its trail network throughout Greater Portland.

Opportunism vs. Strategic Priorities: Conservation requires opportunities afforded by willing landowners, and conservation organizations with limited resources must carefully prioritize their investments. In March 2005 PT's Board of Directors formalized the organization's decision-making process with an "acquisition priorities guidance."¹²⁶ The document details factors to be considered when selecting projects, including scenic beauty, length and estimated usage of trail, connectivity with other trails and destination points, conservation benefits and legal aspects of acquisition for the respective parcel. The guidance assists PT's directors in evaluating and integrating conservation opportunities within its strategic priorities.

¹²⁵ Hopkins 2005

¹²⁶ Cumming, N. personal communication

construction.¹²⁹ PT's early success at Capisic Pond established momentum and helped pave the way for future accomplishments.

Sustain Momentum: In its early days, PT sought to demonstrate momentum by completing one tangible project each year.¹³⁰ Taking on new and ever greater challenges, such as the construction of a 90-foot pedestrian bridge to enhance public access in the 85-acre Fore River Sanctuary, helped the organization to develop new capacities, forge new partnerships, and generate public awareness in the Greater Portland region.

Milestone Project: The Eastern Prom trail, stretching two miles to connect the Eastern Promenade with Portland's historic Old Port district, resulted from a nearly decade-long effort spearheaded by PT and The Trust for Public Land (TPL). PT built a collaborative partnership, including the City of Portland and Maine Department of Transportation, cultivated public support, captured federal alternative transportation funding, and navigated political hurdles and delicate land negotiations to construct the trail which "transformed the eastern edge of the city."¹³¹ Completed in 2000 after roughly three years of outreach and advocacy by PT and TPL, and another five years of phased construction, the Eastern Prom trail helped transform PT from an upstart urban land trust to a well-known entity in Greater Portland.

Regional Expansion: The opportunity to acquire 60 acres of property along the Presumpscot River led PT to envision a riparian trail beyond Portland—through Westbrook, Portland, and Falmouth. The resulting acquisition and creation of the Presumpscot River Preserve was another milestone project that included PT's first capital campaign. Land for Maine's Future provided a matching grant of \$483,333.34 to assist PT's successful effort¹³² to provide public access for hiking, a scenic view of Presumpscot Falls and a hand-carried boat launch along a 2.5 mile trail.¹³³

Likewise, the Portland Trails network connected to South Portland's Greenbelt, further providing a catalyst for PT's regional scope. After achieving its original vision for 30 miles of trails, PT has expanded its goal to 50 miles, with stronger links between downtown Portland and the surrounding communities.¹³⁴

Management

As a trail-building organization, management of its properties is an important consideration for PT.¹³⁵ The organization plans in advance to maintain its trail infrastructure and has established an endowment fund and sponsor and volunteer programs to provide the necessary financial and human resources.

Endowment: PT includes maintenance and management funds in its capital campaigns, beginning in 2003 with the organization's first major campaign, "Preserving the Presumpscot from forest to

¹²⁹ White 2001

¹³⁰ Hopkins 2005

¹³¹ White 2001

¹³² Portland Trails 2002

¹³³ Cumming 2002

¹³⁴ Cumming, N. personal communication

¹³⁵ Ibid.

falls.” The interest from the endowment provides a stable source of funds to support trail maintenance.

Volunteers: The organization hosts “Trail Steward Saturdays” on the first and third Saturdays of each month, during which volunteers help with trail maintenance projects.¹³⁶ PT has hired a staff member to manage volunteers, which greatly enhances the efficient coordination and effectiveness of volunteer energies.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ White 2001

¹³⁷ Cumming, N. personal communication

Appendix II: Inventory of Regional Landscape Initiatives in Maine

1. Central Penobscot Regional Greenprint

See Appendix I

2. Cobscook Bay

Collaborative efforts to conserve the ecological, economic and cultural values of the Cobscook Bay area at the eastern tip of Maine in Washington County represent an early example of regional landscape conservation. The protection of habitat for waterfowl, particularly the black duck, within the Cobscook Bay watershed was an early priority of the Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition, a partnership that implements the North American Waterfowl Management Plan in Maine. More recently, the Downeast Land Trust Collaboration represents a partnership of three land trusts working to conserve the unique character of the region.

Cobscook Bay and its watershed is a rugged and scenic landscape of rocky coasts shaped by dramatic tide fluctuations that reach 20 feet and provide extensive intertidal mud flats. The watershed contains parts of two unorganized areas, one native community, one city, and roughly four towns.¹³⁸ The Bay provides habitat for up to 20 different species of migratory shorebirds, the highest density of nesting Bald Eagle in the northeastern United States, five species of whales and many migratory fish species, including Atlantic salmon.¹³⁹ The watershed contains parts of two unorganized areas, one native community, one city, and four towns. Cobscook Bay State Park provides camping opportunities, wildlife watching, hiking and cross-country skiing opportunities.¹⁴⁰

In addition to the waterfowl conservation, broader goals included preserving the Cobscook region's resource-based economy, strong cultural identity, historical character and scenic qualities. The Downeast Land Trust Collaboration is an ongoing regional conservation planning initiative for coastal Washington County involving the Quoddy Regional Land Trust, Downeast Rivers Land Trust, and Great Auk Land Trust with assistance from the Washington County Council of Governments and support from Maine Coast Heritage Trust. The goal of the collaboration is for the land trusts to develop regional conservation priorities, share information, expand the capacities of each land trust and provide a framework for partnership efforts in the future.¹⁴¹ The Land for Maine's Future Program has also made significant investments in support of these goals.

Partners for Cobscook Bay conservation include Quoddy Regional Land Trust, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Bureau of Parks and Lands, Land for Maine's Future Board, University of Maine, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited Inc., The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, The Trust for Public Land, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

¹³⁸ Brooks, A. personal communication

¹³⁹ Atlantic Coast Joint Venture 2008

¹⁴⁰ Brooks, A. personal communication

¹⁴¹ Quoddy Regional Land Trust 2008

3. Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership

The Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership was a collaborative effort that successfully conserved 342,000 acres of nearly contiguous woodlands and waterways surrounding Grand Lake Stream in Washington County.¹⁴² Located between 200,000 acres of state, federal and Native American conservation lands in Maine, and 600,000 acres of conserved crown land in New Brunswick, the project links more than one million acres across an international boundary. The project was a grassroots effort with local leadership and support. The conserved landscape supports the region's traditional way of life centered on outdoor recreation, employment founded on forestry jobs, guiding services and camps for sportsmen who visit to enjoy the region's renowned hunting and fishing opportunities.¹⁴³

The Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership conserved more than 445 miles of lake shoreline, more than 1,500 miles of river and stream shoreline, and more than 54,000 acres of productive wetlands. The region hosts a rich array of wildlife, including 185 species of birds and more than 10 percent of the loons of northern Maine. The New England Forestry Foundation holds an easement on 312,000 acres and the Downeast Lakes Land Trust owns and manages 27,000 acres as the Farm Cove Community Forest¹⁴⁴ (see page 32).

Partners for the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership were Downeast Lakes Land Trust, the New England Forestry Foundation and the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust. Land for Maine's Future funding was leveraged with other public and private funds to support the Partnership's conservation success.

For a full case study see: *Farm Cove Community Forest, Community Forests: A Community Investment Strategy*. A report by the Community Forest Collaborative. August 2007.

4. Ducktrap Coalition

Twenty-six partner organizations joined forces in 1995 to form the Ducktrap Coalition, a partnership that conserved the natural integrity of Midcoast Maine's Ducktrap River, one of few rivers statewide that still support wild Atlantic salmon. The Coalition has been identified as a model for "watershed councils," a collaborative approach among local and regional stakeholders to conserve wild Atlantic salmon populations in eight Maine rivers.¹⁴⁵

The Ducktrap Coalition's regional focus area is the 22,000-acre Ducktrap River watershed, located midway between the developing Camden and Belfast areas. Along with a unique sub-species of wild Atlantic salmon, the watershed hosts a variety of plant and wildlife species, including Atlantic white cedar, New England bluet damselfly and various plants.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Downeast Lakes Land Trust: www.downeastlakes.org

¹⁴³ Keith, S. personal communication

¹⁴⁴ Downeast Lakes Land Trust: www.downeastlakes.org

¹⁴⁵ Maine Coastal Protection Initiative 2007

¹⁴⁶ Defenders of Wildlife and Land Trust Alliance 2007

More than 83 percent of the Ducktrap River corridor has been conserved to date. In addition, 43 percent of the lands along the Ducktrap's three major tributaries¹⁴⁷ totaling 5,500 acres within the watershed have been conserved with funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other public and private supporters, including the Land for Maine's Future Program. An ecological inventory of the watershed is complete and management plans for conserved lands are in place. Members of the coalition and community volunteers have built 12 miles of trails along the riparian corridor, including the recent construction of a 32-foot bridge spanning the Ducktrap River.¹⁴⁸

The Ducktrap River Coalition is coordinated by the Coastal Mountains Land Trust in partnership with 25 organizations.

5. Kennebec Estuary Collaboration

The Kennebec Estuary Collaboration (KEC) is a partnership dedicated to conserving lands that protect the biodiversity and natural resources of the Kennebec Estuary. KEC focuses on four goals at the regional scale: Ecological Integrity, Water Quality, Working Landscapes, and Cultural Sites. The Land for Maine's Future program recently provided a \$1.3 million grant to KEC and partners to protect 700 acres of high value salt marshes, tidal freshwater marshes, riparian habitat, and associated upland buffers in the Lower Kennebec Region. Popham Beach State Park borders the mouth of the Kennebec River and provides wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Kennebec Estuary is comprised of Merrymeeting Bay, the lower Kennebec River and surrounding uplands. At over 1,700 square miles, it is the largest tidal estuary on the East Coast north of the Hudson River. Twenty percent of Maine's tidal marshes are located within the estuary, representing the largest concentration of salt marshes in the state. Its coastal wetlands, upstream spawning grounds and forested uplands provide critical habitat for a diversity of wildlife and plant species, and five federally endangered and threatened species.

The Kennebec Estuary Collaboration is a partnership between the Phippsburg and Lower Kennebec Regional land trusts, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, US Fish and Wildlife Service - Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and Maine State Planning Office.

6. Kennebec Highlands

The Kennebec Highlands is the largest block of unfragmented public lands in Central Maine.¹⁴⁹ A landscape of hills, ponds and trails, the Highlands provide varied recreational opportunities and wildlife habitats within 15 miles of Augusta, Waterville and Farmington and only a little more than one hour from Bangor and Portland.

Crossing the town boundaries of Rome, Vienna, New Sharon and Mount Vernon, the Kennebec Highlands region contains five undeveloped ponds, acres of wetlands and varied topography that

¹⁴⁷ Maine Coastal Protection Initiative 2007

¹⁴⁸ Defenders of Wildlife and Land Trust Alliance 2007

¹⁴⁹ Land for Maine's Future: <http://maine.gov/spo/lmf>

supports a diversity of wildlife. The landscape offers excellent outdoor recreational activities, including 18 miles of trails and old logging roads that provide access for hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain-biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing.¹⁵⁰

The successful effort to conserve the 6,400 acre Highlands was incubated locally by the Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance (BRCA), which drew on the diverse talents and energy of local champions sustained over a three-year period. The effort has also received support from the Land for Maine's Future Program which recently made its third funding award in support of the Highlands project. BRCA is currently collaborating with local stakeholders and the State of Maine to develop a management plan while exploring opportunities to expand the contiguous open space in collaboration with willing landowners.

The Kennebec Highlands were conserved through the efforts of the Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance in partnership with the Maine Department of Conservation and with funding from the Land for Maine's Future program.

7. Kennebec River Initiative

The Kennebec River Initiative (KRI) is a collaborative effort aimed at securing the future of the Kennebec Corridor as one of the State's most valuable natural, economic, and cultural resources. The KRI regional focus area includes the entire Kennebec River corridor stretching 170 miles from East Outlet at Moosehead Lake to Popham Beach where the river enters the Atlantic Ocean. The planning and analysis accomplished through this initiative will lay the groundwork for preserving and enhancing the character and "sense of place" of the Kennebec River during the coming years.¹⁵¹

The Kennebec River corridor provides habitat for an array of wildlife, fisheries and plants. The corridor has unique and varied scenic resources and provides tremendous outdoor recreation opportunities for boating, hiking, fishing and hunting. For planning purposes, KRI has divided the river into three segments: The Tidal Reach will include the section from Phippsburg through Augusta; The Central Reach covers from Sidney and Vassalboro through Skowhegan; and the Northern Reach stretches from Norridgewock to the outlet of Moosehead Lake.¹⁵²

To date, KRI has developed an action plan to enhance the Kennebec corridor for ecological, economic and cultural values. The planning process included an inventory of areas with sensitive resources, recreation and access opportunities, and locations appropriate for economic development. These maps were then used to gather feedback from the public about priorities for protection or enhancement. Future efforts will include establishing a standing organization, the Kennebec River Council, to facilitate conservation activities, public access, and community-based waterfront development.¹⁵³

Partners in KRI include the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments, the Maine Department of Conservation, Sportsmen's Alliance of Maine, Maine Rivers, the Natural Resources Council of

¹⁵⁰ Kennebec Highlands: www.kennebechighlands.org

¹⁵¹ Kennebec River Initiative 2007

¹⁵² Kennebec River Initiative 2008

¹⁵³ Ibid

Maine, and Trout Unlimited, municipal officials, individuals, regional and municipal land trusts, and business interests.

For more information visit: <http://kcsxcd.org/Projects/KRI%20info/KRI%20Page.htm>

8. Mahoosuc Initiative

See Appendix I

9. Mount Agamenticus to the Sea

The Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C) is a coalition of ten conservation organizations working to protect ecological resources, working lands and waterfronts, and outdoor recreation opportunities in a six-town area of southern Maine facing unprecedented development pressure.¹⁵⁴

The MtA2C focus region covers 48,000 acres between Mount Agamenticus and the Tatic Hills in Wells, and Gerrish Island on the Atlantic coast. The region hosts 40 miles of streams and diverse habitats supporting the highest number of plant and animal species in the state of Maine, from moose to the rare Blanding's turtle.¹⁵⁵

Various organizations and individuals have been actively conserving special resources in the region since the 1970s including early support from the Land for Maine's Future Program. A collaborative effort to conserve lands surrounding one of the region's dominant features, Mount Agamenticus, was the catalyst for the MtA2C partnership that continues today.

The MtA2C coalition includes York Land Trust, Kittery Land Trust, Great Works Regional Land Trust, York Rivers Association, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, The Trust for Public Land, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge and Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve.¹⁵⁶

For a full case study see: *An Evaluation of the Mt. Agamenticus To The Sea Conservation Initiative*. Prepared by Martha West Lyman, Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment. October 2006. Available at: www.mtatosea.org

10. Mount Blue Region and Tumbledown Mountain

The Mount Blue Region and Tumbledown Mountain project is a collaboration of local conservationists, statewide organizations and state and federal agencies. The goal is to conserve

¹⁵⁴ Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative: www.mta2c.org

¹⁵⁵ Ibid

¹⁵⁶ Lyman 2006

treasured recreational lands on Tumbledown Mountain and expand contiguous conservation lands adjacent to the Mount Blue State Park in Maine's Western Mountains.¹⁵⁷

The Mount Blue Region provides abundant wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities and scenic beauty. Tumbledown Mountain features three peaks, an enormous cliff face and an alpine pond;¹⁵⁸ it has been a popular hiking area for years despite that fact that many of its trails were located on private lands. Changing land ownership in the region prompted conservationists to seek permanent conservation and public access of the landscape for addition to Mount Blue State Park.

Over a five-year period beginning in 2001, 26,000 acres were conserved with federal, state and private funds, including 7,464 acres inside the park, as well as 18,311 acres on Tumbledown Mountain, including public hiking trails. The project was complex with over 13 separate real estate transactions and benefited from three Land for Maine's Future grants.¹⁵⁹

Partners include the Tumbledown Conservation Alliance, a collaboration of five organizations—the Webb Lake Association, Friends of Maine State Parks, Western Maine Audubon Society, Foothills Land Conservancy, and Appalachian Mountain Club, along with The Trust for Public Land, Maine Department of Conservation, U.S. Forest Service and Hancock Lumber.

11. Portland Trails

See Appendix I

12. Sagadahoc Region Rural Resource Initiative

The Sagadahoc Regional Rural Resources Initiative (SRRRI) is a regional open space initiative seeking to identify collaborative conservation opportunities and priorities in the rapidly developing Midcoast Region. The SRRRI Steering Committee uses resource data from the Beginning with Habitat program and citizen input on the region's special places to identify key natural features. The SRRRI Steering Committee is developing resource maps for the participating towns and a guidebook that details conservation strategies to enhance collaboration among municipal government and conservation stakeholders.¹⁶⁰

The SRRRI region is comprised of the ten towns of Sagadahoc County plus Brunswick and Harpswell in Cumberland County and is defined by economic patterns that unite the service centers of Bath, Brunswick and Topsham with the surrounding rural communities. The region shares an abundance of natural resources that support outdoor recreation opportunities, working agricultural lands and diverse ecosystems. Merrymeeting Bay, the Kennebec Estuary and the surrounding landscape provide habitat for shell and finfish, abundant waterfowl and wildlife, rare plants and unique natural communities.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Tumbledown Conservation Alliance: www.tumbledown.org

¹⁵⁸ Land for Maine's Future: <http://maine.gov/spo/lmf>

¹⁵⁹ The Trust for Public Land: http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cd.cfm?content_item_id=11081&folder_id=259

¹⁶⁰ Van Dusen, K. Personal communication.

¹⁶¹ Sagadahoc Region Rural Resource Initiative 2008

The SRRRI partnership is lead by the Midcoast Council for Business Development and Planning and includes the towns of Arrowsic, Bath, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Brunswick, Georgetown, Harpswell, Phippsburg, Richmond, Topsham, West Bath, and Woolwich, and the Maine Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine State Planning Office, The Nature Conservancy, Kennebec Estuary Coalition, Maine Audubon, Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust and Bowdoin College, among others.¹⁶²

13. Schoodic to Schoodic Initiative

The Schoodic to Schoodic Initiative seeks to protect a 15-mile wildlife corridor between two significant conservation lands, the State of Maine Donnell Pond Unit near Schoodic Mountain and the Schoodic Point section of Acadia National Park.¹⁶³ The region encompasses Schoodic Peninsula in developing eastern Hancock County.¹⁶⁴

The Schoodic to Schoodic Coordinating Committee (S2SCC), a regional collaboration, is currently exploring the feasibility of a corridor encompassing wetlands, large forest blocks and undeveloped ponds that support a diversity of wildlife and plants. Research on wildlife population was planned for Summer 2008 to inform conservation planning. More conservation groups have joined the dialogue, and are exploring linkages with additional conservation lands in the region.¹⁶⁵

Frenchman Bay Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have conserved several unique parcels as regional planning continues.¹⁶⁶ The parcels represent key stepping stones for wildlife as the corridor is pieced together incrementally, project by project. The Schoodic to Schoodic corridor currently hosts limited recreational use by knowledgeable local residents, including fishing, hunting, hiking and paddling. Conservation of the wildlife corridor preserves for the future the possibility of a continuous hiking trail from Schoodic Mountain to Schoodic Point.¹⁶⁷

Stakeholders participating in the S2SCC include Frenchman Bay Conservancy, Friends of Acadia, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Department of Conservation, Forest Society of Maine, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Acadia National Park, The Nature Conservancy and Great Auk Land Trust.¹⁶⁸

14. Unity Wetlands¹⁶⁹

The Unity Wetlands collaboration represents a pioneering effort in Maine to conserve the unique attributes of a valuable ecological and agricultural landscape. The goal of the project is to “build upon existing and emerging local initiatives to sustain the area’s agricultural economy, conserve wildlife habitat and protect grassland and riparian buffers that can promote water quality.”

¹⁶² Ibid

¹⁶³ Frenchman’s Bay Conservancy: <http://www.frenchmanbay.org/>

¹⁶⁴ Mytar 2007

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Welch, B. Personal communication.

¹⁶⁷ Mytar 2007

¹⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁶⁹ Friends of Unity Wetlands: <http://www.friendsofunitywetlands.org>; Maine Department of Agriculture 2006

The Unity Wetlands regional focus area includes parts of six towns and Kennebec and Waldo Counties. The Unity Wetlands complex contains 44,150 acres identified by the State of Maine's Beginning with Habitat Program as a Primary Focus Area for conservation, encircled by 5,600 acres of adjacent farm lands that contribute significantly to the region's economic vitality and traditional rural way of life.

The project area contains important habitats for rare species in the Sbasticook River, Kanokolus Bog, shoreline of Unity Pond and surrounding peatlands and rich riparian corridors.¹⁷⁰ Fifty-two farms currently operate within the focus area containing 1,975 acres of designated prime farmland and 6,360 acres of agricultural lands of Statewide importance. The Land for Maine's Future Program has made substantial grants to conserve these assets.

The Unity Wetlands initiative includes Friends of Unity Wetlands, Unity Barn Raisers, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources, Kennebec and Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Maine Natural Areas Program, and University of Maine Cooperative Extension. Five of the six towns in the focus area have adopted comprehensive plans that recognize open space and agricultural lands as key assets.

¹⁷⁰ Friends of Unity Wetlands: <http://www.friendsofunitywetlands.org>

Appendix III: Contributors

Mark Berry *Executive Director, Downeast Lakes Land Trust*

Stephen Keith, *former Executive Director, Downeast Lakes Land Trust*

Karen Tilberg, *Senior Policy Advisor, Governor's Office*

Dennis Phillips, *Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance*

Jerry Bley, *Creative Conservation*

Tin Smith, *Director, Stewardship Department, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve*

Jeannie Demetricopolous, *Board Member, York Land Trust*

Doreen MacGillis, *Executive Director, York Land Trust*

Katrina Van Dusen, *Planner, Midcoast Council for Economic Development and Planning*

Rod Melanson, *Natural Resource Planner, Town of Topsham*

Vanessa Lavesque, *Natural Resource Planner, Town of Brunswick*

Liz Hertz, *Natural Resource Planner, Maine State Planning Office Coastal Program*

Alan Stearns, *Deputy Director, Maine Department of Conservation Bureau of Parks and Lands*

Jim Gooch, *Program Coordinator, The Trust for Public Land*

Jim Hinds, *Board of Directors, Bangor & Orono Land Trusts*

Bryan Wentzell, *Maine Woods Advocate, Appalachian Mountain Club*

Alix Hopkins, *Turning Ideas Into Action*

Nan Cumming, *Executive Director, Portland Trails*

Robin Zinchuk, *Executive Director, Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce*

Dave Thompson, *Board of Directors, Bangor & Orono Land Trusts*

John Noll, *Transportation Planner, Penobscot Valley Council of Governments*

Barbara Vickery, *Director of Conservation Programs, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Chapter*

Alan Brooks, *Executive Director, Quoddy Regional Land Trust*

Evan Richert, *planning consultant, Planner, Town of Orono*

Barbara Welch, *former Executive Director, Frenchman's Bay Conservancy*

Jim Dow, *Executive Director, Blue Hill Heritage Trust*

Ben Emory, *Chairman, Schoodic to Schoodic Coordinating Committee*

Steve Walker, *Beginning with Habitat Program Manager, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife*

Scott Dickerson, *Executive Director, Coastal Mountains Land Trust*

Paul Dest, *Manager, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve*

Kenneth C. Young Jr., *Executive Director, Kennebec Valley Council of Governments*

Fergus Lea, *Planning Division Director, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments*

Mick Rogers, *Supervisor of Outdoor Recreation, Maine Department of Conservation Bureau of Parks and Lands*

Jym St. Pierre, *Maine Director, Restore: The North Woods*

Stephanie Gilbert, *Farmland Protection Specialist, Maine Department of Agriculture, Food & Rural Resources*

Jim Mitchell, *Executive Director, Mahoosuc Land Trust*

Laura Sewell, *Executive Director, Kennebec Estuary Coalition*

Lucy Quimby, *President, Bangor Land Trust*

Ed Barrett, *City Manager, City of Bangor*

Kate Williams, *Executive Director, Northern Forest Canoe Trail*

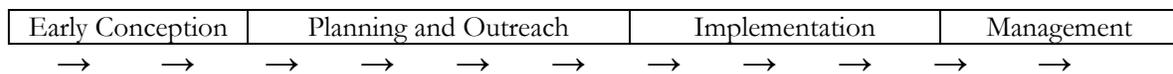
Appendix IV: Interview Questionnaire

REGIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

Questionnaire

Early Conception

1. How and when did you define the targeted region and scope of your efforts?
2. What was the intended outcome(s) of your effort as originally conceived? Did it change? If so, how?
3. On the spectrum below, where would you place the current status of your initiative?



4. Are there any other important lessons that you learned at this stage of the project?

Planning and Outreach

5. How did you go about recruiting project partners?
 - What were key reasons for support from traditional conservationists? From resource based economic interests? Tourism interests? Other?
 - Were there any potential sticking points, such as “turf,” that you needed to address to achieve stakeholder support? If so, how?
6. Projects that are solely volunteer-driven can lose momentum after the initial phases. Did you sustain the energy and resources to keep moving? How?
 - Had you identified a way during your planning to provide consistent leadership?
 - What sort of process did you establish to ensure collaboration and equitable sharing of work and decision-making?
 - How did you ensure accountability for agreed upon tasks?
7. How would you describe your planning process for identifying conservation focus areas?
 - Was the general public consulted? How and when?

8. Were provisions for public access and recreational opportunities incorporated in your planning process? How?
8. Are there any other important lessons you learned at this stage of the project?

Implementation

10. What was your fundraising strategy? Did the regional scope and partners involved help leverage existing funds and/or attract new sources?
 - Did you have fundraising for “non-conservation” activities that were compatible with your overall goals (e.g. boat access, trail development, etc.). If yes, how important do you feel having these activities were to your overall effort?
11. How did you go about implementing your objectives “on-the-ground?”
12. Are there any other important lessons you learned at this stage of the project?

Evaluation and Management

13. Did you periodically evaluate your objectives during implementation, and were priorities or strategies adjusted as a result?
14. How have the conserved focus areas been integrated with regional development strategies?
15. In hindsight, is there anything that you would do differently?
16. Based on your experience, what do you feel are the key ingredients to achieving landscape conservation on a regional scale?

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