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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
LAND USE PLANNING COMMISSION
22 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0022

AMANDA E. BEAL
COMMISSIONER

Memorandum

To: LUPC Commissioners
CC: Ben Godsoe, Acting Executive Director
From: Stacy Benjamin, Acting Planning Manager; Megan Lamb, Senior Planner; David Ludwig, Senior Planner
Date: June 4, 2025
Re: Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update Progress Report

At the December 2024 regular business meeting, Commissioners approved the initiation of a process to update the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP). The proposed process included a two-phased approach, with a pre-process to identify priority issues, assess data needs, collect available data, and garner input on the planning process design before the official update process begins. At the June 2025 regular business meeting, staff will present an update on the pre-process steps taken to date and request Commissioner feedback on some of the next steps. A more detailed report is planned for the August Commission meeting.

I. BACKGROUND

There are compelling reasons to update the 2010 CLUP, though it will require significant Commission and staff time and resources. The CLUP is now 15 years old and no longer future-facing. Maine and the world have changed since 2010, and many of these changing factors influence land use in the Commission's service area. Shifts in Maine's economy, population, climate, environmental needs, and state goals and policies all affect what is happening in the unorganized territories (UT). Developing a new plan would allow for renewed discussion on important topics and identify priorities for the Commission in the coming decade.

In addition, advancements in GIS technology, social media, and internet-based community engagement create new opportunities for planning processes. Commission staff have gained valuable insight from recent participatory planning projects that can be applied to the CLUP update to ensure a more effective update process.

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To help generate the best possible outcomes, the CLUP update process has been separated into two distinct planning processes: (1) the pre-process, and (2) the update process. The pre-process will allow the Commission to collect information on the service area and changes since 2010, identify priority issues, and provide for public input into the update process.

II. PRE-PROCESS COMPONENTS

The following goals have been identified for the pre-process:

1. Develop a better understanding of current issues, concerns, and trends for residents, landowners, counties, and key interest groups;
2. Collect and summarize relevant data and information to understand land use changes in the service area since 2010; and
3. Get public feedback on guiding principles and process models for the update process.

To achieve these goals, staff are:

- Interviewing representatives from a variety of perspectives;
- Collecting available data and refining LUPC permitting data to improve accuracy;
- Developing a broad-based public survey and interactive website;
- Planning for one or more regional meetings with neutral facilitation to get feedback on priority issues and the structure of the update process;
- Seeking outside funding sources for help with outreach and facilitation; and
- Preparing a series of panel presentations/discussions to bring informed perspectives on particular topics before the Commission for information and discussion.

Progress to date on these activities is described in more detail below.

A. Perspective Interviews

Following approval to initiate a CLUP update, Commission staff began reaching out to groups and individuals from key areas of interest to better understand current issues and concerns for the service area (see Table 1). Since December, staff have met with or contacted over 40 individuals or groups, and conversations are ongoing. A similar set of questions is asked with each individual or group, slightly customized to better fit the interest area (see Appendix 1 for a sample of questions asked).

Commission staff take notes during interviews and group meetings. To help staff identify themes and patterns and gain insights, the notes are being qualitatively coded through a process called inductive coding. A summary report, which will present the outcomes and explain this process in more detail, is expected to be presented to Commissioners in August.

Table 1. Key perspectives for pre-process outreach and interviews.

Perspective	Titles/Groups
Agriculture	Organization Executive Directors and Farmers
County Government	County Administrators, UT Coordinators and Supervisors, EMA Directors
Economic Development	State Agency and Regional Economic Development Organizations
Regional Planning Organizations	Presentation at semi-annual council meeting
Landowners	Maine Woodland Owners Association
Forest Products Industry/Timber Companies	Maine Forest Products Council
Natural Resources/Conservation	Appalachian Mountain Club, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Audubon, and Natural Resources Council of Maine
Recreation	Maine Bureau of Parks and Land, Recreation Organizations, Sporting Camp Owners
Residents/Local Officials	Local residents from the Downeast, Eastern, Northern, Western, and Moosehead Regions
Maine Tribes	Consultation with Maine tribal governments, including Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township, Mi'kmaq Nation, Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik

B. Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

LUPC Data. Commission staff have begun evaluating internal data for analysis and presentation to the public. Efforts are underway to ensure permit information and locations are accurate and to summarize data to answer questions such as:

- What is the number and location of new dwellings permitted since 2010?
- What type of and where has subdivision activity occurred?
- How many permits have been issued for commercial development? What types of development are being proposed, and where are they located?
- What zone changes have been approved, and where have they occurred?

Other Data. Commission staff are working with other state agencies, the University of Maine, and others to collect data on the following topics:

- Service provision, including road maintenance, emergency services, plumbing inspections, and solid waste disposal
- Recreational resources

- Natural resources
- Infrastructure
- Population and demographic information
- Conservation land

C. Panel Discussions and Commission Presentations

To help introduce issues that may be relevant to the CLUP update, staff are planning a series of panel discussions for upcoming Commission meetings. These panels would bring together relevant subject matter experts, potentially including but not limited to landowners, community members, county governments, regional planning organizations, nongovernmental organizations, representatives of other state government agencies, and others. The format of the presentations and discussions will likely vary by topic, with the goal of providing opportunities for Commissioners to ask questions to help broaden everyone's understanding of particular topics or issues.

The plan is to host one panel every (or every other) Commission meeting. Panel members would have time for a brief introduction to their subject matter area of expertise before holding a dialogue with Commissioners to explore the subjects more deeply. Each panel would be focused on a specific topic area, such as:

- Forestry: forest health, timber production, and wildfire
- Roads and transportation
- Housing and development
- Considerations for landowners
- Lakes
- Sea level rise, coastal flooding, and storm surge
- Agriculture
- Recreation
- Inland waterways and riverine issues such as flooding and warming waters
- Energy development
- Land and wildlife conservation
- Others?

If Commissioners believe these panel discussions would be helpful, staff can begin planning these events. The number of panels, topics, and priority of topics can be adjusted depending on Commissioner feedback at the upcoming meeting and the availability and willingness of potential speakers to participate (more on this below).

D. Future Pre-Process Components

Possible guiding principles for the update process were introduced in December and will be presented for discussion at an upcoming Commission meeting. Commission staff are also planning for the distribution of a public survey, followed by facilitated public workshops next winter and spring. Survey questions will be generated with information learned through

interviews, data analysis, and Commission panel discussions. The survey will be distributed via the CLUP update website (to be developed). One or more public workshops or community meetings are planned, where participants can give feedback on the information learned to date, introduce new issues or ideas, reflect on guiding principles for the update process, and offer thoughts on update process models. Staff are currently working to secure funding and partnerships to carry out these components and have already begun discussions with potential partners.

Anticipated end products for the pre-process include:

1. A foundation of data and information about the LUPC service area, including better quality permit data, stakeholder values/interests/perspectives, natural resource and development data, feedback on LUPC policies and practices;
2. Established mechanisms for delivering data and information, and garnering feedback, such as through an interactive survey and website;
3. Adoption of guiding principles for the CLUP update process;
4. A list of key topics/issues to address through CLUP goals, policies, and implementation measures; and
5. A recommended proposal for the update process for Commission consideration.

Staff will report on pre-process components as work continues, and a website is under construction to post findings, reports, and relevant process information for public engagement.

E. Proposed Timeline

To Do Item	2025												2026								
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Data collection, analysis, reporting																					
Perspective Interviews																					
Commission Meetings																					
Public Survey																					
Facilitated Workshops																					
CLUP Process Proposal																					

III. COMMISSIONER FEEDBACK

Staff would like feedback on the following:

1. Potential additions to the list of key perspectives and contacts; and
2. Potential interest in panel discussions during upcoming Commission meetings, and input on the topics, priorities, and preferred structure.

Attachments:

- A. Sample questions asked during outreach interviews

ATTACHMENT A
Sample Questions
for Pre-process Interviews

Questions:

1. What is happening in your area of expertise?
2. What are the issues you are currently focused on?
3. What data are important for understanding the issue(s)? Is this data available to share?
4. Who else should we talk to?
5. Is there any information you would like to have from the LUPC?
6. Do you have recommendations for developing a CLUP update process?
7. How do you reach people in your region?
8. Can you recommend a facilitator or funding sources?
9. What should the guiding principles be for the update process?
10. What does success mean to you?
11. How often do you visit the LUPC website? Any thoughts or suggestions?