

# The Role of Farmland in 30x30



# 30x30 is going to take some work.

New funding, new programs, new ideas, new structures have to be on the table.

Strategic thinking on these new initiatives is essential:



**A long way to 30%**

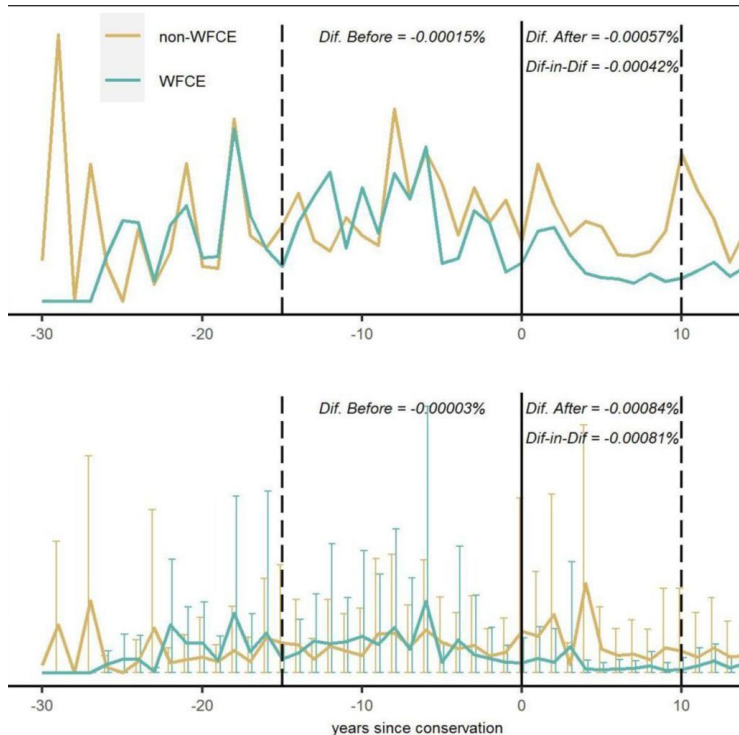


**Too much at stake**



**Too good of an opportunity**

# Targeted Deployment of Conservation Dollars



The easiest way  $\neq$  the most impactful.

The track record of large Working Forest Easements is questionable in some ecological outcomes:

- preventing forest loss (top)
- minimizing unsustainable harvest rates (bottom)

Do Working Forest Easements Work for Conservation?

Jonathan Thompson, Alexey Kalinin, Lucy Lee, Valerie Pasquarella, Joshua Plisinski, Katharine

R.E. Sims - Harvard Forest, 2023

# The Weakest Links of the Chain

## Farmland

(Between 3.8% and 0.7% of Farmland is protected.)



## Wildlands

(3.8% of forests are protected with harvest prohibitions.)



## What does an expanded investment in Farmland Protection allow us to do?

- **Ending Hunger by 2030**

A food system with diverse pathways to land access is better equipped to contribute to the root causes of poverty and hunger: food access, rural employment, diversity of ownership.

- **Land Access for Indigenous & African American Farmers in Maine**

Public investment in farmland protection can provide an opportunity to incentivize acquisition or ownership in line with stated policy goals. Diversified ownership of land and enterprises has proven to be an effective anti-hunger intervention.

- **Reduction in Carbon Emissions**

Local supply chains are intrinsically less dependent on carbon-intensive distribution channels.



- **An off-ramp for an aging demographic.**

Funding opportunities allow for a new generation to start and grow farm businesses as commodity production becomes increasingly consolidated and precarious (potatoes, dairy).

- **Essential counterpart to ongoing processing investments.**

AIPP + CARES Funding through DACF

Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund

- **Valuable component of natural landscapes and habitat.**

A landscape that accounts for wild spaces, managed woodlands, farmlands, and centralized communities provides the ecological diversity our native species thrive in; and is an essential element of the character of our state that is, at least recently, attracting essential new residents.

# Getting it right vs. getting there fast.

Public investment in protecting natural resources should include mechanisms to represent the public interest.

- **Where does the public's money end up? Large landowners vs. small holders. REIT vs. communities.**
- **Public investment that allows for degradation of an essential resource should be a last resort to stave off development pressure (over harvests, topsoil loss etc.)**
- **It's worth spending the money to acquire an interest that allows for future leverage vs. fast acquisitions (Easements alone vs. Easements + OPAVs, eg.)**
- **Conservation protections should not inherently prohibit unexpected but valuable uses (Indigenous-owned land protects 80+% of global biodiversity and is an incompatible end use for many traditional conservation mechanisms within the state).**

# From 3% to X% of Farmland Protected

Codifying OPAVs

Reviewing existing process for improvements and alignment:

- ME at the bottom of federal ACEP \$ in NE
- 2 years to close w/ WFAPP

We're playing catch up to development  
Lean in to the economic justification

The population and buying power in southern New England depends on food and forest products from ME.

## Keep the Land Open, Structural Reform

Statutory Adjustments  
Farm Viability Investments

## Expand the Toolbox

Funding consistency and volume  
Adopt other models from around New England

## Regional Integration

New England-wide partnerships  
Regional infrastructure

Expand appropriations in existing farm support programs (FFF, dairy subsidies)  
Leverage social support dollars where they impact farm viability (nutrition incentive programs, rural housing)

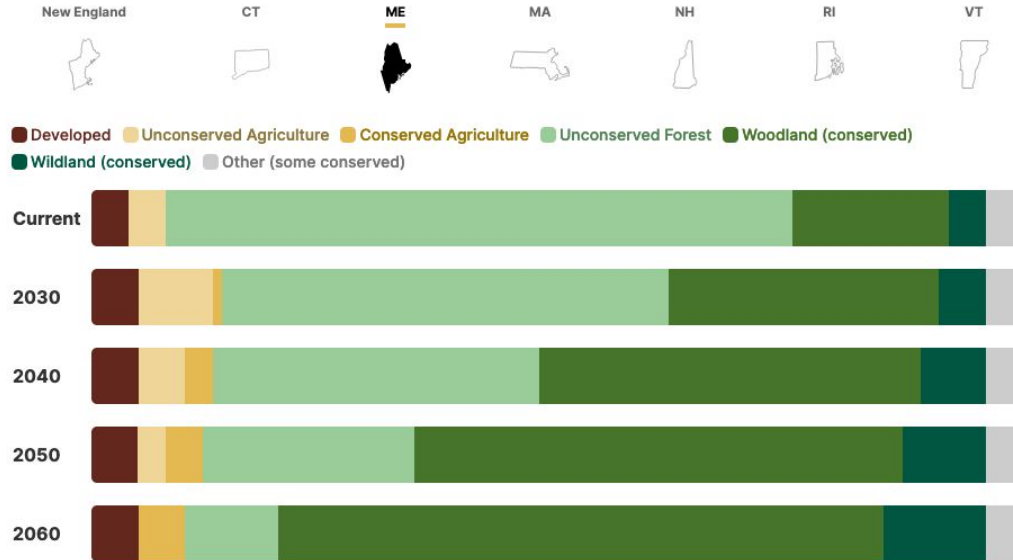
MA and CT hold easements or farms in fee and have 12 and 6 staff respectively (ME at .5 FTE)

RI, VT and, as of 2024, NH have public farmland protection boards to administer farmland protection \$ directly.

Regional dollars and collaborations are behind the direction of our energy grid, forest ownership and farmland resources right now; structures to influence their shape and design can emerge across state lines.



## Conservation Targets by Land Types and State



[View Land Type Descriptions](#)

\*Note: These figures are based on Harvard Forest (2030-2060) projections starting with the 2019 National Land Cover Database and are rounded for display. The goal for wildland conservation is for at least 10% in wildland preserves, with many organizations pursuing higher