

**Maine Climate Council
Natural and Working Lands Work Group Meeting
Tuesday, April 30, 2024; 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
Marquardt Building, Room 118, Blossom Lane, Augusta**

For Zoom attendees, register in advance HERE:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcpd-mhrj8rGtUvNm7eHZZjWaYCiF-sgo-k>

Desired Outcomes - By the end of this meeting, we will have:

- Heard initial feedback from the Mitchell Center on its outreach to priority populations
- Finalized the Work Group recommendations
- Provided input into Deliverables Template questions focused on Equity and Metrics
- Provided an opportunity for public input

Agenda

What	When
Welcome – co-Chairs Tom Abello, Amanda Beal Agenda and Working Agreements Review	10:00 – 10:05
Preliminary Feedback from Priority Population - Dr. Caroline Noblet and Louise Chaplin, Mitchell Center	10:05 – 10:50
Finalization of Recommendations	10:50 – 11:40
Break	11:40 – 11:50
Deliverable Template Questions on Priority Populations and Measuring Outcomes	11:50 – 12:40
Public Input	12:40 – 12:50
Final meeting: May 15, 10 am – 1 pm, Deering 101 NWL Work Group information, meeting dates: https://www.maine.gov/future/climate/council/workinggroups/lands	12:50 – 1:00

Note: Agenda item times are subject to change based on the progress of the group

Maine Climate Council Natural and Working Lands Working Group Membership List

Co-Chairs

Tom Abello	Governor's Office
Amanda Beal	Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF)

Members

Bethany Atkins	Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW)
Sen. Richard Bennett	Maine State Senate
Adam Bishop	Maine Farmland Trust
Hannah Carter	University of Maine
Rep. Dean Cray	Maine State House of Representatives
Andy Cutko	DACF Bureau of Parks and Lands
Norm Daigle	Hannaford Supermarkets
Phillip deMaynadier	DIFW Wildlife Division
Molly Docherty	DACF Maine Natural Areas Program
Dana Doran	Professional Logging Contractors of the Northeast
Maureen Drouin	Maine Conservation Voters
Ivan Fernandez	University of Maine
Ellen Griswold	Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment
Ches Gundrum	Maine Audubon Society
Bethany Humphrey	The Climate Initiative
Sen. Henry Ingwersen	Maine State Senate
Tony Jenkins	USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
Gary Lamb	Hallowell City Manager
Craig Lapine	DACF Bureau of Agriculture, Food & Rural Resources
Melissa Law	Bumbleroot Organic Farm
John Naylor	Rosemont Market
Rep. Margaret O'Neil	Maine State House of Representatives
Darren Ranco	University of Maine
Kaethe Rice	Waterville High School
Jeff Romano	Maine Coast Heritage Trust
Johnny Sanchez	Food and Medicine
Silvan Shawe	Cultivating Community
Heather Spalding	Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association
Pat Strauch	Maine Forest Products Council
Karin Tilberg	Forest Society of Maine
David Trahan	Sportsman's Alliance of Maine
Carol Weymouth	Maine Association of Conservation Districts

Staff

Jo D. Saffier	DACF Commissioner's Office
Tom Gordon	DACF Commissioner's Office

Working Agreements

- Meetings will start and end on time.
- When meetings are held in person, Committee members will make every effort to attend in person to maximize learning, communication, and collaboration.
- Cameras will remain on during virtual meetings to facilitate communication and understanding.
- Meeting materials will be shared in advance of meetings with sufficient time for review.
- Come prepared, having read meeting materials and completed assignments.
- Be present and engaged.
- Strive for equal airtime, enabling all to participate fully.
- Listen with curiosity and an openness to learning and understanding.
- Adopt a creative problem-solving orientation.
- Name the tension, kindly.
- Humor is welcome!

The Natural and Working Lands Work Group will strive for consensus in its recommendations through a facilitated, discussion-based process, and will not hold votes on specific decisions. The Work Group may choose to include a significant minority opinion as part of its final recommendations.

Proposed Additional Introductory Paragraph
to Unify the 3 Subgroup Introductions in the Final Submission

The Natural and Working Lands Work Group selected three of its original recommendations to define further through the 2024 update to Maine Won't Wait. Maine's significant undeveloped land base consisting of working forests, active agricultural land, and natural lands is the envy of the region and the nation. These lands play an essential role in sequestering carbon, offsetting Maine's greenhouse gas emissions, supporting a vibrant local food system, and providing essential habitat for biodiversity protection and species migration, all necessary attributes to mitigate and adapt to climate change. These expanded recommendations identify the most promising approaches Maine can take to increase protected land, local food consumption, and forest carbon sequestration. While the recommendations are distinct, there are commonalities in approach. Collectively, they require a commitment to and investments in research and monitoring, expanded capacity, technical support, incentives, planning, public engagement, stewardship and long-term funding. With these further investments, the state can maximize the potential of its natural and working lands to mitigate climate change and support community and natural resource resilience.

30% Land Sub-Group Recommendations

April 30, 2024 DRAFT

Introduction

The Natural and Working Lands Working Group reviewed *Strategy E, Recommendation 1- Protect Natural and Working Lands and Waters from Maine Won't Wait*:

- *Increase by 2030 the total acreage of conserved lands in the state to 30% through voluntary, focused purchases of land and working forest or farm conservation easements.*
- *Additional targets should be identified in partnership with stakeholders to develop specific sub-groups for these conserved land for Maine's forest cover, agriculture lands and coastal areas.*
- *Focus conservation on high biodiversity areas to support land and water connectivity and ecosystem health.*

Maine is a land rich in contrasts between the boreal and temperate, freshwater and saltwater, upland and wetland, alpine and lowlands. The State's 33,315 square miles includes 17.5 million acres of forestland interspersed with rugged mountains, over 700,000 acres of productive farmland, more than 5,600 lakes and ponds, roughly 5 million acres of wetlands, 31,800 miles of rivers and streams, 4,100 miles of coastline, and 4,613 coastal islands. Most of Maine's conserved lands consist of large working forest easements in northern and eastern Maine. Southern Maine, with a higher population density and numerous biodiversity 'hot spots,' has a lower proportion of conserved lands. Maine has been most successful in conserving wetlands and mountaintops with high ecological, scenic, and recreational values. Compared to forestlands and wetlands, farmland conservation lags significantly behind, with only 3.5% conserved.

The *Maine Won't Wait* 2023 Update notes that 4,357,462 acres, or 22.2% of Maine, are permanently conserved through fee and/or easement. Over recent years, Maine has conserved about 50,000 acres annually; to reach the 30% goal, this rate will need to increase *nearly fivefold*. Our sub-group recognized that the 2030 goal should represent a milestone rather than an end in itself – land conservation will surely need to continue beyond 2030.

The following is a collaboratively developed definition for 'conserved lands' to be counted for the 2030 goal:

"Conserved Lands" means any land in a primarily natural or traditionally managed condition that is both durably* protected and managed to provide or maintain ecosystem services, climate resiliency, or cultural values. These services and values include equitably and inclusively supporting Maine's economy, providing drinking water, ensuring food security, conserving biodiversity, and providing recreational opportunities.

Andy Cutko: Note comments on definition from MFPC

**Durable includes lands under permanent fee or conservation easements (meeting GAP status 1-39 in the Maine Conservation Lands GIS layer) or natural and traditionally managed lands identified in government-to-government relationships with Wabanaki tribes. Durable lands do not include temporary protections by such tools as, for example, lease agreements, shoreland or municipal land use restrictions, carbon offset projects, or areas enrolled in tree growth or other open space current use tax law provisions.*

Although this focuses on permanent land conservation, other programs play an important role in maintaining Maine’s landscape in compatible land uses. These compatible land uses include many municipally owned lands and Tree Growth, Open Space, and Farmland ‘current use’ tax programs. Collectively, these compatible land uses, together with permanently conserved lands, account for 65.9% of Maine. (Note that although the definition above suggests the inclusion of tribally owned lands, the 65.9% figure excludes approximately 330,000 acres of those~~This figure excludes ~330,000 acres of tribally owned~~ lands, which comprise 1.7% of the state. The role of tribal lands and tribal interests/needs in state land conservation needs further discussion and engagement with tribes.). One suggestion for tracking this ‘compatible land use’ statistic is to recommend no net loss.

Sub-group discussions also touched on a wide range of related topics, including the importance of the forest economy (and balance between reserves and working forests), recognizing other community needs (e.g., housing, economic growth), workforce housing for conservation employees, and the role of equity in public access to lands and funding.

Recommendation 1: Priorities

Focus land protection efforts in areas with high biodiversity value, high carbon storage and sequestration, cultural and economic importance, and/or which offer opportunities to improve public access equitably.

***Metric:** Through voluntary, focused purchases of land and conservation easements, increase the area of conserved lands in Maine by at least 1.5 million acres by December 2030 with the following targets in mind:*

- Conserve land within Beginning with Habitat Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance, add new state and private-owned ecological reserves (including high carbon forests), and increase fee and easement conservation for important terrestrial and aquatic areas that ensure landscape-level connectivity as identified through efforts such as a new Landscape Conservation Design (referenced as an action item in the recommendation on increasing capacity).
- Conserve lands that fill gaps in equity for land use and access, including working waterfronts and properties that support the goals of and secure land to the Wabanaki tribes of Maine; establish open space opportunities for Maine residents located within a 10-minute walk of where they live; and construct ADA-accessible trails and boat access within 10 miles of Maine population centers.
- Sustain ecosystem services and lands needed for carbon storage and sequestration and natural resource-based industries by securing significant and well-distributed working forest conservation, including productive lands for storage and sequestration and durable wood product production; and complete fee and easement conservation of source drinking water watersheds (including for Portland and Lewiston-Auburn) to ensure water quality without additional water treatment measures.

Andy Cutko: OSI suggests maintaining 75% forest cover in public supply watersheds

Recommendation 2: Funding

Significantly expand the funding and funding eligibility for fee and easement acquisition through existing and new land conservation programs, including the Land for Maine’s Future Program.

Metric: By December 2025, Maine has established permanent conservation funding that generates at least \$50 million per year).

Andy Cutko: Opinions vary on this number, with ranges from \$15 to \$125 million.

- Establish permanent and ongoing funding for the Land for Maine’s Future Program; consider a variety of mechanisms, including mitigation funding, real estate transfer tax, re-allocation of sporting goods or rooms and meals tax, enhancing dedicated funds for deer yards (as an umbrella habitat for many species), and others (in part) to create a match for federal funds.

Andy Cutko: OSI suggests incentives for stream buffers. MFPC suggests deleting umbrella habitat reference

- Advocate for increased, sustained, and more flexible federal conservation funding that supports state, tribal, and non-governmental efforts (e.g., a new Forest Conservation Easement Program). Examples of critical funding include the Forest Legacy Program, Pittman-Robinson Funds, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Land and Water Conservation Fund, and others.
- Streamline state processes for conservation funding and grant review, approval, and administration.

Recommendation 3: Capacity

Expand public and private capacity to support all conservation acquisition and stewardship elements, including participatory planning efforts, acquisition and due diligence, ongoing land management and monitoring, and program evaluation and accountability.

Metric: By 2030 (and using 2023 as a baseline), increase the conservation acquisition and stewardship staff of land management agencies in proportion to the acreage of land owned, under easement, and other legal stewardship responsibilities, and develop a plan for long-term land uses for the state of Maine.

- Ensure agency staffing keeps pace with acquisition and stewardship responsibilities, including land acquisition, grant, database administration, land management, and monitoring.
- Create incentives to expand the network of land acquisition contractors, including appraisers, surveyors, and legal services, and recruit conservation workers (land stewards, park rangers, foresters, ecologists) that reflect the diversity of current and future generations.

- Over the next three years, state agencies will work with a coalition of partners and large landowners, as well as Wabanaki tribes in government-to-government relationships, to develop a non-regulatory statewide Landscape Conservation Design that sets targets to and beyond 2030 for biodiversity conservation and management, identifies corridors for species movement resulting from climate change, respects individual management objectives of private landowners and identifies lands and waters necessary for maintaining vital natural resource-based economies.

Andy Cutko: MFPC suggests deletion of this language, as well as other edits

Recommendation 4: Farmland

Safeguard the state’s agricultural resources by doubling the permanently protected farmland in Maine by 2030 through a comprehensive and collaborative strategy that brings increased state funding, capacity, and new strategies to this work.

Metric: By December 2030, Maine will invest 100M toward permanent conservation of at least 7% of its presently undeveloped farmland. It has an established strategy to carry this work forward, with a goal of no net loss of farmland.

- Establish a well-funded, sufficiently staffed, stand-alone state program or mechanism (in addition to Land for Maine’s Future) to prioritize the efficient flow of farmland conservation resources in collaboration with non-profit and federal partners, which includes both traditional easement acquisition as well as seamless support for alternative methods of protecting farmland outside of the process (Buy/Protect/Support/Sell, community land trust/non-profit acquisitions, etc.).
- Commission a Maine Farmland Action Plan to articulate goals and strategies regarding Maine’s farmland resource and agricultural economy beyond 2030, identifying the highest priority lands to secure against nonagricultural development along with affordable and achievable pathways to farmland access and development of practical tools and programs for supporting Maine’s agricultural economy.
- Recognizing that farmland viability is critical to this recommendation, expand funding for state programming and infrastructure (such as grant, loan, and assistance programs) that have a tangible, positive impact on farm viability in Maine.

Deliverable Template Questions:

1. Impacts – How do the recommendation and its actions address Maine’s four climate goals?

Mitigation: Maine’s natural landscape is vital to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions: each year, Maine's forests sequester an amount of carbon equal to at least 60 percent of the state's annual carbon emissions, a figure that rises to 75 percent when durable forest products are included. In addition, conserved lands also provide innumerable other benefits – maintaining wildlife habitat, ensuring clean water, providing access to food, and creating recreational opportunities that support the physical and mental health of all Mainers. Preserving land prevents conversion to other uses that

would typically result in higher energy use and emissions rates. An increase in climate-friendly farming practices on permanently conserved farmland can enhance long-term carbon sequestration in soils, helping to mitigate an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

Workforce and Economic Opportunity: Maine’s natural landscapes are central to the state’s economy and high quality of life. Maine’s outdoor economy provides \$3.3 billion through jobs and tourism dollars. Additional conserved lands will support the health of these industries. Farmland conservation investments provide critical capital for farm businesses, supporting infrastructure and equipment improvements and reducing debt. Purchased agricultural conservation easements directly support the viability of the farm economy, often leading to opportunities for new and beginning farmers to develop their businesses.

One challenge related to the conservation workforce is the need for more affordable housing for seasonal workers, particularly in southern and coastal Maine. Similarly, wages for entry-level workers can create challenges for workforce recruitment and retention. Agencies and organizations involved in hiring should create incentives and best recruitment practices **that increase the number of conservation workers and increase access to conservation careers for priority populations.**

Andy Cutko: A further NWL group suggestion related to an analysis of hiring barriers.

Resilience:

Conserved lands increase the resilience of the landscape. Healthy and intact ecosystems are less susceptible to pests, and conserved lands provide important buffers to flood waters, rising sea levels, and other natural disasters, including fire. They allow habitat connectivity, essential for shifting species ranges from warming climate conditions. In addition, farmland conservation contributes to the resilience of Maine’s local food system in the face of future climate-related disruptions to the global supply chain.

Equity: Future conservation must consider equitable land access for underserved populations and communities. There is also an interest in expanding conservation opportunities for Wabanaki tribes. Affordable and equitable land access in the agricultural space has been and will continue to be accomplished primarily through farmland conservation and the purchase of conservation easements. The purchase of agricultural conservation easements and associated farmland conservation tools are often used to conserve land, make land affordable, and help lower-income and socially disadvantaged populations overcome the lack of capital as a land access barrier. As the pace for agricultural land conservation expands, affordable and equitable land access opportunities will also be critical as farmers of color and New American farmers continue to seek avenues to participate in Maine’s food system.

Proven Strategy and Feasibility: Maine has an excellent track record of federal funding, collaboration among public agencies and conservation groups, and public support for conservation. Maine also has property owners typically willing to engage in conservation alternatives for their land—in other words, the project ‘pipeline’ presents opportunities for increased conservation. However, the feasibility of the 30% goal is dependent on funding and capacity. We estimate that up to *\$1.5 billion* of funding could be required over six years (with an average land cost of \$1,000/acre).

2. Cross-over – Does the recommendation and its actions involve other working groups?

Coastal and Marine: Funding for land conservation will likely include properties that conserve coastal ecosystems and working waterfronts.

Resilience: In particular, projects emphasizing habitat connectivity, landform diversity, and land conservation will support ecological resilience. The Community Resilience Work Group would be another cross-over group, as they look at human populations and vulnerabilities to climate-related disasters, e.g., flooding, wildfire, and human health.

3. Priority Populations – What priority populations are impacted by this recommendation and its actions, and how?

Populations: Efforts to fund land conservation should recognize the importance of low-income and marginalized populations, particularly those with limited access to conserved lands and conservation funding. In addition, consideration should be given to expanding funding for land conservation opportunities for Wabanaki tribes. Regarding increased farmland conservation, in line with recent experience and trends, affordable and equitable land access opportunities will increase for low-income and socially disadvantaged groups (including BIOPC and New American farmers)

4. Timeframe – What is the timeframe for this recommendation and its actions to implement and realize outcomes?

Efforts should be made to identify and create a permanent land conservation funding mechanism by the end of 2025. Recognizing the need for the pace of farmland conservation to rapidly increase to bring Maine in line with the rest of the northeast, investment is needed immediately to achieve the goal of doubling the amount of farmland protected in Maine by 2030.

5. Implementation – what next steps are required to implement this recommendation and its actions?

- Legislative action would be needed to create permanent state funding sources to conserve lands and farms. Legislative action would also be needed to increase ‘head count’ to boost state agency capacity.
- Incentives may be needed to increase the number of appraisers, surveyors, and legal staff required for due diligence efforts.
- Advocacy will be needed to maintain or increase various federal land and farm conservation funding programs.
- Collaboration and teamwork will be needed among public agencies, conservation groups, and landowners.

6. Measuring Outcomes – how will this recommendation and its actions be measured, and how will effectiveness be evident?

The Maine Climate Council currently has a dashboard metric for conserved lands based on the Conserved Lands GIS data layer administered by DACF. Various other databases and GIS layers maintained by DACF and DIFW track progress on land conservation and protection of specific habitats.

30% Maine Food by 2030 Subgroup

Working Group Recommended Climate Recommendations,
Actions and Measurable Outcomes

WORKING GROUP DELIVERABLE TEMPLATE

April 22, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Natural and Working Lands Work Group identified specific actions to accomplish the Maine Won't Wait goal of increasing the amount of food consumed in Maine from state food producers to 30% by 2030 through local food system development.

About a third of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are linked to food¹. Moreover, climate-related disruptions pose a serious threat to the production and transportation of food around the globe. That makes strengthening Maine's food system a fundamental climate strategy for no fewer than three reasons: we can reduce the climate impacts of transporting food long distances, we can reduce dependence on fragile global supply chains, and we can enhance the state's ability to support climate-friendly agricultural practices – a power that is largely lost with imported food.

The overarching recommendation to accomplish this goal is to create a state-level food plan; this is a necessary precursor to strategic improvements in Maine's food system. The working group acknowledged that there have been important, NGO-led food system planning efforts in Maine, and that the state itself has created plans for aspects of Maine's food system—notably a plan to reduce food insecurity and a plan to support the marine economy. However, the state has no comprehensive plan for its food system, a system that impacts every resident and two significant heritage industries. A food planning process involving the state, the University of Maine, and other key institutional players will have the capacity to bring together a broad range of stakeholders and collect baseline information about local food production and consumption. It will also include recommended policies, expanded funding mechanisms, new programs, and additional cooperation, which the state, businesses, and non-profits will implement. While the creation of this plan is underway, the recommendations to increase the viability of food businesses and ensure that more consumers can access local food can be implemented.

~~The 30% Maine Food by 2030 subgroup focused on identifying recommendations and actions that would enable 30% percent of the food that Mainers consume to come from Maine.~~

¹ United Nations (n.d.). *Food and Climate Change: Healthy diets for a healthier planet*. Climate Action. Retrieved April 22, 2024, from <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/food#:~:text=Food%20needs%20to%20be%20grown,emissions%20is%20linked%20to%20food.>

~~The subgroup consisted of 33 members and met four times, twice in person with a remote option, and twice exclusively remotely. In addition, 30 members of the public attended one or more meetings.~~

~~In the first meeting, the attendees came to a collective understanding of the barriers to achieving 30% Maine Food by 2030 as well as the strengths, successes, and opportunities in the Maine food system. The following meetings focused on identifying, refining, and prioritizing recommendations and actions needed to leverage our strengths, overcome the barriers, and reach the goal. To supplement these discussions, invited experts spoke about topics that overlapped with the draft recommendations including consumer perceptions and preferences around local foods, opportunities for cooperative models, the impact of seafood on the food system, and New England state food plans.~~

~~Some limitations to the subgroup's efforts included a lack of baseline data and clarity on how to measure the 30% Maine food goal. (For example, consumption can be tracked by dollars, pounds, or calories, and each would result in a different percentage of Maine food in Maine diets.) Lacking confidence in measures of the percentage of Maine food Mainers currently consume made it difficult to assess whether this goal is realistic. Creating a definition of Maine food, included below as a suggested action, will increase accuracy when collecting local food consumption data in the future.~~

~~The 30% Maine Food by 2030 subgroup made recommendations addressing the components or phases of our food system. That is, the group advanced recommendations addressing production, processing, distribution, access, and consumption. The group also advanced a single overarching recommendation that could be considered a necessary precursor to success for the other recommendations—creating a state level food plan. A state food plan would encompass inventories of funding and technical assistance opportunities, and food system infrastructure, which will help to identify gaps and barriers. It will also enable the state to collaboratively set strategic food system goals. Through identifying the goals and barriers, the state food plan will create a more comprehensive list of action items. This process—tackled by other New England states—may take time, so the group has also listed more immediate goals that don't require a longer term identification process. These include increasing the viability of food businesses and ensuring that more consumers can access, and are interested in consuming, local food.~~

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

1. Create a Maine Food Plan
 - a. Identify funding for the state food planning process and identify key goals for the plan.
 - b. Align food plan recommendations with those of existing Maine strategic plans.
 - b-c. Center community involvement, in particular youth and priority populations, in plan creation.
 - e-d. Create a local food definition that can be adopted and used statewide.

2. Strengthen the viability of Maine farms, fisheries, and other food producers through expanded and ongoing access to funding, technical assistance, and processing and distribution infrastructure.
 - a. Maintain and expand access to farmland, working waterfront, and other key pieces of the food supply chain infrastructure.
 - b. Establish permanent funding for the state to help producers navigate the technical assistance and funding opportunities available throughout the state.
 - c. Create an inventory of the current food processing, storage, and aggregation capacities and evaluate the infrastructure gaps and needs.
 - d. Establish permanent funding for infrastructure development that aligns with the scale, geography, and food type needs and increase the capacity of the Maine Agriculture, Food and Forest Products Investment Fund.
 - e. Target funding to support producers in adopting climate change mitigation and resilience strategies including the Maine Healthy Soils Program.
3. Create more Maine markets for Maine producers and increase access to Maine food.
 - a. Develop a marketing plan to increase the consumption of Maine food. The plan will align Real Maine and the Seafood Directory to the goals of 30% Maine food by 2030. The marketing plan will enable state departments, agencies, and interested groups to communicate a unified message to identify Maine food and its value to the economy, nutrition, and the climate. Part of the plan will educate consumers and food service directors about local food preparation.
 - b. Support producers to diversify market channels and identify and connect with profitable Maine markets for their products.
 - c. Increase funding for food equity programs such as local school food programs, nutrition incentive programs, and Maine Senior Farm Share. Create additional programs to reach underserved populations, including seniors.

ANALYSIS AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

For each recommendation and its respective set of actions, provide concise analysis using the questions below. Analysis should focus mostly on new recommendations and significant revisions to existing recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Create a Maine Food Plan

1. **Impacts - Describe the recommended recommendation and its actions and how they address Maine's four climate goals – *reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing resilience, creating economic opportunity, and achieving equity through Maine's climate response.***

If 30% of food purchased in the state were grown, fished, and raised in Maine, climate change impacts would be reduced, primarily by reducing the greenhouse gas emissions associated with long-distance food transportation. Increasing Maine's food production with a focus on local

markets will strengthen the resiliency of our food system in the face of inevitable future climate-driven disruptions.

Increasing the number of consumers of Maine food and the amount they purchase will strengthen the economic viability of the farms throughout the state, an important natural heritage industry. Many producers could scale up, enabling them to hire more workers which would help to strengthen rural communities.

The state is known for small, diversified farms. These farmers are good stewards of the land who use a variety of practices to increase the health of the soil, air, and water. Keeping land in farming helps ensure that the land won't be used in ways that would negatively impact the environment and climate change.

Increasing local food availability will enable all people in Maine to have access to high-quality, nutritious, and delicious food as Maine has the capacity to produce enough local food to supply a much larger proportion of Mainer's diets.

[Food system questions evoked the most passionate engagement from youth participants and we recommend that engagement be encouraged and leverage through a youth-centered planning process.](#)

2. Cross-over - Does the recommended recommendation involve other working groups/sectors?

Coastal and Marine Working Group
Waste Management Working Group
30% Land by 2030 Subgroup

How did the Working Group coordinate with others around these overlaps?

The Working Group coordinators met with the coordinators of the three relevant Working Groups and look forward to sharing recommendations.

3. Priority Populations - Consider the priority populations impacted or affected by this recommended recommendation.

Many people from priority populations are food insecure and many work in the farming, fishing, food processing, and food distribution industries. Strengthening the local food system will positively impact many priority populations by increasing economic activity and making healthy, local food more accessible.

Many farms and food processing businesses are in rural areas with limited access to public transportation. Most farms in Maine are small businesses and many farm owners earn below the poverty line. Farm workers and food processing workers are often low-income, migrant workers, new Mainers, undocumented workers, and members of tribal nations. Investments in these businesses will improve their economic sustainability, enabling them to flourish and expand.

Supporting local food producers will make local food more available and accessible. There will need to be continued focus to ensure that local food is affordable and accessible to everyone throughout the state.

This subgroup had little input from priority populations. Those invited from priority populations could not attend because of time constraints. We hope the Mitchell Center process will help fill these gaps and strengthen these recommendations.

4. Timeframe - What is the timeframe for this recommendation and its actions?

All of these actions could be implemented in the short term. The outcomes for creating a local food definition will be realized in the mid-term while the outcomes from creating a food plan will be seen in the long term.

5. Implementation Next Steps - What types of next steps would be required to implement the recommendation?

- Legislation, rules/regulation, internal program guidance changes
- Establishment of a new program or a fund,
- Conduct additional research
- Provide education or training
- Coordinate with other parties/agencies/states
- Other (please describe)

Please provide some detail around these steps. If possible, identify specific actors who would lead in the implementation of the recommendation and actions.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension has secured funding for some aspects of a strategic food plan. The state could collaborate with the university to create a more comprehensive plan. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry will identify additional funding for the state food plan and will work with state, federal, private, and philanthropic funders to leverage additional funds.

The planning process will provide an opportunity to coordinate activities outside DACF across other state agencies, including DECD, DHHS, DOE, DMR, and others, to ensure that the plan aligns with the goals and plans of those agencies. The process can also leverage and support the ongoing work of non-state entities, including the Maine Food Strategy, Focus Maine, CEI, New England Food Planners Partnership, and others.

DACF will endorse the report's findings, identify funds to implement the recommendations, and work with food system partners to act on the recommendations. Outputs will include key food system infrastructure inventories and a Maine food system data dashboard.

DACF will organize a work group to develop a definition of local food. The work group will include consumers and grocery and institutional buyers and will learn from New England states that have implemented local food definitions.

**6. Measuring Outcomes - How will you know the recommended recommendation is effective?
*Are outcomes measurable using current monitoring/data collection? Are there benchmarks or short-term indicators of success?***

A state-level food plan will enable the state to make strategic decisions about strengthening the Maine food system. The state will have metrics by which to evaluate funding priorities. The outcome will be that the Maine food system is more equitable, financially sustainable, and environmentally sustainable.

Outcomes include increasing the economic strength and diversity of the Maine food system. Farmers and food producers will reduce their impact on climate change and increase their ability to adapt to climate disruptions. Local food sales at all market channels will increase and local food access and public health outcomes will improve.

The Maine food system will become better networked, with various businesses, agencies, and nonprofits understanding how their work fits together and leads to common goals. Policies will be implemented to remove barriers and build on opportunities in the Maine food system.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Strengthen the viability of Maine farms, fisheries, and other food producers through expanded and ongoing access to funding, technical assistance, and processing and distribution infrastructure.

1. Impacts - Describe the recommended recommendation and its actions and how they address Maine's four climate goals – reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing resilience, creating economic opportunity, and achieving equity through Maine's climate response.

Same as Recommendation 1.

2. Cross-over - Does the recommended recommendation involve other working groups/sectors?

Same as Recommendation 1.

3. Priority Populations - Consider the priority populations impacted or affected by this recommended recommendation.

Same as Recommendation 1.

4. Timeframe - What is the timeframe for this recommendation and its actions?

All the actions can be implemented in the short-term aside from maintaining and expanding access to farmland and the working waterfront, will take place in the mid-term. Realizing the outcomes of

creating an inventory of the food processing and storage facilities will take place in the short term while the outcomes of establishing targeted funding streams will take place in the mid-term. The outcomes of expanding access to farmland and the working waterfront will be realized in the long term.

5. Implementation Next Steps - What types of next steps would be required to implement the recommendation?

- Legislation, rules/regulation, internal program guidance changes
- Establishment of a new program or a fund,
- Conduct additional research
- Provide education or training
- Coordinate with other parties/agencies/states
- Other (please describe)

Please provide some detail around these steps. If possible, identify specific actors who would lead in the implementation of the recommendation and actions.

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry will lead many of these efforts in collaboration with Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Department of Economic and Community Development, and the Division of Marine Resources. In addition, DACF will work with non-profit technical assistance providers including MOFGA, Maine Farmland Trust, and others. They will also collaborate with funders, such as Community Development Financial Institutions, including CEI; local credit unions, including Farm Credit East; and philanthropic organizations, including those in the Maine Food Funders Network.

6. Measuring Outcomes - How will you know the recommended recommendation is effective? *Are outcomes measurable using current monitoring/data collection? Are there benchmarks or short-term indicators of success?*

These actions will enable businesses that grow, raise, produce, harvest, catch, and distribute food to be more financially and environmentally sustainable. It will be important to capture baseline measurements of economic and sustainability indicators and then track these over time. These measurements may include the number of farms and food businesses, the profitability of farms and food businesses, the amount of food produced, and the number of people employed in the food sector. It will also be useful to measure the amount of funds distributed and the number of recipients and the return on investment of that funding.

Regarding sustainability measures, acres of land in conservation, and a reduction in food production activities that negatively impact climate change should be tracked.

Increased viability of farms and food businesses will also positively impact the farming, fishing, and food-producing community. The state should see more young and beginning farmers fishermen and better mental health among farmers and food producers.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Create more Maine markets for Maine producers and increase access to Maine food.

- 1. Impacts - Describe the recommended recommendation and its actions and how they address Maine's four climate goals – *reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing resilience, creating economic opportunity, and achieving equity through Maine's climate response.***

Same as Recommendation 1.

- 2. Cross-over - Does the recommended recommendation involve other working groups/sectors?**

Same as Recommendation 1.

- 3. Priority Populations - Consider the priority populations impacted or affected by this recommended recommendation.**

Same as Recommendation 1.

- 4. Timeframe - What is the timeframe for this recommendation and its actions?**

The actions to create a marketing plan and increase food equity will take place in the short term and the outcomes will be realized in the mid-term.

- 5. Implementation Next Steps - What types of next steps would be required to implement the recommendation?**

- Legislation, rules/regulation, internal program guidance changes
- Establishment of a new program or a fund,
- Conduct additional research
- Provide education or training
- Coordinate with other parties/agencies/states
- Other (please describe)

Please provide some detail around these steps. If possible, identify specific actors who would lead in the implementation of the recommendation and actions.

Real Maine and the Division of Marine Resources will lead the development of a comprehensive marketing plan for Maine food. They will partner with many organizations offering nutrition education to strengthen and align the work.

The state will pursue additional funding to expand existing food equity programs and will work to create new programs to reach additional populations. They will pursue federal, state, and philanthropic funds to expand this work. The state will partner with many non-profits focusing on food justice and equity.

6. Measuring Outcomes - How will you know the recommended recommendation is effective?
Are outcomes measurable using current monitoring/data collection? Are there benchmarks or short-term indicators of success?

Ultimately, metrics will be guided by the state food plan. In the short term, farm and fishing indicators include: the value of harvests by indicator crop and the value of landings by indicator species. To capture new market channels identified by producers, the number of new products sold in Maine and the number of new channels will be collected. Understanding consumer purchases of Maine foods and consumer sentiments will strengthen this recommendation.

7. Other - Additional Rationale/Background Information

****Please footnote substantive disagreements among the Working Group members**

Forest Carbon Subgroup Recommendations

FINAL DRAFT

4.30.24

Introduction

The Forest Carbon Task Force, established by Executive Order in 2021, identified multiple recommendations aimed at increasing forest carbon sequestration and storage in Maine forests. Three key principles formed the starting point for these previous recommendations and the new set of recommendations below because they are foundational to Maine forests successfully sequestering and storing more carbon. These principles were:

- Maintaining existing forestland (“keeping forests as forests”) is fundamentally important if forests are to make a growing contribution toward achieving the State’s climate goals;
- Improving forest condition through widespread adoption of climate-friendly forest management practices is equally important to increase forest carbon; and
- Increasing economically viable markets for low-grade wood is necessary to facilitate adoption of carbon-enhancing forest practices.

The Natural and Working Lands Work Group re-affirms these principles. Forests in Maine are the primary contributor to carbon sequestration and storage, and maintaining as much forest land as possible is essential to meeting Maine’s climate goals. The management of Maine forestland is closely linked to its capacity to provide climate-related and other important ecosystem services, including contributing to human health with clean air and water, and supporting local and regional wood markets. Yet forest carbon management, inventorying, and accounting are parts of a highly dynamic field, and new programs and methodologies are constantly emerging.

Informed by these realities, the following three new recommendations aim to increase carbon sequestration and storage in Maine forests while also ensuring these forests continue to support other critical economic, environmental, and cultural values. ~~Specifically, they help forest landowners of all sizes, foresters, and loggers apply climate-friendly practices. To accomplish this goal, Maine must: 1) continually improve data to support sound decision-making for policy and program development; 2) expand technical assistance, training, and education to landowners, foresters, and loggers to increase their ability to apply climate-friendly forest management practices; and 3) provide financial incentives to increase the application of these practices.~~

1. Improve forest carbon data, monitoring, and verification to support forest policy-making and outreach program development.

- a. With further funding, the Maine Forest Service’s (MFS) Forest Resource Assessment program should work with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the University of Maine to develop a climate-focused forest data and monitoring program that continuously produces the best available information on Maine’s forest composition, management and harvest activity, and forest carbon sequestration and storage, and identifies climate-driven forest health and resilience metrics, to better inform climate-friendly forest management practices and public policy decision-making.

2. Increase the availability of technical assistance, training and education for forest landowners, foresters, and loggers to increase the application of climate-friendly forest practices.

- a. MFS, in collaboration with others, should develop and maintain up-to-date materials and provide training on extreme weather BMPs, forest carbon offset programs, other revenue-generating forest carbon programs, current use taxation programs, and other strategies, targeting outreach to specific audiences - such as landowners of over 40 acres, new woodland owners, farmers, foresters, and loggers - to expand the implementation of climate-friendly forest management practices, resulting in increased forest carbon sequestration and storage.
- b. MFS should work with partner entities to increase and diversify forest sector-related natural resource professional capacity to apply climate-friendly forest management practices.

3. Provide incentives to forest landowners, foresters, and loggers to increase the implementation of climate-friendly practices

- a. The Maine Forest Service and other entities should identify additional technical and financial resources to increase the implementation of climate/carbon-friendly forest management and timber harvesting practices; provide cost-share assistance to loggers to purchase low-impact harvesting equipment and implement carbon-enhancing forest management practices; and support the voluntary use of professionals and service providers who follow protocols to validate the implementation of climate-smart practices.
- b. Given the rapidly evolving availability, content, and geographic focus of carbon-offset and practice-based forest carbon programs for forest landowners, Maine should explore potential opportunities to increase the suitability and availability of incentive programs for Maine's forest landowners that increase forest carbon sequestration and storage while maintaining a robust forest economy.
- c. With further funding, MFS should expand the WoodsWISE incentives program and include climate-friendly management strategies in forest management plans.
- d. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's Bureau of Parks and Lands should explore the potential benefits of engaging in forest carbon pilot projects that increase carbon sequestration and/or storage, maintain forest sector jobs, provide new revenue streams for the management of the self-funded Public Reserve Lands System, and contribute practical knowledge on climate-friendly forest management practices.
- e. Coordinate with existing forest sector development initiatives to help improve markets for low-grade wood that help make implementation of climate-smart forest management practices financially viable.
- f. Maine's open space current use taxation program should be reviewed to identify how best to incorporate incentives for forest owners to adopt climate-friendly land management practices.*
- g. Continue to engage in a multistate collaboration with state agencies and universities in consultation with landowners regarding the role of forest carbon sequestration in reducing net greenhouse gas emissions, one outcome of which would be to define how Maine will account for voluntary/regulatory carbon sequestration markets in its emissions accounting approach.

* Placeholder if LD 1648 doesn't pass, to encourage reintroduction of bill in the 132nd legislature.

Forest Carbon Subgroup Template Question Responses

4.30.24

RECOMMENDATION 1 (Data/Monitoring/Verification)

1. Impacts

Mitigation - Will improve the accuracy of data to validate climate-smart initiatives, confirming whether Maine is meeting its climate commitments. It is necessary to accurately quantify the CO₂e sequestered and the amount reduced over time. It will confirm whether the intended outcomes of lower atmospheric GHG and reduced co-pollutant impacts on human and ecosystem health are being achieved.

Adaptation and Resilience - Reduces the likelihood and risk of climate hazards by improving the efficacy of GHG reductions. Improved forest carbon data will inform management decisions that lead to increased ecosystem services such as water quality protection, erosion control, and wildlife habitat and connectivity. Improved data access could improve community engagement in climate-smart programming and educational activities.

Workforce/Economic Opportunity - Would create job/economic benefits through the University of Maine to assist the MFS in the development and maintenance of a climate-focused forest data and monitoring program.

Achieving Equity - One barrier could be access to technology (internet, smart-phone, computer) to adequately access and use the data. An improved carbon measurement and verification system assures that priority populations are included in the data used for decision-making. The recommendation is currently silent on specific details that encompass culture, historical access, and low-income and communities of color and is also silent on tribal communities, including the potential impact of issues of trust and sovereignty in the management of data necessary for improved carbon accounting. However, the data could be useful for assessing and mitigating the impacts to these communities.

Additional Costs - Any useful set of data/tools would likely cost several \$100K in staffing and other expenses to develop and then an annual budget of \$100K to maintain. At a minimum, funding would be needed to develop a prototype and solicit public feedback on how this information could best be distributed and used. USFS and EPA are possible funding sources.

Proven Strategy/Feasibility - Current technology can be used at the outset but data collection techniques must keep pace with emerging technology. Financial and workforce capacity are current barriers to implementation. Generally, other states are spending more than Maine on monitoring and data management of carbon budgets.

2. Cross-over

Community Resilience WG. Coastal and Marine WG for blue carbon data and monitoring. Buildings, Infrastructure, and Housing WG and Energy WG with likely recommendations that rely on forest products to meet their goals (biomass, mass timber, etc.). More generally, intersection with other WGs is through Maine's biennial GHG reporting and carbon budget development that encompasses GHG sources and sinks across all sectors.

3. Priority Populations

Populations - The majority of Maine forestland is located in the state's rural and low-income communities. Forest management, timber harvesting, and wood processing are all vital components of the state's forestry sector, one of Maine's major natural resource industries. The sector is comprised largely of small businesses.

Impacts - The Equity Subcommittee recommended (Ch. E, Goal 2) consulting with priority populations including tribal communities on climate change-related data collection. This forestry recommendation would increase access to forest carbon data by these communities.

Sources of Information - The Forest Carbon Subgroup included representatives of woodland owners and small businesses from Maine's rural communities.

Result of Engagement - [Bookmark for Mitchell Center feedback](#).

Implementation - The MFS, DEP and the University of Maine will need to consult and partner with priority populations to develop data collection and monitoring protocols.

4. Timeframe

Increased data collection will first require funding to support staffing. Implementation and initial outcomes should then be achievable in the short/mid-term (2025-2030). The need, however, is continuous. New data could potentially be the next (11th) DEP GHG reporting cycle.

5. Implementation Next Steps

Type: Legislation; Coordinate with other parties/agencies; Establishment of a new program or a fund; Conduct additional research.

Next Steps: Secure funding. MFS, UMaine, DEP to identify key individuals; solicit input to identify data acquisition and analytical needs to develop a framework that complements other relevant reporting frameworks (e.g. USEPA, IPCC, UNEP).

6. Measuring Outcomes

Metrics should measure the extent of improved access to Maine forest carbon data by priority populations. Progress will be evident by improved precision, accuracy, and completeness of Maine carbon budget calculations and improved understanding of the relationship between Maine calculations and those of other states and federal agencies (e.g., USFS FIA, USEPA).

RECOMMENDATION 2 (Technical Assistance/Training/Education)

1. Impacts

Mitigation - Would directly enhance mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions by increasing carbon sequestration and storage through better implementation of climate-friendly forest practices.

Adaptation and Resilience - Climate-friendly forest practices have the benefit of increased resilience of the forest resource, allowing for greater adaptation in the face of climate change. These practices also have co-benefits related to the creation and maintenance of wildlife habitat and improved connectivity if implemented on a wide scale. Decreased negative impacts from major storm events, wildfire, or other natural disasters would also be an outcome.

Workforce/Economic Opportunity - Engaging new forest landowners and others not currently managing their forests will lead to more active timber management and will create economic opportunities for foresters, loggers, and landowners. This strengthens one of the state's key natural heritage industries.

Achieving Equity - Targeted outreach to underserved landowner groups can ensure priority populations are engaged. Existing cost-share programs make the development of forest management plans accessible to previously underserved populations.

Additional Costs - An existing network for training already exists, although it would likely require additional resources to handle additional demand and outreach needs. Materials will need to be maintained and distributed through ongoing outreach which may require additional MFS staff.

Proven Strategy/Feasibility - Landowner outreach and direct technical assistance are proven strategies that lead to active landowner engagement with their land. Barriers include a shrinking pool of consulting foresters in Maine and ongoing difficulty filling open MFS forester positions with qualified candidates. (JDS)

2. Cross-over

Community Resilience WG (through flood mitigation); Transportation (wood haulers); Building, Infrastructure/housing (wood products)

3. Priority Populations

Populations - Rural communities (family woodland owners), natural resource industries, small businesses (logging and contractor businesses), and previously underserved populations of forest landowners who have a presumed higher-than-average potential to increase carbon sequestration and storage on their lands including those with over 40 acres, new woodland owners, and farmers. Climate-smart forestry has indirect benefits for people with health vulnerabilities.

Impacts - The Equity Subcommittee recommended (Ch. D, Goal 2) providing workforce training opportunities for natural resource industry workers to help adapt to a changing climate. This recommendation aims to increase and diversify forest sector-related natural resource professional capacity.

Sources of Information - The lack individuals entering forestry professions in Maine and nationwide is broadly understood. A myriad of industry assessments by the public and private sector confirms this.

Result of Engagement - [Bookmark for Mitchell Center feedback](#).

Implementation (via consultation with/access by Priority Populations) - ?

4. Timeframe

Implementation and realized outcomes should be achievable in the short/mid term (2025-2030). The actions will need to be ongoing.

5. Implementation Next Steps

Type: Provide education/training; Coordinate with other parties; Internal program guidance changes; Establishment of a new program or a fund

Next Steps: New training opportunities can build upon multiple existing training programs. Certain educational resources can be developed with existing MFS staff. Increased landowner outreach will require filling vacant MFS forester positions. Increasing and diversifying professional capacity will require collaboration between MFS, the University and community college system, and the private sector.

6. Measuring Outcomes

Outcomes could be measured by the number of individuals trained on climate-friendly forest management practices, including the number of individuals from priority populations. Requiring that such training be incorporated into Woodland Resource Action Plans is one possible approach. Increases in the availability and diversity of forest sector-related natural resource professionals could also be tracked. Additional metrics could be established to document which practices are being implemented, and on how many acres. MFS's BMP Monitoring Annual Report could gauge the effectiveness in training to climate-smart practices. Baseline data are needed to measure progress.

RECOMMENDATION 3 (Incentives)

1. Impacts

Mitigation - Providing financial incentives to forest landowners, foresters, and loggers that enables them to implement climate/carbon-friendly forest management and timber harvesting practices will

have a direct mitigation impact through increased forest carbon sequestration and storage.

Adaptation and Resilience - Providing financial support to forest landowners, foresters, and loggers will enable them to implement forest management strategies that improve resilience and adaptation in the face of a changing climate. Climate-friendly forest management can reduce wildfires and other climate hazards and safeguard neighboring communities. It also can increase ecosystem services such as wildlife habitat and connectivity and water quality protection.

Workforce/Economic Opportunity - Engaging more forest landowners in managing their forests will lead to more active timber management, and will create economic opportunities for technical service providers, loggers, and landowners. This strengthens one of the state's primary natural heritage industries.

Achieving Equity – These financial incentives will make the development of forest management plans and the implementation of climate-friendly forest management practices accessible to previously underserved populations.

Additional Costs - Providing financial incentives to forest landowners, foresters, and loggers to implement climate-friendly forest management and harvesting practices will require the identification and/or development of new public funding mechanisms or funding from the private or non-profit sector. Funding from practice-based forest carbon programs are a potential source of new funding.

Proven Strategy/Feasibility - Providing direct financial support to forest landowners to incentivize adoption of certain forest management practices is a rapidly evolving field. New voluntary and regulatory forest carbon markets and associated implementation approaches are emerging each year. Barriers include program complexity and length of commitment. (JDS)

2. Cross-over

Community Resilience WG

3. Priority Populations

Populations - Rural communities (family woodland owners), natural resource industries, small businesses (logging and contractor businesses), and previously underserved populations of forest landowners who have a presumed higher-than-average potential to increase carbon sequestration and storage on their lands including those with over 40 acres, new woodland owners, and farmers. Climate-smart forestry has indirect benefits for people with health vulnerabilities.

Impacts - Financial incentives to increase carbon sequestration and storage would provide new economic opportunities for rural landowners and loggers.

Sources of Information - Maine Forest Service surveys confirm that landowners with a forest management plan are far more likely to manage their forest in ways that improve forest condition and associated ecosystem services. Surveys also confirm that small forestland owners face barriers to engaging in forest carbon programs due to program complexity and cost of entry.

Result of Engagement - [Bookmark for Mitchell Center feedback.](#)

Implementation (via consultation/access by Priority Populations) - ?

4. Timeframe

- Implementation and realized outcomes should be achievable in the short/mid-term (2025-2030) dependent on additional funding allocations. The actions are ongoing.

5. Implementation Next Steps

Type:- Legislation; Establishment of a new program or fund; Coordinate with other parties/agencies/states.

Next Steps: Many of the actions depend on securing stable and adequate funding to implement. Partnerships must be developed to modify existing or develop new programs.

6. Measuring Outcomes

Standard metrics include the number of new forest landowners with forest management plans; the number of forest landowners who received funding and are implementing carbon-friendly forest management practices; the amount of acreage engaged; the number of acres enrolled in revised Open Space Tax Program climate-enhancing options; the use of practices by loggers; and the total forest carbon sequestration and storage in Maine's forests. Metrics should also include an ongoing assessment of the relative impact of different climate-enhancing forest management practices to identify those that result in the greatest carbon sequestration and storage over time. Baseline data are needed to measure progress. MFS's BMP monitoring program could be adapted to test and verify educational and operational ground performance.

**Patrick Strauch Comments on
Natural and Working Lands Group Recommendations
April 10, 2024**

DEFINITION OF CONSERVED LANDS: (Page 1)

The conserved lands definition needs to include consideration of both fee acquisitions (lands that include broad public values), and private working forest easements (predictably the greatest acreage) that will have individual values and objectives that are not part of the public trust. Suggested edits include:

The following is a collaboratively developed definition for ‘conserved lands’ to be counted for the 2030 goal:

"Conserved Lands" means any land in a primarily natural or traditionally managed condition that is both durably* protected and ~~managed to~~ provides a ~~variety of public services and values that can include, but are not bound by~~ ~~or maintain~~ ecosystem services, climate resiliency, or cultural values. These services and values can include ~~equitably and inclusively~~ supporting Maine’s economy, ~~providing~~ ~~protecting~~ drinking water, ensuring food security, conserving biodiversity, and providing recreational opportunities.

“Equitably and inclusively” This is appropriate for public lands, but not necessarily for private lands with conservation easements that are transactional transfers of specific rights. For example, a private forest landowner with an easement for development and public access rights can still be primarily focused on management for timber values.

RECOMMENDATION 2: FUNDING (Page 6)

I’m not aware of any research that substantiates that deer yards are an umbrella habitat for many species. There is research from UMO explaining how Canada Lynx and Pine Martin are indicator species for a wide variety of species habitats.

Establish permanent and ongoing funding for the Land for Maine's Future Program; consider a variety of mechanisms, including mitigation funding, real estate transfer tax, re allocation of sporting goods or rooms and meals tax, enhancing dedicated funds for deer yards (as an umbrella habitat for many species), and others (in part) to create a match for federal funds.

RECOMMENDATION 3: CAPACITY (Page 7)

Commercial forest landowners are opposed to this recommendation because it has not been discussed and experiences in other states with this concept have resulted in regulatory restrictions. The term "Landscape Conservation Design" equates to a landscape regulatory map approach unless carefully designed. Currently landowners are vigorously objecting to a landscape approach proposed for DEP for Chapter 375 rules on Site Location Law provisions. We would be glad to talk about a process and objectives for the concept, but we cannot endorse the recommendation.

Over the next three years, state agencies will work with a coalition of partners and private large landowners as well as Wabanaki tribes in government-togovernment relationships, to explore develop a statewide landscape planning process. Landscape Conservation Design that sets targets to and beyond 2030 for biodiversity conservation and management, identifies corridors for species movement resulting from climate change, respects individual management objectives of private landowners and identifies lands and waters necessary for maintaining vital natural resource-based economies.

RECOMMENDATION: CONTINUE ENGAGEMENT IN THE MULTISTATE CARBON COLLABORATION.

Dr Fernandez introduced the recommendation to support ongoing engagement with regional states concerning carbon issues. He mentioned an example that it will be important for the group of states to reach agreement on how to account for transactional credits of carbon versus actual atmospheric depositions of carbon. Because carbon is a private commodity and carbon offsets are an evolving science/market, we are concerned about multi-state discussions on carbon policy that do not involve Maine businesses. Any recommendation for ongoing multi-state discussions needs to include open public communication and a transparent decision-making process.

COMMENTS FROM OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE

From: Abigail Weinberg <aweinberg@osiny.org>

Sent: Friday, April 19, 2024 4:19 PM

To: Beal, Amanda <Amanda.Beal@maine.gov>; Abello, Thomas <Thomas.Abello@maine.gov>

Cc: Saffeir, JoD <JoD.Saffeir@maine.gov>; jenkmelville@outlook.com

Subject: OSI comments - NWL recommendations

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the State of Maine Mail System. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Commissioner Beal and Tom Abello,

Thank you for accepting these comments from the Open Space Institute to the draft Natural and Working Lands recommendations. Our comments are provided on the attached PDF.

The overarching issue we emphasize is the need to identify and conserve Maine's high carbon forests in addition to improving sequestration rates. Maine plays an outsized role in combatting the climate crises by keeping its forests intact. Because the carbon stored in our existing forests is as much as 300 times the amount sequestered every year, protecting forests at risk of conversion is of equal or greater importance to increasing sequestration. The Open Space Institute and our partners will be releasing an updated national forest carbon map this summer that could help achieve the goals outlined.

As you know, the benefits of protecting our woods are many. Not only do they sequester and store carbon, but Maine forests also protect native biodiversity, provide clean drinking water and ensure access to the outdoors.

Jennifer Melville has been keeping us up to date on your excellent work. We so appreciate the opportunity to be part of this important process and are thankful for your leadership.

With the best regards,

Abigail Weinberg



**Abigail Weinberg, Senior Director of Conservation
Science & Planning**

1370 Broadway, 5th Floor

New York, NY 10018

212-290-8200 x1235

Pronouns: she.her.hers

Email aweinberg@osiny.org

openspaceinstitute.org

OSI protects land for people, for wildlife, forever.

Suggested Edits from Open Space Institute to NWL Work Group Recommendations 4.19.24

30% Land Subgroup

Recommendation 1: Priorities

Focus land protection efforts in areas with high biodiversity value, high carbon storage and sequestration, cultural and economic importance, and/or which offer opportunities to improve public access equitably.

Metric: Through voluntary, focused purchases of land and conservation easements, increase the area of conserved lands in Maine by at least 1.5 million acres by December 2030 with the following targets in mind:

- Conserve land within Beginning with Habitat Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance; add new state and private-owned ecological reserves; identify and conserve high-carbon forests; and increase fee and easement conservation for important terrestrial and aquatic areas that ensure landscape-level connectivity as identified through efforts such as a new Landscape Conservation Design (referenced as an action item in the recommendation on increasing capacity).
- Conserve lands that fill gaps in equity for land use and access, including properties that support the goals of and secure land to the Wabanaki tribes of Maine; establish open space opportunities for Maine residents located within a 10-minute walk of where they live; and construct ADA-accessible trails and boat access within 10 miles of Maine population centers.
- Sustain ecosystem services and lands needed for carbon-sequestration and storage and natural resource-based industries by securing significant and well-distributed working forest conservation, including high-carbon forests at risk of conversion, productive lands for sequestration and durable wood product production; and maintain 75% or greater forest cover in complete fee and easement conservation of source drinking water watersheds (including for Portland and Lewiston-Auburn) to ensure water quality without additional water treatment measures.

Recommendation 4: Farmland

Safeguard the state's agricultural resources by doubling the permanently protected farmland in Maine by 2030 through a comprehensive and collaborative strategy that brings increased state funding, capacity, and new strategies to this work.

Metric: By December 2030, Maine will invest 100M toward permanent conservation of at least 7% of its presently undeveloped farmland. It has an established strategy to carry this work forward, with a goal of no net loss of farmland.

- Establish a well-funded, sufficiently staffed, stand-alone state program or mechanism (in addition to Land for Maine’s Future) to prioritize the efficient flow of farmland conservation resources in collaboration with non-profit and federal partners, which includes both traditional easement acquisition as well as seamless support for alternative methods of protecting farmland outside of the process (Buy/Protect/Support/Sell, community land trust/non-profit acquisitions, etc.). Identify approaches to incentivize forested stream buffers for flood resilience, water quality protection, habitat and forest carbon benefits.
- Commission a Maine Farmland Action Plan to articulate goals and strategies regarding Maine’s farmland resource and agricultural economy beyond 2030, identifying the highest priority lands to secure against nonagricultural development along with affordable and achievable pathways to farmland access and development of practical tools and programs for supporting Maine’s agricultural economy.
- Expand funding for state programming and infrastructure (such as grant, loan, and assistance programs) that have a tangible, positive impact on farm viability in Maine.

Forest Carbon Subgroup

4. Improve forest carbon data, monitoring, and verification to support forest policy-making and outreach program development.

- a. With further funding, the Maine Forest Service’s (MFS) Forest Resource Assessment program should work with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the University of Maine to develop a climate-focused forest data and monitoring program that continuously produces the best available information on Maine’s forest composition, management and harvest activity, and forest carbon sequestration and storage, and identifies climate-driven forest health and resilience metrics, to better inform climate-friendly forest management practices, land protection priorities, and public policy decision-making.



The data could be used to identify high-carbon forests at risk of conversion.

Open Space Institute has partnered with Clark University to update their National Forest Carbon Monitoring System from a 2010 baseline to 2021. This will also update near term sequestration estimates for 2050 and 2070. The data will be completed this Spring and integrated into free online tools this summer.

OSI has developed approaches for identifying high-carbon forests that are at risk and would be happy to see if any of our work could be helpful to Maine beyond the work we are doing with LMF.

TNC is using this data to develop an estimate of avoided emissions from land protection projects that will include the lost storage and sequestration. That will be available next fall.