

Task Force to Shape the Next Generation of Maine Land Conservation

Overview

In 1987, the Maine Legislature created the Land for Maine's Future Program launching a remarkable 30-year period of land conservation in Maine during which the acres of permanently conserved land grew four-fold. These land conservation achievements touched all corners of the state and all facets of life for Maine people. The time is right to assess the accomplishments of this period, as well as its challenges, and to lay the groundwork for a new generation of land conservation in Maine.

Responsibilities and Objectives

Review and Assessment of Past Land Conservation Efforts

The Task Force will conduct an assessment of land conservation efforts in Maine over the past thirty years including the:

- Amount of land that has been conserved
- Location of conserved lands
- Types of land that have been conserved
- Tools that have been used to conserve lands
- State, federal and private funding and how dollars have been leveraged
- Management of conserved lands and the adequacy of stewardship funding
- Impact of conservation efforts on Maine's natural resource-based industries including forest products, farming and fisheries
- Impact of land conservation on public access to Maine's natural resources for motorized and non-motorized recreation, as well as fishing, hunting and other uses
- Impact of land conservation on Maine's tourism industry
- Impact of land conservation on Maine's municipalities
- Success in achieving land conservation priorities established in the 1997 report of the Land Acquisition Priorities Advisory Committee

Planning for the Next Generation of Land Conservation in Maine

The Task Force will develop a set of findings and recommendations that can serve as a blueprint for future land conservation initiatives that:

- Benefit regional economies including resource-based industries, tourism and local economic initiatives
- Meet a new set of land acquisition priorities, including aquatic resources, that reflect the interests of Maine people
- Provide needed funding for land and water conservation and stewardship, offer potential improvements to the Land for Maine's Future Program and the Maine Forest Legacy Program, as well as explore new funding initiatives that leverage both public and private dollars

- Improve stewardship and public use of existing and future conservation lands
- Enhance collaboration between municipalities, community organizations, businesses, and land conservation groups to ensure conservation acquisitions and management activities are consistent with local and regional needs.
- Help address the challenges of a changing climate
- Improve the health of Maine people

Task Force

The task force, representing diverse interests, will be staffed and meetings will be facilitated to move the group toward consensus. It will meet at least six times between April 2018 and January 2019 and hold at least two public listening sessions. The task force will focus on gathering information to inform the above objectives, learning from this information and developing recommendations related to the above objectives.

Proposed interests represented by the Task Force:

- State Legislature including representation from both parties
- Sportsmen
- Statewide Land Trust
- Local Land Trust
- Municipalities: both rural and urban/suburban
- Tourism Industry
- Conservation science
- Public Health
- Forest Landowners
- Outdoor-related Business
- Motorized Recreation
- Non-Motorized Recreation
- Agriculture
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- Developers
- Commercial fisheries
- Students
- Native Americans
- Educators

Draft Schedule

- Meeting 1: Early May
- Meeting 2: Early June
- Meeting 3: Middle/ Late July
- Meeting 4: Middle September
- Meeting 5: Middle October
- Two Listening Sessions: Middle November
- Meeting 6: Middle January

Other Stakeholders

The Task Force will develop a list of other stakeholders and solicit their feedback. To facilitate this process, the Task Force will outline focus areas, identify key topics and provide periodic updates.

Finished Product

By the middle of February 2019, produce a written document outlining findings and recommendations that can be shared with policymakers and others.

Sponsorship

Maine Coast Heritage Trust will serve as the fiscal agent for this process. However, the process will be collectively sponsored by each Task Force member (as an individual or representing an organization).