

Task Force to Help Shape the Next Generation of Maine Land Conservation
Meeting Summary
September 12, 2018

Task Force Members Present: John Bryant, Patrick Corey, Hugh Cowperthwaite, Lee Dassler, Jim Douglas, Tim Glidden, Julia Harper, Dennis Keschl, Don Kleiner, Janet McMahon, Austin Muir, Nancy Smith, Alison Sucus, Wolfe Tone, David Trahan, Chris Winstead

Task Force Members Absent: John Banks, Adam Bishop, Cathy Breen, Doug Kane, Alex Koch

Others Present: Jerry Bley (co-coordinator), Liz Petruska (co-coordinator)

Panelists: Dave Chabot (IF&W), Tom Doak (Maine Woodland Owners), Maggie Drummond-Bahl (Maine Community Foundation), Tom Duffus (The Conservation Fund), Kate Dufour (Maine Municipal Association), Will Harris (former BPL Director), Stephen Hufnagel (Damariscotta River Association), Tora Johnson (UMaine Machias), Jennifer Melville (Open Space Institute), Tom Morrison (former BPL Director), Andy Shultz (Maine Forest Service), Bill Toomey (TPL)

Public: Tom Abello (TNC), Eliza Baker-Wacks (AMC), Jess Burton, Eliza Donoghue (Maine Audubon), Sarah Hansen (Maine Preservation), Ryann Linn, Ed Meadows (Avocet Group), Jake Metzler (Forest Society of Maine), Jeff Romano (MCHT), Lucy Quimby, Warren Whitney (MCHT)

The fourth meeting of the Task Force to Help Shape the Next Generation of Maine Land Conservation (Task Force) took place on Wednesday September 12, 2018 at 1 pm, at the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine in Augusta.

I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order by co-chairs Tim Glidden and David Trahan.

II. Panel on Land Conservation Funding

Jerry introduced four panelists who were asked to make presentations on both public and private sources of funding for land conservation. Key points of each presentation included the following:

Tom Duffus (The Conservation Fund) and Bill Toomey (Trust for Public Land) – Public Sources

- Federal spending on land conservation in Maine from 1998 to 2017 has totaled over \$175 million. Maine ranks 33rd nationally in Federal dollars spent on land conservation. Spending from state programs has also been considerable, with \$103 million spent over the last 15 years. Maine ranks 26th nationally in state dollars spent on land conservation. Among northern New England States (ME, NH, VT), Maine ranks second in dollars spent per capita (\$4.85) annually on land conservation.
- From 1991-2016, Maine was a leader in the Forest Legacy Program, having received the most Forest Legacy Program dollars and protected the most acreage of all states. Montana will soon surpass Maine in dollars secured from FLP, in part because Maine has not requested funding since federal fiscal year 2017. This represents money left on the table which also affects private funding from a match/leverage perspective.
- The top federal funding programs for Maine include the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), the National Coastal Wetland

Conservation Fund, and Pittman Robertson Funds for Wildlife Conservation (though these funds are used primarily for non-acquisition purposes in Maine).

- Top state funding sources include the Land for Maine's Future Program (funded through bonds), the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program (funded through mitigation fees), and the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund (funded through lottery sales).
- Other states use a variety of funding mechanisms including real estate transfer taxes, oil and gas royalties, deed recording fees, and constitutional amendments that direct a small portion of sales tax (e.g. 1/8 of 1%) towards land conservation. The efficiency, efficacy and public involvement in other mechanisms and programs varies and so it's difficult to conclude whether these other approaches would be a good fit for Maine.
- Local funding initiatives are a growing tool across the country and have been supported across political parties, in big and small communities, and in urban and rural settings, to the tune of \$72.5 billion (includes state government efforts).
- All of these sources – federal, state and local - are critical for providing a foundation for groups to deliver private philanthropy. And the investment has had impressive returns. For example, every \$1 invested in land conservation through LMF returned \$11 in natural goods and services to the Maine economy. To maintain a highly effective program, the state needs leadership and a well-functioning and supportive agency partner.

Maggie Drummond-Bahl (Maine Community Foundation) and Jennifer Melville (Open Space Institute) Private Funding

- Maine Community Foundation (MCF) is the only community foundation in Maine. It administers both competitive grant funds and donor advised funds. MCF currently has two grant programs for land conservation: the Fund of Maine Land Conservation and the Community-Building Grant program. In 2019 they will launch a new program aimed at identifying high-priority land conservation projects that MCF will support. This effort will rely in some part on the Task Force's work.
- Conservation is a significant and growing interest for donor advised funds. In a recent donor survey, 67% of donors cited conservation/environmental projects as a strong interest. This represents an 11% increase since the last survey. While the average grant from donor advised funds is around \$8,000, collectively MCF has given out \$5 million in grants between 2011-2018, which is double the amount given in the previous 10 years. Maine is a unique and important place to do conservation. MCF finds that a good percentage of its donor-advised conservation dollars come from people that only live here part-time, but still appreciate the uniqueness of Maine.
- Recent trends in private philanthropy include looking for multi-faceted projects where community and economic benefits are presented along with environmental values. There's also an interest in projects that are bottom-up, where communities identify projects that are important to them locally, and to ensuring access for populations that have previously faced barriers.
- Over the last 18 years, the Open Space Institute has given \$45 million with approximately \$10 million coming to Maine. They are increasingly funding projects that address climate change solutions and see a trend where other funders are also shifting in this direction. OSI sees protecting land as an important way to offset the effects of climate change.
- There's a growth opportunity for private philanthropy in Maine because of the amount of forestland, and its contribution to climate mitigation through carbon sequestration and wildlife habitat.

- Maine can make a case for needing greater philanthropy because of its underserved rural and urban populations. Should promote projects that highlight the intersection between community and conservation (like water quality and drinking water acquisitions). There's a new breed of landowner in the state, and people are buying land for a range of reasons: some have a financial interest and others more of a philanthropic interest. We need to figure out how to work with them to leverage their interest, to meet their financial goals and help conserve Maine's significant resources.

Questions and Discussion

Task Force members and panelists reflected on a variety of issues, including:

- We hear stories about so-called "conservation buyers" acquiring big tracts in Maine, but are they actually protecting it? In some cases, we're aware of conservation intent, in others, it's not clear what interest buyers have. While the lands aren't necessarily conserved now, there's an opportunity to work with them if we get better leadership in the state on conservation issues.
- In the context of many different conservation funding mechanisms, are there specific tools that Maine should be thinking about? Considering new tools will require a careful financial analysis so that we don't pull money away from another place it's needed. In the short-term, a new LMF Bond is the place to focus. TPL did a report years ago that looked at other state funding mechanisms; maybe it's time to update this with more detailed information about what might be possible in the long-term. It's worth noting that other states are finding partnership with housing and community revitalization projects, and in even with the arts community. There's a conversation to be had about whether there are other pieces that should be part of LMF moving forward. This might bring greater political strength to the program, just as it did when farming and working waterfront were added.
- What is the unmet need after nearly a decade of low-levels of state funding? MCF has had donors express interest in funding projects that were waiting on LMF dollars, but there's generally a recognition that private philanthropy can't forever replace public funding. There may have been a short-term loss of trust in LMF, and some lost conservation opportunities, but the program has been solid over so many years, that with the right leadership it will be strong again. In some ways, the decrease in state funding happened at a good time, during a downturn in the economy when real estate slowed down considerably. That may be true, but the threat is very real. In the woods, turnover is just about to happen again. Conserving working forests is still an important need, as is the continued lack of public access along the coast. It's possible that we haven't quantified the need as well as we should.
- What are the real needs? To some extent it depends on what you're trying to protect. For the Portland Water District, protecting the waters of the Sebago Lake watershed is essential so that they don't have to filter. They've estimated that about 120,000 more acres needs to "stay as it is" – does this mean it needs to be protected by conservation easement or acquisition, or are there potentially other means? Increasingly conservation groups are looking for projects that achieve multiple benefits, and so it becomes important to broaden the network of partners, to include folks that are interested in equity, access and health, and to work in communities that are delivering those benefits to greater numbers of people.
- How are various funding mechanisms working at the municipal level? Windham, for example, is growing rapidly, including in its non-growth areas. Would a transfer of development rights program work? MCF could be interested in supporting a community in trying out new tools, especially because it builds capacity locally that other communities can learn from. One problem is that towns are always chasing shiny objects, rather than putting tools in place that help the town grow

sustainably. In Massachusetts, the Community Preservation Act allows town to exceed the tax cap for housing, conservation and historic preservation needs. It would be nice to see a more robust state supported initiative to help communities have greater control over the future of their land-base.

III. Panel on Stewardship

Three panelists were invited to share their perspective on stewardship, and to discuss the depth and breadth of the stewardship responsibilities for Maine land trusts, Public Lands and State Parks. Key points of each presentation included the following:

Stephen Hufnagel – Damariscotta River Association (DRA)

- Stewardship is an opportunity as much as it is a problem. Community members have expertise and an interest in being outdoors and engaging them in stewardship projects can create a long-term circle of giving and support. The guy flying kites at the preserve can end up being the lead contributor to a project further down the road. Plus, stewardship can be fun – the most desired stewardship role at DRA is to ride the John Deere tractor the state bought to manage the Whaleback Shell Midden site. Stewardship is about making a link with the community and maintaining that over time. Many of the biggest gifts made to DRA were from people who were in some way involved hands-on with the work that DRA does.
- DRA manages several properties in partnership with the state, which brings important resources to the table. At Dodge Point, DRA has a crew that focuses on routine maintenance while the state can bring in heavy machinery for larger projects.
- Thinking about the next generation of stewards is essential. DRA does this through a summer camp and school programs. They had 3,700 children come through those programs last year. They take the perspective that DRA conserved lands are “our” places; and are working hard to build ownership within the community and at a young age.
- It’s important to look at how growing stewardship needs affect staffing and budgeting. Growing stewardship needs require professional oversight and expertise. Accreditation also plays an important role. From DRA’s perspective, you can’t talk about stewardship without talking about accreditation, because it ensures quality fundraising, management and record-keeping practices. A well-run stewardship program is an asset, but a poorly-run one can drive people away. As its land base grows, DRA is also ever more carefully asking the question – should we conserve this piece of land.
- Elements of Community-based Stewardship should:
 - Consider stewardship from the start
 - Secure/maintain Accreditation
 - Make the invisible visible/tangible
 - Engage local citizens in the land
 - Focus on the pieces of conservation that are really important (i.e. exclude the Building Envelope)

Will Harris – Former Director, Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL)

- Maine’s State Parks host over 2.5 million visitors a year and are part of a snowmobile and ATV trail system with thousands of miles of trails, including much-loved multi-use rail trails.
- Stewardship of State Parks is funded through the state’s general fund. In 2017, it cost \$6.7 million for operating the State Park system. Revenue collected from park fees goes back to the general fund

as an offset. In 2007, the system brought in about 40% of the Parks budget, with that growing to about 55% of the budget following a fairly aggressive effort to increase attendance and an increase in entrance and camping fees.

- Supplemental funding comes from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Recreation Trails Program funded through DOT, and from leases, such as Poland Spring which amounts to about \$675,000 a year and is dedicated revenue just for Parks. The State's loon plate is also a dedicated funding source. When it first started it was the only alternative plate, but now with so many options, brings in about \$250,000 a year.
- Monies appropriated from the general fund go towards daily maintenance and operations; there's no general fund budget for capital improvements. In 2007/2008 voters approved a \$7.5 million bond for capital projects and another \$500,000 from a 2010 bond. These monies helped catch up on a project backlog. The 2007 bond passed at 77% approval, and was a sign that people support what they use. This shows the need to get people out to state parks so that they see the value in what the state is providing. There are big projects that need to be done that will require support for capital funds. A few years ago, the law changed so that individual parks that sell things can keep the money for projects specific to their own park. This led to park managers becoming entrepreneurial and this is now an important supplemental source of money for individual parks.

Tom Morrison – Former Director, Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands

- Maine's Public Lands are managed for multiple uses including forestry, wildlife and recreation. Unlike Parks, Lands are operated using a dedicated revenue source. They don't receive any general fund dollars; the primary source of funding is timber harvesting, with some additional funds coming from leases. Capital projects represent about 15% of the annual budget. Having a dedicated revenue source is unique for Maine's state agencies. To date the funding mechanism has been successful in covering annual expenses and has been fairly stable, even though there are fluctuations from year to year.
- Use of Public Lands by the public is different from state parks. In general, the people using Public Lands are looking for access to the outdoors and have less of a need for the developed facilities you find at state parks. That doesn't mean there's not more that could be done – more trails and campsite opportunities have been identified. But generally, current management of public lands meets public expectations.
- Overall the public seems satisfied with stewardship of public lands. It may be more appropriate to say they're not unhappy, since in most cases the public is uninterested until something goes wrong. Public lands are certified through two third-party systems (FSC and SFI), which incorporates an important element of public accountability.
- One growing challenge for BPL is conservation easements. Easements have been used more frequently in the last decade or so. And while they're a good tool in that they keep land in private ownership, they are a challenge because they come with expenses and no opportunity to generate revenue. The monitoring expenses for most easements are covered by stewardship endowments, but there are rarely funds available to help BPL take advantage of affirmative rights to develop recreation assets.
- One challenge for the future is finding ways to acquire conservation lands closer to population centers so that they're more accessible for public use. This might also help broaden support for public lands, which don't have the same strong constituency group as "sportsmen." Need to be careful of acquiring lands when they're available without giving adequate thought to their future management. Once acquired there's a public expectation that they be made available to the public.

Questions and Discussion

Task Force members and panelists reflected on a variety of issues, including:

- What does a successful process look like when working with multiple groups? Partnership for partnership sake is tough. There needs to be something more than that to keep people at the table over the long-term. Volunteer groups have a long history of involvement in stewardship, but you want them to be adding something that the initial organization is not able to accomplish on its own. It's important to have a clear understanding of the roles and goals of the participants from the beginning.
- Easements represent a perpetual obligation for the next generation. How do we ensure they have the funds and tools to honor that responsibility? How do we ensure a legal framework that allows for some change over time? Funding for stewardship is key – you can't take on an easement without some assurance that you have the resources to care for it in the future. The community component is also essential – we need to have people who care about these lands in the future. Tools like management plans and Best Management Practices with broader principles provide greater flexibility so that everything doesn't have to be locked into easement language. The conservation community has learned a lot about what not to put into easements.
- Can short-staffed state agencies meet stewardship obligations? Are they equipped to take on more land? Having a dedicated revenue source ensures stable funding for public lands long into the future. Conservation won't compete well with other important social needs so having dedicated revenue is key. Having the Attorney General's Office help in enforcing easements is important, especially for properties that don't allow public access and therefore may not have the same level of public support.
- What role have Friends Groups played in stewardship of Public Lands? Friends groups can be really helpful or they can have a focus that differs from the state's management priorities. In general though, it's a good idea to cultivate supporting groups that can bring volunteers, money and political support.
- What are the current trends in use of State Parks and Public Lands? In recent years use of State Parks has been up. There's not a controlled access system for Public Lands so it's harder to get the same data on use.

IV. Panel on Landowners

Three panelists were invited to share their perspective on the role of landowners.

Dave Chabot – Maine IF&W Landowner Relations Program

- Dave shared some of his personal background, highlighting how even as a boy he grew up talking to farmers, connecting with neighbors, and hunting on other people's lands; and how seeing land change hands and those traditions stop impacted him personally and professionally.
- The Landowner Relations program is within the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, under the Bureau of Warden Service. For the last 5 years the program has only had one staff person. The state realizes the importance of landowners and the economic benefit they provide by allowing access, and so added a second position. The program is funded through dedicated funds, which can be hard since there are no monies from the general fund to supplement such a broad program.

- The program is unique in that it offers assistance for landowners of all sizes, land trusts and municipalities. Having the program within the warden service also allows the program to work cooperatively with landowners and to act in an enforcement capacity when needed.
- Primary issues that landowners report are ATVs, illegal dumping and nuisance wildlife. The Keep Maine Clean program helps to address dumping, but it's a huge responsibility. Over 12 tons of debris was removed off one site through this initiative. With 94% of the state privately owned, the program's objectives are ambitious and it's not clear that current levels of funding are sufficient to meet the goals.

Tom Doak – Maine Woodland Owners

- In the early 1990s, MWO created a land trust arm because at that time, not many land trusts were focused on working forests. They are different from other land trusts in that they don't solicit funds for acquisition or proactively identify properties. MWO currently owns 31 parcels totaling 5,100 acres and holds conservation easements on another 13 tracts and 1,300 acres. The organization requires a \$20,000 stewardship donation as a condition of accepting a conservation easement.
- What is the profile of Maine's family woodland owners? In Maine 86,000 families own 10 acres of woodland or more. 40% of these owners are 65 years or older and they hold about 1/3 of the woodland acreage in Maine and 40% of the wood volume. Historically these landowners have been the "filler" in the market and have been an important source of wood supply.
- Woodland ownership is changing, and it's hidden because it's happening at 20, 50 and 100-acre tracts. In many ways there's a greater impact from these many smaller turnovers than there is when a large tract of tens of thousands of acres changes hands from one corporate owner to another.
- The next generation of woodland owners is not the same as today, especially with regards to public access. The current generation believes in sharing their land. The next generation will be less timber oriented and less tolerant of the things that are going on in the woods; they don't have same loyalty to public access and don't see any incentives for continuing to provide access. The next generation will also want their information differently; they'll want information through their phones, not through field days. We're not prepared for these changes that are already underway.
- 70% of woodland owners currently allow unfettered public access, but one half of those are thinking about changing their minds. Everyone should be nervous about this. A study that was done to find out how much it would cost if we had to pay for public access on private lands, came back with a figure of \$33 per acre per year, which is not a viable option. Landowners want people to behave themselves and want to be respected.
- Suggestions for the Task Force to consider:
 - Look at how waste laws are driving illegal dumping issues and think about how they could be adjusted to alleviate the problem
 - Conservation easements are too complicated. Easements should be written to address the most critical things.
 - Current use taxation is an essential program for many landowners. Tree Growth is functioning well, but the open space program could be adjusted to make it more attractive to landowners.
 - A common denominator among woodland owners is wildlife: some like to shoot it, others like to look at, but they all care about it. Small landowners own land in the part of the state that has some of the most important habitat and we ought to have a way to offer technical assistance for wildlife management to them.

- Landowners are still interested in land conservation. They don't necessarily trust the next generation. It would be helpful to have a program that would offset the transaction costs for people who are willing to donate their land. MWO is inundated with calls and can just barely cover their own costs.

Andy Shultz – Maine Forest Service

- Andy is the Landowner Outreach Forester for the Maine Forest Service. In this capacity he helps provide referrals to get people the information they need for managing their woodlot. MFS has had a landowner program since the 1990s and it was rebranded as the Be Woods Wise program in 2004. The program combines various education and outreach pieces including district foresters, forest health, stewardship and entomologists. An important part is having district foresters available to walk the woodlot with the landowners.
- The ideal scenario is for MFS to have the opportunity to connect the landowner to a private consulting forester before they cut. There are only 10 district foresters for the entire state and they can't support the need. Sometimes landowners are in touch because they are not happy with a harvest that has already taken place – then the program offers remedial guidance.
- There are currently some funds available to help with forest management plans. At one time they offered financial assistance for pruning, thinnings and PCTs – things that cost money but didn't generate income, but there are no longer funds for these items.
- One of the biggest challenges to encouraging good stewardship by landowners is attention. How do you reach the smaller ownerships? Often it's something negative that directs their attention to their woods (invasive insects, windstorm, etc.). This is good news in that they become aware, but sometimes they jump at action without sufficient planning.
- People own land for a variety of reasons: wildlife, legacy, privacy and beauty. Financial return is always somewhere on the list, but not necessarily an overall priority. According to the MFS Harvest Satisfaction Survey, income is usually the number 1 or 2 reason why a landowner does a harvest.
- A US Forest Service market segmentation analysis suggests that you're not going to reach 100% of landowners with stewardship messages. There is roughly 25-30% that are already on board. You can't turn your back on them; they need to be engaged with events such as tree farm field days. Then there's roughly 25% that would be interested in stewardship activities if they knew what to do. This is the target audience. But how many of those would be interested in easements? The idea of permanence is scary to landowners so there needs to be approaches in addition to easements. The Kennebec Woodland Partnership took a landscape approach to the broad concept of woodland conservation, highlighting easements but also legacy planning.

Questions and Discussion

Task Force members and panelists reflected on a variety of issues, including:

- Funding for the Landowner Relations Program seems like an issue. Currently the budget is funded through dedicated funds and they have not been successful in getting general funds, despite several asks. The wardens can only do so much without sufficient funding. The Landowner Relations Advisory board is very supportive in trying to get more money. IF&W recognizes that the current model of unfettered access forever is unsustainable. There needs to be a stable funding source for landowner relations if we're going to be serious about it. Where it comes from is still up for debate. In the past new taxes have gone towards increased marketing, putting more pressure on the resources. There's a policy disconnect because none of that money goes to protecting the resource

they're promoting. The issue affects everyone, not just ATV users. It's too easy to take for granted what we have here in Maine.

V. Panel on Financial Impacts on Municipalities.

Two panelists were invited to share their perspective on the financial impacts of land conservation on municipalities.

Kate Dufour – Maine Municipal Association

- For the last decade, the relationships between state and local government has not been great; local government is no longer considered a partner of state government and there are fewer instances where the two work together to provide services to a common constituency. In the past, the state was a good partner and honored their financial commitments to municipalities. This has changed significantly:
 - County jails – the state gets to decide who is in prison, for how long, and in what facility, but property tax payers cover 72% of the costs.
 - Schools – the state has been under the gun to pay 55% of school costs, but they're currently funding just less than 50%
 - Revenue Sharing – since 2006 the Legislature has treated this historical program poorly. Municipalities are supposed to get 5%, but instead, \$700 million of that went instead into state coffers.
 - The State mandates things without revenue to assist. When that money is not delivered to towns, decisions have to be made since the mandates are still in place.
 - It should be a priority to restore the relationships between state and local government so that services to Maine communities can be restored.
- Tax Exemption
 - Current policies were created back in 1820, and they need to be modernized because today's nonprofits are not the same as they were 200 years ago. The Legislature avoids doing that because it has an affinity for nonprofits because of the good work they do.
 - Municipalities are frustrated because they have no say in the exemption process. The Legislature provides the policy and the nonprofit decides whether to make a Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT). Everyone else holds the cards except for the community that's affected.
 - MMA understands that not every property owner should be on the hook for all taxes, but they have advocated for mandatory PILOTs that cover direct resources (fire, plowing, etc). The growth in exempt property is outpacing the growth of taxable value and this is a significant problem. They are particularly concerned with exemption for land trusts, because land trusts have the opportunity for 95% through the Current Use Taxation programs, and yet many make a choice to request full exemption. The town has no say. MMA is not anti-land trust. They understand the important roles land trusts play, but they do think there's an opportunity to improve the relationships between land trusts and municipalities.
 - There's a range of views among municipalities. Overall communities recognize the benefit associated with land conservation. Parks, access and clean air are good, but it comes back to the financial contribution; the balance needs to shift so that it's not so heavily skewed for town officials to carry the burden. The whole community needs to be part of that conversation and engaged in decision making. It's worth building better relationships so that town officials don't feel left out. Make time to listen. When you have municipal buy-in, then you have a product that people will protect.

Tora Johnson – University of Maine, Machias

- The Downeast Conservation Network undertook a study which looked at the value of the economic benefits accruing from conserved lands in the Downeast and Acadia region. The final findings will be presented at the Convergence Conference on November 2nd at the Schoodic Institute. A few statistics from the report:
 - 12.5% of Hancock county is conserved either in fee or easement
 - 25% of Washington county is conserved either in fee or easement
 - 72.4% of these conserved lands are forest land
 - Ownership of conserved lands and easements: Government 40%, Private 59%, Other <1%
 - The economic value of conserved lands in the region is \$455 million annually. But more than 50% of this is directly associated with Acadia National Park
 - Outside of Acadia, there are a few towns where over 50% of the land-base is conserved.
- Some lessons from the study:
 - Currently, Acadia sees most of the economic returns from conserved lands.
 - There are untapped benefits in Washington County. We should look at ways to help the county realize more of the returns without trying to turn it into Acadia
 - Strategic Conservation is key. Land trusts must be strategic about future acquisitions and think about how to engage with communities going forward.
 - Tax exemption – there are a lot federally and state-owned lands in this region that are fully exempt, but even these lands benefit from basic services (fire protection, roads to get there). It's important to consider this impact.
- Future Needs
 - To truly quantify and understand the impacts on municipal finances of conservation and current use taxation programs, we need better information. We need to look more closely at geographic variation. We know enough about Acadia but need a better grasp on the impacts of state parks, public lands and private conservation holdings.
 - We need to explore how to do economic development around conserved lands in a way that still protects them.
 - There's a need for greater communication and collaboration between municipalities, regional planning organizations and conservation groups.

Questions and Discussion

Task Force members and panelists reflected on a variety of issues, including:

- Does the data show whether it's better to invest in public or private conservation lands? The Downeast report doesn't suggest anything conclusive. For state parks, a portion of fees that are paid are returned to the host community. MMA thinks that local is better and that to the extent we can improve relations between land trusts and towns, then that's the way to go. To some extent, the issues with government held lands will vary based on what entity is the owner. It would also be interested to see the data split between organized and unorganized towns.
- It's interesting how little economic benefit is left when the figures for Acadia are removed. There's been a lot of effort devoted to conserving land, but very little directed at creating economic development around those conserved lands. The different pieces aren't working well together. It's difficult to get a bank loan for something related to recreation. If we could create better synergy we might have new opportunities.
- With regards to tax exemption, it's interesting that the land trusts represent a small percentage of exempt lands, yet they seem to get all of the legislature's attention. We can't paint all communities

with a broad brush. MMA feels they've tried every avenue possible in discussing the issue, and yet they always hear, "if not for us, towns would have to do X, Y, and Z." Towns and nonprofits need to find common ground and present a plan together. This would help eliminate the political wrangling. The issue of fairness is key. Towns and counties feel left out of the discussion. On the other hand, they may have a very unique resource that's worth protecting. It's not one county's fault that it has an overabundance of special places and resources – needs to be a way to protect them while still providing the county with the resources they need. The state should recognize this.

VI. Remaining Agenda Items

Because of limited time, it was decided to solicit input from the Task Force on Public Listening Session items via email.

VII. Public Comments

The Task Force welcomed comments from the public. Comments were made by Lucy Quimby (Bangor), Ed Meadows (Orono), and Ryan Linn. Key points included:

- The City of Bangor and the Bangor Land Trust have had positive conversations for many years. Bangor is a service center and so feels the loss of revenue sharing heavily. This is an important conversation to be had.
- While the conversation about financial impacts to municipalities is important, it's not the whole picture. In Maine we've conserved a lot, but we're only in the middle of the pack nationally in terms of funding for land conservation. There needs to be better messaging around the work that still needs to be done and better story telling in general. The goals are not just acreage. Some "conservation lands" are threatened because they're not truly conserved. There are more and more requests for non-conservation activities on lands acquired with LMF funds. Need to be prepared with conversion and amendment policies.
- Stewardship of public reserve lands is a growing issue. In at least two instances, Tumbledown and the Cutler Coast, it seems that the state isn't really paying attention to what's going on there. The pond at Tumbledown is really impacted by the crowds. On weekends, the parking lot and sides of the road are full. Other groups like Maine Appalachian Trail Club, use caretaker and ridgerunner positions. BPL is missing a huge opportunity by not having an official presence at some of these sites. There's trash and illegal camping and firepits, and it's disheartening to see this type of use at places that are the state's crown jewels. We need to have better data on use so we can better educate people about good stewardship and the significance of these resources. The best way to reach people is when they're physically at the location. We should take the opportunity to meet them where they are and help them understand the meaning and importance of public reserve lands.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:30 pm.