

**Task Force to Help Shape the Next Generation of Maine Land Conservation**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**July 24, 2018**

**Task Force Members Present:** John Banks, Adam Bishop, Cathy Breen, Hugh Cowperthwaite, Lee Dassler, Tim Glidden, Julia Harper, Alex Koch, Janet McMahon, Alison Sucus, Wolfe Tone, David Trahan, Chris Winstead

**Task Force Members Absent:** Patrick Corey, Jim Douglas, Doug Kane, Dennis Keschl, Don Kleiner, Austin Muir, Nancy Smith

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

**Panelists:** Rebecca Boulous (MPHA), Carl Constanzi (WMH), Deirdre Gilbert (DMR), Olivia Griset (MEEA), Craig Lapine (Cultivating Community), Carolann Ouellette (MH&T), Karin Tilberg (FSM), Mike Wilson (NFC), Kara Wooldrik (Portland Trails)

**Public:** Tom Abello (TNC), Kaitlyn Bernard (AMC), Eliza Baker-Wacks (AMC), Tom Duffus (The Conservation Fund), Jeremy Gabrielson (MCHT), Ed Meadows, Jake Metzler (FSM), Carly Peruccio (NRCM), Lucy Quimby (Bangor Land Trust), Jeff Reardon (Trout Unlimited), Jeff Romano (MCHT), Warren Whitney (MCHT)

The third meeting of the Task Force to Help Shape the Next Generation of Maine Land Conservation (Task Force) took place on Tuesday July 24, 2018 at 9 am, 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, followed by an introduction of Julia Harper, a new Task Force member who works for both the Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn and the Androscoggin Land Trust. The chairs gave an overview of the meeting agenda and two panels: one on the Economic Benefits of Land Conservation and another on the Community Benefits of Land Conservation. Where the panels in June were on traditional land conservation topics, this month's panels are intended to provide insight into how land conservation has evolved over the last generation and to think about the movement in more expansive ways. A few panelists listed on the agenda were not able to attend at the last minute – Penny Jordan and Judy East. Jerry explained that there would not be formal presentations, but panelists would respond to questions they received in advance, followed by questions and discussion with the Task Force.

II. Panel on Economic Benefits of Land Conservation

Jerry introduced the five panelists who were invited to represent Working Forests, Farmland, Working Waterfront and Tourism:

- Deirdre Gilbert – Maine Department of Marine Resources
- Adam Bishop – Maine Farmland Trust, filling in for Penny Jordan to discuss farmland issues
- Carolann Ouellette – Maine Huts & Trails/ Formerly the Director of the Maine Office of Tourism
- Karin Tilberg – Forest Society of Maine
- Mike Wilson – Northern Forest Center

Panelists all responded to the question, “**How has land conservation impacted and benefited your industry?**” and then provided comments on one or two of the other questions on the list (see Appendix A).

### **Working Forests – Karin Tilberg**

- The Forest Society of Maine (FSM), which is 33 years old, holds just shy of 900,000 acres of working forest conservation easements (WFCE) and monitors another 100,000 acres. Many forest landowners still actively come to FSM to pursue a WFCE, and interestingly some that they haven’t heard from in a while. This is encouraging and a measure that forest landowners of all kinds are looking for options in the face of great pressures
- Landowners pursue WFCEs for a variety of reasons; many are proud of the recreational benefits, wildlife habitat, and scenic vistas, and want to hold on to these into the future; many use proceeds from the sale of an easement to strengthen their business or to stabilize finances in order to pass the land on to another generation; many don’t want the hassle of people who want to lease or buy small chunks of land for a camp – they don’t want to be in the real estate business
- WFCEs help the community today by providing steady jobs in the forest products industry, providing traditional public access, and helping to stabilize the forest land base. A 2011 white paper from the Land for Maine’s Future Program provides similar information on the benefits of forestland conservation.
- Challenged by limited governmental funding; FSM, working with landowners who wish to do a WFCE, often has to find other funding sources (private, carbon sales). Government funding provides a forum for people to come together to talk about some of these important public issues around land conservation – can’t have that discussion if we don’t have the public funding vessel and process. For public funding moving forward it’s essential to have 1) a reliable program, 2) a stable funding source, and 3) a fair and credible process. The process should be as user-friendly as possible, with minimal strings attached.

### **Farmland – Adam Bishop**

- Important context for farmland conservation in Maine: less than 4% of the state has Prime Farmland Soils, with 1% being already under development and around 1% already conserved; so we’re fighting for just 2% of the land base. In addition, over 400,000 acres is currently owned by older farmers that will transition that land within the next 10 years.
- Close to 45,000 acres of farmland has been conserved in Maine to date with significant economic benefits; funds from these projects that go to farmers are often reinvested into the farm, they are used to pay down debt to make the farm more viable, they are set aside for retirement and make it possible for the farm to be passed on to the next generation.
- Farmland conservation easements also make it possible for new farmers to access an affordable piece of land, even in fairly expensive real estate markets. There are at least 40 farms in Maine where conservation easements have directly resulted in the farm transitioning from inactive to active, or in transitioning the land to a younger generation farmer.
- Investment in infrastructure is also important for farmland projects. Dollars go into a private investment into the farm with important community impacts:
- if the farm is viable then the farmer can lease fields from other landowners and those landowners aren’t selling off their land for development, and; there are jobs and a market for selling equipment and goods. The community’s livelihood rotates around the farm like a hub.
- Challenges for the future include funding and flexibility: Maine has not taken full advantage of funding from NRCS because the State has been unable to raise sufficient matching funds. Maine gets \$300,000 from NRCS compared to \$14 million for Vermont and \$8 million for New Hampshire.

Maine Farmland Trust has had to rely more heavily on private funding because there are few state funding sources to use as match. MFT thinks it's important to have money set aside only for farmland, that it's not a fair process to have farmland projects compete against recreation or community forests. Projects also need to be flexible – farms are more complex than recreational properties – and the timeline needs to be quicker; a farmer that's in a moment of financial crisis can't wait years for conservation funding.

### **Tourism – Carolann Ouellette**

- Tourism is a \$9 billion industry and Outdoor Recreation is an \$8 billion industry (not exclusive, so doesn't add to \$17 billion). Across the state tourism has benefitted from land conservation and open access for recreation.
- Maine Huts and Trails is one piece of this, operating four backcountry lodges and maintaining 180 miles of trails. They're focused on environmentally sensitive economic development and see building a conservation ethic as a means for creating an economic impact. It is a very rare set of visitors that wants a true backcountry experience, instead people are looking for some infrastructure to help make the experience comfortable and meaningful.
- Notable tourism trends that relate to land conservation include: local food is very important for visitors to the state; visitors value ocean views, mountain views, wildlife viewing and enjoying fall colors; there is rapid growth in adventure travel, which is dependent upon a landscape that is conserved and that has opportunities for people to get outdoors; everything "local" has much greater context than it ever did, with people looking for transformative experiences that tie in to both the natural setting and the local history, cultural and community.
- Looking to the future it's important to include funding for long-term management and maintenance. MH&T needs to replace more than 40 bridges on its trails and finds that it's easier to get money for new projects than for ongoing maintenance.
- Marketing and flexibility are also key for future efforts. Telling the story is an important part of the project. Leaving room for future adaptability is also key – example given of prefab shipping containers being used as shelters in National Parks.

### **Rural Economy/Tourism – Mike Wilson**

- The Northern Forest Center is about 20 years old. It works regionally on rural economic issues in three arenas: forest products, destination tourism development, and community revitalization. Increasingly looking at what conditions need to be in place for rural communities to thrive.
- Stabilization of the large landscape wood supply is important for the north woods region and we should be thinking about what role conserved lands can play in this market, and how they can connect to other key businesses.
- Destination tourism has potential, but we need to acknowledge that not every community is going to be a tourism destination. Some communities have a higher concentration of values: land, cultural assets, downtowns, name recognition. We should focus on preserving key landscape features in those areas and not trying to develop tourism opportunities everywhere. Also need to consider infrastructure – in many of these destination tourism locations, there's a lot conserved land, but not sufficient infrastructure to support tourism needs.
- When we conserve land, we should consider how we are adding to the experience that people have in a place – does it highlight what's unique about that community, does it make an investment that's good for visitors but also good for creating a nice place to live. Need to consider creative models –

like community forests and financing for tourism businesses – that help tie the transaction to related investment in the community, maybe even by giving communities a percentage of the project budget to invest in broadband and other infrastructure.

- One of the biggest challenges is with tying conservation and recreation together and in maintaining good relationships with landowners. Landowners are increasingly concerned about growing use, abuse of private roads, and trash problems. It's important to work with landowners early in the process.
- Municipal and industry partnerships are really important. Need to think about how we proactively engage with local communities about opportunities right in town, and not just trails or properties 10 miles away.

### **Working Waterfront – Deirdre Gilbert**

- DMR administers the Working Waterfront protection program, which was created in 2006 following work by the Island Institute that indicated only 20 miles of the 5,300-mile coastline was still available and appropriate for working waterfront access.
- The Working Waterfront sector is a vibrant and economically important commercial industry, with a 2017 landed value of \$580 million. It's estimated to be worth \$1.5 billion overall to the state's economy. That's great, but if you can't access the water, this becomes less valuable. Working waterfront covenants are important for protecting these businesses into the future.
- Businesses involved with working waterfronts were not familiar with land conservation tools. DMR worked with CEI initially to help educate people about the opportunity and mostly let projects come to them. Since 2006, 25 properties have come through the program. CEI has statistics on what resources were affected/protected, but they include 670 boats, 1,100 fishermen, 1,200 families, and \$48 million in landings. The projects range from York To Lubec.
- The program is sound, and has good tools, but it's challenging to work with the landowners to put together applications and business plans. In the early years, CEI oversaw project development, but this ended after a determination that bond funds couldn't be used to contract for administration of the program. They've struggled with limited capacity but hope to do a new round in the coming year.

### **Questions and Discussion**

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

- There's a common need for infrastructure to fully realize the economic benefits of land conservation projects. It's increasingly recognized by the tourism and outdoor industries that it's not just about the place itself, but also about how you're going to get there. Transportation is one of the biggest long-term issues. There needs to be greater coordination between communities and conservation groups, better planning early on to map out accessible infrastructure needs, and flexibility to incorporate recreation and economic development opportunities as land conservation projects mature.
- How can we better manage the saltwater resource and minimize conflict and competition between recreational and commercial fishermen? It's important to recognize that public access and commercial fisheries are not always compatible. There are properties in the Working Waterfront program that support both, but there need to be other funding mechanisms and properties to help meet public access needs.
- Food matters – the farm to table movement has had an impact in Maine, especially in the last 10 years. When surveyed, tourists to Maine site the #1 reason for visiting Maine is "Food/Beverage/Culinary", #2 is "Activities." Culinary tourism is significant and lots of farms

(although mostly younger and newer farms) are directly involved with providing farm-to-table experiences. It's estimated that 53% of tourists post pictures of their food while travelling.

- How do impacts vary by region? Southern Maine has less land available for fishing, farming and forestry. Are we conserving enough to maintain these traditional economies, and is it worth paying higher prices to conserve land in southern Maine? It's not always just a matter of dollars. Maine Farmland Trust believes that every community should have farms, even where farmland is more expensive. If there are intact forest lands in more populated regions, then there's an important role for conservation funding to play.
- How might climate change and sea-level rise affect working waterfront projects? Are there restrictions on how the money can be used? These haven't been considered with past applications, but program funds often go into rebuilding and improving wharves. DMR knows there are businesses out there that which they had built things higher because of sea level rise and would encourage future applicants to incorporate this into their plans.
- How is local leadership engaged in land conservation work? Are they recognizing the importance of infrastructure development to their community? NFC is finding the community forest model to be very successful – have 30-50 people representing diverse interests involved with planning in Bethel. FSM finds that efforts in the Moosehead region have been community driven. It can lead to a lengthier process, but it's then based on community knowledge, and creates pride in the region. There's also good community involvement in the High Peaks effort.

### III. Panel on Community Benefits of Land Conservation

Jerry introduced the six panelists who were invited to represent Cultural Connections with Land, Healthy Living, Education, and Livable Communities:

- John Banks – Penobscot Indian Nation
- Rebecca Boulous – Maine Public Health Association
- Carl Costanzi – Let's Go! Western Maine
- Olivia Griset – Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA)
- Craig Lapine – Cultivating Community
- Kara Wooldrik – Portland Trails

Panelists all responded to the question, “**How has land conservation impacted and benefited your community interest?**” and then provided comments on one or two of the other questions on the list (see Appendix A).

#### **Cultural Connections - Craig Lapine**

- Cultivating Community is trying to provide access to land for historically marginalized people. It serves mostly refugees and immigrants that farmed in their country of origin and are looking to build farms here in Maine as a pathway out of poverty. Farming in the U.S. was historically built on stolen land and stolen labor and there's still a need to help disenfranchised people build farm-based businesses.
- Land trusts have helped to redress some of those injustices by conserving land for the community. They're important and have great potential because of the community's involvement in decision-making and the ability to have the composition of the board reflect the diversity of the community.
- Cultivating Community operates two incubator farms – one in Lisbon that's protected with an easement held by the Androscoggin Land Trust, and one in West Falmouth that's owned outright by the Falmouth Land Trust. These programs have benefited from having conserved lands.

- Farming and food is a really complicated sphere; land can be a really healing place but it can also be a space where historical injustices are continued.
- Looking to the future, there's room for improvement with farmland conservation programs. Early conservation easements were more positional than interest based. There's a need in the farming community to have easements that are more an expression of values rather than a prescription of practices. Crafting this type of tool is challenging and takes more work and greater trust.
- As we think about all of these issues we should keep at the forefront the questions of "what are really the values that underlie the whole conversation", and "how do we open the conversation so that everyone's included?"

### **Education – Olivia Griset**

- MEEA is working to increase environmental literacy and to build a stewardship ethic in order to help secure a future for the next generation. Its work intersects with land conservation in many places – have educators working at state agencies, land trusts, conservation organizations and doing some collaborative work in schools. There are powerful partnerships already doing great work. MEEA works with educators (both formal and informal) to help make those partnerships happen, especially for public educators who are strapped for resources.
- It's more challenging to do place-based programming in schools because of resource limitations, but the pendulum is starting to swing back the other way thanks to educators who think this is a very powerful learning tool. People are looking to Maine as a leader in this field.
- MEEA is involved with a landscape analysis of nature-based education in Maine and is doing some other big picture thinking about place-based education for the state. These efforts will help provide a better picture of what's happening where and help direct resources for the future.
- Looking to the future it's important to nurture young leadership and to give them freedom to see a future land conservation world that looks totally different. We need to make space for cross-generational conversations across differences and to acknowledge that's okay to be at the table for different reasons – maybe for environmental justice or climate change, not always just for a love of nature. Need to build a love of the land that's not separate from self, and to build civic engagement around these issues.

### **Livable Communities – Kara Wooldrik**

- Portland Trails works at the intersection of public, economic and environmental health in the greater Portland area. For Portland Trails, community conservation isn't just a buzz word, it's who they are and what they do. The organization has 2,000 volunteers and works with 250 businesses and other partners including municipal planning boards, police and fire departments, real estate developers and neighborhood groups.
- There is a trail or greenspace within ¼ mile of every residence in Portland. The result is that nature is not just this thing that's protected only in the north woods – it's everywhere you turn. Here corridors are not just for habitat, but a tool for connecting people and neighborhoods. Appreciation of natural spaces comes from hands-on experiences tied to these places.
- Intersection of conservation, trails and transportation in the city is front and center. Having access to trails and greenspaces allows people to move away from reliance on single occupancy vehicles.
- Portland Trails has found with partnerships that it's more important to focus on "who's not in the room" and how to engage the quietest voices. Collaborative work takes time and requires a dedication to relationship management to avoid pitting different interests against each other. One

day everyone might have to agree that affordable housing rules the day, and the next time, conservation will be the lead. This give and take is required and it's how Portland Trails avoids land conservation becoming a negative impact to the community.

### **Cultural Connections – John Banks**

- Land conservation has tremendously impacted and benefit the tribal community in Maine. There's a segment of the tribal community that continues to practice cultural traditions and ceremonies that require extremely remote areas with little evidence of human involvement. Protection of Baxter and Mt. Katahdin is important to all four tribes in the state. The park has been somewhat cooperative and has agreed to set aside certain areas for use by the tribal community.
- Partnerships are complicated but can be worth the effort. The Penobscot River Restoration Trust raised \$65 million to restore 11 species of migratory fish to the Penobscot River watershed, while also preserving the generating capacity of the hydropower industry. The process took time and it required making room to understand each and every partner's interest.

### **Healthy Living – Becca Boulous**

- The Maine Public Health Association focuses on ensuring the health of Maine's people and places – and land conservation is certainly important to that. The Public Health sector works hard to engage the community in ownership and activism around issues that affect their health. The Federal CDC has a new initiative, One Health, that is looking at the intersection of environmental, animal and human health, and land conservation is one component of that.
- This work requires multi-sector engagement in the community, which can be challenging, but provides a way to engage many people, and an opportunity for people to learn from one another and to take ownership of protecting resources that are important for community health.
- The biggest challenge to Maine's Public Health system is limited resources, especially over the last few years. People have less access to public health services on a broad range of issues, and this transcends all other challenges.

### **Healthy Living – Carl Costanzi**

- The environment, economy and public health are all interconnected. The least healthy counties in the state are also the most impoverished. The Let's Go! obesity prevention program spreads a message of healthy eating and active living, but obesity is a complicated disease and is impacted by environmental and economic factors. A child growing up in impoverished rural Maine has limited access to active living experiences – both from a lack of sidewalks, bike lanes and trails in town, and from family and generational habits.
- Access to active living opportunities is an obstacle in many places. The life of rural Mainers is built around cars. Even biking in rural areas is a challenge. Making active living opportunities as accessible as possible is an important way to have future land conservation efforts support healthy living efforts. Parks and preserves near town are successful – South Paris River park and the Roberts Farm – and getting school children there helps bring a connection back to families and adults.
- The healthy eating part is also connected to land conservation. For many families, their main source of protein is wild food, so conserving that pool of wild food and access to it is important. Farmland conservation efforts are also key in helping us reach a goal of having 50% of the food we eat come from Maine.

- Healthy Living efforts are challenged by our electronic culture, and by limited resources for marketing and story telling that help make people aware of the opportunities available to them. One of the root causes for many Oxford County problems is isolation and disconnection. We need to find ways to give people a voice and a way to be part of the solution.

### **Questions and Discussion**

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

- What are some of those underlying values? Relationships and time are really important, and interestingly are in conflict with the idea of landowners entering into a project during a crisis moment. As a movement it will take time to develop tools that reflect these values. As a culture, we're in a moment where time and relationships often compete with technology. These are values to consider in the context of the Task Force as well – where we have a schedule of wanting recommendations for the coming legislative session, but a need to have a deeper conversation around many of these issues. Time also affects landowners and stewardship – many large landowners are people from away or investment companies that don't have the same long-term interest that both people and industry shared not so long ago.
- Shared spaces are important. There's a place where people who have lived there forever can share concerns with people from away, and if we can connect people in those spaces, we will be able to move forward together. In prior years, the path to land conservation was easy, but recent challenges have forced us to revisit the path we're on and find new ways to look to the future.
- What's the relationship between community organizations and economic development agencies? For the tribal community, economic development is integrated with conservation programs. Everyone's in the room at the same time so that any economic development proposals have a lot of input from people who are more interested in environmental values. Portland Trails works with the City's Economic Development Department regularly and every project goes before the Planning Board. This builds good relationships but also keeps Portland Trails' values in the forefront of their planning. The idea of economic development being only looked at as forest products, fishing, tourism and farming is outdated – need innovative ideas like saving money through public health initiatives and other programs that take us out of the old-school model of economic development. Need to look critically at economic transactions that provide monetary benefit but a loss of public control over a public resource (like groundwater).
- How can land conservation programs foster innovation and communication in a better way? There's a need for greater flexibility, but that's hard to do in a traditional funding space. Business and tech companies do this all the time, but our sectors are not great at this. This partially comes from the business model – we're not sitting on cash reserves, and partially from guidelines and restrictions that are dictated by funders, and sometimes lead to groups not applying for funding at all. They're not responsive enough to a rapidly changing landscape. Partnerships can help with this issue – diverse stakeholders can work to pool resources towards shared goals.

#### IV. Working Lunch

##### **Public Listening Sessions**

The Task Force discussed plans for Public Listening Sessions. The idea is to have two sessions in mid to late October; one in the Portland area and one in the Bangor area. Having them before the November meeting will provide an opportunity to hear public input before making preliminary findings. At the September meeting the Task Force will develop suggested questions for members of the public to



comment on. The coordinators will work to find two dates that work for a good number of Task Force members.

### **Reflections**

Task Force members offered the following reflections about the meeting and the process thus far:

- One emerging theme is food. We haven't talked about aquaculture and it's a huge developing industry that's reliant on coastal access, just like other working waterfront industries. Maybe one theme we consider is food production/capacity.
- Another theme: the health of the economy, the environment and public health are interconnected.
- The point about land conservation being "pretty easy" in past years is well taken. The Community Benefits panel blew the traditional label of conservation open. How do we address that as a group if land conservation isn't just "land conservation" anymore?
- How do we incorporate and reconcile issues of scale? Conservation at a grand scale is one of the things that makes Maine unique. This is not going away, and if anything will get more important. But the other scale of having every resident within ¼ mile of a trail also resonates. How do we keep both purposes in mind?
- Prioritization is a challenge, both across types of projects and regions of the state – how do you best allocate finite funding resources? Especially when everything we've heard so far is important? Need to make sure we consider these recommendations broadly – remembering that LMF is just one piece of the pie.
- Struck by how often we've left federal dollars on the table, or we had them and gave them back. It's clear that partnerships succeed by leveraging resources from many different places and our future depends on a government and community that pursues what's available.
- Don't think we've conserved too much land – these efforts happened because people recognized what a unique place Maine is and came forward in significant numbers to get the money to protect those lands. The land conservation movement is evolving into a more mature and sophisticated program – it's more challenging, but it's not a bad thing. We're still well positioned to keep the character of Maine intact.

### V. Public Comments

The Task Force welcomed comments from the public. There were none. Task Force members were provided hard copies of public comments that had been submitted electronically to-date.

### VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1 pm.

**Appendix A**  
**Questions to Panelists**

**Economic Benefits of Land Conservation**

1. How has land conservation impacted and benefited your industry?
  - what opportunities or programs have proven most beneficial?
  - how extensively have these opportunities been utilized?
  - has it had a measurable economic impact both locally and statewide?
  - will this impact be long-lasting?
  - an illustrative example?
2. What challenges or constraints has your industry run into when attempting to utilize land conservation opportunities to advance economic objectives?
3. What partnerships have proven to be most important in achieving successful outcomes?
4. Are there ways in which land conservation has negatively impacted your industry? If so, how can this be avoided?
5. Looking to the future, how could land conservation programs be designed, improved or expanded in ways that would substantially increase their positive economic benefits to communities and the state?

**Community Benefits of Land Conservation**

1. How has land conservation impacted and benefited your community interest?
  - what opportunities or programs have proven most beneficial?
  - how extensively have these opportunities been utilized?
  - has it had a measurable impact both locally and statewide?
  - will this impact be long-lasting?
  - an illustrative example?
2. What challenges or constraints has your community interest run into when attempting to utilize land conservation opportunities to advance community objectives?
3. What partnerships have proven to be most important in achieving successful outcomes?
4. Are there ways in which land conservation has negatively impacted your community interest? If so, how can this be avoided?
5. Looking to the future, how could land conservation programs be designed, improved or expanded in ways that would substantially increase benefits to your community interest?