

DRAFT

Great Maine Forest Initiative

Forests and the forest products industry define Maine. They are a significant part of what creates Maine's character and special quality of place. Both the forest resource and its traditional uses face unprecedented challenges to their future and the values that they have traditionally provided to Maine people. The Great Maine Forest Initiative (GMFI) is a collaborative effort led by the Maine Department of Conservation to involve a variety of state and federal conservation and energy agencies, as well as elements of the forest products industry, forest landowners, and the conservation community to chart a course that will maintain the values that Maine's forest resources and its forest manufacturing industry have provided to Maine citizens for two centuries.

The purposes of the Great Maine Forest Initiative are:

- To keep forests as forests for both environmental and economic reasons.
- To maintain as diverse and robust a forest products industry as is possible to provide jobs for Maine people, the backbone for rural economies and to keep us connected with the land in a real and tangible way.

The components of the Great Maine Forest Initiative are as follows:

1. **A new model for keeping forests as forests.** This involves and implementing a new model for a federal/state/private partnership to keep forests as forests, and to maintain their value as a source of timber to fuel the state's economy and to protect their environmental values. More detail on this element of the initiative is contained in Attachment A ("*The Forest Land Conservation Component of the Great Maine Forest Initiative*"). Agencies and interests invited to participate in this effort include the Maine Department of Conservation, the USDA Forest Service, the US Department of the Interior, forest landowners, mills, environmental non-government groups.
2. **Improving energy efficiency at mills.** This element of the initiative involves a collaborative effort already underway (e.g., Office of Energy Independence and Security's collaboration with the US Department of Energy, Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Efficiency Maine, etc.) to improve the energy efficiency at Maine's forest products mills (the effort includes, but is not limited to, these mills). The largest of these mills (e.g., pulp and paper mills), have large opportunities for conserving energy. Not only will capturing this potential make these mills more competitive in the world market, it will reduce their carbon footprint as well. Organizations involved with this effort include the Maine Office of Energy Independence and Security, the US Department of Energy, and mills which are part of the forest products industry.
3. **Increasing the use of renewable energy at Maine mills.** This portion of the effort is intended to increase the use of indigenous wind and biomass resources to provide electricity at Maine mills; hence, reducing their costs and dependence on oil. The organizations involved with this effort include the Maine Office of Energy Independence and Security, the Governor's Office, US Department of Energy, USDA Forest Service,

mills, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and the Maine Department of Conservation.

4. **Refining federal and state policy.** This portion of the effort is designed to refine federal and state policy related to both keeping forests as forests and to maintaining as diverse and robust a forest products industry as possible. The effort is aimed at the following kinds of issues:

- Increasing the attractiveness of donating conservation easements on forest lands
- Expensing silvicultural expenses
- Forgiving estate taxes if a conservation easement is donated or sold at a bargain price
- Providing incentives for energy conservation
- Allowing the proceeds from timber management to underwrite tax exempt forestry bonds
- Shaping federal and regional policy on climate change (for example, the content of federal cap and trade legislation).

The agencies involved with this effort include the Maine Department of Conservation, the USDA Forest Service, working with the Pinchot Institute(?) and other interests. See Attachment D for more on this topic (this really is not underway now, but could be initiated).

Conclusion

As stated earlier, forests and the forest products industry are part of what define Maine and its character. Maine has both an unusual forest – the largest unfragmented forest east of the Mississippi River – and an unusual forest type globally, as well as an unusually robust and diverse forest products industry. This Great Maine Forest Initiative is intended to maintain both.