

DRAFT Working Outline

The Keeping Maine's Forest portion of the Great Maine Forest Initiative

Response to Federal Interests in Keeping Maine's Forests as Forests
January 22, 2009

The initiative outlined below **is intended to create a new, more robust federal/state/private partnership to conserve Maine's forests statewide** and enhance their economic, ecological, recreational and habitat values.

Background

At the invitation of Senator Susan Collins, Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar visited the State of Maine in July 2009. Among the other activities he met with a group of people interested in forest conservation and expressed his interest in conserving in what he called "treasured landscapes." Most of the persons he met with were involved with a committee working on "Keeping Maine's Forests."

At the meeting, Secretary Salazar was presented with information on forests from an ecological perspective (importance as the largest unfragmented forest habitat in the east [see map]), and its importance as a source of wood for Maine's exceptionally diverse and robust forest products industry, and as a unique recreational resource. Participants explained the deep and abiding connection Maine people have with the state's forests, the uniqueness and importance of the extensive private landownership pattern within Maine's forests, and the critical linkage between these lands and a robust forest products industry. The group expressed concern with the lack of certainty and stability about the fate of this important and cherished resource as a result of the global economic changes that have resulted in the sale of lands by long-time industrial forest landowners.

It was pointed out that Maine has made great progress in its efforts to keep forests as forests over the last decade through the purchase of lands and conservation easements from willing sellers, but that because the public and private sources of funding that made this progress possible have diminished substantially, increased federal funding (in a form that builds on the successful, public private partnership model that has emerged in Maine) will be necessary to keep Maine's Great Forest.

Secretary Salazar expressed a willingness to consider a proposal from Maine focused on forest conservation. He stressed, however, the importance of having a broad-base of support, including environmental/conservation interests and landowners/industry leaders.

This matter has also been a topic of discussion with representatives of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service for over two years. Recent contacts with USDA Secretary Vilsack's office, Chief of the USDA Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Officials in Maine have confirmed their interest in advancing these discussions. In particular, Secretary Vilsack's articulation of an "all lands policy" supports Maine's efforts to develop a new model for federal/state/private cooperation to keep forests as forests.

The following is a response to the expressions of interest by Secretary Salazar and the USDA. It is a component, but not the entirety, of a larger Great Maine Forest Initiative, which addresses a number of related and important efforts (e.g., maintaining a diverse and robust forest products industry in Maine). More information on this larger initiative is available from the Maine Department of Conservation.

The Essence

The essence of this proposal is an innovative and more robust public-private partnership, specifically tailored to Maine circumstances to permanently sustain the Great Maine Forest (including its natural and recreational values) and the forest products industry and rural economies which depend on it. This partnership is envisioned to consist of private landowners, the state and federal governments, ENGOs, and the philanthropic community, and is intended to secure a future where Maine's forests provide for future generations the goods, services and values they have provided for centuries. Creating this partnership will require broad support among a variety of constituencies and a **focus on a positive vision** for the role of each of these partners in capitalizing on the window of opportunity Maine has. Success in these regards will require unprecedented levels of understanding, communications, and cooperation among a variety of partners and a sustained effort. **Creation of a new national park or national forest are specifically not among the options being pursued.**

At its heart, this is a proposal to maintain a sustainably managed forest landscape, which continues to produce wood products and protects ecological values, while maintaining and improving recreational opportunities. With regard to resource protection, beyond the protection afforded by sustainable management, this proposal recognizes that some key areas with special ecological and recreational values are most appropriately removed from the timber producing landbase (with, of course, compensation to willing landowners), but these are intended to be located within a matrix of lands sustainably managed for the production of timber. Further, this proposal recognizes that if timber supplies are to be maintained in the face of setting aside certain areas, the intensity of forest management may have to be sustainably increased on others.

To be effective, this proposal contemplates working at a landscape scale to encourage the mix of private and public lands and easements, acquired from willing sellers, best suited to accomplish the objectives listed below on the parcels involved.

We recognize that Maine's working forest has been maintained by 150 years of private ownership and that most of Maine's land conservation progress in the last decade has been achieved by the acquisition of easements intended to maintain the working forests. The expectation is that easements will continue to be a valuable tool to keep forests as forests.

Elements of Success

Fundamental to success will be:

- Operating at a landscape scale.
- Creating a partnership with private landowners to achieve the objectives outlined below through purchases (fee, easements, and potentially other creative mechanisms) from willing sellers, and incentives for sustainable forest management.

In terms of the specific objectives to be achieved, they include:

- a. Maintaining the most diverse, robust and economically beneficial forest products industry possible. As well as supporting other related efforts to maintain and enhance Maine's forest products industry, this will require, but is not limited to, maintaining the supply of wood

from Maine's forests; and, to the extent possible in a free market system, have wood supplies which are both reliable, stable in price, and verified as from sustainably managed forests.

- b. Contributing to meeting Maine's energy needs by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and high energy costs.
- c. Protecting biodiversity (such as rare, threatened, and endangered species recognized at the federal and state level, unique and exemplary natural areas, late successional forest features in working forests, and others similar, as well as maintaining, and where practicable, restoring viable populations of game and non-game wildlife).
- d. Maintaining or enhancing existing public access for the full spectrum of existing recreational uses, and attracting an increased number of recreational users by selective investments in improved recreation facilities.
- e. Preserving special places, e.g., old growth forests, areas with special recreational values, unique or exemplary natural features, and other similar features.
- f. Maintaining and increasing carbon storage, thus contributing to reducing levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases.
- g. Facilitating the adaptation of forest systems to a changing climate particularly by maintaining large contiguous and interconnected areas of forest.

It is intended that this effort provide a model for forest conservation efforts elsewhere in the region and a pilot for New England wide efforts as called for in the report of the New England Governor's Conference, Commission on Land Conservation. In the meantime, these objectives provide a valuable set of guideposts for forest land conservation efforts and projects in Maine that should be useful to not only participating organizations but others as well.

This draft was developed with input from a wide variety of constituencies that care about the future of Maine's forests, and is a work in progress. Consensus has not been achieved on all the issues involved, but all the parties wish to continue the dialogue and determine how this could work on the ground. Continued discussion and refinement will be needed to develop broadly supported mechanisms and strategies for implementation that achieve all the goals and objectives specified simultaneously.

The persons and organizations that have participated in this effort up to this point include the following; however, it is the group's intention to invite others to participate and provide other opportunities for discussion of the issues involved and the most effective design for a program to achieve the objectives outlined.

Participants:

Patrick K. McGowan, Department of Conservation	Wolfe Tone, Trust for Public Land
Rosaire Pelletier, Advisor to the Governor	Sherry Huber, Maine Tree Foundation
Karin Tilberg, Office of the Governor	Mike Tetreault, The Nature Conservancy
Alec Giffen, Maine Forest Service	Patrick Strauch, Forest Products Council
Ted Koffman, Maine Audubon	Roger Milliken, Baskahegan Co.
Marcia McKeague, Katahdin Timberlands	John Williams, ME Pulp & Paper Assoc.
Eleanor Kinney, Maine Quality of Place Council	Karen Woodsum, Sierra Club
Brownie Carson, Natural Resources Council	Alan Hutchinson, Forest Society of Maine
Peter Triandafillou, Huber Resources	Walter Graff, Appalachian Mountain Club
Don White, Prentiss & Carlisle	

Five Largest Areas of Remaining Unfragmented U.S. Temperate Broadleaf and Mixed Forests

