

# Keeping Maine's Forests | Part of the Great Maine Forest Initiative

## Overview

*Keeping Maine's Forests brings together a diverse partnership of interests who believe forest conservation must strengthen economic, ecological, recreational, community, and tribal benefits.*

**Keeping Maine's Forests** is an effort to maintain Maine's forest land base *as forest*—both for its high environmental values and its importance to the wood products industry, community and tribal aspirations, sportsmen, recreationists, and rural economies.

The largest unfragmented forest in the East, Maine's traditional working forest is a national treasure uniquely maintained predominantly by private landowners. This Initiative seeks to take advantage of a unique opportunity offered by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack and U.S. Secretary of Interior Salazar to work with their agencies to find ways to maintain forest landscapes through coordinated action and make their federal programs more responsive to the needs of Maine's forest landowners.



**North Maine Woods from Barren Ledges**

In November, the Secretaries asked Keeping Maine's Forests for a preliminary and collaborative pilot project proposal by mid-February that describes how Maine people and the U.S. Interior and Agriculture Departments could work together utilizing existing federal programs to demonstrate collaborative forest conservation on a landscape-scale, i.e. large blocks of multiple holdings. Through such a Pilot Project, the Secretaries wish to explore how their agency programs can be structured and their departments better coordinated to maintain forest landscapes and to provide more flexible and relevant support to landowners, governments, and non-profits to the end. These federal programs support acquisition of working forest easements, fee acquisition of areas with high-value ecological, cultural, or recreational resources, and forest stewardship (payments to landowners for providing / managing for public benefits). Up until now they have pursued their specific purposes independently of one another rather than focusing on specific landscapes and working together to maintain that landscape and enhance its management. The Keeping Maine's Forests effort is seeking additional resources and necessary adjustments to these programs so that they can work together to achieve coherent landscape scale conservation and more Maine interests may take advantage of them.

In so doing, over the long term the Initiative seeks to foster partnerships of many kinds among willing landowners and diverse interests to work toward a commonly-held, long-range vision for the North Maine Woods. It is all about increasing non-regulatory conservation support for landowners and benefits for all constituencies from mills to recreationists. It starts with the premise that this is an opportunity for landowners and other interests to pursue individual organizational objectives within a broader collaborative effort.

Some specific objectives of Keeping Maine's Forests include:

- Maintaining the most diverse, robust and economically beneficial forest products industry possible;
- Contributing to meeting Maine's energy needs by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and high energy costs;

- Protecting biodiversity and preserving select special places;
- Enhancing public access for the full spectrum of existing recreational uses; and
- Addressing carbon storage and facilitating the adaptation of forest systems to a changing climate.



**The Pilot Project** will articulate a long-range vision for the North Woods and identify high priority landscape areas as well as one or more on-the ground project(s) to demonstrate how willing landowners may take advantage of existing federal programs. It will also recommend a process for assisting these landowners and other interests in exploring and/or implementing the identified opportunities; and provide an assessment of changes that the Secretaries should consider to make their programs more useful in Maine.

A process is now underway to select one or more "Priority Landscapes" ranging in size from 250,000 acres to 2,000,000 acres which would become part of the Pilot Project. The Steering Committee has, on a preliminary basis, identified four Candidate Areas for potential inclusion as a Priority Landscape in the proposal to be submitted to the Secretaries. Participation in any of these programs will be purely voluntary – no landowner will be required to do anything different on their land if it is ultimately included within a Priority Landscape.

The expectation is that a Priority Landscape will be comprised of a collection of landowners who will opt for different levels of involvement or none at all. Some may wish to participate in "Demonstration Projects," that together will provide an on-the-ground laboratory for exploring how federal programs may better be aligned to support specific resource conservation needs associated with these Priority Landscapes and the North Woods. An assessment is now underway of the programs that may be most useful to landowners and other interests.

#### **Steering Committee Participants:**

John Banks, Penobscot Nation  
 Brownie Carson, Natural Resources Council  
 Matthew Dunlap, Maine Sportman's Alliance  
 Alec Giffen, Maine Forest Service  
 Walter Graff, Appalachian Mountain Club  
 Sherry Huber, Maine Tree Foundation  
 Alan Hutchinson, Forest Society of Maine  
 Eleanor Kinney, Environmental Funders Network  
 Ted Koffman, Maine Audubon Society  
 Marcia McKeague, Katahdin Timberlands  
 Rich Merk, Small Woodlot Owners of Maine

Roger Milliken, Baskahegan Co.  
 Rosaire Pelletier, Advisor to the Governor  
 Patrick Strauch, Forest Products Council  
 Mike Tetreault, The Nature Conservancy  
 Karin Tilberg, Office of the Governor  
 Wolfe Tone, Trust for Public Land  
 Eliza Townsend, Dept of Conservation  
 Peter Triandafillou, Huber Resources  
 Don White, Prentiss & Carlisle  
 John Williams, ME Pulp & Paper Assoc.  
 Karen Woodsum, Sierra Club