

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

Frequently Asked Questions

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

What long-term results can be expected? As we learn from this Pilot Project and its demonstration projects, it is hoped that new opportunities will be available for all interested parties in Maine. Ultimately, participants hope that there will be greater confidence that the traditional working forests of Maine will continue to offer the benefits that the people of Maine value, economically, socially, and environmentally. As this variety of interests work together, Maine will gain longer term security and stability for its forest landowners, forest products industry, sportsmen and recreational users, tribal nations, and local communities. With greater stability we can expect even greater private and public investments in the North Woods.

Why is this different from what we have been doing? Maine needs a fresh approach to fostering collaboration among landowners, environmental organizations, governments, and other interests. In recent years, communications across many sectors have been strained, with few participants happy with the tone or character of the debate. Independently, most of these interests have come to believe that the best way forward should be through open dialogue and constructive engagement, especially around resources as central to our future as the North Woods. Keeping Maine's Forests grew out of this shared belief that a process characterized by inclusion, equity, transparency, respect, creativity and perseverance can overcome timeworn obstacles and open new opportunities.

Regarding federal and state agency functions, this proposal contemplates all the agencies working together with a shared goal of maintaining Maine's forests. Agencies will still pursue their individual missions, but in a coordinated way that is designed to achieve landscape scale results.

How did Keeping Maine's Forests originate? This Initiative arose from the interest of a variety of parties interested in changing the tone and substance of forest conservation dialogue in Maine. Bruce Wiersma, former Dean of the School of Forestry at the University of Maine, formed the initial group over two years ago. The present Steering Committee of Keeping Maine's Forests is a follow-up to that effort. It includes representatives from the landowner, forest products, and conservation communities, along with the Maine Department of Conservation.

How does it relate to Governor Baldacci's Great Maine Forest Initiative? The coalition to Keep Maine's Forests is part of a larger effort, known as the Great Maine Forest Initiative, begun by Governor Baldacci with the dual goals of maintaining Maine's forest land base and strengthening its forest products industry. Another group is working parallel to Keeping Maine's Forests on strengthening Maine's forest products industry and ecotourism.

Why now? Many see a significant window of opportunity that may not come around again soon, a function of several different circumstances. There is the newly demonstrated willingness of often competing interests to work together here in Maine. Meanwhile, and importantly, leaders at the federal level are wrestling with how resources like Maine's vast forests can be maintained and the people who depend upon them can best be served.

Why are we approaching you? While the effort to produce a Pilot Project Proposal for the Secretaries is now moving quickly, it is still early in an ongoing process. Not all important interests have had a chance to weigh in. Accordingly, we are consulting those who have deep connections to Maine's forestlands – from large landowners and logging contractors to local communities, tribal nations, businesses and recreation and sporting groups. This is an opportunity to think broadly about the needs and opportunities within Maine's forests. It is an opportunity to see if mutual goals exist that can be met immediately through the Pilot Project and over the long-term through continued collaboration.

We would like to hear your ideas and thoughts as to what you think this effort should seek to accomplish, and how it might go about doing that. In particular, we would like to know:

1. Are there opportunities for this effort to address your interests in such areas as:
 - Forest products jobs?
 - Recreational access?
 - Wildlife habitat?
 - Tribal subsistence and other values?
 - Tourism development?
 - Local community development? and
 - Other important needs?
2. What existing federal programs are currently most useful in supporting your needs (e.g., NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program, USFWS Tribal Wildlife Grants, Rural development Business Opportunity Grants)? What keeps you from participating in those in which you have an interest? How could these programs be modified to better to meet your needs? (See Summary of Existing Forest Programs, available from Keeping Maine's Forests.)
3. Do you see any opportunities for partnership with other groups in moving projects forward?

How can you help? Beyond weighing in on the development of the Pilot Project and long-term direction of the initiative, your support through a letter or call to Maine's Delegation in Washington, D.C. will be most helpful.

Thank you for your interest.

For more information on Keeping Maine's Forests, please contact:

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