

Comprehensive Land Use Plan



*for Areas within the Jurisdiction of the
Maine Land Use Regulation Commission*



Maine Land Use Regulation Commission
Department of Conservation
2010

5.9 Recreational Resources-Excerpts

Recreation in the jurisdiction is important to the economic well-being of the communities within and near the jurisdiction as well as to the state as a whole. Recreation plays an important role in the economy for a number of towns which have traditionally served as gateways to the jurisdiction (Rangeley, Greenville, Millinocket, Jackman, Ashland and Allagash). These communities rely on the recreational opportunities afforded by the jurisdiction's distinctive qualities.

The recreational experience in the jurisdiction is heavily influenced by the preferences of recreationists and a changing land ownership pattern of publicly and privately owned lands, including a substantial amount of land subject to conservation easements. Currently, the dominant setting for recreation in the jurisdiction is within the working forest. However, there is a spectrum of settings with a wide range of levels of human presence. This dynamic human landscape shapes recreational opportunities in the jurisdiction, as lands become either accessible or closed to recreationists.

Recreation is of secondary use for most landowners, however most landowners recognize the long tradition of respectful public use of private lands and support this use by maintaining roads or campsites or allowing snowmobile trail routes on their lands. Recreational uses that have historically occurred in the Maine Woods are generally those that are compatible with the working forest. Hunting, trapping, fishing, canoeing, gathering (berries, fiddleheads) and snowmobiling are among the recreational pursuits long associated with the Maine Woods and compatible with forest management. Horse-packing, mountain biking and ATV riding are newer uses that may be compatible when road safety issues can be addressed satisfactorily. Hut-to-hut trail systems are among the emerging uses on privately owned land that also have the potential to grow and be compatible with a working forest.

Motorized recreation within the jurisdiction includes snowmobiling, motor boating and use of backcountry vehicles such as ATVs, dirt bikes, and four-wheel-drive trucks.

Hiking, mountain climbing, mountain biking, backpacking, primitive camping, ski touring, snowshoeing, canoeing and kayaking generally depend on the availability of trails or accessibility to backcountry areas or water resources.

Hunting, fishing and trapping are recreation pursuits that have a rich tradition in the Maine Woods.

Whitewater rafting is an organized, high-volume activity that utilizes outstanding stretches of rapids, primarily on the West Branch of the Penobscot and Kennebec Rivers.

The jurisdiction's recreational facilities include boat launches, campsites, campgrounds, trail systems, sporting camps, whitewater rafting bases, as well as nordic and alpine ski resorts.

Fishing and hunting participation is in flux. Between 1999 and 2008, the number of hunting and fishing licenses issued to Maine residents increased by approximately 4% and 10%, respectively. The number of nonresident hunting and fishing licenses issued during the same timeframe declined by approximately 18% and 7% respectively.

Motorized recreation is increasingly popular in Maine. Snowmobile registrations grew by approximately 16% between 1999 and 2008, with approximately 102,000 snowmobiles registered in 2008. ATV registrations grew by approximately 40% during that time, with more than 67,000 ATVs registered in 2008.

Whitewater rafting is on the decline.

Wildlife watching characteristics are changing. The number of people participating in wildlife watching (this includes observing, photographing and feeding wildlife) in Maine has decreased by 14% from 1996 to 2006 for those traveling away from home to participate, but has increased by 33% from 1996 to 2006 for those participating near home.

There is increasing interest in nature-based tourism.

Future Demand In evaluating available recreational use data, it appears that there are two main categories of recreational use — recreational experiences tied to a strong demand for amenities (including both motorized recreation and nature-based experiences) and backcountry non-motorized primitive recreational experiences associated with minimal accommodations.

Recreational uses and facilities exist today that were probably not contemplated in the early 1970s. Likewise, in the future there are likely to be new recreational uses not considered by this Plan. A likely future trend for campgrounds, sporting camps and whitewater rafting operations is diversification into secondary activities as a means of attracting more business. For example, some sporting camps now remain open year-round to cater to snowmobilers and other winter recreationists. Several rafting bases and sporting camps have added campground areas and have dining facilities open to the general public. A number of campground stores cater to both campers and to the public at large. As this trend continues, it may become increasingly difficult to clearly distinguish between different types of recreational facilities and to assess potential impacts.

The Commission recognizes that it must be flexible in its approach to this evolving field, and adapt its policies, zones and standards to address new uses. On the other hand, the Commission will carefully consider the potential impacts of any new uses on the principal values of the jurisdiction. While the Commission encourages recreational diversity, it will ensure that new uses and facilities do not diminish the experience for existing recreational users.

4.6 Development Data and Trends, 1971-2005- Excerpts

Recreational Development

Forty-two percent of development permits issued by the Commission between 1971 and 2005 were for recreation-related activities and facilities. *Low-Intensity Recreational Development*

Most recreational pursuits in the jurisdiction are low-intensity activities which require development of few, if any, facilities or support services. Common examples of low-intensity recreational facilities are public and private sites for picnicking, launching boats, and swimming; trails for snowmobiling, hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing; and lodging facilities such as remote rental cabins and sporting camps.

The number of traditional sporting camps has declined throughout this century, but there has been renewed interest in these facilities and improved coordination and promotion by camp owners. Many of these facilities are marginal, labor-intensive operations. Their future success may be tied to increasing their clientele while maintaining the remote character of the camps and their surroundings.

High-intensity recreational facilities include golf courses, ski resorts and commercial rafting bases. These facilities tend to be located along highway corridors in areas with high natural resource values, and require rezoning to a development subdistrict. There are clusters of development permits issued for high-intensity recreational development around Rangeley, The Forks, south of Jackman, Moosehead Lake and just south of Baxter State Park.

The whitewater rafting industry is centered on two outstanding whitewater river segments: the West Branch of the Penobscot River and the Kennebec River Gorge. The industry includes more than ten rafting companies that provide their clientele with food, lodging, equipment, guide services and transportation to and from the river. A number of rafting bases have been constructed in the vicinity of these whitewater segments. For example, several are located along Route 201 in The Forks Plantation.

Nature-based tourism – including by state and private entities — may lead to new proposals, including large-scale destination resorts that offer a broad range of activities, and upgrades of existing uses to provide more amenities and recreational options. These proposals will likely benefit from being located in areas with high scenic or recreational values, where questions of appropriateness of location and impacts upon existing uses, resources and values are particularly important.

Chapter 7
Implementation
Excerpts

7.1 The Commission's Highest Priority Issue

The Commission has concluded that the principal development issue is not the amount of development taking place in the jurisdiction, but rather where it is located.

7.2 Other High Priority Issues

Re-evaluate the Commission's regulations on recreational trail construction and campgrounds, involving other state agencies, landowners, recreation groups and interested parties in these efforts.

Evaluate the merits of prospectively identifying sites for large-scale nature-based resort facilities either through the current zoning framework or by means of a modified zoning approach.

Re-examine the appropriateness of the current zoning of sporting camp facilities as General Development (D-GN), particularly those in remote settings.

Continue to apply, and refine as needed, experiential- and opportunity-based approaches to evaluating impacts on recreation resources.