

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

S.P. 613 - L.D. 1529

An Act to Enhance the Protection of High-value Natural Resources Statewide

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §685-C, sub-§1, as amended by PL 2021, c. 676, Pt. A, §§23 and 24, is further amended to read:

1. Comprehensive land use plan. The commission shall prepare an official comprehensive land use plan, referred to in this subsection as "the plan," for the unorganized and deorganized areas of the State.

The commission must use the plan as a guide in developing specific land use standards and delineating district boundaries and guiding development and generally fulfilling the purposes of this chapter.

The plan may consist of maps, data and statements of present and prospective resource uses that generally delineate the proper use of resources, and recommendations for its implementation.

The commission shall hold public hearings to collect information to be used in establishing the plan. The public hearings must be conducted according to commission rules adopted in accordance with procedures for the establishment of rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2.

The commission may, on its own motion or petition of any state agency or regional planning commission, hold such other hearings as the commission considers necessary from time to time for the purpose of obtaining information helpful in the determination of its policies, the carrying out of its duties or the formulation of its land use standards or rules.

A. The commission may not finalize a plan or a portion of a plan without:

- (1) Submitting a draft copy of the tentative plan to each regional planning commission and other appropriate planning or state resource agencies, which shall forward their comments and recommendations, if any, to the commission within 30 days;

(2) Submitting a draft copy of the tentative plan to the Director of the Bureau of Resource Information and Land Use Planning within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Resource Information and Land Use Planning, as described in Title 7-A, section 206, subsection 4, or its the director's successor, which who shall forward its the director's comments and recommendations, if any, to the commission within 30 days; and

(3) Considering all comments and recommendations submitted under paragraphs A and B-1; and subparagraphs (1) and (2).

~~(4) Submitting the tentative plan to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over conservation matters and the committee reviewing the plan at a public meeting. The commission shall brief the committee on any anticipated changes to land use districts and subdistricts based on revisions in the comprehensive land use plan and a projected timetable for rulemaking to adopt these changes.~~

B-1. After the commission has finalized provisionally adopted a plan or a portion of a plan, but prior to final adoption, the commission shall provide a copy to the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, who shall submit the finalized provisionally adopted plan or a portion of the plan to the Governor for comments. The commissioner shall submit the finalized provisionally adopted plan or a portion of the plan, including the Governor's comments, to the Legislature ~~within 30 days after the convening of~~ for approval during the next regular legislative session ~~for approval~~. The Legislature shall, by act or resolve, approve, disapprove or require changes to the provisionally adopted plan or any portion of the plan prior to adjournment. If the provisionally adopted plan or a portion of the plan is approved or the Legislature fails to act on the provisionally adopted plan or a portion of the plan before adjournment, the provisionally adopted plan or a portion of the plan may be finally adopted by the commission. If the provisionally adopted plan or a portion of the plan is disapproved or revisions are required, the provisionally adopted plan or a portion of the plan must be revised by the commission and resubmitted to the Legislature for approval by act or resolve. The joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over conservation matters may submit legislation to implement the provisions of this paragraph.

This subsection also applies to any material alteration in the plan.

Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §8879, sub-§1-B is enacted to read:

1-B. Report on conservation of late-successional forests and old-growth forests. Beginning with the report due on January 1, 2031, the report must include information regarding the status of late-successional forests and old-growth forests in the State and actions that have been taken since the previous report under this section to enhance the conservation of late-successional forests and old-growth forests on public and private land statewide.

Sec. 3. Maine Land Use Planning Commission; comprehensive land use plan. The Maine Land Use Planning Commission, referred to in this section as "the commission," shall, as part of the next update to the comprehensive land use plan under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 12, section 685-C, subsection 1, consider the effectiveness of its lake management program and whether changing circumstances and new trends

warrant an update to the program, including an evaluation as to whether all lakes or a subset of lakes should be reclassified, what methods should be used to revise lake classifications if needed, the cost of the reclassifications, possible funding sources and the priority for implementation. The evaluation must consider whether additional measures are required to protect the character and natural resource values of the commission's current Management Class 7 lakes that are undeveloped and have one or more natural resources classified as outstanding by the Department of Conservation, Land Use Regulation Commission's Maine Wildlands Lake Assessment published in 1987 in accordance with the commission's goal of maintaining an appropriate balance between conservation and development.

Sec. 4. Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to develop comprehensive report on statewide strategies to enhance conservation of late-successional forests and old-growth forests. Subject to the availability of funds, the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, referred to in this section as "the department," may develop a comprehensive report on statewide strategies to enhance the conservation of late-successional forests and old-growth forests, including the management of transitioning late-successional forests. In developing the strategies, the department may incorporate ecological values, carbon sequestration methods and economic considerations from a broad range of perspectives to include forest landowners, forest industry representatives, logging contractors, conservation interests and local economies. By November 4, 2026, the department may submit the report, including any recommendations, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over agriculture, conservation and forestry matters, which may report out legislation related to the report to the 133rd Legislature in 2027. In completing the report under this section, the department may solicit and use resources from other state agencies and outside sources.