

Land Trusts Work for Maine



MILTN
MAINE LAND TRUST NETWORK

October 2017

As part of the Biennial budget enacted in July of 2017, Maine’s State Legislature directed its Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (ACF) to conduct a study of land trust conserved lands.



The need for this land trust study arose during the debate surrounding a series of bills over the past few years, which revealed a lack of information regarding land trust conserved lands in Maine. Specifically, the study asked for the following:

- A. The property tax payments nonprofit conservation organizations make on those conserved lands including property tax payments, payments in lieu of taxes and other similar payments;
- B. The economic impact of those conserved lands on other real property, including working farms and commercial forest land, and the access to those conserved lands for licensed Maine guides, commercial fishermen and marine shellfish and worm harvesters;
- C. The economic impact of those conserved lands on the public and Maine's tourism economy, including opportunities to hunt, fish, hike, snowmobile, canoe and engage in other outdoor recreational activities. The committee shall determine the miles of trails and the number of water access sites and similar recreational infrastructure;
- D. The community benefits of those conserved lands owned by nonprofit conservation organizations, including education programs, downtown revitalization efforts, community gardens, youth sports activities and similar initiatives; and
- E. Examine any other issues that the committee determines are related to the purpose of the study.

To help the ACF Committee complete its tasks and paint a full picture of the beneficial role land trusts play in communities across Maine, the Maine Land Trust Network surveyed the state’s land trusts in the summer and fall of 2017. This report is a summary of that survey. However, it is just a snapshot of the work being done by land trusts across the state. For more information on Maine’s land trust community, visit www.mltn.org.



Photos (this page): a chestnut-sided warbler sings at the Downeast Coastal Conservancy’s Pike Lands Preserve in Lubec (top); A beautiful summer day at the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust’s Skolfield Shores Preserve (bottom).

Cover photos (clockwise from top left): Mother and daughter enjoy Boothbay Region Land Trust’s Penny Lake Preserve; farmer bales hay at Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust’s Crystal Spring Farm; snowmobilers explore Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust’s Rangeley River Preserve; angler fishes for trout in Western Foothills Land Trust’s Crooked River Forest; and canoers marvel at fall foliage along the shores of West Grand Lake in the Downeast Lakes Community Forest.

Providing Public Access to the Outdoors

Maine's network of more than 75 land trusts has significantly increased public access to the outdoors for activities including hiking, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, ATV riding, birdwatching, boating, and sightseeing. Based on a survey¹ completed in 2017, Maine's land trust conserved lands offer the following outdoor recreational amenities:

Recreational Trails

- Hiking/Walking 1,260 miles
- Mountain Biking 275 miles
- Snowmobiling 570 miles
- ATV Riding 345 miles



Downeast Lakes Community Forest

Recreational Water Access

- Boat Launch Sites 203
 - Coastal 62
 - Freshwater 141
- Beaches/Swimming Areas 210



Rangeley Lake's Heritage Trust's Cupsuptic Lake Campground

Land Open for Hunting

- More than 2.34 million acres
- More than 90% of all acres conserved by land trusts



¹ In July 2017, Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) surveyed members of the Maine Land Trust Network, which includes most of the State's land trust community. 70 organizations participated. Data from a 2015 MCHT land trust census was used to fill in gaps for those organizations that did not complete the survey.

Enhancing Public Lands

Recreational amenities provided by land trust conserved lands are part of a larger network of conservation lands in Maine, which includes State Parks, Public Reserve Lands, State Wildlife Management Areas, Baxter State Park, White Mountain National Forest, Acadia National Park, Appalachian Trail National Park, Katahdin Woods National Monument, national wildlife refuges, and municipal parks.



Mount Agamenticus is the centerpiece of a 13,500-acre recreational area where land trust preserves, municipal parks, IF&W wildlife management areas, and private conserved lands seamlessly connect to the benefit of resident flora, fauna, and outdoor enthusiasts. The region boasts 40 miles of trails used by an estimated 30,000 visitors each year for snowmobiling, biking, ATV riding, and hiking. These lands are overseen by a Steering Committee with representatives from the Towns of York and South Berwick, York Water District, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Great Works Regional Land Trust, and York Land Trust.

Excerpt from Maine State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): 2014-2019

“Maine residents and visitors alike use a variety of public and private lands to meet their recreation needs. **Land trusts**, state parks and public reserved lands, municipal lands, federal lands, and private lands with public recreational access all serve substantial percentages of the public based on reported visitation.” (emphasis added)

To put the recreational offerings on land trust conserved lands into context, compare them with the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands Public Reserve system, which manages a little more than 600,000 acres in the state. Maine’s Public Reserve system offers fewer than 15% as many miles of hiking trails (175 miles vs. 1,260 miles) and far fewer boat launch sites (35 sites vs. 203 sites). In addition, land trust lands collectively see a lot more public use, because compared to Maine’s Public Reserves, most land trust preserves are located closer to population centers and the state’s most popular tourist destinations.

Benefiting Maine's Tourism Economy

With so many recreational amenities to offer, it is not surprising that land trusts throughout Maine are busy partnering in different ways with innkeepers, guides, outfitters, local chambers of commerce, and others focused on making Maine a more desirable place for visitors to explore. Here are some examples from around the state:

Southern Maine

- *Great Works Regional Land Trust* works with approximately 40 area businesses to promote the land trust's recreational opportunities and to make their trail guide available to customers.
- *Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust (BTLT)* is supported annually by more than 80 local businesses, including water sport companies, restaurants, book stores, hotels and inns. Each year, BTLT works with many of these business members to co-sponsor community programs and events.



Kennebunkport Conservation Trust (KCT) partners with local kayak, bike shop, boat trip, and yoga businesses whose clients visit KCT's properties including the Edwin L. Smith Preserve.

Midcoast Maine

- *Damariscotta River Association (DRA)* partners with 70 local businesses, including local hotels and B&Bs that offer DRA land trust trail maps to their guests.
- *Coastal Mountains Land Trust* developed a 'Take a Hike Brochure' and 'Conserved Land Direction Pad' that is distributed monthly to area inns and the local chambers of commerce.

Case Study: Boothbay Region Land Trust

16 Preserves:	1,169 acres
Hiking Trails:	32 miles
ATV/Biking Trails:	3 miles
Boat Launch:	1 site
Beaches:	2 sites

Analysis completed in 2013 estimated that there are more than 67,000 visitors to Boothbay Region Land Trust preserves each year. Their preserve guide is the most requested brochure at the Boothbay Harbor Region Chamber of Commerce.



Young tourists enjoy panoramic views from Coastal Mountains Land Trust's Bald Mountain Preserve in Camden.



Birdwatchers frequent Boothbay Region Land Trust's Lobster Cove Meadow Preserve each spring.

Downeast Maine

- *Downeast Lakes Land Trust (DLLT)* partners with 40 Grand Lake Stream guides who bring clients to their Downeast Lakes Community Forest. DLLT also invites a dozen area lodges and inns to direct their guests to fish, hunt, hike, boat, and enjoy other forms of outdoor recreation there.
- *Maine Coast Heritage Trust* and *Downeast Coastal Conservancy* have worked with state and federal agencies, as well as 19 local businesses to publish *Cobscook Trails*, a trail guide distributed to residents and visitors of the Cobscook Bay/Bold Coast region.



Frenchman Bay Conservancy's "Monday Music" series at their Tidal Falls Preserve in Hancock draws visitors and residents throughout the summer.

Northern Maine

- *The Nature Conservancy (TNC)* provides 93 bear bait sites and each year welcomes more than 250 paddlers to their remote St. John lands. TNC also annually hosts nearly 5,000 snowmobilers on three trails that wind through their Debsconeag Lakes Wilderness Area.
- A 2016 study conducted by economist David Vail, found that lodge guests, visitors, and activities within the *Appalachian Mountain Club's* 75,000-acre Maine Woods property generated \$2.18 million in spending in Piscataquis County in 2015.

Western Maine

- Sebago Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce and Greater Bridgton Lakes Regional Chamber of Commerce strongly promote *Loon Echo Land Trust* lands in marketing materials. Featured destinations include Pleasant Mountain, Hacker's Hill, and the Raymond Community Forest.
- Four local canoe/kayak/tube rental businesses and six drift boat fishing guides use *Mahoosuc Land Trust's* four boat launch sites on the Androscoggin River throughout the summer.



Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust's Height of Land Preserve is one of Maine's most photographed tourist locations.

Supporting Natural Resource Jobs

Maine land trusts are also focused on the conservation of the state's working landscapes. In fact, land trusts have completed projects in all sixteen counties that benefit important Maine-based industries such as forest products, fishing, and agriculture. These conservation efforts bolster local economies and support jobs, especially in rural parts of Maine.

- In 1999, the *Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust (BTLT)* established a Farmers' Market to advance their mission of supporting local agriculture. Located on Crystal Spring Farm, a 320-acre farm owned by BTLT, the market is now one of the largest in Maine. With forty vendors, many of whom have been with the market since its inception, the market offers a wide variety of local, fresh products including vegetables, dairy, meat, fish, baked goods and artisanal and prepared foods.
- *Downeast Lakes Land Trust's* 55,578-acre Downeast Lakes Community Forest supports approximately 170 forest products industry jobs in Maine. In certifying the Downeast Lakes Community Forest in 2015, the Forest Stewardship Council, an independent third-party auditor of forest practices, noted, "Numerous products are harvested from the forest and agreements are in place with the community to allow hunting, use of gravel from naturally occurring pits, pine boughs for local crafts, firewood, and wood used by local artisans for specialty products. All forest use is aimed and providing benefits to the community."
- Located in a community where roughly 30% of its residents rely on the fishing industry in some fashion, *Harpwell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT)* works in many ways to protect and conserve the marine resources upon which local shellfish harvesters depend for their living. While four HHLT preserves provide commercial access to valuable flats, other trust-conserved properties include areas local diggers frequent by boat.

Land Trust Conserved Working Lands

- More than 85% of the acres land trusts have conserved (2.14 million acres) are working forestlands
- 36,000 acres of working farmlands
- 7 working waterfront properties
- More than 60 access sites for clambers, wormers, and other marine fishermen



Partnering with farm families, community organizations, and municipalities, Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) in collaboration with local land trusts has conserved more than 26,000 acres of farmland in Maine to protect future food production.



The Nature Conservancy's St. John Lands, the largest land trust property in Maine, includes 160,000 acres of working forestland.

Strengthening Local Communities

Apart from welcoming visitors to public preserves, Maine land trusts serve communities in many other ways. Here are just a few examples from around the state:

Partnering with Local Schools

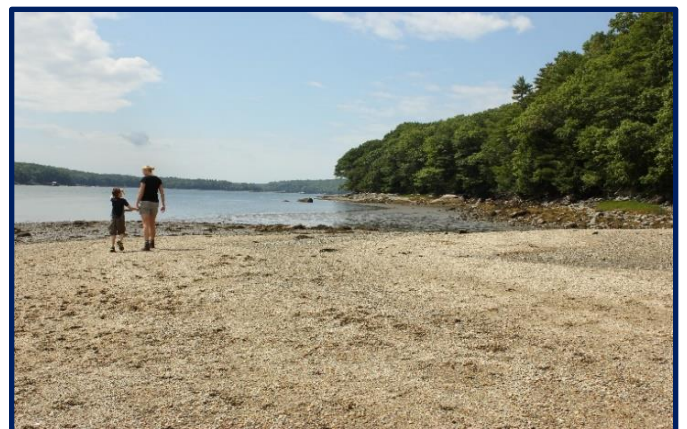
- *Phippsburg Land Trust* partnered with its local elementary school to develop an outdoor classroom and an integrated arbor education. Every third-grade student in the school adopts an outdoor classroom tree and then researches the tree throughout the year to learn about plant reproduction, animals that rely upon it, how decomposers work, and more.
- *Kennebec Land Trust* hosts the Curtis Homestead Forestry Education program each year, where 150 students from Buckfield, Monmouth, and Leeds learn about sustainable forestry, wildlife, and local history.
- *Kennebunkport Conservation Trust's* "Trust in Our Children" initiative includes field trips for elementary school grades, engaging projects for middle school students, and an evolving partnership with the high school's alternative education program to provide hands-on learning opportunities to reach students struggling in the traditional classroom setting.
- *Western Foothills Land Trust's (WFLT)* partners with SAD 17 in Oxford Hills in many different ways, including an afterschool Nordic ski program, an outdoor classroom, and experiential learning opportunities. Each year, WFLT hosts up to 40 middle school students for a summer school program at their Robert's Farm Preserve in Norway. Last year, the program enjoyed 95% attendance rates and more than 30% of the kids saw their reading levels improve.



More than 30,000 students participate in land trust-sponsored education programs in Maine each year, like these young hikers exploring Freeport Conservation Trust's Quarry Woods Preserve.

Maintaining Municipal Parks and State Lands

- *Royal River Conservation Trust (RRCT)* has supported trail and boat ramp construction on municipal parks in Durham, New Gloucester, Yarmouth, and North Yarmouth. RRCT also works with the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands to benefit Bradbury Mountain State Park in Pownal.
- In addition to taking care of 13 miles of trails on their own properties, the *Orono Land Trust* looks after more than 10 miles on town-owned lands.
- *Damariscotta River Association* maintains trails on municipal properties in Edgecomb and South Bristol, co-manages Maine BPL's Dodge Point Public Reserve and Whaleback Shell Midden Historic Site, and partners with the MDIFW on the maintenance of the Sherman Marsh Wildlife Management Area.



The Bureau of Parks and Land's 500-acre Dodge Point Public Reserve in Newcastle includes 3 beaches, 4 miles of trails and a dock – all maintained with support from the Damariscotta River Association.

Improving Water Quality

- *Kennebec Estuary Land Trust* replaced a fish ladder at the Nequasset Dam in Woolwich and upgraded a culvert at Sewall Pond in Arrowsic. These projects were part of a larger collaborative effort with the Sheepscot River Watershed Council and the Kennebec Valley Soil & Water Conservation District to survey fish passage barriers and wetland restoration.
- *Midcoast Conservancy's* Youth Conservation Corps works with private landowners to implement best management practices to prevent erosion and run-off into the Damariscotta Lake and Sheepscot River watersheds. The Corps provides no cost labor to landowners, protecting the region's water quality critical to downstream commercial fishing and aquaculture businesses.

Hosting Guided Walks

- Each year, *York Land Trust* leads guided walks for seniors and for community members battling diseases such as Alzheimer's, diabetes, and cancer.
- *Scarborough Land Trust* partners with Piper Shores, a retirement community in town, by leading guided walks for their elderly residents.



Annually, there are an estimated 65,000 attendees at land trust events in Maine, activities such as this Bangor Land Trust guided walk.

Feeding the Community

- *Maine Coast Heritage Trust* donated more than 25,000 pounds of produce to Good Shepherd Food Bank and local food pantries in 2016. The produce was grown by Teen Ag Crew, a social entrepreneurial program employing students, 14 to 18 years old, in a full-time summer job where they learn the essentials of business planning, marketing, growing, harvesting, packaging, and delivering fresh produce.

Connecting with Nature

- *Androscoggin Land Trust (ALT)* partners with Tree Street Youth, a program serving young people from socio-economically challenged communities in Lewiston-Auburn. Together they sponsor "Learn to Fish" events, a day on the Androscoggin River where many cast a line for the first time and share in the excitement of landing their first catch.
- *Blue Hill Heritage Trust* collaborates with Cynthia Winings Gallery to sponsor the "Open Air Arts Initiative," an effort to ignite creativity in the young people who live on the Blue Hill Peninsula. Students from Pre-K through 12th Grade visit land trust properties, create something that expresses their inspiration, and display their work at an art show the next year.



Greater Lovell Land Trust hosts a 6-week program for the Lovell Recreational Department called "Nature Day" for up to 50 elementary-school aged children each year.

A Private Sector Answer to Meet Public Needs

Maine has one of the most active land trust communities in the nation, with more land trusts per capita than any other state. Collectively, Maine's 75+ land conservation organizations have conserved a little more than 2.5 million acres of the state.

- 600,000 acres: lands owned by land trusts as preserves and areas available to the public for outdoor recreation.
- 1,900,000 acres: lands privately-owned and on the tax rolls, protected with conservation easements. The terms of these easements vary by property, but generally limit development and require the protection of natural resources. Most of this acreage is managed as working forest, available to the public for hiking, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities.

Maine Has Very Little Public Land

One reason why Maine has such an active land trust community is because Maine has the lowest percentage of public lands among states east of the Appalachian Mountains. At 6.5%, it is also one of the lowest percentages in the country, lower than 37 other states.

Most states rely heavily on government, at all levels, to acquire and manage public lands to meet the needs and desires of their citizens to secure public access to the outdoors. In Maine, where government land ownership is low, land trusts have stepped up to meet this demand by acquiring many publicly accessible lands without government support and by partnering with government to purchase and manage new and existing public properties.

For many parts of the country, the burden of public access to the outdoors is mostly the responsibility of government and taxpayers. To the contrary, thanks to land trusts, Maine people now enjoy more places to hunt, hike, fish, snowmobile, ATV, picnic, birdwatch, walk their dogs, and enjoy nature through a system where the burden of costs are shared significantly by the private sector, as well.



Public Land: % of State *East Coast States*

• Florida	25.2%
• New Jersey	18.7%
• New Hampshire	17.1%
• New York	16.7%
• Pennsylvania	15.8%
• Vermont	15.3%
• South Carolina	10.2%
• Massachusetts	10.0%
• Virginia	9.4%
• Maryland	9.0%
• North Carolina	9.0%
• Delaware	8.7%
• Connecticut	8.4%
• Rhode Island	7.9%
• Georgia	6.8%
• Maine	6.5%

Based on numbers from "Federal Land Ownership: Overview and Data" a 2017 Congressional Report and information collected from state websites.

In areas of Maine, like Lincoln County, where the amount of public land is far below the state average of 6.5%, land trust properties such as the Midcoast Conservancy's Bass Falls Preserve in Alna provide the public with guaranteed access to a high percentage of the available opportunities that exist for hiking, fishing, birdwatching, hunting, and other outdoor recreational activities.

Most Land Trust Lands Are on Tax Rolls

Public lands in Maine and around the country are exempt from paying property taxes. While land trust conserved lands provide similar benefits to public lands and many land trust properties are eligible for tax exemption, nearly 95% of all land trust conserved lands in Maine remain on the Tax Rolls.

Land Trust Conserved Land¹

- On 94.5% of the acres, the land is on the tax rolls
 - 1.9 million acres with conservation easements
 - 460,000 acres owned by land conservation organizations
- On 4.0% of the acres (100,000 acres), the land trust makes payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs)
- On 1.5% of the acres, the land is tax exempt and no PILOTs are made
 - Impacts a little more than 30,000 acres of land in municipalities
 - Impacts roughly 0.3% of municipal land in the state
 - More than 70% of municipalities (300+ communities) have no land in this category
- Most land trust conserved land is also subject to state's Forestry Excise Tax, which funds forest fire protection efforts in Maine.



Most land trust conserved acreage in Maine, such as the Appalachian Mountain Club's Maine Woods in Piscataquis County, was enrolled in the state's Tree Growth Tax program prior to being conserved and remains in the program today.

¹ In July 2017, Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) surveyed members of the Maine Land Trust Network, which includes most of the State's land trust community. 70 land trusts participated. Data from a 2015 MCHT land trust census was used to fill in gaps for those organizations that did not complete the survey. More than 55,000 acres accounted for in the PILOT category is owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and is currently tax exempt. TNC has sponsored legislation for the past four years that would allow them to enroll this land in the Open Space Law (state caps Open Space at 15,000 acres) or make PILOTs to the county (this land is in the unorganized territory). A bill passed in 2017 that will allow them to make PILOTs on this land in 2018, which they intend to do.

Land Trusts Work for Maine

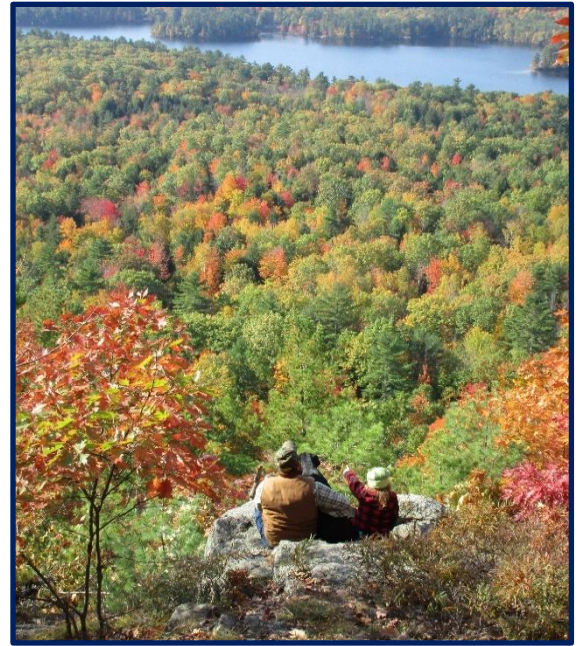
Public Access to the Outdoors



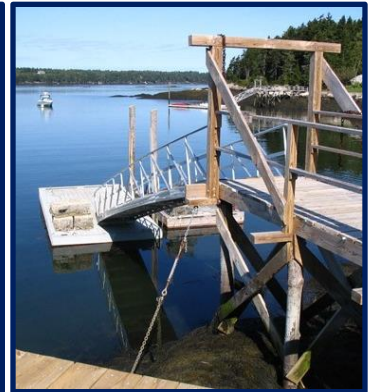
Presumpscot Regional Land Trust's Mill Brook Preserve in Westbrook hosts the largest Casco Bay migratory fish run each spring, luring visitors of all ages (left).

Loon Echo Land Trust's Raymond Community Forest displays fall colors that attract visitors to the Sebago Lake Region each fall (right).

Attracting Tourists



Supporting Rural Economies



From left to right: King Hill Farm in Penobscot, conserved by Blue Hill Heritage Trust, grows produce and raises beef, pork, chicken and hens; lumber harvested on Downeast Lakes Land Trust's Downeast Lakes Community Forest is ready to be processed in local mills; and Robert's Wharf, conserved by Boothbay Region Land Trust, provides deep water access, gear storage, and moorings for ten local fishermen.

Strengthening Communities



From left to right: Fourth graders gather for the day's science class at Royal River Land Trust's Pisgah Hill Preserve in New Gloucester. Friends and neighbors celebrate the winter season and gather Christmas decorations at Great Pond Mountain Conservation Trust's Wildlands Preserve in Orland.