

County Distribution of Land for Maine's Future Projects

The Land For Maine's Future (LMF) program has focused acquisition and protection efforts on areas of the state that have the lowest need for more public land.

An analysis of state holdings on a county by county basis reveals that the benefits (recreation, access and associated economic activity) and burdens (lost tax base and development opportunities) of public land are not distributed equitably in Maine. The six rural counties that already exceed the state median in both percentage state owned and public acres per capita (Piscataquis, Aroostook, Washington, Oxford, Franklin and Hancock) were targeted for 77.7% of all LMF purchases to date, and more than 90% of proposed new acquisitions. The LMF program has purchased or plans to purchase .65% of these "low priority" Tier 3 counties

LMF has failed to address the severe shortage of public land in southern Maine.

Tier 1 counties ranking below the state median in both percentage state owned and public acres per capita (Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, Lincoln, York, Waldo) account for only 12.5% of past acquisitions, and only 6.5% of new proposals. Acquisitions represent only .36% of these "greatest need" counties.

LMF has actually worsened the "Two Maine's" divide.

Although it is true that LMF has had projects in all 16 counties, a closer analysis of their acquisitions reveals that the vast majority of their efforts have been and will continue to be focused on rural northern, eastern and western Maine. These public acquisitions are a backdoor approach to creating a giant park or wilderness reserve in rural Maine, and efforts to hide or spin the actual distribution of acreage acquisitions only serve to convince rural Mainers that their concerns are well founded.

County Distribution of Land for Maine's Future Projects							
1988-Present		Proposed			Total		
Tier 1							
	Acres	%LMF	Acres	%LMF	%LMF	%County	Projects
Androscoggin	287	3.5%	0	0.0%	2.5%	0.76%	4
Cumberland	1,414	2.2%	301	1.1%	1.8%	0.32%	8
Kennebec	550	0.9%	1,047	3.7%	1.7%	0.29%	2
Lincoln	592	0.9%	0	0.0%	0.6%	0.20%	4
York	2,843	4.4%	0	0.0%	3.1%	0.45%	12
Waldo	423	0.7%	490	1.7%	1.0%	0.20%	5
Subtotal	8,109	12.5%	1,838	6.5%	10.7%	0.36%	35
County Distribution of Land for Maine's Future Projects							
1988-Present		Proposed			Total		
Tier 2							
	Acres	%LMF	Acres	%LMF	%LMF	%County	Projects
Somerset	254	0.4%	0	0.0%	0.3%	0.01%	1
Penobscot	5,544	8.6%	0	0.0%	6.0%	0.26%	2
Sagadahoc	474	0.7%	97	0.3%	0.6%	0.35%	3
Knox	40	0.1%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.02%	1
Subtotal	6,312	9.8%	97	0.3%	6.9%	0.13%	7
County Distribution of Land for Maine's Future Projects							
1988-Present		Proposed			Total		
Tier 3							
	Acres	%LMF	Acres	%LMF	%LMF	%County	Projects
Piscataquis	30,492	47.2%	0	0.0%	32.7%	1.20%	2
Aroostook	2,759	4.3%	3,190	11.2%	6.4%	0.14%	6
Washington	5,882	9.1%	820	2.9%	7.2%	0.41%	12
Oxford	687	1.1%	0	0.0%	0.7%	0.05%	4
Franklin	2,023	3.1%	230	0.8%	2.4%	0.21%	3
Hancock	8,384	13.0%	22,276	78.3%	32.9%	3.01%	4
Subtotal	50,227	77.7%	26,516	93.2%	82.4%	0.65%	31
Totals	64,647	100.0%	28,451	100.0%	100.0%	0.47%	73

- *Acres: Acquisition by fee purchase or easement
- *%LMF: Percent of LMF acquisitions
- *%County: Percent of county acquired
- *Projects: # of projects, completed and proposed
- *Tier 1: Counties below State median in both percent State owned and State land per capita (Greatest Need)
- *Tier 2: Counties below State median in either percent State owned or State land per capita
- *Tier 3: Counties above State median in both percent State owned and State land per capita

STATE OWNED LAND BY COUNTY

COUNTY	PUBLIC ACRES	COUNTY TOTAL	POPULATION	PUBLIC %	PUBLIC/POP
LINCOLN	1,911	291,584	30,357	0.66%	0.06
ANDROSCOGGIN	3,649	300,992	105,259	1.21%	0.03
KENNEBEC	6,818	555,200	115,904	1.23%	0.06
YORK	10,990	634,240	164,587	1.73%	0.07
WALDO	8,937	467,072	33,018	1.91%	0.27
CUMBERLAND	12,563	534,784	243,135	2.35%	0.05
PENOBSCOT	56,192	2,173,440	146,601	2.59%	0.38
SOMERSET	68,482	2,513,152	49,767	2.72%	1.38
FRANKLIN	30,244	1,086,720	29,008	2.78%	1.04
SAGADAHOC	5,015	162,560	33,535	3.09%	0.15
WASHINGTON	51,706	1,643,904	35,308	3.15%	1.46
KNOX	7,742	233,984	36,310	3.31%	0.21
AROOSTOOK	150,750	4,270,016	86,936	3.53%	1.73
HANCOCK	46,431	1,017,024	46,948	4.57%	0.99
OXFORD	65,159	1,330,048	52,602	4.90%	1.24
PISCATAQUIS	340,998	2,538,560	18,653	13.43%	18.28
TOTAL	867,587	19,753,280	1,227,928	4.39%	0.71

SOURCE: 1995 SPO DATA AND 1990 US CENSUS

STATE LAND PER CAPITA

ABOVE MEDIAN BELOW MEDIAN

PISCATAQUIS KNOX

OXFORD SAGADAHOC

ABOVE MEDIAN HANCOCK

AROOSTOOK

WASHINGTON

FRANKLIN

% PUBLIC

SOMERSET CUMBERLAND

PENOBSCOT WALDO

YORK

BELOW MEDIAN

KENNEBEC

ANDROSCOGGIN

LINCOLN

TIER 1, GREATEST NEED

TIER 2, MEDIUM NEED

TIER 3, LOWEST NEED

Communication

\$50 Million to Worsen the Two Maines Divide

By Jon Reisman

The \$50 million lands bond will worsen the Two Maines divide. The Land for Maine's Future program targeted northern, eastern and western Maine and failed to address a growing sprawl and open space problem in southern, central and mid-coast Maine. And despite glib promises that the targeting will stop, there are no guarantees. You'd think for \$50 million we'd get a straight answer or two.

Eighty percent of Maine's public lands are in six counties (Piscataquis, Aroostook, Washington, Oxford, Hancock and Franklin), which comprise 60 percent of the land base and 22 percent of the population. These counties are above the state median in both percentage of state-owned property and state acres per capita. They have the highest unemployment and lowest incomes in the state. For the most part, "sprawl," open space and public access are not big problems there. But they are the counties that have been disproportionately targeted by state land acquisition efforts.

Five percent of Maine's public lands are in six other counties (York, Cumberland, Androscoggin, Kennebec, Waldo, Lincoln), which comprise 14 percent of the land base and 56 percent of the population. These counties are below the state median in both percentage of state-owned property and state acres per capita. They have the highest incomes and lowest unemployment rates. Sprawl, open space preservation and public access are big problems in these counties.

The benefits and burdens of public land are not distributed equitably in Maine. Public lands bring benefits (recreation, access, open space, conservation) and burdens (eroded tax base, lost tax revenue and economic growth opportunities). There's a "shortage" in southern Maine, but not in the north. Given the current distribution of land and people, 500 acres of public land in southern Maine would be worth more than 10,000 acres in northern Maine.

The majority of the 1987 \$35 million land bond issue (two subsequent bond requests failed) was spent in northern, eastern and western Maine. Almost 90 percent of all acres acquired were in the "Other Maine." More than 90 percent of the acreage in pending projects is in northern and eastern Maine. Tax base erosion from public ownership was 25 percent heavier in northern Maine than in the south. This has worsened the Two Maines divide, and there is little prospect for the next \$50 million (actually up to \$675 million with potential matching federal and

private funds) being spent any differently.

The land trusts and environmental organizations that dominate the selection process have plans for 4.3 million acres of parks and wilderness areas in northern, eastern and western Maine. (You can view the maps at <http://conservation.esri.com/conservation/cisp/audm/audobm.html>). They opposed all efforts in the legislature to set up guidelines directing the money to the central, southern and coastal Maine counties where it is most needed. In the used car business they call that "bait and switch."

Public lands advocates often speak of "willing sellers" and no use of eminent domain. But the very

last amendment to PL 514, passed in the dead of night putting the bond issue on the ballot, clearly indicates that land may be taken by eminent domain if your neighbors approve. They also speak of "community support." If you live in the target area, vote no and show RESTORE: The North Woods, Jonathan Carter and their friends that your community does NOT support a park on the installment plan. Vote No on #7. Vote for one Maine.

Jon Reisman teaches economics and environmental policy at the University of Maine at Machias and is the Treasurer of Keep Maine Free, which opposes the \$50 million lands bond.

Jonathan Reisman
Cooper

Testimony of Jon Reisman on LD 324, An Act to Limit Public Land Ownership in Maine
Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Committee:

My name is Jon Reisman. I am a resident of Cooper, a former first Selectman and an associate professor of economics and public policy at the University of Maine at Machias, where I have taught environmental policy and economics since 1984. I worked for the King administration on environmental and education policy in the 90's. My testimony today in support of LD 324 reflects my professional and political experience and expertise, but I speak for myself, not the University. I want to thank Rep. Javner and the co-sponsors for agreeing to sponsor this bill.

In the 1990's, Maine adopted a goal of increasing (state) public land ownership to 10%, or about 2 million acres. I believe that aggressive funding of the Land for Maine's future program over the last 20 years has accomplished this goal, although I have not seen any well-publicized accountings. In recent years, especially because of our still developing climate change policy, state and national goals of 20 to 30% have been suggested.

In 1999, I conducted an analysis of state land ownership (attached) and proposed purchases on a county basis. This analysis found that the vast majority of state public lands in Maine were concentrated in the second Congressional District, specifically Piscataquis, Aroostook, Somerset, Oxford, Penobscot, Washington, Hancock and Franklin Counties. The majority of proposed (and since then actual) acquisitions were also in those counties. My analysis did not include federal and municipal land ownership. My analysis argued that the greatest need for public lands and the benefits they would confer was in six Southern Maine counties below the state median in both percentage of the county in public ownership and public acres/capita- Cumberland, Waldo, York, Kennebec, Androscoggin and Lincoln.

LD 324 seeks to cap federal, state and local public land ownership statewide at 33%, with no more than 50% in any given county, with a 2/3 legislative cap override option. The reasons are as follows:

- The United States uses a capitalist economic system, which means that resources, including land, are generally owned and controlled by private parties, not the state. The 33% statewide and 50% County cap reflect that;
- The benefits of public ownership- recreation, conservation and carbon sequestration are subject to diminishing returns and should be distributed equitably across Maine;
- The costs of public ownership- a diminished tax base and reduced development opportunities are subject to increasing costs and should also be distributed equitably across Maine;
- The establishment of state and county caps, along with a legislative override option will lower the temperature of any upcoming debates on raising the statewide goal or potential expansions to Katahdin Woods and Waters, Acadia National Park or other public lands in Maine.

Thank you for taking my testimony, and I would be glad to answer any questions. I can be contacted at jreisman@maine.edu.