

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# Sustaining Maine's Green Infrastructure

## Executive Summary



Lily Bay State Park

### *The Governor's Steering Committee finds:*

- *Maine's natural resource-based industry depends on our green infrastructure*
- *There has been considerable state investment to support green infrastructure*
- *State funding for green infrastructure has been eliminated or scaled back*
- *The state's green infrastructure needs are viewed in isolation of one another*
- *Today much of our green infrastructure is threatened or in disrepair*

*"Maine people have a unique relationship with the land."*

## Maine's Green Infrastructure

Maine is blessed with an exceptional and diverse natural environment that in many ways drives the state's economy. Communities, businesses, and residents rely on our landscapes and working lands for jobs, recreation, and peace of mind. Often it is public infrastructure that keeps the lands and waters accessible and supports their use. State-funded conservation and recreation lands, waters, and facilities are key components of this public infrastructure, comprise Maine's green infrastructure. Maine needs to take

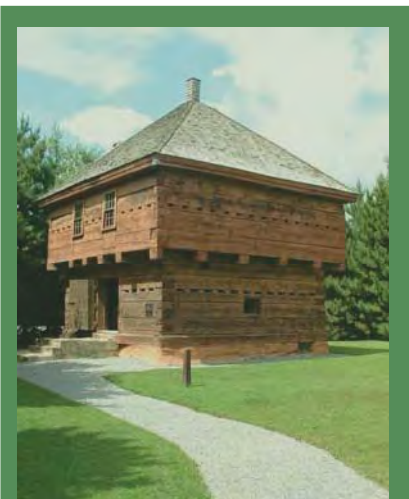
care of this green infrastructure to support our natural resource-based economy and maintain a way of life for our citizens.

The Governor's Steering Committee on Maine's Natural Resource Industry hopes to understand the diverse threads that comprise the state's green infrastructure, the extent of need to manage these resources into the future, and the degree of support for developing funding proposals to sustain them.

## What is Green Infrastructure?

Green infrastructure includes the very lands and waters themselves, as well as the constructed facilities that allow their use—from piers and boat ramps, to parks and trails. For our purposes, we focus on the following state investments:

- ✓ State Facilities: state parks and historic sites
- ✓ Recreation Lands and Trails: state-administered trails, public reserve lands, state eased lands and trails, private landowner agreements and accommodations, and state nature tourism infrastructure
- ✓ Coastal and Inland Waters: lakes, rivers, ponds, estuaries, and beaches along with working waterfront access, fish hatcheries, and state boat access
- ✓ Working Lands: farmlands and forests
- ✓ Other State Conservation Lands: habitats, prime physical features, ecological reserves, river corridors, and scenic landscapes



1839 Blockhouse at Fort Kent, a National Historic Landmark



Quoddy Head State Park

## Economic Contribution of Green Infrastructure

Public investment in our green infrastructure strengthens Maine's economy. The economic impact of the combined natural resource industry is compelling. In addition to the stalwarts (forestry –\$10.2 billion, agriculture –\$1.2 billion, and fishing –\$800 million), the estimated direct spending on outdoor recreation could be as high as \$3 billion, contributing to a \$6.2 billion tourism economy.<sup>1</sup> A 2001 survey shows that Maine's wildlife-related economic contribution is fifth in the nation in terms of the percentage of gross state product.

Land and water for recreation and conservation is important to Maine's economy. The Maine Economic Growth Council points to it as one of its indicators of our state's economic health. They say, "Access to public and private lands

contributes to the high quality of life enjoyed by Maine people. Residents use these lands for all types of recreational activities, which provide jobs and draw tourists."

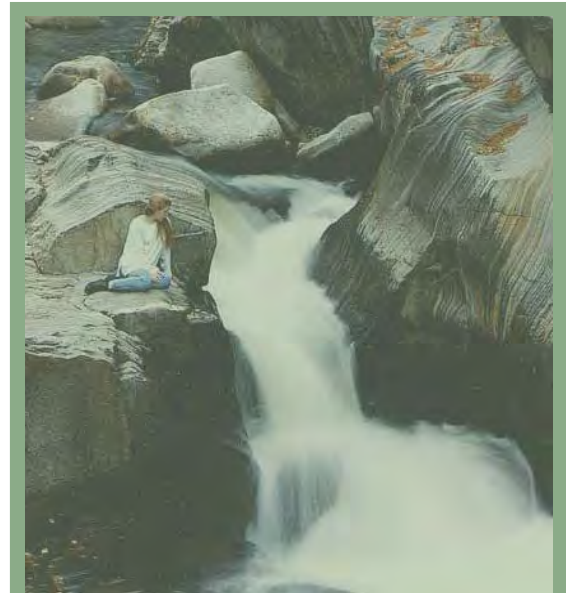
Maine people's use and enjoyment of the state's abundant resources is part of our heritage that needs to be upheld. Maine residents' participation in and spending on outdoor recreation tops that of visitors in hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, all terrain vehicle (ATV) riding, and state park use. The economic impact of hunting by Maine residents is more than double that of nonresidents. Of the more than four million fishing days during 1996, resident anglers went fishing 3,275,000 days and nonresidents 832,000 days. There are more Maine resident saltwater anglers than

Cont. on p 4

## Pressures on Green Infrastructure

The state's green infrastructure is under pressure in multiple ways:

- o State parks and historic sites attract 2.2 million visitors each year and include some of the state's most valuable assets; too many of them are not adequately maintained and are in disrepair.
- o State government resources to fully manage its recreation lands and trails are spread too thin; this despite the generous efforts of many volunteers to maintain trails and other facilities.
- o Damage from unmanaged, and in some cases, irresponsible use and a lack of repair and clean-up services threaten the continued use of traditionally available private lands for outdoor recreation.
- o Outdoor recreational activities are growing in popularity, providing an economic benefit to the state; the increase in users must be balanced against impacts to sometimes fragile shorelines and natural resources.
- o Our coastal beaches are eroding, putting at risk one of our most significant tourism attractions.
- o Coastal development is displacing Maine's commercial fishing operations.
- o Several of the state's nine fish hatcheries, which produce over 1 million trout and salmon a year to support Maine's lucrative sports fishing industry, do not meet wastewater treatment discharge standards.
- o Even though Maine's coastal and inland lakes are state treasures, just a fraction of them have dedicated public access.
- o Land prices make it very attractive for farmers to sell out, resulting in a loss of productive agricultural lands.
- o Maine is losing key pieces of its incomparable landscape and wildlife habitat to development.



Coos Canyon

## Current and Future Investment to Sustain Maine's Green Infrastructure

While various state funding sources for Maine's public green infrastructure are in place, they are uncertain or intermittent. In the past 35 years, voters have approved just \$8.5 million for capital repairs for state parks and historic sites; the last bond was a decade ago. Before 2002, Maine had not upgraded its fish hatcheries in more than 50 years. It was 12 years between the first and second Land for Maine's Future bonds and six more years before another LMF bond was sent to voters last year.

For the most part, funding has been inadequate to keep pace with demand. Maine has seen increases in the rate conversion of farm and forest land to development and demand for additional trails and boat-launching sites, while bond requests for farm and forestland preservation and water access have been scaled back or eliminated.

Too often we have not adequately funded our maintenance and land management obligations. Parks and historic sites, public lands and trails, state-held conservation and working landscape easements, and other green infrastructure represent millions of dollars of public investment. This investment must be looked after.

The table below provides a summary of the Maine's green infrastructure and the funding needed to sustain it.



Pastoral Maine

State Green Infrastructure Resources	Biennial Funding Needs July 1, 2007-June 30, 2009	Total Funding Needs
State Parks and Historic Sites	\$8 million for capital repairs	\$40 million over 5 years
	\$10 million biennially for maintenance	\$10 million biennially for maintenance
Recreation Lands and Trails	See Land for Maine's Future below	See Land for Maine's Future below
Nature Tourism	\$1.2 million	\$6 million for MDOT-related infrastructure over 4 years
Coastal Beaches	\$7.1 million for beach nourishment	\$143 million over 20 years
Working Waterfront Access	\$2 million for working waterfront access	\$2 million biennially for working waterfront access
	\$1.5 million for Small Harbor Improvement Program	\$1.5 million biennially for Small Harbor Improvement Program
Fish Hatcheries	\$10 million	\$22.6 million over 10 years
Water Access	See Land for Maine's Future below	See Land for Maine's Future below
Farmland	See Land for Maine's Future below	See Land for Maine's Future below
	\$5 million for Farms for the Future	\$5 million biennially for Farms for the Future
Forests	See Land for Maine's Future below	See Land for Maine's Future below
Land for Maine's Future Program	\$40 million	\$100 million over 5 years
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$85 million</b>	



Prepared for:  
Governor's Steering  
Committee for Maine's  
Natural Resource-based  
Industry

By:  
State Planning Office  
38 State House Station  
Augusta ME 04333  
(207) 287-6077

This white paper is prepared for the Governor's Steering Committee on Maine's Natural Resource based Industry to inform its discussion on sustaining the state's green infrastructure. To see the full paper:

Web Site:

[www.maine.gov/spo/natural/gov](http://www.maine.gov/spo/natural/gov)

Note:

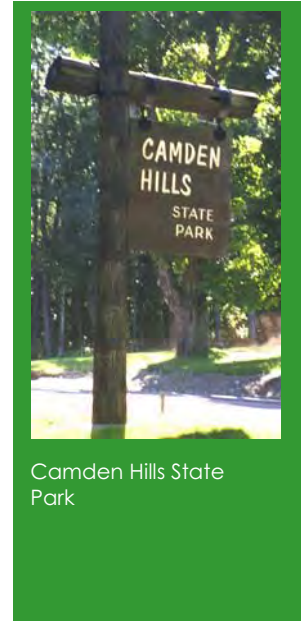
<sup>1</sup> This includes direct and indirect spending reported as follows: state parks and historic sites (\$80 million 2005), snowmobiling (\$400 million est. 2005), ATV riding (\$200 million 2004), hunting (\$325 million 2003), inland fishing (\$300 million 1996), recreational marine fishing (\$28 million 2005 personal daily expenditures only), wildlife watching (\$332 million 1996), and recreational uses of Great Ponds (\$1.7 billion 1997). Some or all of these dollars are included in the \$6.2 billion reported for tourism and there is likely to be overlap between some of the numbers reported for outdoor recreation. See the recommendations in the full white paper regarding the need for a better, consistent calculation of spending by outdoor recreationists in Maine.

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Department of Conservation,  
Maine Office of Tourism,  
Maine Geologic Survey

Economic from p. 2.

nonresident (207,183 residents and 173,349 nonresidents in 2005). In 2005 there were 48,408 resident snowmobile registrations; four times more than the 11,026 nonresident ones. Nearly all ATV registrations are for Maine riders; only 6% are registered to nonresidents. About two-thirds of the people who use our state parks are Maine residents.

Public investment, and more particularly state spending, helps not only to retain our outdoor traditions, but also to fortify our natural resource economy. A 2004 study conducted jointly by the University of Southern Maine and University of Maine concludes that public investment in land conservation is akin to building rail and highway systems; that is it is basic infrastructure to support our economy. Preserving open space and working lands helps revitalize communities and mitigate local property taxes. Public infrastructure spending not only provides access to lands and waters on which many of our natural resource businesses rely; it also stimulates private investment in commercial operations that support them.



Camden Hills State  
Park

## Learning from Other States

Research into green infrastructure investment measures used by other states suggests some innovative funding options, including:

- o Increased general obligation bonding; perhaps something on the scale of a *Legacy Act*;<sup>1</sup>
- o Enabling options for local governments such as property tax exemptions or a local option sales tax;
- o A stable fee source such as real estate transfer fees or a targeted sales tax increase;
- o Income tax credits for donated land or easements;
- o Mitigation fees on development in unorganized territory dedicated to parks or public reserve lands;
- o Creation of a semi-autonomous body to hold and manage state-owned conservation easements; or
- o A major endowment or capital campaign.

## Questions for the Steering Committee

The following questions are posed for consideration by the Governor's Steering Committee for developing a strategy for the sustainable management of Maine's green infrastructure.

- o How should the upkeep and development of the state's green infrastructure be funded? How may it be sustained?
- o What is the appropriate balance between fees, taxes, and bonding to support the state's green infrastructure?
- o Are endowments or corporate sponsorships to support green infrastructure appropriate?
- o Is there sufficient willingness among sectors to collaborate on a proposal for funding Maine's green infrastructure?
- o What are the priorities for funding?