

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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OFFICE OF
THE GOVERNOR

NO. 4 FY 95/96
DATE January 3, 1996

**AN ORDER TO ESTABLISH THE
LAND ACQUISITION PRIORITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

WHEREAS, the preservation of outstanding Maine lands is one of the most valuable legacies Maine citizens can leave for future generations;

WHEREAS, the talents and energies of all Maine citizens should be encouraged and included in this important effort;

WHEREAS, the Land for Maine's Future Program and other state, federal and private conservation initiatives each have acquired valuable lands in their respective programs, and now seek to coordinate their efforts in planning future acquisitions; and

WHEREAS, a public/private partnership to create a coordinated land acquisition plan is essential to the success of future acquisition efforts;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Angus S. King Jr., Governor of the State of Maine, do hereby establish the Land Acquisition Priorities Advisory Committee.

Purpose

The purpose of this Advisory Committee shall be, through a public process, to develop criteria to identify the types of land or interests in land that should be prioritized for acquisition by public and private conservation agencies. The priorities established will enable new or existing acquisition programs such as the Land for Maine's Future Program, the Forest Legacy Program and other public and private conservation initiatives to function in a coordinated manner, thereby maximizing the benefits of land acquisition to the citizens of Maine.

Functions and Duties

1. Inventory and Assess Acquisitions to Date

The Advisory Committee shall consider the results of related planning efforts, including but not limited to, the Wildlands Lakes Assessment, the Maine Rivers Study, and the Ecological Reserves System Report, and shall consider all natural resource inventory information available, including, but not limited to, that from the Natural Areas Program, the Department of Conservation, the Land for Maine's Future Program, the Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, and the Department of Marine Resources. Furthermore, the Committee shall review current public land ownership and protection, the work of the Land for Maine's Future Board and other public and private land acquisition efforts in order to assess the geographic distribution, conservation and recreation values, and carrying costs of public lands to Maine taxpayers acquired to date.

2. Establish Goals for Future Acquisition and Protection

The Advisory Committee shall establish statewide and regional goals for future acquisition and protection through a natural resource and open space needs assessment and consider whether large parcels meeting multiple criteria are preferable to smaller parcels meeting only one criterion. In setting these goals, the Committee will consider the current levels of protection currently in place, and the criteria referenced in section 3 of this Order. The Committee shall also recommend one or more funding sources for land acquisition.

3. Establish Criteria and Guidelines to Direct Progress Towards the Goals

The Advisory Committee shall establish criteria and guidelines designed to enable future land acquisition programs to achieve the goals outlined in section 2, while using a public planning process that:

- (a) actively solicits criteria from Maine citizens to set priorities for acquisition of fee or less-than-fee interests in exceptional and important land, building upon the Guidelines for Acquisition currently in use by the Land for Maine's Future Program. The acquisition selection criteria may, for example, include lands that:
 - offer outstanding recreational opportunities including locations for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, camping, picnicking, and other forms of traditional outdoor recreation;
 - provide recreational access to mountain summits, coastal, river and lake shorelines;
 - connect outstanding recreational locations through a system of trails;
 - support vital ecological functions and values;

- provide habitat for rare, threatened, or endangered plants or wildlife, or outstanding examples of representative natural communities or ecosystems;
 - have outstanding scenic value or significant geological features;
 - have private forest lands and other open space which are of such significance or are so threatened by conversion to other uses that conservation easements should be purchased;
 - provide opportunities to demonstrate exemplary land management practices, including silvicultural, wildlife and recreation management; and
 - provide opportunities to add value to existing public ownerships (such as trail heads, parking areas, critical habitats).
- (b) acquires interests in land only from willing sellers, ensures that eminent domain will be used only when necessary to clear title and weighs the potential impacts and benefits to local communities;
- (c) involves local governments, recreational users, landowners and other interests;
- (d) efficiently uses public dollars by purchasing only rights necessary to best protect identified, exceptional values;
- (e) considers whether further acquisition should be of greater priority than capital improvements to existing facilities;
- (f) considers the cost of future public land arrangement in the assessment of overall costs of acquisition while recognizing that it is important for the state to invest in the long-term future of the state as opportunities arise even if present management funds are limited;
- (g) provides that lands purchased are used and managed for their intended purposes.

Membership

The Advisory Committee members shall be appointed by the Governor and may include public members, representatives of large and small landowners, environmental and sportsmen's organizations, recreation and tourism interests, land trusts, local governments, ecological expertise, Land for Maine's Future Board, state land management agencies, and the State Planning Office Director or designee. Members shall not receive any financial compensation. The Director of the State Planning Office or designee shall serve as Chair of the Advisory Committee.

Process

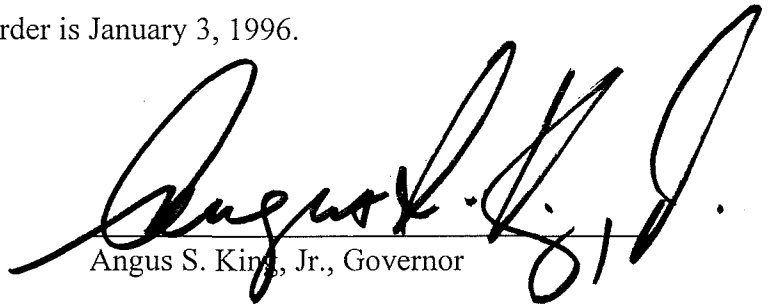
Within six months of the effective date of this Executive order, the Advisory Committee shall hold public meetings in several locations around the State. The Advisory Committee shall seek recommendations from the public on the goals for future acquisition referenced in Section 2 and the criteria and guidelines referenced in Section 3 of this Order.

The Advisory Committee shall prepare draft recommendations as requested under Section 2 and 3 of this Order by January 1, 1997, based upon public input. It shall then hold another set of public meetings on the draft recommendations. Following the public meetings, the Advisory Committee shall revise the priorities, if necessary, and present them to the Governor and the Legislature no later than April 1, 1997.

Administration

As designated above, the State Planning Office will provide staff to the Advisory Committee, within existing resources, and will be responsible for coordinating and preparing a report of the Advisory Committee. The Governor may accept gifts on behalf of the State in order to assist the Advisory Committee in carrying out its responsibilities.

The effective date of this Executive Order is January 3, 1996.



Angus S. King, Jr., Governor