

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Office of
The Governor

No. 24 FY 20/21
DATE January 13, 2021

**AN ORDER ESTABLISHING THE GOVERNOR'S
TASK FORCE ON CREATION OF A FOREST CARBON PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, climate change is having negative impacts on Maine and, if not addressed, will have devastating effects on the state;

WHEREAS, Maine established mandates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050; and developed a State Climate Action Plan to achieve emission reductions and clean energy targets as well as adaptation strategies;

WHEREAS, Maine forests cover 89% of the State and support an important forest industry that is central to our natural resource-based economy, soil health, and quality of life, and their sustainable management can meaningfully improve carbon sequestration;

WHEREAS, Maine's forests have annually sequestered an amount equal to at least 60% of the state's annual carbon emissions, a figure that rises to 75% when durable forest products are included;

WHEREAS, by current estimates, Maine loses approximately 10,000 acres of natural and working lands to development each year — a figure that is projected to grow in coming years;

WHEREAS, this development is a direct source of carbon emissions and hinders the growth of natural climate-change solutions, such as the powerful carbon-storage potential of forested lands;

WHEREAS, incentives should be developed to encourage land management practices with climate mitigation and adaptation benefits to increase carbon storage;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Janet T. Mills, Governor of the State of Maine, pursuant to *Me. Const. Art V, Pt 1, §1 and §12*, do hereby Order as follows:

I. ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE

The Task Force on a Maine Forest Carbon Program for small landowners is hereby established. The purpose of the Task Force is to develop a voluntary, incentive-based program for woodland owners of 10 to 10,000 acres and forestry practitioners to increase carbon storage in Maine's forests.

The Task Force shall:

- A. Review available data for practice-based carbon programs throughout the United States;
- B. Review current harvest levels and carbon stocking data on woodland owners of 10 to 10,000 acres;
- C. Identify a suite of climate-friendly forest management practices that improve carbon stocks and maintain current timber harvest levels;
- D. Identify a suite of financial incentives and technical assistance activities to increase carbon sequestration on woodland owners of 10 to 10,000 acres, and carbon sinking in wood products, through active forest management;
- E. Identify incentives for high-quality, on-the-ground performance by loggers and promote the use of low-impact harvesting equipment;
- F. Recommend updates to the Open Space Current Use Taxation program including in a manner that incentivizes climate-friendly land management practices;
- G. Explore opportunities for partnerships with large, commercial forestland owners;
- H. Consider opportunities for Maine to participate in multi-state forest carbon initiatives;
- I. Recommend a numeric goal or targets for increased carbon sequestration in Maine over time.

II. MEMBERSHIP

The Task Force shall consist of the fifteen (15) members who will be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor. Two members shall represent small, family woodland owners, one member shall represent large, commercial landowners, two members shall represent statewide conservation nonprofits with expertise in forest management, one member shall represent a statewide science-based nonprofit with expertise in forest resources, two members shall represent the University of Maine: one from the School of Forest Resources and one from the Climate Change Institute, one member shall represent licensed foresters, two members shall represent the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, one of whom shall be the Commissioner and one from the Maine Forest Service, one member shall represent the Department of

Environmental Protection, one member shall represent the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, one member shall represent a statewide organization representing loggers, and one member shall represent the Governor. The Task Force shall consult with the Maine Municipal Association and the Maine Revenue Service regarding issues related to potential financial incentives and municipal reimbursements.

III. PROCEEDINGS

The Task Force shall be chaired jointly by the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and the Governor’s representative. The chairs will preside at, set the agenda for, and schedule Task Force meetings. The Task Force shall meet as often as necessary to complete the assigned duties. To the extent practicable, all meetings shall be open to the public and held in locations determined by the Task Force or will be held virtually, but the proceedings of the Task Force are not otherwise “public proceedings” within the meaning of 1 M.R.S. section 402. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry shall staff the Task Force as resources permit.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

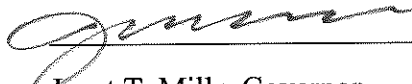
The Task Force shall submit its recommendations to the Governor on or before September 1, 2021, after which submission the Task Force and the authority of this Executive Order will dissolve.

V. COMPENSATION

Members of the Committee shall serve without compensation.

VI. EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date of this Order is January 13, 2021.



Janet T. Mills, Governor