

LANDOWNER RELATIONS PROGRAM



2021 Annual Report

Warden Corporals Rick LaFlamme & David Chabot Landowner Relations Specialists

LANDOWNER RELATIONS PROGRAM YEAR IN REVIEW-2021

We were all expecting 2021 to be a better year and return things back to normal. As you all know that did not happen! We definitely continued to see and experience the increased activity in regard to people getting outdoors. Whether it was hiking, walking, biking, camping, hunting, fishing, or utilizing recreational vehicles – the outdoor boom was still present and at times still burdening our public and private landowners.

It needs to be noted, the ever-present change that is occurring in Maine. The non-resident real estate transactions have increased 38% over the last two years. These types of changes without education and outreach to new landowners could place the traditional, open access we have all experienced in jeopardy, especially in rural Maine.

We received many complaints from landowners and requests for signage. The old and new landowners did not necessarily want to "POST" their land but wanted control back. They wanted to be able to control who was on their property.

The Landowner Relations Program again stepped up to address both the above-mentioned issues. We were responsive to such requests and complaints. We ensured that those who asked for assistance received it and we performed proactive outreach to many who didn't know the program existed. For example: The program and various Department staff initiated an outreach and informational email/social media campaign specific to Maine's landowners. The response was amazing and is continuing to grow as more and more landowners are finding out about the programs, we offer specifically for them. We had over 1000 landowners sign up to communicate with us during the initial survey. THAT'S AMAZING!!!!

The Landowner Relations and Keep Maine Clean programs continue and will be a top priority for us and MDIF&W. We have been successful in cleaning up areas of the State throughout the year and specifically on the annual Landowner Appreciation Day which occurs in the fall. The successes of these two programs are paramount in continuing the free and open access to private lands.

There will always be a need to provide the "one on one" attention Maine landowners deserve. We recognize the fragility of these relationships because without their cooperation we would all lose an important tradition we have all enjoyed. The very thing that makes Maine a great state to live in, could be gone if not nurtured. Let us not forget to respect Maine's landowners.



Landowner Relations Program

Landowner Specialists Rick LaFlamme and David Chabot field many calls from the public, department biologists, warden staff, DACF staff, ATV / Snowmobile clubs and private landowners throughout the year. The calls are handled or vetted by the appropriate personnel or advice is given to remedy the problem. There are times when the complaint is handled in house and special attention is given to the complainant, which is usually a landowner. The following bullet points are just a few examples of work done by Landowner Relations Specialists - Corporal LaFlamme and Chabot.

LARGE LANDOWNERS - 2021 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS AND ACTIVITIES: CORPORAL RICK LAFLAMME

Training Provided:

- Assisted with UMO class, power point and lecture on LOR;
- Finished all annual training required of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy;

Education/Outreach:

- Webinar with Dr. Dayer from Virginia and the Governor's Association on landowner issues across the country;
- Worked with MDIFW Information and Education Division to deploy a landowner questionnaire about their needs and wants;
- Interview with R3 program for LOR podcast;
- Met with a group of middle school kids from OOB to discuss how to be good land stewards;
- Interview with channel 8 news Megan Cole on Landowner Relations and hunting in Maine;
- Phone conference with new Executive Director of North Maine Woods, Thomas Pelletier;

Landowner Issues:

- Assisted Irene Flynn, stewardship coordinator for George River Land trust with land abuse issue;
- Worked with Land Vest on property issues in Parsonsfield, Milford and Lincoln;
- Assisted a landowner in Bowerbank and Sebec with a couple of gates and access signs to keep several hundred acres accessible for hunting and fishing;
- Met with large turf farm owner in Arundel due to a problem with geese. Provided hazing information and cracker shells for deterrent;



- Assisted and organized staff with an Aroostook County landowner who coordinates the Veteran's Moose hunt in mid-September;
- Met with large landowner, Anita Haskell in the Greenbush / Milford area. Surveyed land and issues she had been having. She is interested in making a sanctuary and would like assistance with land trust information;
- Assist landowners in Brownville with abuse issues. Supplied telecom cameras and LOR overtime to staff in that region. Working with DACF to assist with blocking trails with large rocks. Most of damage has been done by vehicles. Warden staff has issued summons for trespass.
- Worked with large landowner in Gorham in conjunction with MWS staff and snowmobile club to resolve land abuse issue;
- Obtained seven motion sensor propane cannons to assist farmers & landowners with wildlife conflicts;
- We purchased and delivered 20 thousand signs, which included the Access by Permission, No Motorized Vehicles, "No discharge of firearms in this area, Access Permitted, and Safety Zone signs that are available to landowners for the upcoming year. We work to identify the landowner needs and use the signs to address misuse of their land;



- We purchased 20 more live feed cameras to assist landowners with misuse issues;
- Assisted a large landowner with installing a couple of gates, that were being misused by motorized vehicles (consequently left 1000 acres open for recreating);
- Assisted landowner in Bremen by providing "Attention please respect landowner" signs, "ABPO" signs and had the local warden meet with him. This landowner left their 700 acres open to the public;
- Assisted landowner in Windham who owns 500 acres that is open to public. We provided "no discharge", and "no motorized vehicles" signs for certain areas of property and walked the entire property with landowner as well. The property remains open for hunting, trapping, fishing, and hiking;
- Assisted several other landowners with Q&A and signage and contact info for their local warden in the towns of Biddeford, North Berwick, Greenville, Bowerbank, Limerick, Oxford, Lyman, Limington, Saco, Gardiner;
- Wrapped up final stages of landowner dispute, at Steep Falls Preserve;

- Wrapped up landowner complaint in North Shapleigh, regarding illegal use of his property, installed temporary fencing, signs and cameras;
- Met with landowners in Oxbow to resolve snowmobile trail issues;
- Worked with warden staff and Weyerhaeuser, on several landowner abuse cases;
- Attended meetings regarding discontinued town roads and ATV use in Lincoln, Matagamon, Milo, Dexter, Sebec, Madison;
- Resolved an issue in Greenville in which the snowmobile club trail has a deeded right of way over a privately owned land;
- Assisted the town of Alfred with liability law information;
- Assisted dozens of land trusts and private landowners private with signage for abuse issues;
- Worked with MDIFW staff in Baskahegan and Princeton to come up with resolutions to ATV trails and misuse;



- Worked with Jack Kelly of Prentiss & Carlisle to update some of their policies on tree stands, and then supplied their new policies to our staff and Maine guides who use their property and worked with DACF Brian Bronson and Prentiss and Carlisle to distribute the new ATV policies and trail maps;
- Worked with private lands Biologist Joe Roy and landowner in Dayton;
- Assisted several landowners with depredation permits for nuisance wildlife;

Administrative:

- Worked with ONXMAPs software owner to update some landowner info. in Northern Maine as well as supply links for WMD's and expanded archery (renewed memberships for all warden staff) and updated some of our technology. To help address landowner complaints, we have purchased approximately 100 new cameras including several dozen cell cameras;
- Several meetings throughout the summer and fall with CMP, DACF, MDIFW staff and other landowners in the Bingham area to resolve ATV trail and landowner ownership dispute;
- Meetings with landowners and road assoc. in North Guilford/ Willimantic to resolve access to state land over a private road. Meetings with Wildlife Biologist Ryan Robicheau, Lt. Barboza and field staff;
- Meetings with Office of Tourism and our Information and Education Division to update messaging to the general public for proper use and expectations of Maine landowners;

- Meetings with Beginning with Habitat, and landowner biologist, assisted them with their launch program https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIoBQPkiTS0;
- Work with Biological staff, Nate Webb, Bob Cordes, Keel Kemper, Ryan Robicheau to update the beaver removal policy after the emergency law change;
- Worked with warden staff to upgrade LOR UTVs with height issues and tire modifications for more versatile use;

Collaboration with Other Agencies:

- Assisted DACF with nuisance beaver, at several locations across the state;
- Meetings with Maine Farm Bureau, and MDIFW wildlife staff, to discuss wildlife conflicts and prepare a Q & A document that included some management practices that work long-term (this document was completed as a joint effort):
- Working with Maine Forest Service to update their LOR gear bags for seven new forest rangers;
- Meeting with Baskahegan Lands to assist with landowner abuse issues. Organized staff in the area to work with their regional manager;



<u>SMALL LANDOWNERS</u> – 2021 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS AND ACTIVITIES: CORPORAL DAVID CHABOT

Training Provided:

- Statewide MOSES Training with Licensing Division explanation of the benefits of the OPP program and answered questions from a Warden point of view;
- IFW Ethic Class presentations;

Education/Outreach:

- Podcast with Maine Bicycle Coalition & Podcast Webinar "Coffee with Landowner Relations";
- Maine Realtors Association presentation;
- Edward Little, Leavitt, Oxford Hills, High Schools and Camp Manitou speaking engagements;
- Initiative with IFW Staff regarding a Landowner Outreach program – very successful over 1000 landowners are in a database with specific needs we have been addressing;
- SAM youth committee;



• Received a large amount of calls from landowners and users, gave advice and educated to solve issues that arose;

Landowner Issues:

- Implemented Androscoggin Lake mooring boundaries with DACF;
- Hunter/Landowner stake holder meeting reference hunting dog trespass;
- Continued partnership with Brookfield and Department staff to obtain a piece of property in the Town of Greene for a boat launch and fishing area;
- Meet with Fisheries Biologist Pellerin reference water access/landowner issues on Pettengill pond in Windham;
- Surface use issue on Annabassecook Lake;

- Meeting reference Hills Pond access;
- Assist Wdn. Franklin with Landowner issues in Harpswell;
- Clean up Little Ossipee Management area with staff;
- Sent boats to auction that were abandon on Moose Pond;
- Private lands Biologist Roy and I met with a large group of landowners in York County;
- Organized the Landowner Appreciation Day and Keep Maine Clean initiative;
- Removed an abandon boat from Sebago Lake that was left on the shore;
- Assisted with various signage requests for landowners and water access Program;
- Assisted with multiple small clean ups utilizing the Keep Maine Clean Program;
- Assisted many Landowners with the LOR signs;
- Worked with multiple snowmobile and ATV clubs as well as landowners to keep the trail system open – Brownfield, Fryeburg, Sebago, Hiram, Parsonfield, Waldoboro, Steep Falls, Rumford, Mexico among other communities;
- Handled trespass complaints for various landowners – to include squatters in New Gloucester several times;
- Assist with CMP trail issues and land abuse;
- Assist landowner in Auburn with litter and transient issues;



Landowner Relations Program

- Assist Androscoggin Land Trust with newly acquired property and local farmer who leases the property and killing of nuisance deer;
- Assisted with deer count on Swan Island;

Administrative:

- Assigned and authorized Landowner related details for ATV, snowmobile, hunting, fishing, land abuse and littering issues – statewide;
- Continued ATV Task Force work and legislative law interpretations and interactions; oversized ATV discussions with various invested partners and members of the public;
- Assisted working group regarding LOR Biologist;
- Various landowner meetings and assistance given;



- MWS Supervisory Staff meetings; MWS Division meetings; LSRAB meetings; Virtual SWOAM meetings; Guides Boards meetings;
- Met with I&E staff, Fisheries staff, and Warden Service staff to ensure Landowner Relations priority reference new ice fishing opportunities in Western Maine;
- Worked on nuisance wildlife policies within the MDIFW to make it easier on landowners to handle nuisance issues;
- Met with the new wildlife conflicts agents to explain the LOR Program;
- Assist with a document for Farm Bureau nuisance wildlife directive;

Collaboration with Other Agencies:

- Meeting with DACF Brian Bronson and Large Woodland Owners regarding ATV use and the new enacted laws from the 2019 ATV Task Force;
- Meeting with Conservation regarding a new outreach program & continued effort and communication with both DACF Recreational Coordinators' Brian Bronson and Joe Higgins;

Landowner Relations Program Mission Statement

"Prioritize and address Maine's landowner concerns by quickly responding with assistance and enforcement while continuing to educate and bring awareness to all land users."

IMPORTANT FUNDING SOURCES FOR LANDOWNER RELATIONS AND KEEP MAINE CLEAN PROGRAMS

The use and access to private lands is unique to the Northeast and is of extreme importance to the State of Maine and its economy. The open and free access has been a longstanding tradition in which we all rely upon. The practice has been a long accepted and welcomed partnership amongst most landowners and users. This historical practice of free, public access to private lands has been acknowledged to be of significant importance by the State of Maine as it relates to its citizens and economic well-being.

The initial creation of the Landowner Relations {LOR} Program approximately 27 years ago and newly created Keep Maine Clean {KMC} Program; was a direct result of the Legislature's understanding of the importance of the free access given graciously by Maine's private landowners. In 2018, MDIFW – Warden Service with support of the Landowner Sportsman Relations Advisory Board added another Landowner Specialist position to the program.

The following are funding sources the two programs have utilized for personal services, capital equipment, general expenses, etc. The "Support Wildlife" motor vehicle registration, the yearly \$150,000 General Fund allotment, and the Outdoors Partners program helps ensure the mission of the two programs {which share the funding} will continue well into the future and provide benefits to the landowners and land users of this great State of Maine.

This access can never be forsaken or taken for granted. At times, it has and will continue to take substantial funding to ensure we can continue to provide remedies to issues regarding private lands. Since, 2018 the Landowner Relations and Keep Maine Clean Programs spend on average \$180,000.00 plus annually. This money is utilized for enforcement



details, essential capital equipment, landowner needs and other services, as well as a sign program which provides a variety of signs, usually at no charge to the landowner. Any surplus money that is not utilized goes directly back to the LOR/KMC dedicated account and is able to be used at a later date by the programs.

It would be extremely detrimental to make any eliminations or changes to the funding. This would undermine these two programs that have direct impact to the State's economy and its citizens.

OUTDOOR PARTNERS PROGRAM



The Outdoor Partners program is relatively small but provides an opportunity for the outdoor enthusiast to donate to the Landowner Relations and Keep Maine Clean Programs. It is a \$15 yearly contribution and is available through the Department of MDIFW online store or at the time of license purchase. We also offer for sale, Outdoor Partner decals and hats of various colors and patterns. We had **1,784** participants in 2021, which is a slight increase from 2020.

OUTDOOR PARTNERSThe list of companies on our *"Thank You"* page has provided discounts for products, memberships or are assisted with our services. These relationships have been established with outdoor retailers, trash/tire disposal companies and provide an involvable support system for Maino's

organized clubs & associations to promote and provide an invaluable support system for Maine's Landowners and the Landowner Relations Program.

KEEP MAINE CLEAN PROGRAM

The Keep Maine Program was established and placed within the Landowner Relations Program of Inland

Fisheries and Wildlife. The sole purpose is to provide relief and assistance to Maine's landowners with illegal dumping {littering} issues. These illegal acts are a main reason for the POSTING of private property.

With the assistance and partnerships of the Maine Forest Service, BDS Tire and Waste Management the annual Landowner Appreciation Day which occurred on September 13th was a success even during a pandemic. This litter is no longer on Maine's landscape thanks to the program and the volunteers.

The Keep Maine Clean Program is an essential and integral part for Landowner Relations and shall continue well into the future, to ensure we always Keep Maine Clean.

Nearly a dozen large dumpsters were filled statewide totaling **27 + tons of litter**; this does not include the tire



totals listed below, which was taken by BDS tire disposal company in Norridgewock Maine, for absolutely free! This phenomenal total of trash and tires were picked up within a day totally dedicated to Maine's landowners.

Warden Service

Division A - 300+tires Division B - 45 tires Division C - 225+ tires Division D - 15 tires Division E - 350+ tires

Statewide Total tires: 935 +



The top four clubs who participated in the Annual Landowner Appreciation Day received prizes for most truckloads of trash. *Gift Cards graciously donated by Kittery Trading Post!*

- 1. Dennysville Snowmobile & ATV club
- 2. Wilton Fish & Game
- 3. Bucksport Fire crew
- 4. Unity College

"A huge shoutout and thank you to all who participated in such an important day."

LANDOWNER AND SPORTSMEN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD

The Landowner Sportsman Relations Advisory Board {LSRAB} is an advisory board to the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife the following are goals of the Board that are set forth in law:

- Expand education to promote respect and appreciation for landowners.
- Continue support for nuisance wildlife damage issues on private property, especially farms
- Ensure the importance of landowner relations and its program mission is delivered to the public
- Continued coordination and cooperation between government agencies and landowners
- Recognize non-traditional use is growing rapidly (hiking, biking, kayaking, over-landing with vehicles, back country snowmobile riding) especially during pandemic times
- Acknowledge public access to private property is rapidly declining, due to lack of respect and abuse by users (litter, destruction of property, etc.)

Advisory Board Members:

Don Kleiner (Maine Professional Guides Assoc) - Chair Jessica Leahy (Univ. of Maine Orono) – Co-Chair Tom Doak (Woodland Owners of Maine) Al Swett (MSA) Clark Granger (Maine Farm Bureau) Hannah Stevens (Seven Islands) Kara Hodgin (Maine Sporting Dogs Assoc.) Real Deschaine (Maine ATV) David Trahan (Sportsman's Alliance of Maine) David Montague (Down east Land Trust) Daniel Grenier (The Nature Conservancy) Rick Laflamme (Landowner Relations – IF&W) David Chabot (Landowner Relations – IF&W)



The Maine Landowner Relations and Keep Maine Clean Programs would like to personally thank the following partners:

"THANK YOU"

Outdoor Partner Members	Bicycle Coalition of Maine
Waste Management	Small Woodland Owners of Maine
BDS Tire	Poland Spring
Mac's Trading Post	Sportsman Alliance of Maine
Ben's Trading Post	Maine Snowmobile Association
Indian Hill Trading Post	ATV Maine
Northwoods Sporting Journal	Maine Professional Guides
Maine Sportsman	Operation Game Thief
North Maine Woods	Maine Trappers Association
Fort Kent Ski Doo	Maine Farm Bureau
Kittery Trading Post	University of Maine
LL Bean	Various Large Landowner Corporations
Cabela's	Various Land Trust
Landowner Sportsman Advisory Board	Maine Realtors Association

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to all State of Maine employees, volunteers, and outdoor recreationalist who go out every day to help, educate or respect Maine's Landowners and Keep Maine Clean.

Landowner Relations Program

Landowner Relations and the Department's I&E worked together to have a larger social media presence to address issues surrounding land use by non-traditional users. The selling and mailing of signs and merchandise increased dramatically. We also reached out and campaigned specifically to landowners – it was well received with over 1,000 landowners signing up for the program / communication.

2021 Honorable Mentions

Warden Joe McBrine is a continuous landowner advocate for the area he patrols in Washington County. He spends a significant amount of his time ensuring landowners have their issues resolved. Below are examples of how he used the latest cell camera technology to apprehend trespassers.





LOR Program / Warden Service - 2021 Veterans controlled moose, deer, and turkey hunts. Getting people outdoors to heal and give them an opportunity of a lifetime.



New Technology used by the Landowner Relations Program

Cellular Cameras



E-bikes

Propane Cannons





"TEAMWORK"



Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Staff working together to get Little Ossipee WMA clean before people recreate. Over the years this area has had a tremendous amount of illegal dumping.

Maine Warden Service Landowner Related Calls for Service in 2021 {As of December 3, 2021}

- General trespass -176
- Snowmobile trespass 123
- ATV trespass 184
- Hunting trespass 142

- Fishing trespass 12
- Trapping trespass 0
- Hunting dog trespass 20
- Littering / Dumping 70
- Wildlife Conflicts: 2377



Maine Warden Service Landowner Related Summonses for 2021 {As of December 3, 2021}

- Snowmobile civil 39
- Snowmobile criminal 2
- Snowmobile OUI 16
- ATV civil 279
- ATV criminal 17
- ATV OUI 26
- Hunting 243
- Fishing 314
- Trapping 6

Reminder to Support Maine's Landowners by:

- Being an advocate for responsible and ethical use of private and public lands
- Becoming an Outdoor Partner
- Purchasing a support wildlife vehicle registration
- Donating to Landowner Relations
- Purchasing Outdoor Partner hats or stickers

Accessing private land: there's the law, and then there's the unwritten rule.

The law - Unlike most other states, Maine operates under an implied permission structure, meaning that if land is not posted, it is legal to use the land.

The unwritten rule - *Always* ask permission. Hunting, fishing, or otherwise using private land without the owner's permission is a careless move that puts everyone's future access at risk.

When venturing into the Maine woods, follow the unwritten rule - "ASK FIRST"

Ways to be a good land user

Landowners who permit you to use their land for outdoor recreational activities are not only doing you a favor, they are placing their trust in you. Here are some ways you can prove their trust is not misplaced:

- Always ask for permission, whether or not there are signs on the property requesting that you do so, and regardless of who owns it (a private individual or a business). If you have identified a land area, you'd like to access but you're not sure who owns it, you should be able to find that information at the municipality's Town Hall. Then, look up the person or business's contact information, and give them a call. With a little resourcefulness and a Google search bar, you shouldn't have any problem navigating this process. When mapping out where you'd like to go, keep in mind that railroad and utility corridors are not public rights of way and still require landowner permission. Also, don't be afraid to reach out to landowners who have posted their land. You may be pleasantly surprised at how many of them will allow access to someone who has the courtesy to ask first.
- Learn what matters most to the landowner and abide by all special requests they make, including where you can or cannot drive or park a vehicle, and which specific activities are allowed. Some landowners may require permits for certain activities. If so, respect that request. Look at any such requests from the landowner's point of view, and act with their best interests in mind whenever you use the land. Some landowners dread various seasons of the year, believing the associated activities limit their use of their own property. It's your job to make sure whoever owns the land you're using never feels that way. If we as a recreational community can't respect landowners' wishes, we can only expect more private land to be closed to public use.
- Provide detailed information. If requested, give the landowner your name, address, phone number and vehicle description, and consider using pre-printed <u>Landowner/Land user Courtesy Cards (PDF)</u>. Good, thorough communication is a great way to build mutual respect.

- Know your boundaries. Learn the geographic property boundaries of the land you have permission to use and stay within them. There is no excuse for trespassing it's a crime enforceable by all state, county, and municipal law enforcement officers, and if convicted, you may lose any license issued by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.
- Keep it clean. Remember that you are a guest. Always leave the land as you found it, if not better. If you see trash that someone else left, pick it up.
- Keep it legal. Always obey the law, be safe and ethical, and report any land abuse that you witness. Land abuse is a very serious problem in Maine, and each year, access to private property is lost because of it. Put yourself in the landowner's shoes and help ensure that violators are prosecuted. If you see a violation occurring, contact Operation Game Thief at 1(800) ALERT-US [1(800) 253-7887].
- Say thank you. Thank the landowner for the opportunity to use their property for recreation. They'll love hearing that you enjoyed it, and that you recognize and appreciate their generosity.
- Show your support. Become an Outdoor Partner or volunteer for a Keep Maine Clean event!

Landowner Outreach Initiative

If you are a Maine landowner interested in learning more about the assistance Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife can provide to you through our Outdoor Partners and Beginning with Habitat programs, <u>please complete this short form</u>.

Landowner Relations Program and Keep Maine Clean Program

Maine has a unique history of public access to private land. Over the past 200 years, landowners, residents, and visitors have forged a tradition of neighborliness and shared access that you won't find anywhere else in the nation.

Roughly 94% of Maine's forest land is privately owned, and more than half of that land area is open to the public. In total, landowners voluntarily open up more than 10 million acres of working farms and forests.

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's Landowner Relations Program, works to preserve Maine's unique history of public access to private land by:

- Promoting responsible land use to the public
- Educating landowners about their rights, liabilities, and options
- Forming partnerships and supporting landowners.
- Assisting with illegally dumped litter.

For more info: https://www.maine.gov/ifw/programs-resources/outdoor-partners-program/support.html

Become an Outdoor Partner

Become an <u>Outdoor Partners</u> by clicking on this link. Help continue the open land access tradition we have all enjoyed by learning how to be a good land user and learn your rights if you are a landowner. The Outdoor Partners contribution helps support the landowner relations program.

Beginning with Habitat

The Department's <u>Beginning with Habitat program</u> provides technical assistance to landowners, foresters, and other service providers managing land and providing habitat enhancements for at-risk, native fish and wildlife. Contact Biologist Joe Roy today!!!!

Upcoming Landowner Events

Landowner Appreciation and Keep Maine Clean Up Day usually occurs in the fall, second week of September. If you'd like to <u>Learn more or sign up to volunteer</u> please click the link.

"Together we can keep Maine's traditions alive and well by caring and respecting our Landowners"

