

REPORT ON CONSERVATION IN MAINE

Maine Community Foundation Jessica Burton, Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative August 14, 2019

Introduction

In 2019, the Maine Community Foundation (MaineCF) will be managing a new fund for conservation, the result of a new bequest. This newly created fund will increase MaineCF's available funding for land conservation. The stated purpose of the fund is to support land conservation and/or acquisition, including the acquisition of permanent scenic easements or land use restrictions. Coincidentally, at the same time, the Maine Conservation Task Force (Task Force), a collaborative process to review the 30-year history and accomplishments of the Land for Maine's Future Program and identify a blueprint for future conservation work in Maine, released a Report in February 2019 with recommendations and action items. MaineCF sought outside help to better understand the evolving nature of land conservation priorities and to create a well-informed MaineCF community so that it can build an effective and relevant new grant program that reflects values articulated by the Task Force. This report will also be used to inform, as appropriate, additional MaineCF funds.

The Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative (SMCC) was hired to create this report. SMCC is a service center that provides technical assistance to 21 land and water conservation organizations in Southern Maine. It is also actively engaged in statewide initiatives relevant to land conservation and as such, has developed a deep understanding of the land trust community. This report draws heavily on the experience of the state's land trusts, the primary organizations focused on land conservation in Maine.

SMCC undertook a comprehensive exploration of the state of land conservation in Maine, including:

- Interviews with a broad diversity of individuals involved in conservation across the state*
- Completion of a wide-ranging, email-based survey* of Maine land trusts, with a 39% response rate
- Review of the Maine Land Trust Network's biannual land trust census*
- Careful consideration of the recently-released Shaping the Next Generation of Land Conservation in Maine: The Final Report from the Land Conservation Task Force 2019*
- Monitoring of Land Conservation Task Force meetings

* = *For full documentation, please see the appendix.*

There is much happening in land conservation all over Maine, and new projects are started and finished each week. This report is intended to highlight trends, provide project examples, and inspire further understanding of land conservation concerns. The report offers criteria and a framework to help inform MaineCF in its land conservation priorities funding decisions.

Land conservation has a role to play in addressing many of the new challenges facing Maine today. The Heald Fund has a rare opportunity to elevate issues using the most current research and data to inspire a new giving approach and impact for MaineCF.

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I. Maine Conservation Task Force

In 2018, The Maine Conservation Task Force was convened by Maine Coast Heritage Trust and The Nature Conservancy to revitalize land conservation in Maine by creating a bold vision. The process was modeled from and inspired by previous legislatively mandated efforts in 1986 and 1997, each of which generated a report with land conservation-related recommendations. This year's Task Force, however was not borne from the Legislature but rather from the conservation community itself. For three decades, land conservation in Maine had achieved remarkable success and accomplishments, but in recent years activities have slowed due to a variety of challenges.

To ensure that land conservation meets the future needs of Maine people, the Task Force was designed to represent diverse interests. The twenty Task Force members were educators, public health advocates, municipal officials, Wabanaki Tribal representative, economic development specialists, and more. The range of issues the Task Force engaged in and considered included: (from the Report page 5)

- identifying land and water conservation initiatives that reflect the evolving priorities of Maine people and communities;
- improving public access to existing conservation lands;
- enhancing collaboration between economic development organizations, recreational groups, land trusts, municipalities, businesses, and other civic organizations;
- maximizing ways in which land and water conservation activities benefit local and regional economies;
- identifying ways that land conservation can help Maine mitigate and adapt to a changing climate; and
- proposing funding, strategies, and policy options to support the Task Force's recommendations.

Over nine months, this group heard from practitioners and experts, conducted research, and received public comments. In February 2019, the full report including a set of recommendations and action steps was made public. In addition to the full report, the Task Force's notes, research papers, and meeting materials can be found on its [website](https://www.maineconservationtaskforce.com/) (<https://www.maineconservationtaskforce.com/>). The research documents created to support the task force are in this Report's Appendices.

The Task Force was a tremendous accomplishment and the resulting report presents an appropriately wide reaching vision. The work to achieve this vision will not come easily, but by providing a common starting point, the Report encourages alignment and will likely lead to greater impact.

The Task Force Report

The Report is the final product of the Task Force and includes a review, assessment, and celebration of accomplishments, current status, and the hopes for the future. The report articulates opportunities that exist for the conservation sector to lean into:

- A group of students reviewed in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine showed that “creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach” produced a 48.4 percent increase in the frequency of physical activity. (pg. 15)
- Maine’s 17.7 million acres of forests provide the potential to partially mitigate the adverse effects of a changing climate through carbon sequestration and storage. (pg. 20)
- Maine’s North Woods is the largest and most intact area of temperate forest in North America, and perhaps the world and the Western Maine Mountains region is the critical ecological link between undeveloped lands to the north, south, east, and west. (pg. 20)
- The climate gradient that occurs over 20 degrees of latitude in Europe, exists in just three degrees of latitude in Maine, resulting in a tremendous diversity of plants and animals. (pg. 21)
- Less than 4% of the state has prime agricultural soil; with 1% already being under development and around 1% already conserved. (pg. 22)
- The state’s \$8.2 billion outdoor recreation economy supports 76,000 jobs. (pg. 23)

The following section highlights three sources of information summarized from the Task Force Report that SMCC builds on later in the document as they offer a criteria matrix to guide Heald Fund funding decisions.

The Task Force Report highlights six major land “types” or “attributes” as valuable focal points:

1. Working forest
2. Iconic, uniquely beautiful places that have come to define the state
3. Lands that protect wildlife, particularly threatened and endangered species
4. Lands offering outdoor recreational access including boat launches and trails (biking, hiking, ADA, snowmobile, ATV)
5. Farmland, particularly prime agricultural soils
6. Working waterfront

The Task Force Report identifies a list of key challenges that Maine faces: (from Report page 9)

- A generation of family landowners who will be transitioning long-held farms, woodlands and coastal wharfs to new owners in the next decade;
- A changing climate that will likely disrupt Maine’s natural ecosystems and wildlife,
- Towns that find it increasingly difficult to meet their fiscal obligations while keeping property taxes at reasonable levels;
- Multiple barriers prevent an increasingly diverse population of immigrants from connecting to Maine’s natural resources;
- The highest obesity rate in New England;
- Forest products, agricultural and commercial fishing industries in transition;
- An aging and disabled population that seeks access to Maine’s woods and waters;
- A federal government that is a less reliable partner in land conservation;
- Youth who spend more time looking at screens and less time outdoors;
- A growing tourism industry that relies upon Maine’s natural wonders to attract visitors;
- and

- An increasingly mobile and telecommuting population who can elect to live, work and set up businesses wherever they want particularly as broadband service and 5G networks are expanded in Maine.

The Task Force Report includes six overarching recommendations:

1. Take proper care of our treasured public and private conservation lands and ensure that they meet the needs of Maine people into the future.
2. Create land conservation opportunities that connect people with land and water.
3. Revive funding for land conservation and ensure that the Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF) can effectively meet the challenges of the next generation.
4. Work cooperatively with landowners to support good stewardship and ensure that Maine's tradition of public access to private lands is maintained.
5. Target land conservation efforts to effectively protect critical natural resources and help Maine combat and adapt to a changing climate.
6. Ensure that land conservation benefits Maine's economy and communities.

II. Land Trust Community

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) defines a land trust as a nonprofit organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by acquiring land or conservation easements (or assisting with their acquisition), and/or stewarding and managing land or conservation easements. There are 84 land trusts in Maine; as of the 2015 LTA Census Data there are 1,363 land trusts across the country. (<https://www.landtrustalliance.org/census-map/>)

Land and conservation easements can be donated, sold, and sold through a bargain sale. In a bargain sale, the land is sold to a land trust for less than its fair market value. This not only makes it more affordable for the land trust, but offers several benefits to the seller: it provides cash, avoids some capital gains tax, and may entitle the seller to a charitable income tax deduction based on the difference between the land's fair market value and its sale price.

LTA defines a conservation easement as a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Landowners retain many of their rights, including the right to own and use the land, sell it, and pass it on to their heirs. Conservation easements allow people to protect the land they love; they are the number one tool available for protecting privately owned land. All conservation easements must provide public benefits, such as water quality protection, farm, land preservation, scenic views, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, education, and historic preservation. Most conservation easements are donated, but if the land has very high conservation value, a land trust may be willing to raise funds to purchase an easement. In particular, a number of federal, state, and local programs provide funding to purchase easements on farm land.

This report focuses on the land trust community. There are 84 non-profit land trusts in Maine all working in their communities to protect, steward, connect, and celebrate their particular geography. According to the 2019 Maine Land Trust Census, Maine land trusts own or hold easements on 2,651,663 acres consisting of 1,862 owned parcels and 1,940 easement. These

organizations protect fields, forests, trails, farms, parks, wilderness, waterfront, fisheries, and wildlife habitat. Their efforts focus on easy and open access, clean drinking water, ecological connectivity, fishing and hunting, recreation, transportation, education, human health, food systems, and more. Planning for and addressing the current and future impacts of our changing climate is a growing focus alongside the need to attend to economic benefits and overall community well-being.

Land trusts are legally required to care for these lands in perpetuity. On easement lands, land trusts must work with the landowners to ensure the easement restrictions are upheld, and when they are not, land trusts must defend the easements, unfortunately sometimes in court. On land they own, land trusts must steward it appropriately, for example with forest or recreational management plans, with trails and signage, and with invasive species management.

Land trusts also have programs and projects that focus on education, a modest amount of advocacy, environmental monitoring, farming, housing, and business management and development. In addition to land trusts, other entities that own and steward Maine land for conservation purposes include Tribal Nations, municipalities, the State of Maine, and the federal government.

Today, effective land conservation depends upon collaboration. Problems are too complex to address alone, funding sources are shrinking in the face of increasing needs and issues, and collaboration as a tool is better understood and used more effectively. Many examples exist today of land trusts joining multi-sector collaborations designed to share visions and increase impact.

It is essential to recognize that the current land conservation movement follows thousands of years of land stewardship by the Wabanaki people. Consistent with Governor Mill's commitment to support and improve the State's relationship with the Wabanaki, more examples are emerging of partnerships between land conservation organizations and Maine's Tribal Nations. Wabanaki history, language, and traditions are directly connected to the natural environment and these connections have been weakened or destroyed as the result of land takings and myriad other injustices.

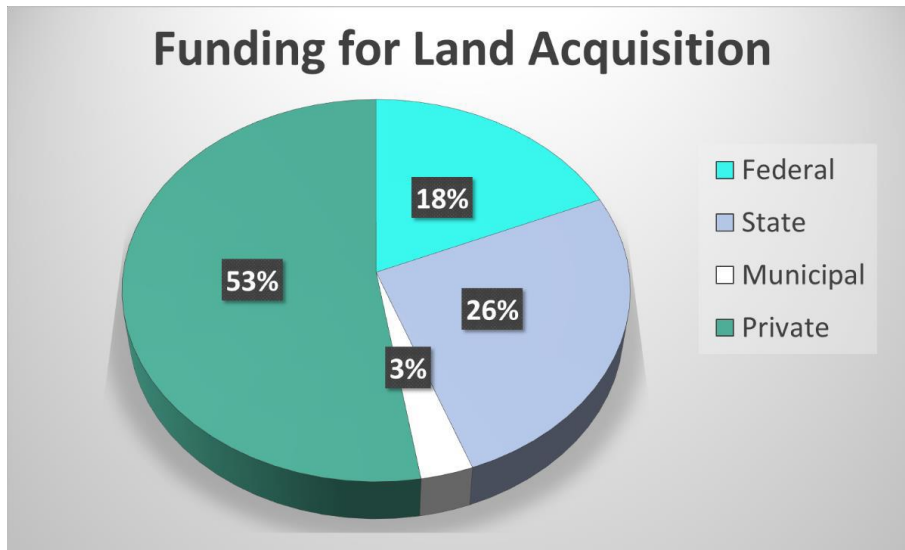
III. Analyses of Land Conservation Funding

In Maine, land trusts seek funding from many of the same environmental foundations and for a variety of reasons. There are few funders that fund staff time, general operations, or acquisition. These recognized funding gaps provide opportunity for the Heald Fund to have a meaningful impact.

Land trusts are working to address many needs and having the ability to fund the backbone of the organization enables greater flexibility, responsiveness, and innovation. Operation and/or staff time funding allows the experts on the ground to use the funding where it is needed. Although it does appear that more foundations are providing operation funding now than in the past, foundations themselves are becoming more streamlined in their visions thereby limiting the

number of organizations that are eligible – and restricting the inherent benefit of operational funding from being ultimately flexible.

Over the past 30 years, at least \$600 million of funding has gone to the acquisition of lands and conservation easements in Maine, according to the Background Paper on Land Conservation Funding provided to the Task Force (please see Appendices for full paper).



This Background Paper goes on to present a thorough assessment of state, federal, and local sources of funding, providing summaries of each program. Regarding private funding:

“Private sources of funding, which includes individuals, foundations and businesses, has contributed at least half of the land conservation funding in the past generation. Of these, individuals and foundations provided the bulk of the funding. Amongst individuals, major donors have included both Maine residents such as the late Leon Gorman, as well as summer residents, particularly along the coast. The same can be said for foundations, with Maine foundations such as the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation and Davis Conservation Foundation making gifts to numerous acquisition projects alongside national foundations. In some instances, both individuals and foundations were attracted to Maine projects simply because they were exceptional opportunities not matched elsewhere in the country. Some private donors, both individuals and foundations, only choose to contribute to a particular type of project, for example ecological preserves. In recent years, there appears to have been fewer and generally smaller foundation grants for land acquisition projects. Whether this represents a trend in the philanthropic world or is a by-product of reduced availability of public funding is not yet clear.”

IV. Project Selection Criteria

SMCC believes the following information provides important criteria to guide the Heald Fund in its funding decision. This section is divided as such:

1. MaineCF Strategic Goals
2. The Task Force Recommendations

3. SMCC Survey
4. 2019 Maine Land Trust Census
5. Criteria Matrix

1. MaineCF Strategic Goals

SMCC believes that this fund’s criteria must map back to the MaineCF Strategic Goals to both ensure institutional relevance and because land conservation has a role to play in addressing these goals.

“It is essential that everyone in Maine has access to opportunities to achieve their full human potential and realize a high quality of life. Every person in every community must be able to accumulate a strong supply of human capital – the education, knowledge, experience and creativity needed to succeed. To that end, the Maine Community Foundation will work with its partners over the next five years and intensify its commitment to five priority goals. Our mission: to help ensure more welcoming communities with healthier, better educated and happier people, a more productive workforce, and a more vibrant and inclusive economy.” MaineCF Strategic Goals Webpage

Conservation, the environment, and place do not explicitly show up in these statements. MaineCF’s support of land conservation is realized through funds such as the Fund for Maine Land Conservation and the broad Community Building Grant Program. Additionally, MCF staff work with a number of individual donors who have a deep commitment to land conservation.

Place is essential in all of MaineCF’s Strategic Priorities and therefore this report attempts to make this connection to place more explicit. As an example, conservation can be practiced in a manner that advances racial equity. There are initiatives within land conservation today that illustrate these additional benefits by centering human wellbeing and equity; this report will highlight a few examples.

SMCC suggests that conservation connects directly to three of the MaineCF strategic priorities:

Racial Equity: All people of color in Maine have access to opportunities and life outcomes that are not limited in any way by race or ethnicity.

- Land Conservation has a past that is tied to exclusion and white supremacy. Multiple barriers remain, including systemic racism that prevent people of color from accessing nature. The Task Force Report targets Maine’s growing immigrant population as an opportunity for new engagement, and these people join other communities of color and the Wabanki People who have been here for centuries, and longer.

Thriving Older People: All older people in Maine are valued and able to thrive and age in their workplaces and communities with health, independence, and dignity.

- The majority of land trust volunteers and board members are senior citizens, many whom have moved to Maine to retire in search of communities connected with their

natural areas. Land Trusts offer senior citizens opportunities related to physical and mental health.

Entrepreneurs & Innovators: All entrepreneurs and innovators have the opportunity to bring their big ideas to life.

- Maine's economy is primarily supported by its natural resources; conservation ensures that these resources are managed sustainably.

2. Task Force Recommendations

Another set of criteria used to select the projects are four of the Task Force Recommendations. These four are most relevant to private land conservation, they align with the current priorities of many land trusts and they align well with MaineCF's Strategic Priorities.

Recommendation 1: Take proper care of our treasured public and private conservation lands and ensure that they meet the needs of Maine people into the future.

Among this recommendation's Action Items are that land trusts and philanthropic interests should work together to create a Stewardship Forever Fund at MaineCF and secure substantial private funding in support of land stewardship.

Stewardship encompasses all the many permanent management responsibilities inherent in owning or holding an easement on land. It is exciting and essential that land be acquired, and permanently protected through easements or fee ownership. After that, however, land trusts must steward the properties forever. Due to a multitude of factors, this perpetual responsibility is becoming increasingly complex and expensive.

As the Task Force report states: "Stewardship needs range from everyday tasks like marking property boundaries and maintaining out-houses, to the perpetual legal obligations of monitoring and enforcing conservation easements, to making lands more accessible to the public through the construction and maintenance of roads, trails and boat access sites, to public programs such as interpretive hikes and summer camps." (page 11)

The Task Force report goes on to say, "Generally speaking, funding sources for acquiring conservation lands and easements, both from public sources and private donations, are more numerous and plentiful than available resources for the stewardship of conservation lands." It is very hard for land trusts to find reliable funding sources to pay for the actual work of conservation – caring for the land.

Recommendation 2: Create land conservation opportunities that connect people with land and water.

Among this recommendation's Action Items are that the Land For Maine's Future (LMF) Funds should be directed to "Community Projects" and that land conservation activities should "Support opportunities for Wabanaki tribes to conserve areas of particular cultural significance

and to utilize conserved lands and waters for traditional uses that support their place-based cultures.”

This recommendation is connected to the challenges related to access and engagement articulated by the Task Force: reducing barriers for the disabled and new immigrant population, engaging youth to be outside, offering recreational opportunities directed at physical and mental health, and building conservation projects in places to make all of these things happen.

Community Conservation is a term that the land conservation community has been using for some time to describe projects that provide and articulate community benefits. According to the Land Trust Alliance, community conservation projects share many of these characteristics:

- They include a deliberate process that engages a diverse constituency in stating its shared values, needs and goals;
- They rely on a rich understanding of people, place and history and the relationships between these;
- They are forward-looking, enhancing a community’s capacity to be healthy and sustainable;
- They commit to a form of engagement that serves the community and the land trust, making both stronger and more resilient.

There are many examples of this type of work in Maine. Nibezun is a project of the Wabanaki Confederacy that was supported by Maine Coast Heritage Trust and The Conservation Fund, and which serves as a national model for Indigenous-led conservation of sacred land. The Androscoggin Land Trust works with Tree Street Youth to connect students with the Androscoggin River through fishing opportunities and outdoor education adventures. Portland Trails partners with the City of Portland to facilitate neighborhood conversations about small open space opportunities to celebrate and enhance place making and people-powered transportation. 3 Rivers Land Trust has built an ADA-approved trail to the top of Goat Hill in Alfred where people have access to a 360 view of southern Maine.

These projects broaden the definition of who deserves to have access to the outdoors and makes land conservation relevant not only to the most hardy or fit but to all people, regardless of familiarity with the outdoors, technical ability, or capability.

Recommendation 5: Target land conservation efforts to effectively protect critical natural resources and help Maine combat and adapt to a changing climate.

Among the action items, The Task Force suggests supporting public-private partnerships to address and adapt to climate change and “increase conservation of land and water resources in areas of high biodiversity, seeking representation of all habitat types in each biophysical region of the state.”

This work is underway by many conservation organizations in Maine but there is a great deal of learning and action needed to address the threats of our changing climate. Reports from the scientific community are increasingly focused on the benefits land conservation offers in addressing climate change. Marina Schaffler, a Maine resident and writer, has written two relevant articles on these topics for the Land Trust Alliance’s periodical [Saving Land](#). In [“Looking to the Land to Mitigate Climate Change”](#)

(<https://www.landtrustalliance.org/node/2718>) (Spring 2018) Schauffler states, “By advancing natural climate solutions, land trusts can provide a wealth of ecological and economic benefits that extend beyond cost-effective climate mitigation. Lands managed with the climate in mind also filter and protect water supplies, increase soil fertility and forest productivity, foster biodiversity and strengthen ecosystems’ capacity to withstand drought and extreme weather — reducing flooding, runoff and erosion.”

In her second article published this Spring, “[A Growing Force](#)” (<https://www.landtrustalliance.org/news/growing-force>), she shares examples of land trusts from around the country who are engaging in this work. In Maine, for example, Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) has developed its Marsh Migration Project which, through geospatial data analysis, predicts where marshes need to migrate to absorb higher sea levels and more water. MCHT is sharing this information with its coastal partners. Open Space Institute and Trust for Public Land have developed mapping tools that indicate where there are areas that will be most resilient to the impacts of climate change.

This work related to our changing climate is relatively new, and therefore it is difficult to anticipate the time and cost of the work. Additionally, through innovation and learning through doing, projects are changing and the need for flexibility in the funding is essential. There is great need for philanthropic support to increase our overall capacity to attend to current situations and prepare for the future.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that land conservation benefits Maine’s economy and communities.

Among the Action Items there is emphasis on continuing to place high priority on protecting Maine’s forestry, farming, fishing, and tourism industries by seeking public funds and private funds to serve as required match, encouraging land trusts to work with municipalities to plan for future recreation and conservation while addressing fiscal pressures, and supporting the Office of Outdoor Recreation.

In 2017, the Maine Land Trust Network (MLTN) produced a report called [Land Trusts Work for Maine](#) (<http://www.mltn.org/homenews/post.php?s=2017-10-27-land-trusts-work-for-maine-report>, and the report is in the Appendices). This report paints a rich picture of the beneficial role land trusts play in communities across Maine. Information was gathered by survey of the state’s land trusts in the summer and fall of 2017. Results of the survey illustrated how land conservation groups are expanding outdoor recreational opportunities, strengthening the tourism economy, supporting natural resource jobs, and enhancing local communities throughout Maine. Highlights include the following statistics associated with land trust-conserved land in Maine:

Over:

- 1,260 miles of hiking trails
- 570 miles of snowmobile trails
- 200 boat launch sites
- 2.3 million acres of land open to hunters
- 2.1 million acres of working forestlands
- 36,000 acres of productive farmlands

- 65 access sites for marine fishermen

The Land Trusts Work for Maine report also includes dozens of examples of how these community-based organizations partner with businesses, support local classrooms, help maintain public lands, improve water quality, connect people with nature, and make our state a better place to live and raise a family.

In addition, the May 27 2019 edition of MaineBiz features an article “Betting on Bethel,” (pg. 14 – 16) that assigns credit for Bethel’s economic surge to the year-round recreational opportunities offered in the area. Multi-use trail infrastructure is drawing new businesses to the area, enticing new users to connect with the outdoors, and bringing people back to live who grew up in Bethel and left Maine for jobs elsewhere.

3. SMCC Survey

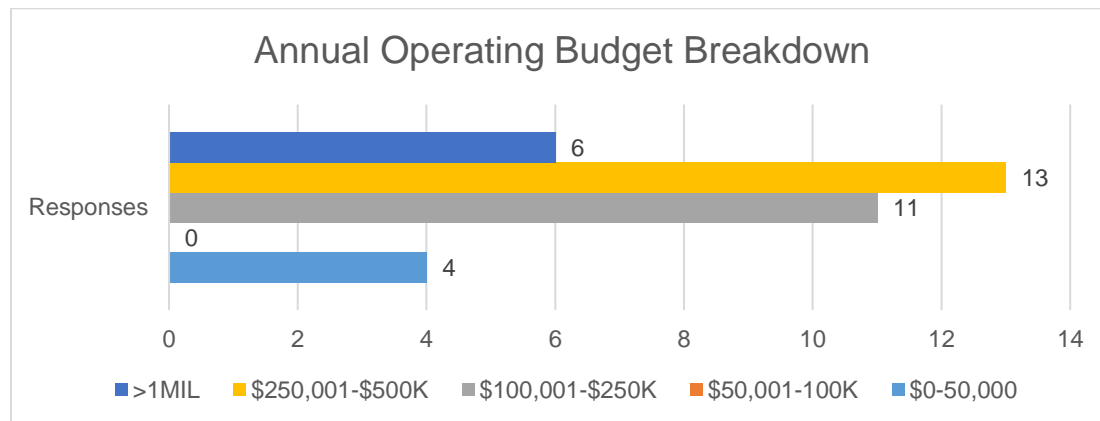
Thirty-four individual land trusts responded to the SMCC survey. The full Survey results can be found in the Appendices.

Geographically they are distributed:

- 13 are in the Southern Maine Region
- 6 are in Downeast Region
- 5 are Statewide
- 4 are in Western Mountains Region
- 3 are in Casco Bay Region
- 3 are in Midcoast Region
- 0 are in Penobscot Bay Region

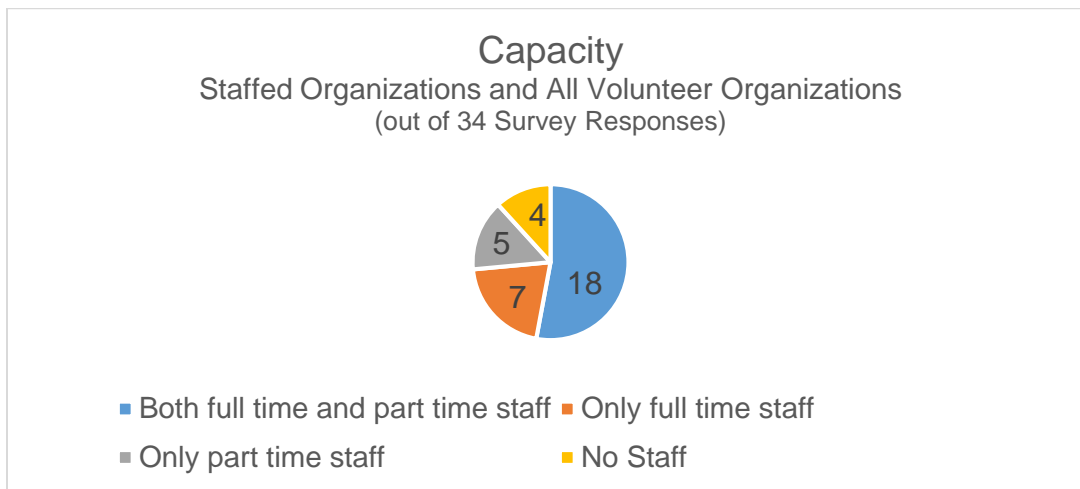
The Annual Operating Budget breakdown is:

- \$0-50,000 - 4
- 50,001-100K - 0
- \$100,001-250K - 11
- 250,001-500K – 13
- >1MIL – 6



Capacity (staffed organizations and all volunteer organizations) amongst the 34 survey responses:

- 18 have both full-time and part-time staff
- 7 have only full-time staff
- 5 have only part-time staff
- 4 have no staff



The following is a summary of data responses related to the criteria presented in this report:

- Stewardship
 - 82% are concerned about their ability to maintain adequate funding for stewardship (non-staff related expenses)
 - 82% are concerned about their ability to maintain adequate staffing and/or volunteers for stewardship
- Climate Change
 - 76% either address or are considering adding climate change in their strategic plan
 - 72% incorporate climate –science into stewardship work and/or manage for impacts from climate change
 - 63% list funding as a barrier they encounter with climate change projects
- Community Benefit
 - 94% have either an ongoing or emergent project with a focus on community benefits
 - 93% address community benefits in their strategic plan
 - 72% list funding as a challenge they encounter with community benefit projects
- Economic Benefit
 - 76% have ongoing or emergent projects with a focus on economic benefits
 - 76% address or are considering adding economic benefits to their strategic plan
 - 64% list funding as a challenge they encounter with economic benefit projects

This survey acknowledges that land trusts are already working to achieve the Land Conservation Task Force’s vision for Maine and that there are clear barriers that impede land trusts’ work, the

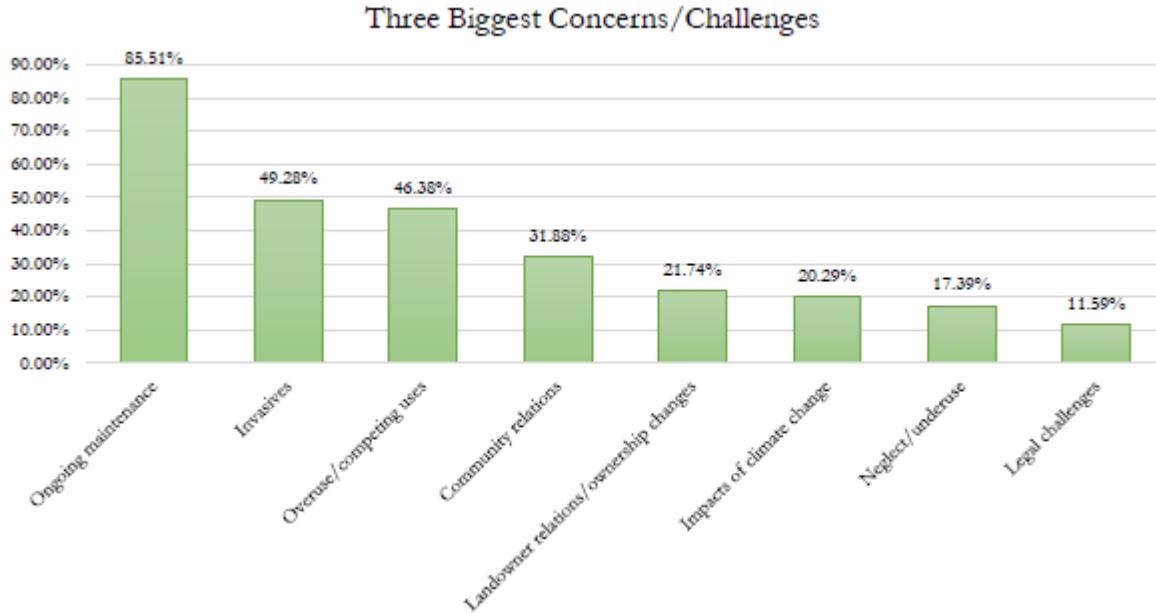
greatest of which is funding. This unmet need directly impacts organizations capacity to implement their mission and vision.

4. 2019 Maine Land Trust Census

The 2019 Maine Land Trust Census is a follow-up to the Census in 2016 of the same design collecting general information on land trust organizations and conservation activities. Data from the census is used to bolster the land trust community’s advocacy efforts and to strengthen and improve MLTN’s services to land trusts. Additionally, census data provides land trusts with valuable data when communicating with town officials and community members.

In the MLTN Survey, organizations were asked to rate the cost in time and money of various activities by indicating whether these values had stayed the same or increased. Activities of focus were stewardship, fundraising, community engagement, land acquisition, general operations, and enforcement/legal defense. For the majority of land trusts, everything besides enforcement/legal costs are increasing in time and cost. (2019 Land Trust Census page 13 for chart.)

Respondents were also asked “What are the three biggest challenges or concerns in terms of fee property stewardship?” Eighty-five percent of the 69 respondents reported that ongoing maintenance is the biggest challenge. These challenges include impacts they know and those they do not know; and the concern is wrapped up in needing the flexibility to prioritize resources such as decisions about what to fund between staff, materials, planning, and/or management to address the problems. (2019 Land Trust Census page 21.)



The survey results presented in this section provide a justification for the focus on stewardship, climate, community, and economics projects and a framework to focus on funding principles and objectives.

5. Criteria Matrix

Drawing from the above sources of information, SMCC identified a set of criteria to select the projects presented in this report. The Criteria Matrix is attached in the Appendices.

These criteria are:

- a. Three of MaineCF's Strategic Priorities
 - a. Racial Equity
 - b. Thriving Older People
 - c. Entrepreneurs & Innovators
- b. The four Task Force Recommendations described in the above section
 - a. Take care of our protected lands
 - b. Connect people with land and water
 - c. Combat and adapt to changing climate
 - d. Benefit Maine's economy and communities
- c. The six major land categories noted throughout the Task Force Report
 - a. Working forest
 - b. Iconic, uniquely beautiful places that have come to define the state
 - c. Lands that protect wildlife, particularly threatened and endangered species
 - d. Lands offering outdoor recreational access including boat launches, trails (biking, hiking, ADA, snowmobile, ATV)
 - e. Farmland, particularly prime agricultural soils
 - f. Working waterfront
- d. These challenges identified by the Task Force
 - a. Aging landowners
 - b. Climate change
 - c. Barriers for new immigrants
 - d. Aging/disabled population

The attached Criteria Matrix is an excel spreadsheet that lays out the criteria and the projects. Based on the information provided, each of the projects presented in this report have been scored on this matrix. SMCC recognizes that the information provided for each project is a summary, and certainly with a greater amount of information such a scoring exercise would be more complete and fair. This Matrix is presented here as an example and an illustration for fund decisions.

V. Recommendations for Heald Fund Operations

This report presents 24 different projects from around the state that meet a certain number of criteria. Certainly there are many more projects in process or emerging that will also meet these criteria. With increased conservation resources, MaineCF could approach this work in any number of ways. SMCC has developed suggestions for MaineCF's initial priorities below covering focus, mission, and equity.

1. Develop a mission to produce conservation outcomes informed by the priorities identified by the Land Conservation Task Force and MaineCF's Strategic Priorities, such as:
 - a. Climate resilience – projects that further develop tools for assessing climate impacts and land conservation projects that these tools uncover as priorities.
 - b. Healthy commercial fisheries supporting local economies - projects that support local fishing economies by protecting critical lands in the watersheds of high value fisheries, as well as access for fishing activities, and dam removal/mitigation.
 - c. Unfragmented forests - projects adjacent to already conserved forest resulting in climate mitigation, forest products, and habitat protection benefits.
 - d. Productive farmland – projects to increase access to prime agricultural soils for food production, carbon sequestration, and community connections.
 - e. Trail systems – projects that support the establishment of trail networks at all scales.
 - f. Accessible nature – projects that are very close to people possibly even in their centers like schools, elderly housing, and programs related to getting people outdoors.
 - g. Equity in conservation - projects align with MCF's definition of equity – ensuring all Mainers have access to resources in order to thrive.

2. Focus on opportunities to make the financial contribution a key leverage in the overall work:
 - a. Focus geographically in one area to support collaboration and intersectional impact (example of the Horizon Foundation and Elmina B. Sewall Foundation.)
 - b. Fund just one project for multiple years to have a larger impact in one place.
 - c. Commit to a particular land type/attribute each year (e.g. working waterfront one year, farmland the next, trails the next.)

3. Recommended Funding Principles for equity and justice that will reduce barriers for all applicants and result in greater impact and change.
 - a. Promote the new fund by traveling the state to tell people about it, focusing on outreach to marginalized communities around the state who may not have access to the information through traditional outlets or may feel excluded by history or current practices.
 - b. Consider multi-year funding. Very few good ideas take only one year to complete.
 - c. Commit to awarding the amount requested. Partially funded projects present a unique challenge to land conservation efforts.
 - d. Be explicit about the fund's priorities, thereby enabling grantees to make the best use of their time.
 - e. Publicize the amount of annual funding available, the likely size of grants, and therefore the likely number of grants to be awarded each year.
 - f. Make the grant application as simple and concise as possible.
 - g. Give constructive feedback on why an organization wasn't funded so that they might improve future requests.
 - h. Don't rule out general operations funding – Maine's land trusts are mature organizations that know how to allocate resources wisely.

- i. After some time, consider studying the grant requests to identify common needs and themes to present back to the community (Example of the Portland Education Foundation and their teacher grants.)

VI. Featured Projects

SMCC presents examples of conservation projects that illustrate different aspects of the criteria set forth in Section IV. Project Selection Criteria, which include the Maine Community Foundation Strategic Priorities, the Task Force Report and Recommendations, the SMCC Survey of Maine Land Trusts, and the 2019 Maine Land Trust Census. The featured projects represented are a small subset of all of the projects and organizations working in conservation. SMCC hopes this report will serve to educate, support, and inspire MaineCF staff and donors to reach out for more information, find more projects, and to think deeply about using philanthropy to advance this ongoing work.

SMCC sought to collect as much information about ongoing projects in the state through research, interviews, and surveys. Ideally, this section would present even more projects so as to acknowledge and celebrate the work happening all over the state by the fullest range of organizations representing the variety of locations, sizes, and capacities. However, given the Heald Fund restrictions, the chosen criteria, the project timeline, the response rate, and the size of the state, the following summaries are limited. These factors, in and of themselves, illustrate how practicing equity is challenged by our current framework of short deadlines, limited funds, and social fragmentation.

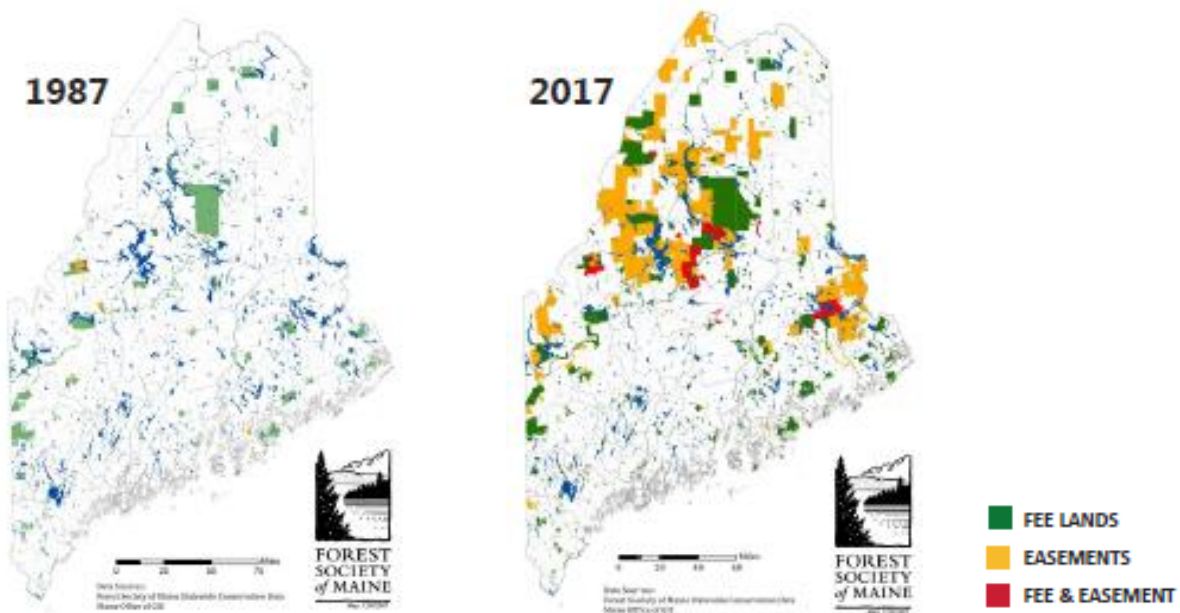
SMCC notes that most of the projects selected for this report are in the more densely populated parts of the state. Maine's eight southern-most counties (excluding Oxford County), where the great majority of Maine residents reside, have only about 5% of the state's conservation lands (Task Force Report, Figure 5 pg. 15). The 2014-2019 Maine Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) adds additional population data to the same analysis from a few years ago. (SCORP pg. 47)

Table 10: County Analysis of Conservation Lands in Maine.

County	Acres of Conservation Land (1)	% of County Land Conserved (1)	% of Maine's Total Population Residing within County (2)
Androscoggin	9,189	2.89%	8.10%
Aroostook	581,131	13.33%	5.30%
Cumberland	38,163	6.5%	21.36%
Franklin	142,649	12.81%	2.30%
Hancock	178,758	16.54%	4.10%
Kennebec	22,363	3.68%	9.17%
Knox	18,540	7.71%	2.98%
Lincoln	12,895	4.23%	2.57%
Oxford	263,785	18.98%	4.32%
Penobscot	154,308	6.79%	11.57%
Piscataquis	1,076,556	38.51%	1.30%
Sagadahoc	18,502	11.29%	2.65%
Somerset	818,324	31.31%	3.91%
Waldo	22,830	4.19%	2.92%
Washington	506,953	28.81%	2.44%
York	65,558	10.14%	14.97%
Total:	3,930,504 (Statewide)	18.9% (of State)	

(1) Based on Conservation Lands Layer and town and county (24k-scale) GIS Data (2015), ME Office of GIS. Includes fee and easement properties from all owner types (e.g., federal, state, private, etc.)
 (2) Based on US Census 2010

The Task Force Report celebrates that in between 1987 and 2017 Maine’s conserved lands base, including fee ownership and conservation easements, grew from 5% of the state to 20%. According to the Figure 1 on that same page, it is clear that most of the gains were made in northern Maine. (pg. 6)



Project Categories

Four project categories are identified in this report: Wabanaki Tribal Nation Conservation; Regional Initiatives; Statewide Initiatives; and Local Projects. The summary overview for each project is not intended to serve as a grant proposal, but rather to help paint a picture of the different types of projects that are happening in the state. The individual project descriptions were created with the lead organization contact. Contact information for each project lead can be found in the Appendices.

Each project is identified on the Projects Map. The map indicates the geographic diversity and the scale and scope of the projects around the state. SMCC has chosen to show the state in sections defined by the seven Biophysical Regions. The original Biophysical Regions Map is included in the Appendices along with a detailed description of each region. These regions were developed by Janet McMahon in 1990 and have been adopted by the Nature Conservancy as their guide for regional articulation. The Biophysical Regions descriptions also now serves as the basis for the Maine Natural Areas Program, the Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program. Additionally, the Task Force Recommendations refer to these regional definitions specifically in Action Item 5C (p. 21 in Report) which recommends placing priority on increasing land and water conservation in areas of high biodiversity “....seeking representation of all habitat types in each biophysical region of the state.”

5. Wabanaki Tribal Nation Conservation
6. Regional Initiatives
7. Statewide Initiatives
8. Local Projects

VII. Conclusion

Land conservation has a role to play in addressing many of the new challenges facing Maine today. The Heald Fund has a rare opportunity to elevate issues using the most current research and data to inspire a new giving approach and impact for MaineCF and the state of Maine. This report can inform the creation of this new funding program, and it can inform a larger initiative to develop a new strategic priority for MaineCF specifically related to our environment.

“The lives and livelihoods of Maine people are inextricably connected to our beautiful landscape and abundant natural resources – it is the legacy that defines our state.” Task Force Report pg. 25

VIII. Appendices

Maps:

1. Projects Map
2. Maine Land Trusts: Land Trust Service Area map
3. Biophysical Regions Map

- a. Geographic Map
- b. Table of region delineation and definitions
4. Indian Tribal Lands in Maine (produced by the Penobscot Nation)
5. Marshes for Tomorrow Map
6. Regional Trails Connecting Maine

Documents:

7. Shaping the Next Generation of Land Conservation in Maine: Final Report from the Land Conservation Task Force 2019
8. 2019 Maine Land Trust Census (*electronic only*)
9. SMCC Survey Results
10. Conservation Works for ME
11. Criteria Matrix
12. Project specific contact list
13. SMCC Interview List
14. Project specific attachments (*electronic only*)
15. Research Documents to inform the Maine Land Conservation Task Force (*electronic only*)
 - a. Ecology
 - b. Economic Benefits
 - c. Recreation
 - d. Funding

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