

Chapter I: Developments and Accomplishments 2003-2009



Highlights

The overall conservation and recreation lands protected in Maine rose to over 17% of the state's land base.

Programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Land for Maine's Future, Forest Legacy, and the State Parks Bond have supported the improvement of facilities and conservation of lands.

Increased ATV riding opportunities, as well as a better understanding of ATV riders and economic impacts associated with ATV riding, have been gained in the last 5 years. Additionally, measures to deal with the inappropriate or illegal use of ATVs continue to be implemented.

Statewide planning efforts have sharpened the concept that large pieces of Maine's economy and the overall quality of life associated with living in the state hinge upon access to a quality outdoor environment. Maine's natural wonders, scenic charm, and outdoor recreation opportunities combine to act as a major economic driver.

Both public and private (non-profit) efforts to protect backcountry experiences have taken place over the duration of the past SCORP.

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Introduction

In an effort to look back at the broad objectives of the previous Maine State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2003-2008), a review of developments or accomplishments is shared below. The developments/accomplishments are organized around the 6 priorities listed in the 2003-2008 Maine SCORP and are shared not as a total listing of developments, but rather as a sample of some of the work put towards improving recreation opportunities in Maine.

“Funding for Acquisition”

- Land and Water Conservation Funds (**LWCF**) from 2003-2009 were used on 9 acquisition projects involving over \$1.5 million in LWCF funds.
- The 2003-2008 Maine SCORP lists Maine's total 2002 public conservation and recreation lands, including easements, at 6% of total acreage. At the end of 2008, Maine's percentage of public conservation and recreation land was just under 8% of the state's total area. This increase in recreation and conservation lands represents a 26 % jump. State-owned recreation and conservation land/easements increased by over 350,000 acres from 2002 to 2008. When land trust fee lands and easements are added to the figures for public lands/easements, the total conserved area percentage is 17.8% (source: Maine State Planning Office, Land for Maine's Future program). This represents a 37.6% overall increase from 2002.
- The **Land for Maine's Future** program operated by the **Maine State Planning Office** received a total of 27 million in funds for acquisition. This total represents two bonds – one in 2005 and the second in 2007. These funds are now essentially completely committed and unavailable for new projects.
- Since 2003, **Acadia National Park** has obtained 2 easements with recreational elements (total of 29 acres). The park has, again since 2003, acquired 13 parcels totaling 391 acres.
- Between 2002 and 2007, Maine received over \$36 million in federal **Forest Legacy Funds** to acquire 615,498 acres (combined) fee and easement forestlands.

“The ATV Issue”

- The miles of funded ATV trails have risen 141% from 2,346 miles in 2003 to 5,663 miles in 2009.
- The *Economic Contributions of ATV-Related Activities in Maine* report was published in 2005 (see “Statewide Planning” accomplishments on below).
- **The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW)** continues to enforce ATV and snowmobile laws and work with local landowners to provide and maintain access to private lands. Maine DIFW also provides ATV and Snowmobile Safety Courses. The Landowner Relations Program, shared between Maine DIFW and the Maine Department of Conservation (starting in 2007) also assists with managing ATV issues associated with private lands.
- Legislation passed in 2006 requires ATV riders to have landowner permission where they ride.

- The **Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL)**, through the efforts of its Off-Road Vehicle Program and state park managers and public lands managers, continues to maintain and develop ATV-riding opportunities. Most notably, the Sunrise Trail, a multi-use rail trail open to ATV use, is slated to fully open in 2010 and already has over 30 miles open for use. This 87-mile trail in eastern Maine is owned by the **Maine Department of Transportation** and is being managed by BPL. A smaller scale example of collaboration involves the Northern Lands Region establishing a multi-use trail spur on the Salmon Brook Lake Unit connecting the Bangor and Aroostook rail trail in Perham to Salmon Brook just below the outlet of the lake. This provides water access for hand carry watercraft, and serves walkers, bikes and ATV's. Project partners included the Town of Perham community volunteers, the Off-Road Vehicle Division and Washburn Beavers ATV Club.
- **Private ATV Clubs** have shown strong growth in the last 5 years. ATV Maine (www.atvmaine.org) lists 104 registered ATV clubs in Maine as of September 2009. Through grants and volunteer labor, ATV clubs have helped fuel the increase in miles of official ATV trails listed above.

“Maintenance of Facilities”

- Facilities maintenance over the past 5 years has been tackled using a variety of funding sources. One notable development is that in 2007 voters approved a bond package including \$7.5 million for **Maine State Parks and Historic Sites**.
- Between 2003 and 2008, the **Boating Facilities Division of the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands** assisted with or performed the acquisition of 30 new boating facilities spread around the State of Maine. These new acquisition projects were in support of town ownership or state control and included both fresh and saltwater projects. The acquisitions included both hand-carry and trailered ramp developments.
- **The Boating Facilities Division (BPL)** also performed or otherwise supported 40 facilities improvement projects during the 5-year 2003-2008 span. Sample improvements made include making facilities more welcoming to those with disabilities, improving parking, minimizing environmental impacts from run-off, improving access at sites previously limited by tidal fluctuations, improving access roads, and repairing ramps and piles damaged by environmental forces (e.g., ice, storms, etc.). The Boating Division also has continued to maintain navigational aids on 24 lakes while permitting towns and lake associations to maintain aids on another 19 lakes.
- Over the life-span of the past (2003-2008) Maine SCORP, numerous **Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands** site improvements were undertaken. *Comfort station/shower/restroom facilities were developed and/or upgraded at:*
 - ◆ Sebago Lake State Park
 - ◆ Peaks-Kenney State Park
 - ◆ Two Lights State Park

- ◆ Damariscotta Lake State Park
- ◆ Rangeley Lake State Park
- ◆ Moose Point State Park
- ◆ Lake St. George State Park
- ◆ Bradbury Mountain State Park

The facility improvements listed above, when combined with two other sanitary system projects at Colonial Pemaquid State Historic Site and Mount Blue State Park, total over \$4 million.

Playgrounds were upgraded (over \$250,000 total) at the following state parks:

- ◆ Swan Lake
- ◆ Moose Point
- ◆ Lake St. George
- ◆ Two Lights
- ◆ Sebago Lake
- ◆ Bradbury



Construction of a Shelter at Lake St. George State Park

Other accomplishments include:

- Electrical and water hook-ups for RVs at **Sebago** and **Camden Hills State Parks**
- Hiking trail rehabilitation projects on **Maine Parks and Lands'** land units took place at a number of notable destinations, such as the Mahoosuc Land Unit, Tumbledown Mt., the Little Moose Unit, and the Deboullie Land Unit. Trailhead access projects occurred at the Bigelow Preserve, Chain of Ponds, Deboullie Public Reserved Land Unit,
- Recreation facilities on the recently acquired Machias River Corridor property (**BPL**) were upgraded with vault toilets complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, a major campsite at the confluence of the West Branch and the Machias River was improved with a new access road and designated campsites designed to protect the stream banks and water quality.
- Work was undertaken to improve shore-side facilities at various locations along the shoreline of Moosehead Lake. In a partnership between **Florida Power and Light** and **BPL**, major site renovations were completed to the Cowan's Cove camping area on the Days Academy Unit, and campsites on Spencer Bay in Spencer Bay Twp.
- A new public use road and bridge over the Red River at the outlet of Pushineer Pond was constructed in the **Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands'** Deboullie Unit using the existing footprint of a dam. This new access to campsites and the boat launch site on the north side of the river has eliminated the need for vehicles to ford the river. As part of this project, the Pushineer trailer accessible boat launch site was reconfigured and improved. Deboullie also saw the

construction of two new campsites near the recently-repaired Perch Pond dam and a new table shelter at the Perch Pond group use area; improvements to campsites on Crater Outlet and the parking area at the Upper Pond campsite; and improvements to a wetland boardwalk also on Upper Pond.

- Through a **BPL** partnership with the **Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance**, improvements to existing trails and parking areas were completed at the Kennebec Highlands Land Unit.
- **BPL** continued its partnership with the **Maine Appalachian Trail Club** to accomplish stewardship and trail maintenance along the AT corridor in the Mahoosuc, Four Ponds, Bald Mountain, and Nahmakanta Units, as well as the Bigelow Preserve. Additionally, an agreement has been in place with the Maine Appalachian Trail Club to ensure a summer staff presence at heavily used areas of the Appalachian Trail in the Bigelow Preserve.
- A partnership between **BPL** and the **Mahoosuc Land Trust** was put in place to assist in the maintenance of the Frenchman's Hole day use area in the Mahoosuc Unit.
- **Acadia National Park** repaved 28 miles of the Park Loop Road and rehabilitated bridges and drainage structures associated with the road networks within the park. The park also improved restroom/sewage facilities Seawall and Blackwoods Campgrounds, Echo Lake, Thompson Island, Schoodic Point, Fabbri Picnic Area, Sieur De Monts Nature Center, and the Jordan Pond House. Acadia NP continued to rehabilitate trails all across the park. Interpretive exhibits, entrance and ranger stations, shelters, and information centers were upgraded, constructed, or repaired as well.
- **MDIFW** Hatcheries Division continued to raise and stock 1.2 million fish per year into inland waters statewide to provide recreational fishing opportunities.
- **MDIFW** builds on a wildlife species planning effort ongoing in Maine since 1968; a landscape approach to habitat conservation, Beginning with Habitat, initiated in 2000; and a long history of public involvement and collaboration among conservation partners. All MDIFW planning efforts incorporate and emphasize providing public recreational opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, nature appreciation, recreational boating, ATVs, and snowmobiles.

“Statewide Planning”

- In 2006, the **Brookings Institution** published *Charting Maine's Future: an Action Plan for Promoting Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places*. This major report highlighted, among other concepts, the economic importance of protecting the quality of Maine's environment and outdoor spaces.
- **Fermata Inc.** completed the *Strategic Plan for Implementing the Maine Nature Tourism Initiative*, which assessed the status of and potential for nature-based tourism in three pilot regions of the state (Downeast, Highlands, and Western Mountains).

- The *Economic Contributions of Maine State Parks: A Survey of Visitor Characteristics, Perceptions and Spending* study was published by the **Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center** in 2006. The study examined the total contribution to Maine's economy that results from the spending related to visitors to Maine state parks and historic sites as well as from the operation of those parks. It also gathered and synthesized information on visitor characteristics, behaviors, and perceptions.
- The **Governor's Task Force on the Management of Public Lands and Publicly-held Easements** completed its work in 2007 with a Report issued in January of 2008. As a recommendation of the task force, a Recreation and Conservation Forum was established and led by non-governmental organizations involved in the task force.
- The **Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands** adopted a recreation management plan for the state-owned islands on the Maine Island Trail. This plan was prepared by the **Maine Island Trails Association** in cooperation with the Bureau.
- The **Margaret Chase Smith Center Policy Center** and the **Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands** published the *Economic Contributions of ATV-Related Activities in Maine* report in 2005. This study sought to determine the total contribution to Maine's economy that results from the spending related directly to the purchase and use of ATVs in Maine. It also examined environmental and economic damages caused by ATVs.
- The *Allagash Wilderness Waterway Visitor Survey* explored visit characteristics, including trip variables (method of travel, length of stay, etc.), visitor attributes, as well as visitor experiences and preferences at the **BPL** administered waterway.
- As an outgrowth of the Recreation Plan for the *Public Islands on the Maine Island Trail*, the **Maine Agricultural & Forest Experiment Station at the University of Maine** conducted and produced the *Maine Coastal Island Visitor Survey 2006 – Deer Isle/Stonington Region*. This study looked at use volume of regional islands, visitor-use characteristics, visitor characteristics and experiences, Leave No Trace knowledge and behavior, and visitor preferences and satisfaction.

“Wilderness Recreation Opportunities”

- The **Appalachian Mountain Club** has become a major landowner in the 100-Mile Wilderness Region. AMC purchased the 37,000 acre Katahdin Iron Works tract in 2003 and is poised to purchase 28,000 more acres in the Roach Ponds region. AMC is working towards establishing an interconnected network of overnight accommodations and trails, all open to the public, which will provide a wide range of outdoor recreation experiences, including wilderness-type experiences.
- **Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands** (Lands Division) management plans (detailing the management of public lands units and public lots) completed within the last 5 years have allocated non-mechanized backcountry recreation areas at 5 Public Lands units. The non-mechanized backcountry recreation management

category is intended to protect and sustain “superior scenic quality, remoteness, wild and pristine character, and capacity to impart a sense of solitude” (Integrated Resource Policy, 2000). For more on Lands Division management plans, see below, under “Other Notable Accomplishments”).

- A 4,119 acre Katahdin Lake Parcel was gifted to **Baxter State Park** in 2006. The gift was the result of complex negotiations, land swaps on the part of the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, and legislation that resulted in Baxter State Park receiving the lake parcel originally envisioned for inclusion in the wilderness park established by former Governor Percival Baxter. The 2.5 mile Martin Ponds Trail, providing a loop access to Katahdin Lake in combination with the Katahdin Lake Trail, was constructed. The construction of the day-use picnic shelter and toilet at Katahdin Lake was also completed.
- **BPL** has worked towards developing an expanded backcountry hiking opportunity on the Nahmakanta Public Reserved Land Unit. With the help of the Maine Conservation Corps, a new link option for extended hiking in the Nahmakanta Land Unit is slated for completion in 2009. This last mile of trail section will link the 8+ mile Turtle Ridge Trail loop with the 12 + mile Debsconeag Backcountry Trail loop.
- **Maine Conservation Corps (BPL)** crews created a new, 3-mile Black Mtn. loop, which enhances hiking opportunities at Deboullie Mt. in the 21,871 acre Deboullie Public Reserved Land Unit.
- **BPL** has been an active member of a coalition of non-profit organizations (such as the **Appalachian Mountain Club**) and private landowners who developed and now manage the 35-mile Grafton Loop backpacking trail in the Mahoosuc Mountains. The trail provides scenic backpacking along state park land, state public reserved lands, **National Park Service** property (**Appalachian Trail** corridor), and private lands.
- The Maine Island Trail, with recreation management by the **Maine Island Trail Association**, has grown to include 182 properties, of which 66 are publicly owned and open to all. The remaining sites are open to MITA members only. 46 islands were added to the Trail between 2005 and 2009. While not all sites along the trail have wilderness characteristics, the emphasis on primitive camping, coupled with the isolated nature of many island sites, can be looked at as providing a coastal wilderness experience.



“Community Recreation and Smart Growth”

- Between 2003 and 2008, over \$2.25 million of **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)** dollars were dispersed to municipalities in Maine for 59 outdoor recreation projects.

- In that same timeframe, over \$3.25 million in **Recreational Trails Program** (administered by **BPL**) funds were dispersed to municipalities and/or non-profit groups working on recreational trail projects in Maine communities.
- In the last five years, 12 community playgrounds, 7 community parks, 3 general recreation/trails projects, 6 skateboard or outdoor sports facilities projects, and 3 outdoor pool projects were funded through Maine's local share of **LWCF**.
- Between 2003 and 2008, the **Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT)** has received over \$20 million in federal dollars through the **Transportation Enhancement Program**. Maine's program principally supports enhancements in connection with MDOT's *Explore Maine*, pedestrian & bicycle, environmental mitigation, and downtown revitalization initiatives that create a more enhanced transportation system focused on the community.
- **MDOT** also continued to manage and grow its Safe Routes to School Program, through which training, outreach, promotions, research, and grant funding were conducted or dispersed. Over 90 schools and communities were supported as they worked to build their programs.
- **Acadia National Park's** Village Connector Trails Program has supported efforts to better link the park with towns on Mount Desert Island. In 2009, the 2.5 mile Schooner Head Path will reestablish the historic trail route from Bar Harbor to Schooner Head Overlook, with connections to other park trails.
- The **Beginning with Habitat** landscape approach to habitat conservation was initially developed by the University of Maine's Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit (CFWRU) under the direction of the **Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW)**. Since its inception in 2000, Beginning with Habitat, has met with and provided information to more than 140 cities and towns and 35 land trusts and regional planning commissions within the state. Many towns and land trusts have incorporated the information they have received from Beginning with Habitat into their comprehensive plans and strategic approaches to conservation. As such, Beginning with Habitat not only serves to help conserve natural areas and functions, but it also helps towns conserve opportunities for nature-based recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and wildlife-watching.
- The Brookings Institution produced *Charting Maine's Future: an Action Plan for Promoting Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places* (see Statewide Planning section above). This significant report spotlighted the threat posed by sprawl and the need to protect quality of place.
- **Governor John Baldacci** created the Maine Council on Quality of Place to guide and support a state of place investment strategy, and coordinate investment

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strategies across state agencies and regional councils. The **Maine State Planning Office** provides staff support to the council.

“Other Notable Developments”

- **Maine Huts & Trails** is a non-profit organization that has been working to build and operate a 180-mile recreational corridor from the Mahoosucs to Moosehead Lake. The corridor is intended to include a network of huts, trails and waterway corridors and will preserve some of Western Maine's best backcountry for the purposes of conservation, environmentally sensitive economic development, and public access. To date, Maine Huts & Trails has opened two huts (lodges) and 36 miles of trail in western Maine.
- Regional 15 year management plans were completed for a number of **Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands'** Lands Division properties. The *Downeast Region Management Plan*, covering the Donnell Pond, Rocky Lake, Cutler Coast, and Great Heath public land units (as well as 7 smaller lots), is the guiding document for the multi-use management of over 45,000 acres. The *Flagstaff Region Management Plan* includes the Bigelow Preserve and Flagstaff Lake properties, Mt. Abraham, Chain of Ponds, and 8 smaller, miscellaneous public lots. In total, it covers more than 54,000 acres. The *Northern Aroostook Region Management Plan* encompasses over 55,000 acres of land managed by the Lands Division of Parks and Lands. Deboullie, Eagle Lake, and Salmon Brook Lake Bog units are part of the plan as are 12 public lots. The *Seboomook Region Management Plan* covers the management of some of the Bureau's newest properties. In total, the plan applies to over 50,000 acres of lands just north of Moosehead Lake. Properties in the the plan include the Seboomook Lake parcel (with 58 miles of water frontage), a shore-land strip along Canada Falls Lake and its outlet, the South Branch of the Penobscot River, 3,900 acres surrounding a series of small ponds at the top of the St. John River watershed, a shoreline buffer around Baker Lake, and nearby Big Spencer Mountain (4,242 acres).
- After 8 years of acquisition work in partnership with the **Pownal Land Trust, BPL** now has the legal right and approved permission to establish a multi-use trail connecting Bradbury Mt. State Park in Pownal with the Pineland Public Reserved Land Unit in Gray and North Yarmouth. Acquired public reserved lands will be managed by Bradbury Mt. State Park.
- In 2008, recreation management was transferred to the Penobscot River Corridor Parks staff for the campsites and facilities adjacent to the rivers and lakes on this unit, which extends the system of campsites along the upper Penobscot River. Riverside fishing/nature trails were established along the West Branch and South

- Branch. **BPL** also collaborated with **Great Lakes Hydro** in improving the portage trails at Canada Falls and Seboomook dams.
- New brochures and maps were developed by **BPL** for Cutler Coast, Rocky Lake, the Machias River Corridor, Quoddy Head State Park, Rogue Bluff State Park, Shackford Head State Park, and Cobscook Bay State Park.
 - The **Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands** website was enhanced with new search features, expanded content, print-at-home maps and brochures. The Unit brochures and corresponding web descriptions updated in 2008 showcase a new format with more complete descriptions and information.
 - Web-based, interactive mapping of state-owned and state-assisted recreational boating facilities was developed for the Google Earth program. This was a joint



effort between the **Bureau of Parks and Lands** and the **Department of Environmental Protection**, whose staff has already developed expertise in placing geographic information on Google Earth.