Chapter V: Implementation Strategy

Connectivity- the Primary Theme of the 2009-2014 Maine State Comprehensive Plan.

In a narrow sense, connectivity is recognized as a key element for trail-based recreation, especially longer networks. Likewise, connectivity of habitats enables the wildlife species that so many recreational experiences rely on to thrive. In a broader sense, connectivity relates to how Maine citizens and visitors alike interact with and understand outdoor recreation opportunities. Connectivity also has a social and community element reflecting Maine’s strong sense of place and outdoor traditions.

2009-2014 ME SCORP Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connect More Mainers of All Ages with the Benefits of Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect Lands and Communities to Nurture Quality of Place</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect Outdoor Recreation Stakeholders to Improve Collaboration</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect trails to establish regional trail systems supporting tourism and recreation opportunities in Maine’s less developed regions.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PRIORITIES FOR SPENDING LWCF FUNDS
- pg. 11

Other

Associated Focus Group Comments: pg. 8
References Cited: pg. 12
Priorities:

**Connect More Mainers of All Ages with the Benefits of Outdoor Recreation**

Outdoor recreation provides multiple benefits to individuals and society. Time spent engaged in physical outdoor activities improves health and wellness. Even less physical activities in outdoor settings have emotional and psychological benefits. Experiences out in nature are positively correlated by researchers with childhood stress relief (Wells & Evans, 2003), coping with Attention-Deficit- Disorder (Taylor, Kuo, & Sullivan, 2001), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity-Disorder, and obesity prevention (Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness and Council on School Health, 2006).

Given Maine’s highest-in – New England obesity rate, and given the positive impacts of outdoor recreation, it is essential that public and private entities strive to provide outdoor recreation opportunities where youth and adults can get out, get active, and experience the health benefits found in the outdoors.

**Implementation Strategies:**

**A. Encourage increased participation in outdoor activities by raising awareness of outdoor recreation’s personal benefits.**
- Encourage collaborative efforts between recreation and health groups in order to increase participation by appealing to a range of motivations. Collaboration and coordination between groups such as the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Conservation, and Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (and others) as well as collaborations amongst other recreation and health organizations should result in enhanced awareness of health benefits from being outside.
- Promote educational efforts to assuage fears and showcase benefits in order to help combat certain cultural trends that undercut outdoor recreation. Efforts to raise appreciation of outdoor recreation should recognize that there are fears and misconceptions that may keep some potential participants from enjoying outdoor recreation opportunities. Fears ranging from “stranger danger” (youth abductions) to insect bites need to be addressed via education.

**B. Improve awareness of existing outdoor recreation opportunities.**
- Provide readily available information on access to public lands and water. New media as well as traditional information dissemination routes are tools for getting
information out to broad swaths of the public. If one goal is to reconnect more Mainers with the outdoors, it is logical to assume that some may need more of a guiding hand than existing activity enthusiasts, who largely know where to go.

- Improve signage, kiosks, and other on-site public information in order to increase public awareness and enhance visitor experiences. Many Maine sites need improvement in this area, including wayfinding signage, improved maps, interpretive messages, safety information, and use guidelines.

- Improve the quality and availability of GIS-based (Geographic Information System) data and maps. GIS systems serve as an underpinning of mapping efforts aimed at enhanced publicly available maps, brochures, websites, and global positioning systems data. Coordinating various public and private GIS-based mapping efforts would benefit public information efforts by supporting improved management efficiency.

C. Support programs that provide youth with experiences that connect them with nature.

- Continue youth outreach programs such as Take It Outside!, and Hooked on Fishing. These programmatic efforts build community support for outdoor recreation; celebrate life-long, healthy activities; develop skills and knowledge needed to enjoy the outdoors and link outdoor recreation activities with environmental stewardship.

- Look for new partnerships to reach more youth, perhaps with schools, youth groups, parent networks, etc. As one of the focus group participants suggested, “Don’t just target children: target the “informal support network.” Research by the Outdoor Industry Foundation (2008) finds that parents, friends, and relatives, are by far the strongest factors influencing youth to be active outdoors.

- Consider opportunities to use technology as a conduit to the outdoors. Despite the problems associated with too much time spent in front of electronic devices such as TVs, computers, and video game systems, there are opportunities to use technology as a tool for getting some youth outside more. Geocaching or Earthcacheing (both involving sleuthing using a GPS receiver), digital photography and video use, and even social networking on computers may have value in getting get kids outside.

D. Provide a broad range of outdoor opportunities to meet the interests of the public.

- Provide more opportunities suitable for Maine’s seniors. Programs, partnerships, and facilities well suited to specific senior interests should be developed and/or promoted. Recreation opportunities for Maine seniors should encompass mind and body and provide a range of settings and identified attributes. Maine is one of the oldest per capita states in the nation. NSRE data for Maine shows “viewing and learning activities” (including activities such as “view/photograph birds”) to be the category in which seniors participate at the highest levels. However, shifting generational patterns may make traditional views of what seniors want to do for leisure outdated. More specifically, soon-retiring “baby boomers” are
predicted to highly value maintaining an active lifestyle in retirement (Cochran, Stoll, and Kinzinger, 2006).

- Provide outdoor recreation opportunities of specific interest to working adults including young professionals and working parents. Working parents are a key piece of the youth issue. Additionally, recreation is a significant factor in quality of life, and research shows that businesses not tied to a specific resource (e.g., technology firms) value quality of life highly as they consider where to locate or relocate (Crompton, Love & More 1997). Therefore, providing desirable recreation opportunities for this demographic has benefits as a business attraction strategy.

- Support improvement of visitor use data and continued monitoring of outdoor recreation demand as tools for better understanding and meeting public demand as well as managing recreation in Maine.

- Maximize the range of opportunities for Maine citizens, recognizing that there are local, regional, and statewide levels of supply and demand to balance.

- Seriously consider developments that reflect growing interests and trends. Watchable wildlife facilities may serve as one example. Similarly, diversification of lodging opportunities (e.g., cabins, etc.) on parks and public lands may serve as another example.

**Connect Lands and Communities to Nurture Quality of Place**

Growth and development impact Maine in varying patterns across the state. What appears to be clear, though, is that Maine, especially in more southern regions, has lost swaths of open space and recreation access. As Maine moves forward, planning and action will need to continue to target conserving habitat and recreation access. Maine’s quality of place, a natural, cultural, and economic asset, is imperiled if the link between nature and communities is weakened.

A 2004 report produced by the Muskie School of Public Service and the Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy sums up the issue of losing connected open spaces by writing, “When a piece of land that forms part of an undeveloped corridor is lost, the value of the entire corridor, for both recreational use and wildlife habitat, may diminish. When public access to one segment of a trail is restricted, the value of the entire trail system may be threatened.” (Barringer et al., 2004). There is a strong need for and corresponding call for open space protection and stewardship.

There is also an increasing interest in and call for reducing the need to drive to designated recreation areas, including improving connectivity between outdoor recreation assets and neighborhoods within towns, as well as with other recreation, cultural and economic assets within those towns or in neighboring towns.

All in all, there is a growing chorus of researchers, officials, planners, advocates, and the public at large who are calling for action to ensure that Maine remains a place where high quality outdoor recreation experiences, a clean and healthy environment, and unique community identities define the sense of place.
Implementation Strategies:

A. Improve infrastructure and connectivity

- Facilitate access to trails and open space; local access not requiring driving is especially of interest. However, parking is still a need in many destinations.
- Additionally, winter access (plowed parking) was mentioned in the public process as a barrier needing attention in many places.
- Minimize barriers to connectivity and recreation arising from poor policies or design. Notable, but not exclusive, barriers include those affecting bikers and pedestrians. Improved bike or pedestrian access to parks and outdoor recreation areas, especially in more urban areas, would benefit health and quality of place objectives while potentially opening up more areas to those without motorized transportation.
- Recognize that many small towns, lacking public works or parks departments, struggle with the maintenance of facilities and could use support to better maintain outdoor recreation infrastructure.

B. Support interconnected open spaces

- Support efforts to increase connectivity between natural areas that provide both recreation and wildlife habitat benefits. Low-amenity, nature-based recreation areas (such as preserves and trust lands) often exemplify this type of open space.
- Support planning and coordination efforts aimed at empowering local communities to identify important outdoor spaces, develop sustainable recreation access, and sustainably steward natural areas.
- Support the addition of a recreation element to the Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife’s Beginning with Habitat program in order to help municipalities and land trusts integrate recreation and conservation planning at the local level.

Connect Outdoor Recreation Stakeholders to Improve Collaboration

Outdoor recreation in Maine involves a number of important stakeholders – including private landowners, land trusts, organized user groups or organizations, and state and federal agencies. Many recreation opportunities depend upon agreements by landowners to allow public recreation on and across private lands. Managing and coordinating the interests of multiple stakeholders is vital to maintaining a broad set of recreation opportunities in Maine.

Collaborations among stakeholders can provide, in addition to efficiencies, opportunities to foster partnerships in which individual assets are larger than the sum of
the individual parts. For example, mergers and partnerships between land trusts are arising as a means to reduce costs while still addressing the goals of land conservation and stewardship.

**Implementation Strategies:**

**A. Continue to nurture landowner relations**
- Support the Landowner Relations position shared between the Maine Departments of Conservation and Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. Focus group participants emphasized that continual communication is needed to address landowner concerns, and supported the Landowner Relations efforts in DOC and IF&W.
- Support education and awareness efforts aimed at recreationists using private lands to help minimize negative recreation impacts on private lands.
- Encourage organized recreation groups and clubs to be proactive in landowner relations - these groups have an important role in educating users to help minimize and mitigate recreation impacts, and in communicating with landowners.

**B. Focus on whole communities:**
- Support efforts to bring together diverse elements within a community or region to better promote and manage recreation. Business interests, tourism stakeholders, landowners and managers, recreation groups, officials, and a host of other local players can produce richer projects with more potential for positive community impacts.
- Support larger visions or projects to which communities can attach as a means of addressing both regional and local recreation and tourism objectives. One example is provided by the Northern Forest Canoe Trail (NFCT), a non-profit organized to foster waterway stewardship, support rural economic development, and celebrate community recreation, arts, and heritage along traditional Native American canoe routes linking upstate New York across to Maine. NFCT actively works to link paddlers with guides, outfitters, lodging, and other business interests along the trail. Opportunities to integrate trails, whether motorized, non-motorized, multi-use, birding, etc., with local communities should be pursued as they become available.
Connect trails to establish regional trail systems supporting day-long and multi-day trails as part of a vision for expanded tourism and recreation opportunities in Maine’s less developed regions.¹

Maine is blessed with natural and cultural attractions around which trails of all types have been constructed. Iconic parks such as Baxter State Park and Acadia National Park have long-established human-powered trail systems. The Appalachian Trail climbs, drops, and twists just over 300 miles in Maine; this trail system, along with over 40 related side trails is a segment of a nationally significant hiking system. The state ITS snowmobile trail system provides thousands of miles of well-organized riding. In the last half-decade, ATV trails have become more statewide and organized in scope. The East Coast Greenway goes through 92 communities in Maine. On the water, both the Maine Island Trail Association (coastal waterway) and the Northern Forest Canoe Trail (freshwater lakes and rivers) systematically address stewardship, development, information, and outreach. Still, a great number of trails are disconnected from other regional trails, from potential users, and from a support network capable of realistically dealing with ongoing maintenance.

Coordinating existing trails and filling literal or experiential gaps could have the potential to realize improved opportunity awareness, enhanced tourism (and related economic benefits), heightened appreciation for the value of conserving landscapes, and additional volunteerism and trail stewardship. A more coordinated vision for regional trail systems across the state would be a step toward Maine realizing the full potential of its trail resources.

**Implementation Strategies:**

A. Provide direction with collaborative planning:

- Invest in sound planning that will enhance regional trails systems. Support trail system visioning and planning efforts that link tourism and recreation interests by region, and provide a comprehensive vision for trail systems across the state. Any effort to craft a Maine trails plan should include diverse interests and reflect the range of benefits trails provide along with the challenges in making trails environmentally and economically sustainable. Maine Office of Tourism regional marketing groups, landowners, and recreation groups all should be involved with trail planning efforts.

¹ Priority #2 addresses trail connectivity at the sub-regional, or community and multi-community scale.
• Support a robust statewide dialogue on trails systems and related tourism efforts. A statewide trails conference could enable such a dialogue, and could be useful in identifying regions of the state that are logical components for a statewide plan.
• Support efforts to inventory the full suite of trails available, the condition of those trails, and the regional need (based on assets and demand) for specific trail types.

B. Encourage and support coordinated management of extended trail systems:
• Support the coordination of systems that collect and manage trail data (GIS and other trail related information). An important first step in developing trail systems is understanding what resources exist and what attributes they possess. This can serve as a basis for exploring potential collaborations and trail visions. Likewise, partnerships and alliances will facilitate coordinated or consolidated systems to collect trail information.
• Support efforts to coordinate expertise for trail construction, management, and maintenance. As more alliances/partnerships and systems are developed, availability of technical expertise should increase for more trail groups (especially volunteer groups).
• Support coordinated efforts to develop public information on trails through well-designed web and/or print products.

C. Encourage landowner collaborations:
• Create and maintain processes that facilitate trail projects across various ownerships, and that are consistent with a regional or statewide vision in order to minimize conflicts among user groups. Given that trails often are located on private lands (including private conservation organizations), and given that even different public land managers have diverse goals, there is a need to develop mechanisms for better coordination and collaboration in trails planning. User groups presently work with landowners on specific projects, and lacking a comprehensive regional or statewide vision for trails (including motorized, non-motorized, bicycle, horse, and even water trails), conflicts may be created that could otherwise be avoided.
• Support trail projects that break down barriers and effectively link resources under different ownership (e.g., trail partnerships between land trusts and municipalities etc.). Encourage these efforts by sharing examples of successes as examples for future efforts.

D. Foster and support mechanisms that enhance gateway communities as centers of information for regional recreation opportunities, including regional trails.
• Encourage initiatives through which communities improve their ability to serve as outdoor recreation information hubs. The development of regional visitor centers in key outdoor recreation areas of statewide significance is one potential action.
• Efforts to improve year-round access to outdoor recreation areas should be pursued and that access should be included in public information initiatives.
• Foster community/regional efforts to fully understand the economic impact of outdoor recreation and to integrate recreation into economic development planning.

Associated Comments/Recommendations from Focus Groups

A. Priority: Connect More Mainers of All Ages with the Benefits of Outdoor Recreation

• Consistent positive messages about the outdoors are needed; Reduce negative messaging around dangers: more communication of benefits
• Important to connect kids with the outdoors in an unstructured way.
• Combine technology with outdoors (geocaching example); attracts youth
• Don’t just target children: target the “informal support network”—family, friends and neighbors
• Schools: promote structured and unstructured time outdoors
• Support funds for grass root local/home grown projects (based on significant trends).
• Remove policy barriers
• Universal Design… People of all capacities can make use of program (disabilities, age, etc.)
• Integrate recreation planning and recreation offerings/awareness through community entities such as schools, workplaces, community centers, senior centers, etc. Consider coordination with:
  o Workplace wellness policies and programs
  o outdoor experiences through schools
  o environmental education programming
• Focus on effective communications to promote awareness for existing recreation opportunities and their associated benefits to users. Additionally, consider ways to help people get started in recreational activities.
• “Community Stewardship” – using stewardship activities such as community clean-up days or days of service to connect people with their community resources.

B. Priority: Connect Lands and Communities to Nurture Quality of Place

• Green policies… promote recreational planning based on smart/green concepts.
• A better understanding of economic impacts from outdoor recreation might drive up support for recreation projects. Furthermore, projects need to understand and account for the costs of implementation (volunteerism, stewardship etc.). Lastly, the role recreation on private lands plays in regional economic impact should be examined.

• Access for and support of hunting, in the context of community/local natural areas, needs to be considered.
• Planners and managers should strive to provide year-round uses of facilities and year-round access to outdoor areas. It was noted that funding is needed for additional plowed access in winter (parking and perhaps even some paved trails such as rail trails).

• “Better stewarding what we already have” was mentioned as a goal, including the fact that, for many areas, higher staffing levels are needed.
• Predictability (of access), fragmentation, changes to the character of lands, and the level of user-group stewardship were strong concerns [in the large-landscape focus group].
• Safe walking and/or biking routes to reach outdoor recreation destinations (such as local parks or open space areas) are needed.
• Interconnected trails can not only keep people in towns/cities, but they can also attract visitors.
• Developing more parks and ballparks, with connections to trails, would benefit communities by having open spaces linked to a bigger system that does not necessarily rely on driving.
• Routing public transportation (where existing) so people can get to the trailheads without driving was advocated.
• Providing more bike lanes to make city streets more bike friendly may be done at reasonable cost when repaving or redesigning streets.
• Land use and landowner impacts were mentioned as potential negative impacts of enhanced regional marketing, including the fear held by some participants that increased recreation visitors might lead to pressure to push lands more towards preservation (at the expense of certain recreation uses and land management activities). Conversely, there was sentiment expressed that overdevelopment could be an unwanted byproduct of aggressive marketing.

C. Priority: Connecting Outdoor Recreation Stakeholders to Improve Collaboration
• The often complex mosaic of varying landowners, fee-ownership, and easements can be a stumbling block for recreation management projects.
• Projects with multiple organizations involved and a central catalyst organizing efforts were mentioned [by the quality of place focus group] as ideal. It was also noted that partnering with large, established organizations, such as national or New England-wide associations can provide benefits (insurance, resources, education, etc.).
• “Case Studies” on implementing local outdoor recreation initiatives would be of assistance to communities starting out a project.
• It was suggested that efforts be made to balance advocacy and resources between motorized and non-motorized projects, and to build collaboration / alliances between motorized and non-motorized groups. Additionally, opportunities to link land and water resources should be explored.
• Inclusion of all voices/stakeholders should be a priority.
• Landowner relation position with DOC & IF&W should be supported.
• Education of users RE: private property & privilege of use should be a priority.
• Private/public partnerships for trails on private land remain important to nurture.

D. Priority: Connecting trails to establish more coordinated and greater appreciated systems

• More regional collaborations, in which trails and recreation areas are mapped and publicized, would be beneficial. An associated comment is that more recreation and conservation collaborations/partnerships between cities or towns are needed.
• Support was voiced for integrating established visions/resources (e.g., Maine Island Trail, Maine Birding Trail, East Coast Greenway, etc.) with local communities.
• There is a need to create more parking and to develop/enhance more trailheads.
• Appropriate, quality signage was mentioned as a need by more than one focus group.
• Providing adequate numbers of outhouses was noted as a need.
• Consider sharing GPS data for a growing population of recreationists who regularly use hand-held GPS units as part of their recreation experience.
• Consider promoting and developing a central resource for recreational information.
• Plan for recreationists who may not have high levels of outdoor skill or knowledge (i.e., craft information that welcomes and serves new participants).
• Look for the opportunity to better interpret diverse resources to attract and spread use.
• More regional hiking trails (such as Baxter State Park and the Bigelow Preserve) are needed (especially in the 3-5 day range). Additionally, loop trails and a statewide backpacking/backcountry hiking map are needed (as are carry trails on canoe routes).
• A high-level plan for regional trails, a funding mechanism for people powered trails, and aligning fishing goals with water trail goals are all planning-related suggestions made by at least one of the participating groups [in the large-landscape focus group].
• Trail heads, parking, and trail maps are needed for motorized trails.
• Long-term, stable funding; more trails closer to where people live; coordination and planning for long-distance non-motorized trails; identifying compatible & incompatible uses & designing trails; access to cross county skiing networks; and management of users across geographic areas (as numbers increase) were all mentioned as trail system needs.
• Consider developing visitor centers in key gateway trail towns.
• Improved public information (e.g., trip planning), perhaps based on user experience level, may be a way to increase connectivity between gateway communities and surrounding trail resources.
• Improved marketing [of trail resources] has the potential to diversify local economies and brand areas as significant outdoor recreation destinations.
• Maine Office of Tourism regional marketing groups, landowners, and recreation groups were all specifically mentioned as entities needing to be involved with trail planning efforts. Furthermore, trails specific planning, at a state-wide level, was brought up as a possible positive initiative. On a more regional note, the water trails-focused group advocated better tying water trails such as the Penobscot River Corridor with gateway towns (such as, in this case, Millinocket).
• There is a need for more sustainably managed (permanent adequate funding) non-motorized trails.
• Consider a comprehensive statewide trail plan to include balance of non-motorized and motorized, single use/multi-use, winter/summer, local (short) and multi-day, w/needed infrastructure

• There is a need for designation – information – marketing of water – based trails & experience for daytrips & historic water trails & portages
• Gateway communities need to be information providers, support services providers, while also providing information about outfitters & guides.

Priorities for use of Land Water Conservation (LWCF) Fund Expenditures

A. Strategically use LWCF funds for acquisition and appropriate management of natural/recreation areas that provide new or expanded outdoor recreation opportunities, with priority for opportunities:
   • that serve youth, seniors or other demographic components that are underserved;
   • that increase connectivity of recreation and natural areas, particularly in areas close to population centers;
   • that provide multiple public benefits in addition to recreation benefits – ie, address public health issues (e.g., obesity), economic development (e.g., nature-based tourism, quality of place), and protection of ecological values; or
   • that increase opportunities for multi-day trail recreation.

B. Recognize and support the need for maintenance and repair of the state’s outdoor recreation infrastructure.

• Outdoor recreation infrastructure maintenance and repair should be a high priority in the upcoming years. The 2006 white paper, Sustaining Maine’s Green Infrastructure, lists $40 million in need over 5 years and $10 million biennially (maintenance) for State Parks and Historic Sites (Harris, 2006). It also lists needs for $6 million for MDOT related nature tourism infrastructure
(over 4 years), $143 million for coastal beaches (over 20 years), $2 million biennially for working waterfront access, $1.5 million biennially for small harbor improvement, $22.6 million for fish hatcheries (over 10 years), and over $100 million for the Land for Maine’s Future program (over 5 years). Plus, these figures do not represent the significant needs for repairs/maintenance at municipal sites. Therefore, rehabilitation and improved management of existing resources, especially resources related to Priority A (above), should continue to be a focus of LWCF funding.

C. Support efforts to provide adequate staffing for outdoor recreation programs and facilities.

- It is worth noting that in correspondence and outreach with outdoor recreation providers in Maine, staffing is repeatedly raised as a top need. Too often, there is simply not enough staff to address the sustainable management of resources and appropriate visitor service needs, even when efforts are augmented by volunteers. Support use of internships through the AmeriCorps program or other similar program to augment staff.
- Opportunities to use LWCF funds to support efforts resulting in staffing improvements should be strongly considered, even if such opportunities are indirect or planning based.

References Cited: