

Policy Guidelines for **MAINE'S NATURAL RESOURCE SECTOR**





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Presented by:

- **Maine Forest Products Council**
- **Maine Potato Board**
- **Maine Aquaculture Association**
- **Maine Snowmobile Association**
- **Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine**
- **Maine Farm Bureau**
- **Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine**
- **Sportsman's Alliance of Maine**
- **Friends of the Allagash**
- **Maine Dairy Industry Association**
- **Maine Lobstermen's Association**
- **Maine Trappers Association**
- **Maine Professional Guides Association**

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The natural resource sector is committed to providing sustainable management of Maine's abundant natural resources.

Introduction

Maine has always been defined by its relationship with its natural environment. With over 3,000 miles of coastland, millions of acres of forests, and a vast checkerboard of farms and fields, generations of Maine citizens have been able to use the state's abundant natural environment for both work and play. As Maine's economy and communities have changed, however, it has become clear that Maine's natural resource-based businesses have become increasingly disconnected from Maine's policy makers and citizens. This disconnect has been most apparent when issues have arisen at the Legislature and at Maine's state regulatory agencies. Not surprisingly, without a thorough understanding of the value of, and the challenges faced by, Maine's natural resource sector, an increasing number of policy makers and citizens have supported ideas, sometimes unknowingly, that have been in conflict with Maine's natural resource sector.

Despite the many changes that Maine's natural resource sector has undergone in recent years, it remains an important part of Maine's economy. In 2004, the last year for which figures are available, Maine's fishing, farming, forestry, and outdoor recreation sectors employed 50,000 Maine citizens. Moreover, these sectors combined to add over \$15 billion to Maine's economy. Given that Maine's natural resource-based businesses are predominantly located in the state's rural regions, it is clear that, however much Maine's economy may have changed in other parts of the state, the natural resource sector continues to play a critical role for Maine's rural communities and families.

At the same time as it maintains its economic support of Maine's rural communities, the natural resource sector is committed to providing sustainable management of Maine's abundant natural resources. As an example, even after centuries of active management, Maine's forests still cover more than 90% of its landscape, making it the most heavily forested state in the country. Moreover, in a time when suburban sprawl tops the list of many policy makers' concerns, Maine's natural resource sector continues to sustain the vast majority of the open spaces that are so closely connected to the state's enviable quality of life. In short, there is a direct connection between the health of Maine's natural resources and the health of the businesses and communities that rely on them, and nobody understands that connection more clearly than the people who work and recreate every day in and on Maine's forests, farmlands and coastal and inland waters.

In order to begin to rebuild the critical understanding between Maine's policy makers, citizens, and natural resource sector, we have joined together to identify and articulate the ideas and goals that are considered indispensable to the future of our sector. Our goal is to work together as a network to help inform policy makers and Maine citizens in the interest of strengthening Maine's natural resource businesses. We speak from a range of perspectives, but what ties us together is our desire to be able to continue to use responsibly Maine's land and water for both business and pleasure. There are many voices vying for the attention of Maine's citizens and policy makers. Few of those voices, however, can point to centuries of tradition in Maine communities or to generations of economic support for Maine families. Our connection to Maine's natural resources and the communities who rely on them is as strong today as it ever has been, and we are confident that by informing the public about our goals and our shared values, we will strengthen our connections to Maine citizens, and we will sustain and build our sector for the years to come.

Maine's natural resource sector needs...

A Strong Business Climate

Potential investors come from across the country and around the world, and as they consider committing the resources that will build Maine's economy, they need to know that Maine's policy makers recognize the importance of maintaining a stable and balanced business climate. Furthermore, the global economy provides investors with opportunities around the world, so Maine's policy makers need to ensure that the state's business climate does not put Maine businesses at a competitive disadvantage when compared to other jurisdictions. To demonstrate their understanding of the importance of a strong business climate, we recommend that Maine's policy makers incorporate the following indicators into a system that enables them to monitor the impact of their decisions on Maine's economy.

Those elements most critical to a healthy business climate are...

Taxation

• **As it is imperative that Maine reduce its level of taxation when compared to competitive jurisdictions, Maine's taxation policy should be made less burdensome, more predictable, and more supportive of long-term investment in the state's natural resource sector.**

Indicator of Success

- Maine's natural resource sector will grow, and new investments will lead to new and more competitive business and increased job opportunities in communities.

• **Maine needs to support the original intent of all "current use" taxation programs in order to remain competitive.**

Indicators of Success

- The current use taxation system must continue to meet the needs of the natural resource sector and related landowners.
- The current use taxation system must consistently provide incentives to landowners to remain enrolled, and avoid disincentives that cause participants to unenroll, thus ensuring an adequate supply of the natural resources our sector needs in order to compete.
- Maine policy makers will ensure that effective current land and water use taxation policies succeed in maintaining the open resource base required by the natural resource sector and desired by Maine citizens.



Regulations

- Unlike other economic sectors, Maine's natural resource sector requires sustainably managed resources in order to enhance its economic competitiveness. Given this unique reliance, Maine's regulatory and permitting policies need to be stable, science-based, and appropriately balanced to allow for both necessary resource conservation and competitive resource utilization.

Indicators of Success

- Maine's environmental policies will be science-based and provide effective protection for Maine's air, water, and wildlife habitats.
- Maine's permitting and regulatory processes will enable the state's natural resource sector to build and attract long-term investment in Maine's natural resource businesses.
- Effective outcome-based, non-regulatory programs which minimize the use of regulations will be supported by policy makers.

Government Reform

- Maine policy makers should take steps to ensure that government policies and regulations support the goals and global competitiveness of Maine's natural resource sector.

Indicators of Success

- Biennial budget will be passed by 2/3 majority of the Legislature
- Regulatory policies must undergo social and economic impact assessments as they relate to the natural resource sector.
- State agencies will regularly review programs to ensure that their programs and regulations are effectively harmonized with, and not in conflict with or duplicative of, the regulations and programs of fellow agencies.
- All state regulatory and permitting policies will be regularly reviewed to determine effectiveness and continued necessity.
- All state regulatory and permitting policies will be quantitatively assessed to determine their impact on the state's overall economy, as well as on regional, rural communities.
- Policy makers will justify instances where Maine's regulations surpass similar regulations at the federal level or in competing jurisdictions.

Energy

- **Maine should develop an effective energy strategy that will enable the natural resource-based industries to reduce costs while enabling the state to remain competitive with other jurisdictions.**

Indicators of Success

- Energy costs will decline for the natural resource sectors.
- Maine's energy policy deliberations will incorporate assessments of the full range of possible energy sources, including local resources, in addition to assessing the possible impact of energy policy decisions on the state's economic competitiveness.

Health Care

- **Maine should encourage more private health care policy options that focus on reducing the economic impact of rising health care costs, while also addressing the needs of both the currently insured and the uninsured.**

Indicator of Success

- Health care insurance costs for the natural resource sector will fall as more health care options become available and more people become insured.

Transportation

- **Maine should develop and maintain a transportation system that enables the efficient and cost-competitive movement of natural resource products.**

Indicators of Success

- The highway weight limit will be set at 100,000 lbs throughout the interstate system.
- Rail transport will become a more viable option, and the amount of product transported by rail will increase by 15% over the next five years.
- Improved seaport access will allow the natural resource sector to increase its access to world markets.



Maine's natural resource sector needs...

Continued Access to Maine's Natural Resources for Commercial and Recreational Use

Maine's forests, farmlands, and coastal and inland waters provide both the raw material for Maine's natural resource-based industries and the landscape that is critical to Maine's hunters, fishermen, snowmobilers, and other traditional recreationists. In fact, given that 95% of Maine's lands are privately owned, the vast majority of these opportunities rely on the cooperation of private landowners. Consequently, maintaining access to Maine's terrestrial and marine natural resources, both for commercial and recreational purposes, is of critical importance to the survival of all of these sectors.

Commercial Use

- **Maine policy makers should respect, protect, and enhance the ability of the state's natural resource sector to use Maine's natural resources for commercial purposes.**

Indicators of Success

- Businesses that rely on the use of natural resources on and in public lands and waters will be able to maintain consistent access to these resources.
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- **Maine policy makers should understand and maintain the distinction between preservation and the sustainable use of natural resources.**

Indicator of Success

- Policy makers will ensure that Maine's environmental and other resource use policies will provide reasonable commercial access to Maine's terrestrial and marine resources, which the natural resource sector needs in order to remain competitive.

Recreational Use

- **Maine should support the state's multiple-use and established recreational traditions in order to maintain opportunities for sportsmen and recreationists to enjoy their pursuits on both private and public land.**
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- **Maine should have an effective program to deal with the problems arising from public use of private lands, and policy makers will develop incentives to keep an adequate amount of land open and available for recreational purposes.**

Indicator of Success

- State access policies developed will be consistent with the goal of ensuring that Maine's diverse user groups have adequate access to the full range of recreational opportunities on public land.
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Indicator of success

- The rights of, and impacts on, private landowners will be recognized and taken into consideration in all discussions concerning public use of privately owned land. Policy makers should recognize that the access to private property is a privilege, not a right.





Maine's natural resource sector needs...

Information and Education

Given the traditional and continued importance of Maine's natural resource sector to the state's economy and communities, Maine policy makers should ensure a steady flow of credible and consistent information regarding the condition of Maine's natural resources and the economic contribution of the natural resource sector. At the same time, through its education system, Maine should support ongoing research into new products and processes while also ensuring a steady supply of workers for the natural resource sector.

- **Maine policy makers should provide Maine's citizens with consistent and credible information concerning the importance of Maine's natural resource sector to the state's economy.**

Indicators of Success

- State policy will consistently promote the importance of Maine's natural resource sector to Maine's economy.
- Policy makers will recognize and understand the continuing importance of the traditional Maine culture around natural resources.

- **Maine should invest consistently and effectively in Research & Development for the natural resource sector.**

Indicators of Success

- Maine's R & D investment will be competitive with other jurisdictions and will be periodically assessed to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the natural resource sector.
- Policy makers will recognize the importance of understanding the latest scientific research when developing state policies.

- **Maine should increase its focus on vocational training in order to provide the natural resource sector with a well-prepared workforce.**

Indicator of Success

- Maine's education system will provide enough workers to meet present and future needs of the natural resource sector.

Conclusion

The businesses and communities that rely on Maine's natural resources for their livelihoods and pastimes continue to play a pivotal role in Maine's culture and economy. In addition to providing jobs for thousands of Maine citizens, members of the natural resource sector are the most active and important stewards of Maine's precious natural resources. Indeed, while many citizens and policy makers earnestly desire to protect both Maine's natural resources and the cultural identity that comes with them, it is the health and longevity of the natural resource sector that has had, and will continue to have, the greatest impact on the shape Maine takes in the years ahead.

In recent years, the fundamental role of Maine's natural resource sector has been increasingly jeopardized. As Maine's cities and suburbs have spread, and as the state's economy has changed in response to transformations in the global economy, the gap between Maine's rural traditions and the experiences of many Maine citizens has steadily grown. However unintended, this disconnect has often resulted in policies that endanger the natural resource sector's ability to remain competitive in the new global economy.

Despite the changes of recent years, the fact remains that a strong and vibrant natural resource sector is still the key to both the economic stability of Maine's rural regions and the sustained stewardship of Maine's natural resources. Given these clear connections, we are confident that, with the support and understanding of Maine's policy makers and citizens, we will continue to serve as the foundation for Maine's economy and as the link, in a rapidly changing world, to the values and traditions that make Maine unique.





Organizational Contacts

For more information on the issues and goals of Maine's natural resource sector, please contact:

Maine Forest Products Council

Patrick Strauch, Executive Director
535 Civic Center Drive
Augusta, Maine 04330
Tel: 207-622-9288

Maine Potato Board

Donald Flannery, Executive Director
744 Main Street, Rm 1
Presque Isle, ME 04769
Tel: 207-769-5061

Maine Aquaculture Association

Sebastian Belle, Executive Director
P.O. Box 148
Hallowell, ME 04347
Tel: 207-622-0136

Maine Snowmobile Association

Bob Meyers, Executive Director
PO Box 80
Augusta, ME 04332
Tel: 207-622-6983

Wild Blueberry Commission

David Bell, Executive Director
5715 Coburn Hall
Orono, ME 04469-5715
Tel: 207-581-1475

Maine Farm Bureau

Jon Olson, Executive Secretary
4 Gabriel Drive, Suite 1
Augusta, ME 04330
Tel: 207-622-4111

Sportsman's Alliance of Maine

George Smith, Executive Director
205 Church Hill Road
Augusta, ME 04330
Tel: 207-622-5503

Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine

Tom Doak, Executive Director
153 Hospital Street
P. O. Box 836
Augusta, ME 04332-0836
Tel: 207-626-0005

Maine Dairy Industry Association

Julie-Marie Bickford,
Executive Director
P.O. Box 5013
Augusta, ME 04330
Tel: 207-798-5544

Maine Lobstermen's Association

Patrice McCarron,
Executive Director
1 High St, Suite 5
Kennebunk, ME 04043
Tel: 207-985-4544

Maine Trappers Association

Skip Trask, Legislative Liaison
PO Box 65
East Winthrop, ME 04343
strask@prexar.com

Maine Professional Guides Association

Rick Hill, President
Mt Chase Lodge
1517 Shin Pond Road
Mt Chase, Maine 04765
Tel: 207-528-2183

Friends of the Allagash

Mel Pelletier
Fort Kent, ME 04743
Tel: 207-444-5577