

**NATIONAL PRIORITIES SECTION - Update Report**  
**STATE OF MAINE 2015**

The 2008 Farm Bill, under Title VIII - Forestry, amends the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, to include the requirement that each state develop a long-term, state-wide assessment and strategies for forest resources. These assessments and strategies focused on three national priorities:

- Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses
- Protect Forests from Threats
- Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

These documents were developed with a comprehensive team of stakeholders to address cross-boundary, landscape scale actions that would be the most efficient activities to address issues of concern developed for the assessment phase of the “Forest Action Plan.”

This document serves as a record of activities undertaken in Maine to address issues identified in Maine’s Forest Action Plan from June 2010 to June 2015. It will be updated as needed.

Acronyms used in this report

FAP	Forest Action Plan
MFS	Maine Forest Service
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
USFS	USDA Forest Service

## 1. Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses

### State Goal/Theme 1: Keeping forests as forests

#### 1.1. Identify and conserve high priority forest ecosystems and landscapes.

Maine has enjoyed some success in this area through the Forest Legacy program and Land for Maine's Future<sup>1</sup> programs. From its inception in 1993 through September 2013, the Forest Legacy program has contributed to 29 projects, protecting 722,157 acres with a value of \$133.5 million, of which Forest Legacy contributed \$65.3 million. A few projects are in the pipeline. From its inception in 1987 through 2012, the Land for Maine's Future program has contributed to 187 conservation and recreation projects totaling 551,439 acres. Other privately funded efforts have contributed to the conservation of working forests as well.



The Appalachian Trail on the Crocker Mountain FLP project in Carrabassett Valley, Maine.  
Photo by Jerry and Marcy Monkman

#### **Crocker Mountain - Maine**

A 3½-year effort to protect a 12,046-acre property in the Sugarloaf area of Maine concluded on June 11, 2013. The property in Carrabassett Valley holds three of Maine's highest mountain peaks that reach an elevation of 4,000 feet as well as a 10-mile stretch of the Appalachian Trail. This forested property will remain a working forest and will also be managed for public recreation, ecological protection, and scenic protection. In the future, the State of Maine plans to develop new trails for hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, and ATV riding. The Forest Legacy Program contributed \$5,835,213. Additional funding (\$661,962) came from the Land for Maine's Future Program; the Town of Carrabassett Valley and over 100 private donors provided the remaining funds.

Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Forest Legacy Program Yearbook 2013

#### 1.2. Actively and sustainably manage forests.

Under the umbrella of the Maine Healthy Forests Program and the WoodsWISE program<sup>2</sup>, the Maine Forest Service (MFS) continues its efforts to provide information, technical assistance, and financial assistance to family woodland owners interested in maintaining and improving their forest land holdings.

The growth to harvest ratio in Maine has steadily increased from 0.81 in 1995 (harvest was greater than growth) to 1.35 in 2013.

<sup>1</sup> Funded by bond issues ratified by voters.

<sup>2</sup> Maine's Forest Stewardship Program.

MFS continues its work to create a library of video profiles of model woodland stewards, made easily accessible via DVD, web and TV. Known as “Profiles of Woodland Stewardship,” the series documents key elements of stewardship: working with professionals, developing and maintaining a written forest management plan, implementing practices such as timber harvesting, which protect and enhance all the values of forest lands, and provide some assurance that forests will remain as forests for future generations. The scope of the project covers all types of woodland owners across the state, including private families, non-profits, public and quasi-municipal organizations.



Find ways to change the economic equation to favor long-term ownership and management of forest land. MFS has made progress on this goal through its Outcome Based Forestry (OBF) program. OBF is an elective, voluntary process that allows participating landowners to practice silviculture outside the prescriptive confines of the state’s forest practices act provided their management activities protect or enhance the other public values and interests in forests, including but not limited to, soils, water quality, biodiversity, recreation, and forest health. While the forest practices act was intended to curtail the creation of large, rolling clearcuts and assure their regeneration, OBF not only addresses these issues but many more issues of public concern. Since 2011, MFS has entered into OBF agreements with three landowners: Irving Woodlands, Katahdin Forest Management, and the Bureau of Parks and Lands. These agreements cover nearly 1.6 million acres of forest land. To date, the program is working as intended.

Re-establish the Forest Stewardship Program (known in Maine as the WoodsWISE Program) as the forestry assistance program for the state of Maine, with delivery through MFS and its network of private consulting foresters. This goal has not been met due to declining Forest Stewardship Program allocations from the USFS and ongoing competition from NRCS programs.

Expand the planning services menu for landowners to include Woodlot Assessments, Silvicultural Operations Plans, and post-harvest activity assessment and monitoring. This goal has not been met due to declining Forest Stewardship Program allocations from the USFS.

Reinstate WoodsWISE Project cost-sharing. This goal has not been met due to declining Forest Stewardship Program allocations from the USFS.

Create a hybrid of Forest Stewardship and Urban and Community Forestry, e.g.

"WoodsWISE in the Backyard" for suburban and exurban landscapes, which incentivizes and encourages collaboration among adjacent/nearby woodland owners (no minimum acreage) for planning and implementation of projects. This goal has not been met due to declining Forest Stewardship Program allocations from the USFS and a lack of state resources.

Partner with outside groups to provide a "woodscaping" practitioner corps, with emphasis on "foresthetics" and habitat protection and creation. As part of the Healthy Forests Program, MFS has delivered several workshops on the topic of Harvesting to Meet Landowner Goals (aka H2MLOG). While the audience varies from one workshop to the next, the program focuses on creating an appealing aesthetic both during and after timber harvesting. Those logging contractors who utilize the information presented have formed a core group of "woodscapers" as envisioned. MFS intends to continue offering this program.

In concert with UMaine Cooperative Extension and the USFS National Woodland Owners Survey, establish regular interval statewide and/or "priority area" surveys of Maine woodland owners, for state-specific guidance in program content and delivery. As part of the Healthy Forests Program, MFS and its partners developed a Harvest Satisfaction Survey. Now in its second year, the results continue to be encouraging, with indications that a high percentage of family woodland owners are very satisfied with the outcome of timber harvesting on their woodlands. MFS expects to report results early next year.

Create a library of video profiles of model woodland stewards, made easily accessible via DVD, web and TV. Known as "Profiles of Woodland Stewardship," the series documents key elements of Stewardship: working with professionals, developing and maintaining a written forest management plan, implementing practices such as timber harvesting, which protect and enhance all the values of forest lands, and provide some assurance that forests will remain as forests for future generations. The scope of the project covers all types of woodland owners across the state, including private families, non-profits, public and quasi-municipal organizations.

These are not standard "how-to" educational videos. The videos feature woodland owners and their support network, including professional foresters, loggers, and others. The documentary approach models real-life woodland stewardship. All involved tell their own stewardship stories. The videos depict woodland stewardship as a series of steps along a path, including land acquisition, management planning, implementation of practices, monitoring, and planning the future legacy of the land. Many stories feature a complete timber harvest from the goal-setting and planning phase through layout, execution and post-harvest follow-up. Woodland owners' and their families' connection to their land are a key component.

Create and maintain a network of peer-to-peer woodland forums, to further extend outreach of the Forest Stewardship program. Where there is demonstrated grass-roots interest, MFS helps facilitate local woodland owner networks and "neighbor-to-neighbor" woods forums, providing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning about woodland stewardship. MFS and other resource professionals participate as

needed; MFS does not lead the groups, but rather helps establish local coordinators to organize and document results.

Diversify and expand the funding base for MFS programs. This goal has not been met due to declining federal and state support.

Provide information, technical assistance, and financial assistance to municipalities interested in maintaining and improving their urban and community forest resources. Project Canopy (Maine's Urban and Community Forestry program) continues to deliver services and assistance to municipalities in partnership with GrowSmart Maine. Project Canopy provides ongoing services to Maine municipalities and organizations involved in urban and community forest management. Program and field staff provide technical assistance to any community requesting information. Project Canopy Assistance grants provide financial assistance annually for tree planting, maintenance, management, and education. An average of 20 subgrants is funded annually.



Provide forest protection services to minimize the risks and damages from insect, disease, fire, wind, and other destructive agents. MFS continues to protect Maine's forests from the damaging effects of fire, notwithstanding significant staff reductions. MFS has actively worked with our state and provincial partners, developing and implementing an effective Forest Health Working Team under the Northeastern Forest Fire Compact. This has proved extremely beneficial as a tool for assembling and deploying mutual aid resources to deal with invasive pest threats around the region. MFS intends to continue our active involvement in this resource-sharing program.

MFS leadership is currently transitioning to a more involved partnership with communities, landowners and cooperators to achieve the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy: Resilient Landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities, and Safe, Effective and Efficient Wildfire Response.



MFS has recently reorganized forest protection personnel to better utilize remaining available field staff for wildfire, forest health initiatives and for regulatory responsibilities as it relates to forests and forest conservation. MFS continues to support municipal wildland fire response capacity through the Federal Excess Property Program, the Fire Fighter Program and by administering grants like the Volunteer Fire Assistance program.

Enhanced aviation resources are available to MFS and our partners by overhaul of two UH-1H Bell Huey helicopters with another poised to be rebuilt in 2015-16. MFS developed and implemented an expanded pilot, crew chief and crew member training program to increase aviation flight mission capabilities. MFS continues to consolidate and improve facilities across the state to improve efficiency, decrease cost and to position resources and personnel more strategically for wildfire response. MFS partners with USFS Fire and Aviation programs, the Northeastern Forest Fire Compact and the Nation Alliance of Fire Compacts to support response capacity in Maine and nationally in times of shrinking budgets and personnel.

MFS continues to maintain an effective and proactive forest health protection program. The strong public support for, and active participation in, Maine's various programs to detect and manage exotic invasive pests has provided critical additional resources and serves as powerful evidence of the effectiveness of the program. This assessment is further supported by the successful efforts to prepare for the impending spruce budworm outbreak. Despite the history of extremely divisive arguments regarding appropriate management response, MFS worked with various landowner and industry organizations, academia and the conservation community to reconfigure the state's spruce budworm management law. MFS also cooperated in crafting the recently completed spruce budworm response plan.

## **2. Protect Forests from Threats**

### **State Goal/Theme 3: Protecting forests from harm**

### **State Goal/Theme 5: Maintaining the capacity of the Maine Forest Service as an institution to serve the citizens of Maine**

MFS forest protection leadership will promote greater collaboration, flexibility and continuity necessary to achieve the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy: Resilient Landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities, and Safe, Effective and Efficient Wildfire Response. MFS will plan and collaborate with private and public partners to reduce fuel loading, particularly in the Wildland Urban Interface through prescribed fire and mechanical fuel reduction programs to create fire resilient landscapes. MFS staff will take an active role in developing and monitoring Community Wildfire Protection Plans and broaden the scope of the FireWise program. MFS will provide personnel and resources to enhance defensible space, improving Fire adapted communities. MFS will also develop, initiate, provide and attend a wide variety of training programs, both internally and externally, by NWCG and NIMS standards to create or enhance a safe and efficient national wildfire response capacity. MFS will research, develop and implement the latest in equipment and technology. MFS will partner with the North Atlantic Fire Science Exchange and the North Atlantic Fire Science Consortium to better understand fuels, climate, fire environments, fire ecology, and disturbance and mitigate the lasting negative or enhance the positive effects of wildfire on forest ecosystems.

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### **3. Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests**

**State Goal/Theme 2: Improving and diversifying markets**

**State Goal/Theme 4: Maintaining healthy trees and woodlands in urban and community areas**

**State Goal/Theme 6: Increasing the environmental literacy of Maine citizens**

**State Goal/Theme 7: Maintaining and enhancing forest biodiversity**

#### **3.1. Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.**

MFS has worked closely with Maine's professional forestry community for many years to develop and refine forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect water quality. MFS BMPs stress a strong understanding of water quality protection principles needed to use the "toolbox" of BMP practices effectively. MFS prefers a flexible, voluntary BMP approach over prescriptive regulation. Voluntary BMPs based on water protection

principles allow loggers and foresters to select efficient practices that result in the desired outcome; protection of water quality. For an outcome based BMP system to be successful, a strong training program must be in place as well as a monitoring system to ensure that BMPs are working on a statewide basis.

Over 700 loggers, foresters and landowners attended MFS and



partner water quality trainings between 2012 and 2013. MFS's key partner in training development and delivery has been Maine's Sustainable Forestry Initiative State Implementation Committee's Education Committee. The state's logging organizations have all been instrumental in training program delivery. These public-private partnerships have advanced Maine's BMP educational efforts far beyond what they would be otherwise.

MFS collects and analyzes data on BMP implementation and effectiveness using the "Best Management Practices Implementation Monitoring Protocol," an original project of the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters' Water Resources Committee. Reports are issued every two years, with the most recent being issued in June 2014. The key findings from that report were:

- 83% of crossings and approaches had BMPs applied appropriately or were avoided. Crossings and associated approaches represent a high risk area for sedimentation of surface waters. MFS BMPs emphasize planning harvests to minimize crossings by avoiding crossings whenever practicable. When stream crossings are needed, proper application of BMP principles and practices minimizes risk to waterbodies.
- BMPs were not applied on 8% stream crossings and approaches. When BMP principles and practices are not applied the risk of damage to waterbodies greatly increases.
- 91% of opportunities evaluated for sediment input found no sediment entered a waterbody.
- There was no evidence of chemical spills on any of the harvests evaluated.
- When applied appropriately, BMPs were effective at preventing sedimentation from entering waterbodies. Sedimentation events were strongly correlated with inadequate application of BMPs, or lack of BMPs.
- The number of haul road stream crossings that spanned the bankfull width of the stream channel has steadily increased since 2005. Improving installation of haul road crossings to permit fish passage through the crossing has been a major focus of training over the past several years.
- 95% of sites had no haul road or landing in the waterbody buffer or filter strip.
- Wetlands were either avoided or effective BMPs were used to cross. 91% of sample sites had no wetland crossing. Avoiding wetland crossings when at all possible is an important BMP. The majority of wetlands that were crossed had BMPs used to limit rutting to less than 6" deep, indicating effective use of BMPs.

### 3.2. Assist communities in planning for and reducing forest health risks.

In partnership with the Town of Brunswick and MFS's Forest Health and



Monitoring Division, Project Canopy contracted with a consultant to develop a locally relevant tree inventory and management plan to prepare for the eventual arrival of Emerald ash borer. That plan is now complete, and served as the basis for development of a statewide model plan for communities to use for planning and response for invasive forest pests, the statewide model plan is complete, and is being used by several additional communities for development of their own plans. Availability of the plan was advertised at joint trainings with Forest Health staff, and Forest Pest Outreach and Survey Program trainings throughout 2014. Project Canopy grants strongly support the adaptation of this plan to create locally relevant plans for addressing urban forest health risks.

3.3. Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and values of trees and forests.

In 2012, MFS initiated the Healthy Forests Program (HFP) to: (1) identify strategies that lead to active forest management on southern Maine family woodlands; improve wood availability, wildlife habitat, forest health, recreational opportunities, water quality, aesthetics, etc.; and, increase landowner enjoyment and support jobs and the state's economy. MFS worked - and continues to work - in partnership with the forestry community to develop and implement the HFP. Accomplishments to date include several workshops on "Harvesting to Meet Woodland Owner Goals;" and, development of several "Profiles in Forest Stewardship."

3.4. Protect, conserve, and enhance wildlife and fish habitat.

In 2011, the Legislature enacted legislation to consolidate the regulation of forestry activities under MFS. Previously, such authorities were spread among several state agencies and municipalities.<sup>3</sup> These laws include the regulation of timber harvesting in shoreland areas statewide and in protection subdistricts in the jurisdiction of the Land Use Planning Commission (including significant wildlife habitats and high mountain areas). In addition, the Legislature authorized MFS to create a permitting process for placing wood in streams to enhance coldwater fisheries habitat. These regulatory authorities are complemented by MFS's continuing emphasis on promoting the effective use of BMPs to protect water quality which protects fisheries, particularly Maine's outstanding native brook trout fishery.

3.5. Connect people to trees and forests, and engage them in environmental stewardship activities.

Education efforts

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<sup>3</sup> Municipalities still retain home rule authority to enact and enforce local forestry ordinances.

The Maine Forest Service strives to connect people to trees and forests through our vast educational programs and public outreach. Our educational programs are driven by legislative mandate. As part of this effort, we reach school children through Project Learning Tree, as workshop facilitators and Forest Inventory Growth school project leaders, Envirothon, and Future Farmers of America test writers, coaches and judges. MFS participates in special events such as the Southern Maine Water Festival that highlight Maine's forest resources and the importance of forest stewardship. Our educational programs also reach landowners, foresters, and harvesters through fairs, workshops, field days, forest management classes, and on-demand programs.



### Forest Stewardship

The Forest Stewardship Program connects woodland owners and their families with their woods by facilitating contact with professional foresters, via activities such as “walk and talks,” formal and informal management and practice planning, implementation and follow-up monitoring. These steps help woodland owners articulate and realize their goals, objectives and vision for their land, through timber harvests, recreational activities, wildlife habitat improvements and other actions. The Forest Stewardship storyline includes legacy planning for future generations and an appreciation of all the values of the forest resource.

### Project Canopy

Project Canopy staff participate and sponsor the Maine Arborist Association Annual technical meeting each year. Additional technical programming for municipalities on the topics of risk tree management, strategic tree planting and planning for water quality and fisheries health, tree planting, maintenance, Emerald ash borer monitoring, green downtowns, big trees, i-Tree assessment, STRIKE team training, and grant programming are held at various locations throughout the state annually or on an as needed basis.

## Brief summary of implementation challenges

The primary challenges to implementing the FAP relate to funding. Base federal support for Cooperative Forestry Assistance programs continues to erode MFS's ability to carry out its mission. The Forest Stewardship Program is of particular concern. Funding for the program has declined by about 50% since 2003, but the program requirements have increased significantly (e.g. Stewardship plan monitoring). Much of the success of family woodland owner outreach programs begins with a Forest Stewardship plan. Although MFS has made efforts to streamline the Stewardship planning process, the base funding does not come close to meeting demand.

Another challenge is presented by the duplication of effort by another federal agency. Since 2007, recognizing the end of the Forest Land Enhancement Program (funded by the USFS, State and Private Forestry), MFS has attempted to work with the NRCS to bring federal cost-share assistance to Maine's family woodland owners via a series of signed contribution agreements. The most recent agreement was terminated in 2013 by NRCS after MFS objected to the way Environmental Quality Incentive Program funds were being spent. MFS took issue with making payments to woodland owners for self-sustaining commercial harvesting activities, in effect granting an agricultural subsidy with no additional conservation benefit. MFS believes strongly that this is the wrong approach to delivering forestry assistance with what is euphemistically still referred to as "cost-share" funding. For this and other reasons, MFS believes that state forestry agencies are the best agency to deliver forestry assistance programs. This principle is stated very clearly in the Joint MOU signed by NRCS, the USFS, the National Association of State Foresters, and the National Association of Conservation Districts. Section III, Roles and Responsibilities, states: "State forestry agencies have the primary leadership role and responsibility for delivery of forestry programs on State and private lands."

Other programs also have experienced declines in base funding, although not as dramatic. However the diversion a percentage of Cooperative Forestry Assistance program funding into a competitive grant program (originally known as Redesign, then Competitive Allocation Request for Proposals, and now Landscape Scale Restoration) further dilutes resource and diverts staff away from program delivery to grant proposal writing, an endeavor which has had mixed results. MFS believes it is a more effective use of federal assistance to provide an adequate level of base funding than to subject states to a highly variable funding cycle that depends on the opaque decisions of a grant review committee.

Finally, the state's forest products industry has faced a number of challenges over the last several years. Several pulp and paper mills have closed either permanently or temporarily, leaving several hundred people out of work and constraining markets for pulpwood, in addition to the ripple effects that spread throughout the communities that developed around these mills and through the entire wood supply chain. As the National Association of State Foresters has stated, forest stewardship "is not possible in the absence of diverse, viable and robust markets. The absence of markets (particularly for low grade wood) results in passive management and deprives landowners of financial incentives for keeping forests as forests. In other words: no markets - no management."

**Implementation focus for the next five years**

MFS will continue its emphasis on major program areas:

- 1 - Protect Maine's forests from fire;
- 2 - Protect Maine's forests from the harmful effects of damaging insect and disease outbreaks (both native and invasive) and mitigate the effects of introductions of invasive pests;
- 3 - Provide family woodland owners with reliable information, technical and financial assistance to help them make informed decisions about the active management of their woodlands;
- 4 - Maintain a strong urban and community forestry program that helps communities manage and improve their street trees and public woodlands; and,
- 5 - Continue to deliver an effective water quality program that helps landowners protect water quality while actively managing their woodlands.

**Data needs or new issues revealed since the plan was completed**

None.

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