

Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
 Study of Conserved Lands Owned by Nonprofit Conservation Organizations  
 December 1, 2017 - Discussion Worksheet

<b>Duties</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<p>Review/evaluate:</p> <p>A. The property tax payments nonprofit conservation organizations make on those conserved lands including property tax payments, payments in lieu of taxes and other similar payments;</p>	<p>Presentations and public comment from October 12 meeting:</p> <p>ACF Committee letter (9/28/17) to Governor requesting attendance at 10/12/17 meeting of DACF to provide the committee w/the department's perspective on the economic impact of land trust conserved lands and MRS to provide information about resource protection-focused current-use tax programs.</p> <p>Governor's response letter dated 10/10/17 indicated that OPM "is now in the process of researching information relating to amount of land owned by nonprofit organizations" and the "goal is to have a comprehensive report finished by the end of the calendar year."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because Administration officials are in the process of gathering this information, the ACF Committee's request for reps from DACF and MRS to attend the October 12 meeting was declined.</li> <li>• Jonathan LaBonte, Director of OPM, attended the 10/12/17 meeting to address new requirements relating to the conservation lands registry.</li> </ul> <p>July 2017, MCHT surveyed members of Maine Land Trust Network (includes most of ME's land trust community); 70 organizations participated. Data from 2015 MCHT land trust census used to fill gaps for orgs that did not complete survey. MCHT presented results of survey at first study meeting 10/12/17.</p> <p>According to the MCHT report, land trust conserved lands provide similar benefits to public lands (which are exempt from paying property taxes) and many land trust properties are eligible for tax exemption. However, approximately 95% of land trust conserved lands in Maine are on tax rolls.</p> <p>Land trust conserved land:        94.5% are on tax rolls – (1.9 million acres with conservation easements and 460,000 acres owned by land conservation orgs) - *most land trust acreage in ME enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax program        4% (100,000 acres) – land trust makes payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs)        1.5% - land is tax exempt and no PILOTs – (Approximately 30,000 acres of land in municipalities; Impacts roughly 0.3% of municipal land in the State; and More than 70% of municipalities (300+ communities) do not have land in this category)</p> <p>Most land trust conserved land pays State Forestry Excise Tax, which funds forest fire protection in Maine.</p>

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<p>B. The economic impact of those conserved lands on other real property, including working farms and commercial forest land and the access to those conserved lands for licensed Maine guides, commercial fishermen and marine shellfish and worm harvesters;</p>	<p>According to the MCHT report, Maine land trusts are also focused on the conservation of the Maine's working landscapes.</p> <p>Land trust conserved working lands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 85% of acres land trusts have conserved (2.14 million acres) – working forestlands;</li> <li>• 36,000 acres – working farmlands</li> <li>• 7 working waterfront properties</li> <li>• Approximately 60 access sites for clambers, wormers and other marine fishermen</li> </ul>
<p>C. The economic impact of those conserved lands on the public and Maine's tourism economy, including opportunities to hunt, fish, hike, snowmobile, canoe and engage in other outdoor recreational activities. The committee shall determine the miles of trails and the number of water access sites and similar recreational infrastructure;</p>	<p>Land trust orgs provide public access to outdoor recreational activities. According to MCHT report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational trails: 1,260 miles – hike/walk; 275 miles – mountain bike; 570 miles – snowmobile; and 345 miles – ATV</li> <li>• Recreational water access: 203 boat launch sites: 62 coastal and 141 freshwater and 210 beaches/swimming areas</li> <li>• Land open for hunting: Approx. 2.34 million acres (Approx. 90% of acres conserved by land trusts)</li> </ul> <p>According to Maine Office of Tourism (MOT) Economic impact of tourism (2016) *overall statewide, not solely land trust organizations:    Total sales \$8.6 B; Jobs supported 106,000; Total earnings \$2.56 B; Total taxes \$596 M; Visitation 36 M    For purposes of economic impact calculations, visitors are defined as out-of-state day visitors on tourism-related trips &amp; overnight visitors on tourism-related trips. Calculations do not incl. resident day spending.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Touring/sightseeing, active outdoor activities (non-water), &amp; water activities are top interest areas. Snowmobile statistics: Approx. \$350 M in economic activity annually, including \$17.5 M in sales tax rev.</li> <li>• More than 14,500 miles of snowmobile trails in ME and industry accounts for 2,300 FTE jobs</li> <li>• Snowmobile registrations: 85,000 (2016) (44% increase from 2015) (non-resident increased 60%)        Hunting and fishing: Availability of public access very important factor in selecting a fishing destination</li> <li>• Resident &amp; non-resident sportsmen/women spend more than \$200M on goods/services; anglers \$1,429 per trip and hunters \$1,150 per trip.</li> </ul> <p>Both present and former executive directors of Sportsman's Alliance of Maine spoke in support of land trust organizations. DWA and critical brook trout spawning areas protected. Very little land mass exempt from taxation. Land trusts increase value of land adjacent. Land trusts enhance our lands and economy.</p>

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<p>D. The community benefits of conserved lands, including education programs, downtown revitalization efforts, community gardens, youth sports activities and similar initiatives;</p>	<p>According to MCHT report, community benefits include: partnering with local schools (garden-to-school program); maintaining municipal parks and state lands; improving water quality; hosting guided walks; feeding the community (local farmers markets); and connecting with nature.</p>
<p>E. Examine any other issues that the committee determines are related to the purpose of the study.</p>	<p>According to MCHT report, land trust conserved lands enhance public lands and are part of a larger network of conservation lands in Maine, including State Parks, Public Reserve Lands, State Wildlife Management Areas, Baxter State Park, White Mountain National Forest, Acadia National Park, Appalachian Trail National Park, Katahdin Woods National Monument, national wildlife refuges, and municipal parks.</p> <p>6.5% of Maine is public land – ranks 38<sup>th</sup> in the nation.      (Compared to other East Coast states: FLA 25.2%; NH 17.1%; VT 15.3%; MA 10.0%; GA 6.8%)</p> <p>As a result, Maine has one of the most active land trust communities in the U.S, with more land trusts per capita than any other state.</p> <p>Approximately 75 land conservation organizations conserve about 2.5 million acres.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o 600,000 acres: land owned by land trusts as preserves and areas available to the public for outdoor recreation</li> <li>o 1.9 million acres: lands privately-owned and on the tax rolls, protected with conservation easements</li> </ul> <p>Terms of easements vary by property – generally limit development and require protection of natural resources.</p> <p>Maine’s total land area approximately 19.6 million acres.</p>