

LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAM

In Maine, 95% of the land is in private ownership. Many landowners are committed in principle to stewardship of at-risk species, until now the lack of financial and technical incentives has limited the scale of long-term conservation on these lands.

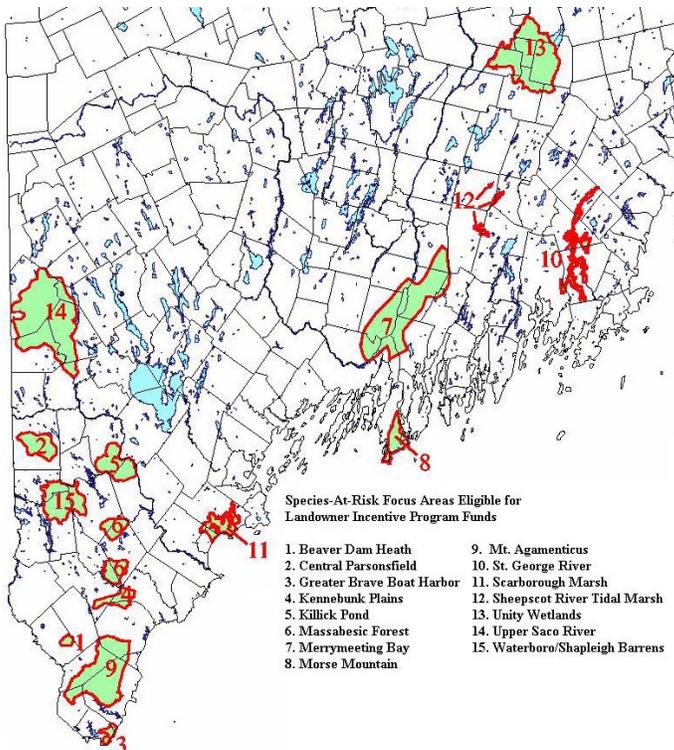
WHAT IS LIP?

The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) is a competitive grant program funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The program provides financial incentives to private landowners in return for long-term habitat protection for rare and endangered species. In Maine, the program has four objectives:

- Bald Eagle Habitat Protection
- Piping Plover and Least Tern Habitat Protection
- Furbish Lousewort Habitat Protection
- Conservation of Species-At-Risk Focus Areas

Conservation of species-at-risk focus areas is one of the core priorities of Maine's Landowner Incentive Program. These funds are to be used only on property in designated areas. Species-at-risk focus areas are home to the highest concentrations of Maine's rare plants and animals, the habitats that support them and contain conservation priorities such as riparian areas and wetlands. **As a private landowner, you may be eligible for inclusion in this program.** If you would like to learn more about species-at-risk focus areas, how they are designated, and their locations throughout the state, please visit:

www.state.me.us/doc/nrimc/mnap/programs/landtrusts.html
or call Sarah Demers at (207) 287-8670.



Landowners choose conservation for a variety of reasons. Some want to share the beautiful places they have enjoyed. Some fear that estate taxes may prevent them from keeping land in their family. Some seek relief from rising property taxes. All of them share an abiding concern and love for the land.



EASEMENTS AND HOW THEY WORK

The conservation easement is a legal document with a fundamental purpose of permanently protecting the natural condition of property by limiting the type and scope of development that can take place. Easement lands remain in private hands and on local tax rolls while providing such public benefits as natural areas, scenic vistas and wildlife habitat for future generations. Easements allow landowners to help preserve important aspects of their community and contribute to the region's quality of life. In some cases, farming and forestry activities may also continue.

Under the Landowner Incentive Program, when you place an easement on your land, you voluntarily limit or relinquish some of the rights to your property, in return for the peace of mind that your property will forever remain in tact and available to the wildlife it supports. In order to guide the permitted uses, the conservation easement also includes a management plan specific to the at-risk resources occurring on the parcel. The prospective easement holder, a nonprofit land trust, will work with you to tailor an easement that protects the land's natural and cultural values as required by the landowner.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO THE LANDOWNER

- ✘ The sale or donation of an easement allows the landowner to realize a portion of the economic value of the protected land without the need to develop it.
- ✘ Landowners retain title to their property and may continue to live on it, sell it, or pass it on to heirs, knowing that it always will remain protected.
- ✘ Easements provide permanent protection, applying to all future landowners. A land trust or government agency upholds the restrictions over time.
- ✘ Easements may reduce property tax by eliminating unwanted but highly valuable development potential.
- ✘ Easements can aid in estate planning, reducing estate taxes that could force the sale of family lands. Donated easements also can provide a charitable income tax deduction.

THE RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS IN AN EASEMENT PROTECT THE LAND'S IMPORTANT NATURAL RESOURCES.

AS A LANDOWNER, YOU ARE FACED WITH A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO DECIDE THE FATE OF A CHERISHED PLACE. THIS CHOICE CARRIES WITH IT BOTH PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY. WHAT BECOMES OF MAINE, IN THE YEARS AHEAD, DEPENDS ON THE CHOICES THAT LANDOWNERS MAKE TODAY.

LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAM POLICIES & GUIDELINES

✧ Willing Sellers Only

All applications must include either a signed Option Agreement or Purchase and Sale Agreement, or a letter from the land owner indicating their willingness to participate in the program.

✧ Public Access

The intent of the Landowner Incentive Program is to protect rare, threatened and endangered species and associated habitat occurring on privately owned lands. Therefore it is not necessary, and at times undesirable, to allow public access on

✧ Purchase Price Determined by Appraisal

The Landowner Incentive Program Steering Committee will not consider proposals requesting a purchase price greater than the appraised value of the easement

✧ Project Sponsorship

Proposals must be submitted by an entity willing and able to hold a conservation easement on the parcel. This may include a local or state-wide land trust, municipality, state agency, or other entity authorized to hold conservation easements.

SPECIFIC ALLOWED USES OF THE LANDOWNER

The allowed uses and restrictions to the property will be determined by the resource that is being protected by the easement.

- LANDOWNERS WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR LAND.
- LANDOWNERS CAN SELL, WILL, OR LEASE THE LAND, SUBJECT TO THE TERMS OF THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT.

The following is a list of general restrictions the landowner **may** be asked to consider:

- ✧ PERMANENT STRUCTURES
- ✧ EXCAVATING SOIL, LOAM, PEAT, GRAVEL, SAND, OR ROCK
- ✧ STORING/DUMPING SOIL, TRASH, STORAGE TANKS, ETC
- ✧ STOCKPILING, OR USE OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES
- ✧ COMMERCIAL, INSTITUTIONAL OR INDUSTRIAL USES
- ✧ MOTORIZED OR VEHICULAR USE
- ✧ DIVISION OR SUBDIVISION OF THE PREMISES

STEWARDSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The easement holder assumes permanent responsibility for enforcing the easement's terms. Stewardship responsibilities include an annual inspection of the property and ongoing contact with the landowners. The easement holder is available to discuss any major planned changes and to help answer questions about resource protection. If an easement is violated, the holder takes action to have the violation corrected, including legal measures although these are rarely required. *One local land trust director has described the holder's role as one of "a partner and trusted advisor, helping landowners protect a valued resource."*

The purpose of the Conservation Management Plan is to ensure that the easement's habitat values are protected consistent with the goals of the Landowner Incentive Program. The Management Plan is written with input from the landowner, easement holder, and biologist most familiar with the management needs of the species occurring on the parcel, and must be completed within 12 months of closing on the easement. The Management Plan should be evaluated periodically to encourage incorporation of new and enlightened agriculture, forestry, and wildlife management practices. It is the intent of this Conservation Management Plan to provide updated management information and build a relationship of trust between the landowner and the easement holder organization. It is not meant to supplant the land management responsibility of the property owner.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAM,
PLEASE CONTACT SARAH DEMERS AT 207.287.8670 OR CONTACT HER BY E-MAIL AT SARAH.DEMERS@MAINE.GOV.

MUCH OF THE INFORMATION IN THIS HANDOUT WAS PROVIDED FROM THE DOCUMENT *CONSERVATION OPTIONS:*

A GUIDE FOR MAINE LANDOWNERS, PUBLISHED BY THE MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST. (207) 729-7366,

OR VISIT THEM ON THE WEB AT [HTTP://WWW.MCHT.ORG](http://WWW.MCHT.ORG)

