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Conservation Framework Would Permanently Protect More Than 400,000 Acres in Maine's North Woods

Three Conservation Organizations and Plum Creek Reach Consensus
On Framework That Includes the Second Largest
Conservation Easement in the United States

AUGUSTA - The Nature Conservancy and its conservation partners the Forest Society of Maine and Appalachian Mountain Club today announced agreement on a Conservation Framework to protect a significant portion of Plum Creek's Moosehead Lake lands. The Conservation Framework reflects months of listening to the public and working with Plum Creek to structure a framework that addresses community needs and sustains the values and traditions of northern Maine. Plum Creek is expected to submit components of the Conservation Framework as part of its new concept plan application to the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC).

"This conservation package provides permanent protection for high value conservation areas, maintains intact working forests, assures public access and, significantly, removes from development consideration areas of greatest concern to conservation scientists, all of which are excellent outcomes," said Mike Tetreault, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy in Maine. "We commend Plum Creek for its long-term planning approach aimed at achieving a predictable balance of conservation and development. We also commend the company for responding to public requests to revise its plan to include more permanent conservation. We hope the public will recognize the many benefits inherent in this approach."

The Conservation Framework identifies how the lands with the highest conservation values can be preserved and forest resources maintained for the economic benefit and recreational enjoyment of

present and future generations. Plum Creek worked closely with the conservation organizations to propose protection for the some of the company's most significant land and water resources in Maine.

“This agreement embraces the traditions and values of Maine,” said Alan Hutchinson, Executive Director of the Forest Society of Maine. “Hunting, fishing, camping and other traditional recreational activities will be assured, valuable fish and wildlife habitats will be protected, and communities will benefit as these lands are sustainably managed for recreational activities and forest products.”

The Conservation Framework, which is comprised of a series of proposed conservation transactions, ensures permanent conservation and traditional public access on more than 400,000 acres:

- 330,000 acres would be subject to permanent conservation easements. 270,000 of these acres are being offered at attractive terms. The remaining acres are an easement that Plum Creek will offer to offset development in their concept plan. The easements would keep lands undeveloped, ensure traditional public access including hunting, fishing and hiking, protect ecologically important attributes and assure that forest management be conducted in a sustainable manner.
- Plum Creek would sell to The Nature Conservancy a 27,000-acre parcel that includes several Roach Ponds and abuts the State's Nahmakanta Reserve to the north and AMC's Katahdin Iron Works holdings to the south.
- Plum Creek would also sell to The Nature Conservancy 45,200 acres including the last portion of Number Five Bog not already in conservation and a substantial portion of the popular Moose River Bow Trip. Of that, the 15,000 acres including the Bog (which is recognized as one of the Northeast's most outstanding peatlands) would be managed by the Bureau of Parks and Land as an ecological reserve. The remaining 30,200 acres just to the south would be managed as a working forest with conservation restrictions. To the north, the proposed reserve abuts Forest Society of Maine land holdings and easement in Attean Township and the State's Holeb Unit. The 45,200 acres lie outside the immediate Moosehead Lake ownership.

The Nature Conservancy, Forest Society of Maine and the Appalachian Mountain Club each expressed a willingness to help implement this Conservation Framework. It is anticipated that The Forest Society of Maine will hold the easements.

“As conservation organizations, we have focused on what constitutes excellent conservation on these lands. Of course, it's important to underscore the fact that today's announcement acknowledges that the Land Use Regulation Commission must undertake its own independent analysis and decision-making once Plum Creek submits its revised concept plan,” said Alan Hutchinson of the Forest Society of Maine. “On questions of appropriate balance, mitigation and regulatory compliance, we defer to LURC.”

The groups acknowledge that final terms of the Conservation Framework can not be finalized until LURC has made a decision on the overall concept plan.

“The Framework is consistent with the goals of our Maine Woods Initiative, which is based on outdoor recreation, resource protection, sustainable forestry and community partnerships,” said Walter Graff, Deputy Director of the Appalachian Mountain Club. “It demonstrates permanent conservation, local economic benefit and public access, and offers a tremendous opportunity for ongoing protection of the 100 Mile Wilderness region.”

“We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with these highly respected organizations, and we believe the Conservation Framework meets the important public request we heard for more permanent conservation,” said Jim Lehner, General Manager Northeast Region for Plum Creek. “We look forward to submitting our revised application to the Land Use Regulation Commission in the near future.”

Maine Governor John E. Baldacci commended the groups on their work.

“This plan achieves the goals of the North Woods Vision I outlined two years ago,” said Governor John E. Baldacci. “On behalf of the people of Maine, I commend The Nature Conservancy, the Forest Society of Maine, the Appalachian Mountain Club and Plum Creek for working together to develop a conservation framework that ensures economic opportunities for the communities in the Moosehead region and provides public access for the people of Maine. This is an unprecedented opportunity for permanent conservation.”

The Nature Conservancy is an international, nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of biological diversity. On-the-ground conservation work is carried out in all 50 states and in 27 foreign countries and is supported by approximately one million individual members. The Conservancy has conserved nearly 15 million acres of land in the United States and Canada and more than 102 million acres with local partner organizations globally. The Conservancy owns and manages the largest private system of nature sanctuaries in the world. Projects increasingly seek to accommodate compatible human uses and benefits.

The Forest Society of Maine (FSM) is a statewide, Maine-based, nonprofit land trust focused on working forestlands, with a special emphasis on conservation and stewardship of large tracts in the North Maine Woods. The organization develops land conservation programs that will sustain the land’s ecological, economic, cultural, and recreational values. This is done with the full involvement of forestland owners and has garnered strong credibility in the forestry and conservation communities. To reflect this multi-faceted approach to land conservation, FSM maintains a diversity of board members with forestry, conservation, and business backgrounds.

The Appalachian Mountain Club has been promoting the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers, and trails of the Northeast outdoors since 1876. The nation’s oldest outdoor recreation and conservation organization, AMC has 90,000 members in 12 chapters that reach from Maine to Washington D.C. Members maintain over 1,500 miles of trails throughout the Northeast, including nearly 350 miles of the Appalachian Trail in five states.

Plum Creek is the largest and most geographically diverse private landowner in the nation, with approximately 8 million acres of timberland in major timber producing regions of the United States and 10 wood products manufacturing facilities in the Northwest. Plum Creek owns and manages more than 929,000 acres of timberland in Maine. Since 1989, the company has participated in conservation transactions on nearly half a million acres of its lands across the country.