

# EXCERPT FROM STATE OF MAINE SCORP PLAN

## 10 PAGES

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Maine State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2014-2019

### Chapter 4: Implementation Strategies

The 2009-2014 Maine SCORP, which this plan updates, used “connectivity” as a framework theme tying together priorities for outdoor recreation in Maine. Connectivity was recognized as a key element for trail-based recreation and habitat conservation (on which so much outdoor recreation activity in Maine is based). Furthermore, connectivity was identified as a way to organize thinking about how Maine citizens and visitors alike interact with and understand outdoor recreation opportunities. Finally, connectivity served as a construct encapsulating the social and community elements stemming from Maine’s strong sense of place and outdoor traditions.

This plan update re-affirms the theme of connectivity. Priorities identified five years ago largely remain priorities today. While these priorities are not all carried over completely unchanged and new points of emphasis have been defined, the overall thrust remains consistent. Maine still needs to ensure earnest efforts are made to connect outdoor recreation with Mainers lives and communities.

Additionally, outdoor recreation remains a core focus for tourism and economic development – which further enhances the capacity of communities to grow and serve not only Mainers, but visitors to our state, and in so doing, expands our local, regional, and statewide economies.

#### Priority Area 1: Connect More Mainers of All Ages with the Health and Wellness Benefits of Outdoor Recreation



Maine needs to address health issues and outdoor recreation can be part of the road to improvement. Outdoor recreation provides multiple benefits to individuals and society. Time spent engaged in physical outdoor activities improves health and wellness. Simply having more experiences in outdoor settings provides emotional and psychological benefits that positively impact many health issues exhibited in an increasingly sedentary population. Experiences out in nature are positively correlated by researchers with childhood stress relief<sup>42</sup>, coping with Attention-Deficit- Disorder<sup>43</sup>, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity-Disorder, and obesity prevention.<sup>44</sup>

Maine has realities and challenges associated with health and wellness. Maine’s population is the oldest in the nation measured in terms of median age (42.7 years). According to 2013 population estimates, 17.3 percent of Maine’s population is 65 years of age or older, compared to 13 percent nationally. “Baby boomers,” aged 46 to 64 in 2010, are the largest segment of Maine’s population, while youth, under age 18, are the smallest. A large majority of Maine’s baby boomer population was over 50 years of age in 2010<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Wells NM & Evans GW (2003). *Environment and Behavior*, 35(3):311-330

<sup>43</sup> Taylor AF, Kuo FE & Sullivan WC (2001). *Environment and Behavior*, 33(1):54-77.

<sup>44</sup> Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness and Council on School Health (2006). *Pediatrics*, 117(5):1834-1842.

<sup>45</sup> Retrieved from: <http://maine.gov/economist/projections/index.shtml>

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An increasingly older population is predicted, with increasing health and disability issues. Approximately 20 percent of Maine residents 65 years of age and older have an ambulatory disability.

Maine's population also has the highest-in – New England adult obesity rate, at 28.9 percent -placing it at number 27 out of all states on the obesity scale.<sup>46</sup> Childhood obesity, among children aged 10 to 17 years old, was 12.5 percent in 2011, ranking 42nd among all states.

Given the imperative to serve an aging population and to address inactivity and obesity across generations, and given the demonstrated positive impacts of outdoor recreation, it is essential that public and private entities strive to provide outdoor recreation opportunities where youth and adults of all abilities can get out, get active, and experience the health benefits found in the outdoors. That includes reducing the need to drive to designated recreation areas. It also includes improving connectivity between outdoor recreation assets and neighborhoods within towns, as well as with other recreation, cultural and economic assets within those towns or in neighboring towns.

### Strategies

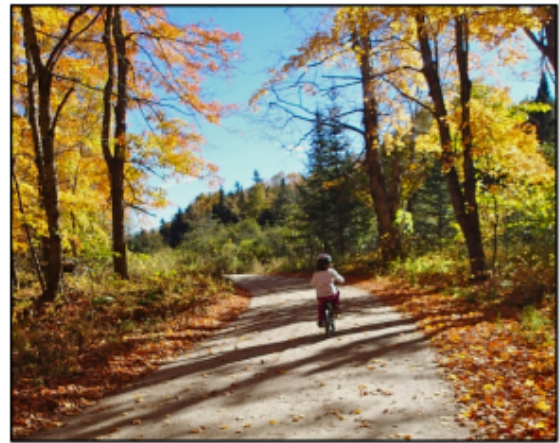
#### A. Encourage Increased Participation in Outdoor Activities by Raising Awareness of Outdoor Recreation's Health & Wellness Benefits:

- Encourage collaborative efforts between recreation and health groups in order to increase participation by appealing to a range of motivations. Collaboration and coordination between groups such as the Maine Department of Health and Human Services; Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry; Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife; and Department of Education (and others) as well as collaborations amongst other recreation and health organizations should result in enhanced awareness of health benefits from being outside.
- Continue and enhance programs in which doctors can "prescribe" park passes as a tool for enhancing health and wellness, especially of youth patients.
- Partner with YMCAs, gyms, etc. to promote the values of indoor AND outdoor recreation for a healthy lifestyle and fitness goals.
- Better integrate with and support the capacity for schools to make outdoor recreation a meaningful part of health education. Additionally, look to integrate outdoor recreation into all academic content areas.
- Foster and support the growth of clubs and groups utilizing outdoor recreation resources (e.g., trails, water access, etc.) for healthy activities such as weekly walking/biking groups, outdoor yoga, scheduled paddling outings, etc. Promote dialog between resource managers and group organizers to facilitate healthy lifestyle oriented events. Look for opportunities to develop recreation sites well-suited to formal and informal group activity.
- Develop outreach strategies identifying audiences, messages, and delivery mechanisms that will get beyond preaching to the choir and attract more people to become more active in the outdoors.

<sup>46</sup> Retrieved from: <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/>

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- Promote educational efforts to assuage fears and showcase benefits in order to help combat certain cultural trends that undercut outdoor recreation. Efforts to raise appreciation of outdoor recreation should recognize that there are fears and misconceptions that may keep some potential participants from enjoying outdoor recreation opportunities. Fears ranging from “stranger danger” (youth abductions) to insect bites need to be addressed via education and awareness campaigns.
- Develop professional, targeted messages at specific audiences to emphasize why getting outside is part of a healthy, fulfilling lifestyle. Coordinate and collaborate with agencies and individuals understanding the science of messaging and communication.
- Develop programming that introduces the outdoors in a FUN and unthreatening way, especially when targeted at audiences lacking outdoor recreation experience.



### **B. Improve Awareness of Existing Outdoor Recreation Opportunities:**

- Provide readily available information on access to public lands and water. New media as well as traditional information dissemination routes are tools for getting information out to broad swaths of the public. If one goal is to reconnect more Mainers with the outdoors, it is logical to assume that some may need more of a guiding hand than existing activity enthusiasts, who largely know where to go. This is supported by research looking into rural youth in Maine, who were shown to lack awareness of where to go for outdoor recreation.<sup>47</sup>
- Improve signage, kiosks, and other on-site public information in order to increase public awareness and enhance visitor experiences. Many Maine sites need improvement in this area, including wayfinding signage, improved maps, interpretive messages, safety information, and use guidelines.
- Recognize that outdoor recreation, even when associated with public resources such as parks, is a product that requires marketing; use best practices of communication, branding, and marketing to connect potential users with existing resources.
- Improve the quality and availability of GIS-based (Geographic Information System) data and maps. GIS systems serve as an underpinning of mapping efforts aimed at enhanced publicly available maps, brochures, websites, and global positioning systems data. Coordinating various public and private GIS-based mapping efforts, would benefit public information efforts by supporting improved management efficiency.
- Encourage municipalities to develop and maintain a data base and guide for outdoor recreation opportunities within their boundaries and to make this information available to their residents, businesses and visitors. Further, encourage data sharing between municipalities and the state for regional and statewide planning efforts.

<sup>47</sup> Muskie School of Public Service. 2008. *Active Living for Rural Youth* Retrieved from: <https://muskie.usm.maine.edu/Publications/rural/pb37/ActiveLiving.pdf>



**C. Support Programs and Expand Opportunities that Provide Youth with Experiences that Connect Them with Nature:**

- Continue youth outreach programs such as Take It Outside!, and Hooked on Fishing. These programmatic efforts build community support for outdoor recreation, celebrate life-long, healthy activities, develop skills and knowledge needed to enjoy the outdoors, and link outdoor recreation activities with environmental stewardship.
- Look for new partnerships to reach more youth, perhaps with schools, youth groups, parent networks, etc. Research by the Outdoor Industry Foundation finds that parents, friends, and relatives, are by far the strongest factors influencing youth to be active outdoors.<sup>48</sup>
- Consider opportunities to use technology as a conduit to the outdoors. Despite the problems associated with too much time spent in front of screens, there are opportunities to use technology as a tool for getting some youth outside more. Smart phone apps, geocaching or Earthcacheing (both involving sleuthing using a GPS receiver), digital photography and video use, and social networking can have value in getting get kids outside.
- Support new recreation infrastructure aimed at activities of interest to youth, such as biking, hiking trails close to home or school, and sports oriented facilities that can be adapted over time to changing interests.
- Provide outdoor recreation opportunities of specific interest to working parents. Working parents are a key piece of the youth issue. This could include family friendly trails near home, as well as at state parks and lands within a short drive of population centers. Running trails sized to accommodate strollers are an example of how this demographic might be reached.
- Continue to support traditional sports and sports facilities such as baseball/softball, soccer, etc. but also look for opportunities to support non-traditional “sports” and extracurricular activities such as outing clubs, mountain bike teams, etc. Especially target facilities and programs that target youth not well served by traditional physical activities.
- Recognize that Maine’s rural character with dispersed residences in many communities creates scenarios where students travel long distances on buses to reach and return from school and other community resources. Explore opportunities such as “late” busses and/or other creative transportation approaches to address youth “stuck” with no means for reaching recreation resources. This is especially relevant for lower-income families struggling with transportation costs and/or work schedules.
- Work with all levels of education to support hands-on student stewardship programs engaging students directly in the care and enjoyment of natural areas.

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<sup>48</sup> Outdoor Industry Foundation (2008) *Outdoor Recreation Participation Study*.

**D. Provide a Broad Range of Outdoor Opportunities to Meet the Varied Interests and Abilities of Adults, Especially the Older and Less-Abled Public:**

- Provide more opportunities suitable for Maine's seniors. Programs, partnerships, and facilities well suited to specific senior interests should be developed and/or promoted. Recreation opportunities for Maine seniors should encompass mind and body and provide a range of settings and identified attributes. Viewing and learning activities such as guided nature walks and bird watching as well as resources such as easy walking/hiking trails are particularly attractive to older recreationists.



- Provide outdoor recreation opportunities of specific interest to working adults including young professionals and working parents. Working parents are a key piece of the youth issue. Additionally, recreation is a significant factor in quality of life, and research shows that businesses not tied to a specific resource (e.g., technology firms) value quality of life highly as they consider where to locate or relocate<sup>49</sup>. Therefore, providing desirable recreation opportunities for this demographic has benefits not just as a health strategy but also as a business attraction strategy. Quality of life and outdoor recreation opportunities are and should remain a competitive advantage for Maine. In particular, vibrant town centers with close to town/close to home recreation amenities such as parks and trails can fit well into the time-limited lifestyles characterizing modern professional and personal life.
- Support investments in rehabilitation and construction of trails and other recreational amenities designed for the physically challenged and disabled populations. Support development of easy to moderate nature trails in a variety of close to home settings, as well as at destination sites located in more remote areas of the state.
- Support improvements to State and municipal parks to address changing interests and needs of the recreating public. Specific priorities identified in the 2014 Maine Outdoor Recreation Survey include modern bathrooms and bath houses with running water, and flush toilets; water and electric hook-ups at campgrounds; family-friendly cabins, tents, and yurts; availability of more interpretive programs and self-guided nature trails; and availability of equipment rentals.

**E. Connect Mainers with Close to Home Outdoor Recreation Opportunities:**

- Facilitate access to trails and open space; local access not requiring driving is especially of interest. The call from American Trails for trails within 15 minutes of every American home and workplace, and from The Trust for Public Land for access to park and open space within a 10 minute walk are both soundly based in the evidence that proximity is directly related to use. Trails at the local level that are convenient to the local

<sup>49</sup> Crompton, John L., Lisa L. Love, and Thomas A. More. "An Empirical Study of the Role of Recreation, Parks and Open Space in Companies' (Re) Location Decisions," *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 1997: 37-58.

population are vitally important for their recreational benefits in and of themselves, but also may serve to provide alternate transportation to other proximate outdoor recreation areas, parks, playgrounds, and similar recreational facilities.

- Recognize that Maine experiences long winters and ensure that outdoor opportunities for Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, ice-fishing access, sledding, skating, snowmobiling, and other winter pursuits are important recreational opportunities. Support efforts to develop recreation opportunities to combat inactivity during the winter months.
- Minimize barriers to connectivity and recreation arising from poor policies or design. Notable, but not exclusive, barriers include those affecting bicyclists and pedestrians. Improved bike and pedestrian access to parks and outdoor recreation areas, especially in more urban areas, benefits health and quality of place objectives while potentially opening up more areas to those without motorized transportation.
- Support efforts to prioritize local trail planning that serves the recreation needs of citizens throughout Maine, with an eye toward those initiatives that also serve to increase access to key community attributes.
- Understand that the tradition of public recreational access to private land is essential if all Mainers, especially those in many rural areas, are to have close to home recreational opportunities ranging from fishing to trail running to snowmobiling. Support landowner relations efforts at all levels from community grassroots to formal state programs.

## **Priority Area 2: Support Regionally Connected Trail Systems in Maine's Less Developed Regions to Increase Access to Outdoor Recreation for Maine's Rural Population and Enhance Economic Development**

Maine is blessed with natural and cultural attractions around which trails of all types have been constructed, including significant regional trails networks. The Appalachian Trail traverses just over 300 miles in Maine; this trail system, along with over 40 related side trails is a segment of a nationally significant hiking system. The state ITS snowmobile trail system provides thousands of miles of well-organized riding. In the last half-decade, ATV trails have become more statewide and organized in scope. On the water, both the Maine Island Trail Association (coastal waterway) and the Northern Forest Canoe Trail (freshwater lakes and rivers) systematically address stewardship, development, information, and outreach. These established trails and other "thematic" trails including scenic byways, natural and cultural history trails, etc. provide valuable recreational opportunities for Maine residents, and also play a role in attracting visitation to Maine's most rural communities.

In Maine's more rural regions, with few exceptions, these regional trails, often linking to and through Maine's Public Reserved Lands, are the backbone of recreation opportunities (as compared to Maine's more developed regions where most state and municipal parks are located). While Maine is known for these regional trails systems, there is opportunity for improvements. These systems still have gaps, and there are opportunities to add more connectivity with local trails and to enhance trail opportunities in these rural regions to reach more



potential users. A more connected system can also help address, at a regional level, the need for support networks capable of realistically dealing with ongoing maintenance.

Coordinating existing trails and filling literal or experiential gaps could have the potential to increase the user base for these trails, enhance tourism (and related economic benefits), and engender volunteerism and trail stewardship.

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

##### **A. Support Regional Initiatives:**

- Support initiatives and larger visions involving multiple communities as a means of addressing both regional and local recreation and tourism objectives. One example is provided by the Northern Forest Canoe Trail (NFCT), a non-profit organized to foster waterway stewardship, support rural economic development, and celebrate community recreation, arts, and heritage along traditional Native American canoe routes linking upstate New York and Maine. NFCT actively works to link paddlers with guides, outfitters, lodging, and other business interests along the trail. Opportunities to integrate trails, whether motorized, non-motorized, multi-use, birding, etc., with local communities should be pursued as they become available.
- Invest in sound planning that will enhance regional trails systems. Support trail system visioning and planning efforts that link tourism and recreation interests by region, and provide a comprehensive vision for trail systems across the state.

##### **B. Encourage and Support Coordinated Management of Extended Trail Systems:**

- Support partnerships and alliances that will facilitate coordinated or consolidated collection and management of trail information (GIS and other trail related information). Invest in developing inventories of the full suite of trails available, the condition of those trails.
- Support efforts to coordinate expertise for trail construction, management, and maintenance. As more alliances/partnerships and systems are developed, availability of technical expertise should increase for more trail groups (especially volunteer groups).
- Support coordinated efforts to develop public information on trails through well-designed web and/or print products.



- Support efforts to bring together diverse elements within a community or region to better manage recreation trails. Bringing together business interests, tourism stakeholders, land owners and managers, recreation groups, municipal officials, and other local players results in a coordinated vision for stewardship of regional trails and can also provide the resources needed to support that vision.

- Foster awareness and appreciation for the perspective of private landowners engaged in trail projects and work to ensure landowner concerns are addressed. Continually communicate and collaborate to improve the recreating public's appreciation for use of private lands.

#### **C. Support and Encourage Landowner Collaborations:**

- Create and maintain processes that facilitate trail projects across various ownerships, and that minimize conflicts among user groups. Given that trails often are located on private lands (including private conservation organizations), and given that even different public land managers have diverse goals, there is a need to develop mechanisms for better coordination and collaboration in trails planning.
- Support education and awareness efforts aimed at recreationists using private lands to help minimize negative recreation impacts on private lands. Look for opportunities to integrate and coordinate programs such as the national Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly programs as well as existing state landowner relations efforts.
- Encourage organized recreation groups and clubs to be proactive in landowner relations - these groups have an important role in educating users to help minimize and mitigate recreation impacts, and in communicating with landowners.

### **Priority Area 3: Connect to Future Tourism Markets through Recreation Interests**

The Maine Office of Tourism notes, in its Five Year Strategic Plan (2014-2019), notes that of the 4.7 million visitors to Maine from New England, 96 percent are repeat visitors, with little expected increase in the percentage of first-time visitors. However, global demand for authentic nature- and heritage-based experiences is growing and Maine is well positioned to meet this demand. *"Maine's assets critical to attracting visitors include its natural landscape . . . , natural resources . . . and wildlife . . . and the means for enjoying these things [recreation trails, drives/byways]."*<sup>50</sup> The report concludes that, based on consumer trends,

#### ***"tomorrow's" visitors will want:***

- *Special interest experiences – traveling with/for a purpose*
- *Interactive learning experiences*
- *Authentic, unique experiences*
- *Physical or psychological challenges*
- *Customized, individualized travel"*

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<sup>50</sup> Retrieved from: [http://visitmaine.com/assets/downloads/Maine\\_5yrPlan.pdf](http://visitmaine.com/assets/downloads/Maine_5yrPlan.pdf)



The report further identifies the growth target for future visitors to be Millennials, and international travelers. . It is noteworthy that non-residents who did not purchase a hunting or fishing license, register a snowmobile or ATV, or camp at a Maine State Park campground were not represented in the University of Maine 2014-2019 Maine SCORP Survey. Furthermore, the survey would not have reached non-residents who have not previously visited Maine, regardless of whether they fish, hunt, camp, etc. In light of this, the Maine Office of Tourism's profile of "tomorrow's visitors" provides insights on how to target new visitors to increase economic activity through outdoor recreation-related tourism.

### **Implementation Strategies:**

#### **A. Foster and Support Mechanisms that Enhance "Base Camp" Communities as Centers of Information for Regional Recreation Opportunities:**

- Support efforts to bring together diverse elements within a community or region to better promote recreation. Business interests, tourism stakeholders, land owners and managers, recreation groups, officials, and a host of other local players can produce richer projects with more potential for positive community impacts.
- Support the development and management of visitor centers and similar central facilities for orienting visitors to the story of and opportunities in a region.

#### **B. Expand and Diversify Maine's Outdoor Recreation Offerings to Appeal to Emerging Trends, Especially Target Visitor Profiles:**

- Create a state water trail branding program or similar initiative to develop and promote water trails. Ensure proper partnerships and management capacity guidelines are woven into any initiative. Focus on "low-hanging fruit" where community/regional groups can come together to better package existing opportunities primarily requiring collaboration, public information, and planning to develop a coordinated experience that will attract expanded community enjoyment and increased economic activity.
- Use partnerships between public land managers/agencies and recreation interests to respond to the growing demand for adventure races, festivals, and other events in which event organizers ranging from birders to mountain bikers seek destinations for pre-scheduled competitions and events.
- Continue to explore and expand "trail" opportunities like the Maine Birding Trail. Consider developing and marketing itineraries pairing outdoor recreation with other aspects of Maine such as cuisine, traditional crafts, agriculture, etc.



**Priorities for Use of Land Water Conservation (LWCF) Fund Monies*****A. Strategically Use LWCF Funds for Recreation Areas or Facilities that Provide New or Expanded Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, with Priority for Opportunities:***

- that serve youth, seniors, the disabled, or other demographic components that are underserved;
- that increase access to recreation and natural areas, particularly in areas close to population centers;
- that provide multiple public benefits in addition to recreation benefits – i.e., address public health issues (e.g., obesity), economic development (e.g., nature-based tourism, quality of place), and protection of ecological values; or
- that increase connectivity among trail systems or expand regional trails systems, especially in Maine's more rural areas..

***B. Support the Rehabilitation or Replacement of the State's Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure, Including Improvements for Accessibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act.***

- Rehabilitation or replacement of Maine's aging outdoor recreation infrastructure, including the provision of ADA-accessible trails and facilities, should be a high priority in the upcoming years. The 2006 white paper, *Sustaining Maine's Green Infrastructure*, lists \$40 million in need over 5 years for State Parks and Historic Sites<sup>51</sup>. It also lists \$6 million for MDOT related nature tourism infrastructure (over 4 years). These figures do not represent the significant needs for rehabilitation and improvements to municipal facilities. Therefore, rehabilitation and/or replacement of existing resources should continue to be a focus of LWCF funding.




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<sup>51</sup> Harris, Jody (Ed.). 2006. *Sustaining Maine's Green Infrastructure: A white paper prepared for the Governor's Steering Committee on Maine's Natural Resource-based Industry*. Maine State Planning Office, Augusta, Maine.