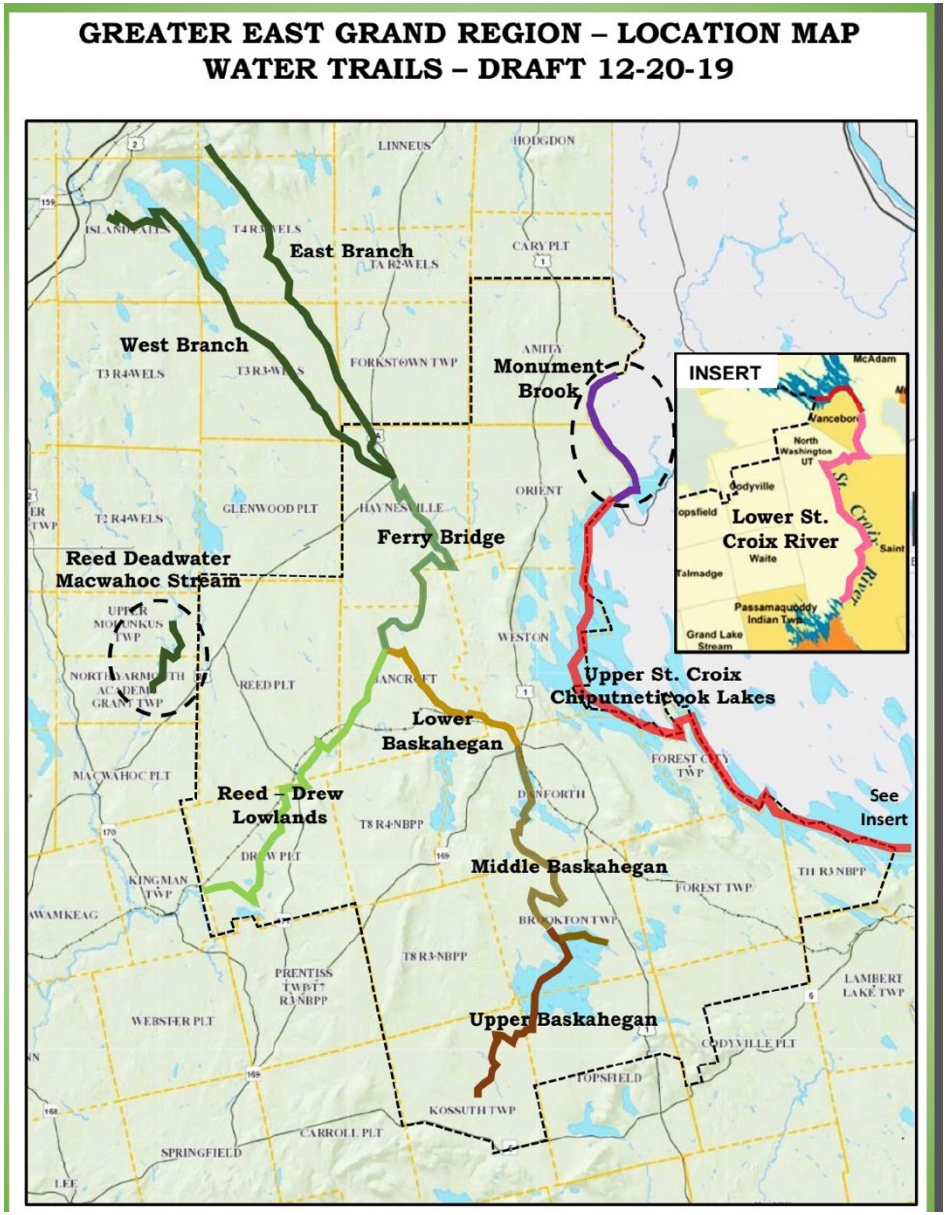
**Greater East Grand Region Economic Development Plan**
**Goal A: Recreational Tourism – Water Trails**
**February 11, 2020 Draft**

## Introduction

Our local waterways have been important to this region's cultural and economic history for as long as people have lived here. Native Americans used rivers and lakes for major travel and trade routes. Early European settlers developed towns along the waterways, transported supplies upstream by boat, and drove logs and furs downstream to market. Access to and enjoyment of local waterways continue to be central to many who live in and visit this area.

A small group from the Greater East Grand Region Economic Development initiative has been exploring how waterways in the tri-county area may enhance recreational and economic opportunities. Improved facilities on the network of waterways could help the region become better known for a variety of outings and create more dependable recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Camp owners, lodges, boating and fishing rentals, guides, and other local business owners would have a broader array of activities to offer housed, guided, or DIY clients.

The Mattawamkeag River, and its tributaries tie more than 13 townships and plantations together with over 100 miles of water. On some sections campsites and boat landings have been maintained. In other areas they are in disrepair. Some areas are seldom used because they lack facilities or access. We see an opportunity to work together to improve the recreation experience on these beautiful waters and benefit from those efforts.



# West Branch Mattawamkeag

| | Features/Assets in Place Today | Investment Needed | Investment Benefits |
|---|---|---|---|
| **West Branch Mattawamkeag** | **Features**<br>• 24 miles from Island Falls to Haynesville<br>• Remote/wild to semi-wild<br>• Good fishing<br>Lake – Bass, Pickerel<br>Stream – Trout, landlock salmon<br>All -Atlantic Salmon Habitat<br>• Class 1-2 rips below lake and fast water seasonally<br>• West branch more dependable water level over summer season<br>• 1 town-maintained boat launch on Mattawamkeag lake<br>• 1 on Mattawamkeag River<br>• 2 BPL campsites on Mattawamkeag lake – Big Island & Long Point<br>• Bible point historic trail & site (BPL-60 Acres)<br><br>**Limitations**<br>• low water may occur below lake outlet during extreme drought | **Added Infrastructure**<br>• Site scouting needed to locate minimum of 2 new campsites on West Branch below lake.<br>• Haynesville – improve existing use take-out/put-in on Route 2A.<br>• Add/designate new hand carry canoe/kayak launch mid-way on branch.<br><br>**Costs**<br>• Guide time to site new campsites, launches and mapping coordinates.<br>• Cost of easements, license or purchase of sites from owners.<br>• Cost to build out 2 new campsites.<br>• Cost to improve existing launches<br>• Cost to build new launch.<br>• Marketing, maps, website tools<br>• Cost for annual maintenance of campsites and launches.<br><br>**Estimated Investment**<br>(Add $ figure for above) | **Benefit to Local Economy**<br>• Regional waterway recognition will attract more interest<br>• Extends water trips for tri-county region for 1-3 day trips for guided or DIY trips<br>• Increases access for fishing and boating for local cabins/lodges<br><br>**Next Steps**<br>• Contact land owners to acquire access permission and/or land lease<br>• Find supporting funds to construct new campsites and launches.<br>• Find supporting funds and an organization to maintain sites. |

# East Branch Mattawamkeag

| | Features/Limitations Today | Investment Needed | Investment Benefits |
|---|---|---|---|
| **East Branch Mattawamkeag** | **Features**<br>• 19.9 mi<br>• Remote/Wild especially above Bell's Field Bridge<br>• Good fishing – mainly trout in main stream and tributaries<br>• Spring fast water rapids at upper river below Red bridge and ledge drop<br>• 2 Campsites listed on ME Atlas<br><br>**Limitations**<br>• Can only paddle in spring or fall during high water<br>• Flat water at bottom of river<br>• Relatively remote – limited access points by vehicle | **Added Infrastructure**<br>• Ground proof 2 campsites listed in Me. Atlas<br>• Evaluate put-in and take-out sites<br><br>**Costs**<br>• Guide time to site campsites, launches and mapping coordinates.<br>• Cost of easements, license or purchase of sites from owners.<br>• Cost to build out 2 campsites.<br>• Cost to improve existing launches<br>• Marketing, maps, website tools<br>• Cost for annual maintenance of campsites and launches.<br><br>**Estimated Investment**<br>(Add $ here for above) | **Benefit to Local Economy**<br>• Another spring 1 or 2 day trips in the tri-county area<br>• Good fishing –consider special regulations such as FFO for upper section<br><br>**Next Steps**<br>• Contact land owners to acquire access and/or land.<br>• Find supporting funds to construct new campsites and launches.<br>• Find supporting funds and an organization to maintain sites. |

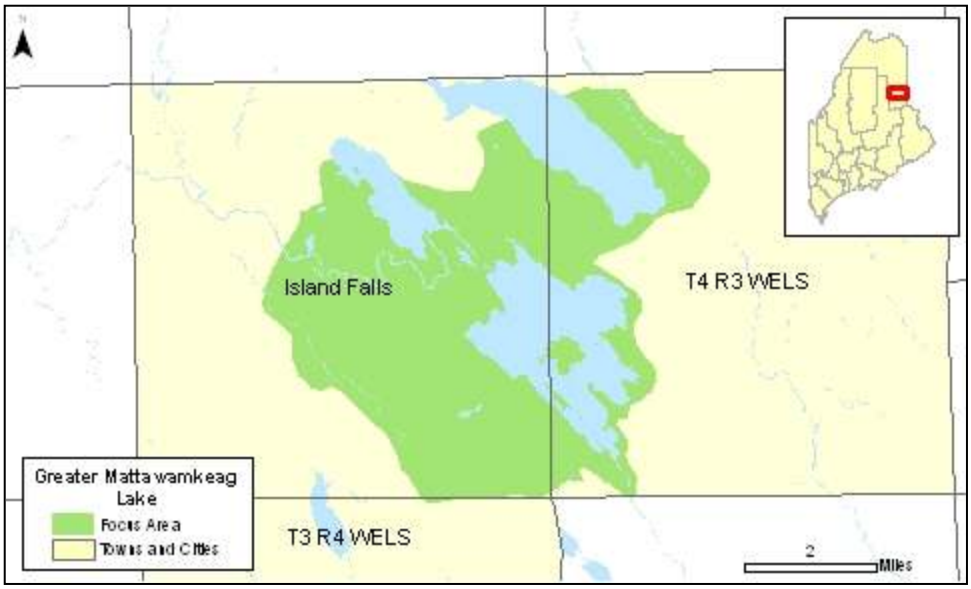
# Mattawamkeag

| | Features/Limitations Today | Investment Needed | Investment Benefits |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mattawamkeag** | **Features**<br>• 33 miles Haynesville to Kingman<br>• Water level dependable for canoe travel though most season<br>• Some remote areas<br>• Unique wetland areas on river<br>• Large, unique MDIF&W wildlife habitat management area in Drew<br>• Good bass and seasonal trout fishing<br>• Rapids/Ledge Falls in Bancroft<br>• Small rips in Reed<br>• Extensive flatwater w/canoe or motor access<br>• IF&W maintained boat launch in Kingman<br>• IF&W has interest in buying and maintaining boat launch sites on Ferry bridge/Haynesville and Reed<br>• Drew bridge boat launch continued public use confirmed by owner<br>• Baskahegan Co. may be willing to let Island in Bancroft be used for a campsite<br>• Historic site possibility at confluence of Baskahegan stream and new campsite possible.<br><br>**Limitations**<br>• Extreme drought may limit travel | **Added Infrastructure**<br>• Develop at least 3 new campsites.<br>• Improve boat landings Haynesville, Reed, Drew near Drew bridge.<br><br>**Costs**<br>• Guide time to site new campsites, launches and mapping coordinates.<br>• Cost of easements, license or purchase of sites from owners.<br>• Cost to build out 3-4 new campsites.<br>• Cost to build 1 new boat landing could be covered by IF&W purchase and easement<br>• Marketing, maps, website tools<br>• Cost for annual maintenance of campsites and launches.<br><br>**Estimated Investment**<br>(Add $ here for above) | **Benefit to Local Economy**<br>• Increase variety of Tri-county region day and multi day trips<br>• Good bass and seasonal trout fishing for local fishing, camps, lodges, stores<br><br>**Next Steps**<br>• Ground proof new camp sites.<br>• Ground proof improved landing in Drew.<br>• Contact land owners to acquire access and/or land.<br>• Find supporting funds to construct new campsites and launches.<br>• Find supporting funds and an organization to maintain sites. |

MNAP/IFW - February 2008

# Greater Mattawamkeag Lake

Island Falls & T4 R3 WELS




***Description:***

The Greater Mattawamkeag Lake Focus Area encompasses a broad swath of uplands and wetlands surrounding Upper Mattawamkeag and Mattawamkeag Lakes, extending from Sly Brook in the southwest to Pleasant Lake in the northeast. The combination of open wetlands, small ponds, rivers, and undeveloped shorelines with hills and low peaks provides this area with a unique combination of natural features including rich plant and animal species diversity.

*Silver Maple Floodplain Forest along the West Branch Mattawamkeag River (photograph by the Maine Natural Areas Program).*

**Natural Communities and Rare Plants**

With the exception of scattered camps around the west ends of the lakes, the land around Mattawamkeag Lake and Pleasant Lake at the edge of the focus area is within a large undeveloped block. The southern end of Mattawamkeag Lake, where it drains into the West Branch of the Mattawamkeag River, is conservation land owned by the State of Maine. An

island in the middle of Mattawamkeag Lake, also public land, supports one of the largest and best examples of **Hemlock Forest** documented in the state.

Multiple important habitat types have been mapped in the southwest side of the focus area, along the wetlands and lowland conifer forests that border Sly Brook. Here, a large (~1800 acre) wetland complex between Sly Brook and Mattawamkeag Lake supports a diversity of natural communities including an excellent example of a **Sheep Laurel Dwarf Shrub Bog**, and smaller patches of Bog Moss Lawn and Leatherleaf Boggy Fen.

Though there is a history of logging within the Greater Mattawamkeag Lake Focus Area, some of the forested areas have been left unmanaged for longer periods and have developed habitat and natural community characteristics that make them exceptional. Patches of **Hemlock Forest** with trees up to 200 years old and large snags provide cover and habitat for songbirds and other wildlife within the lowlands of the focus area. **Beech-Birch-Maple Forest** on the slopes south of Pleasant Lake contain large legacy trees – giants passed over during the last forest harvest – that may have stood when Teddy Roosevelt hunted around Mattawamkeag Lake with Maine guide Bill Sewall in the 1870's.

A rare natural community type in Maine, **Silver Maple Floodplain Forest**, occupies the silty flats along the West Branch of the Mattawamkeag River. Silver Maple Floodplain Forests occur on the plains of low-gradient rivers where seasonal floods regularly deposit fine sand and silt. The resulting high nutrient levels often support a rich display of spring ephemerals, along with a dense herbaceous layer dominated by sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*) and ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*). The isolated pools, oxbows, and river channels associated with floodplain forests provide excellent habitat for multiple wildlife species such as turtles, amphibians, and waterfowl.

**Wildlife**

*Brook floater* (Alasmidonta varicosa)
*(Photograph by Ethan Nedeau).*

One of the highlights of this focus area is the mussel habitat along the Mattawamkeag River. **Yellow lampmussels** (*Lampsilis cariosa*), a threatened species in Maine, have been found in several locations along the West Branch of the Mattawamkeag River and within Mattawamkeag Lake. These mussels are found only in high quality streams and rivers. The undisturbed nature of the area and relatively undeveloped shorelines have created excellent conditions for this freshwater mussel species. Future surveys along the West Branch or within Pleasant Lake may locate additional populations. Another threatened mussel species, the **brook floater** (*Alasmidonta varicosa*)**,** was found on the West Branch and the East Branch of the Mattawamkeag River on the east side of Pleasant Lake, adding to the overall mussel diversity of this focus area. The brook floater is found among rocks, gravel, and sand in creeks and small rivers. In Maine, this species is generally found among rooted aquatic vegetation in nutrient-poor streams. The brook floater has experienced significant

declines throughout its range, and many populations have been extirpated. Even where it is found, populations often consist of just a small number of aging individuals. For these reasons it is listed as a species of special concern in the state. Maine may hold some of the best remaining populations of this species anywhere in its range.

The large wetland complex between Sly Brook and Mattawamkeag Lake contains open water, streamside wetlands, and emergent vegetation which all create significant habitat for **inland waterfowl and wading birds**. Spruce and cedar stands between the streams and open wetlands provide cover for deer and are mapped as important **deer wintering areas**.

**Bald eagles** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) have nested in the tall trees near the southern perimeter of Mattawamkeag Lake since 1985. At least one alternate nest site has been identified, and the nests were occupied into the early 1990s, when they were last monitored. The nearest known eagle nests are about 10 northeast near Meduxnekeag Lake. Bald eagles nest along sea coasts, inland lakes and major rivers. Breeding habitat includes large trees, primarily old white pines, in close proximity (less than one mile) to water where food is abundant and human disturbance is minimal. Bald eagles, once abundant in Maine, were nearly extirpated throughout their range because of widespread use of environmental contaminants. Due to a wide variety of efforts, including designation of Essential Habitat to protect bald eagle nest sites through provisions of the Maine Endangered Species Act, bald eagles have now made a dramatic recovery. Because of Essential Habitat designation, all projects or activities funded and carried out by municipalities and state agencies within ¼ mile of eagle nests are reviewed by MDIFW. Problems for eagles still persist, however. Habitat loss, human disturbance at nest sites, environmental contamination, diminished water quality, and human-caused deaths and injuries are still primary conservation problems. Management will continue to ensure that declines of the past are not repeated, and that habitat and a clean environment persist to promote population growth and expansion.

***Rare Features Table for the Greater Mattawamkeag Lake Focus Area*:**

| Common Name | Scientific Name | Status | S-Rank | G-Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Natural Communities** | | | | |
| Northern Hardwoods Forest | Beech - Birch - Maple Forest | N/A | S4 | G3G5 |
| Hemlock Forest | Hemlock Forest | N/A | S4 | G4G5 |
| Hemlock Forest | Hemlock Forest | N/A | S4 | G4G5 |
| Dwarf Shrub Bog | Sheep Laurel Dwarf Shrub Bog | N/A | S4 | G5 |
| Silver Maple Floodplain Forest | Silver Maple Floodplain Forest | N/A | S3 | GNR |
| **Rare Plants** | | | | |
| None documented | | | | |
| **Rare Animals** | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brook floater | *Alasmidonta varicose* | T | S3 | G3 |
| Yellow lampmussel | *Lampsilis cariosa* | T | S2S3 | G3G4 |

***Other Features Mapped by MDIFW:***

Bald eagle essential habitat
Inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat
Deer wintering area

***Protection Status:***

The Maine Department of Conservation and Bureau of Parks and Lands own and manage approximately 3600 acres around the south end of Mattawamkeag Lake.

***Conservation Considerations:***

- The integrity of wetlands and the processes and life forms they support are dependent on the maintenance of the current hydrology of the site. Intensive timber harvesting, vegetation clearing, soil disturbance, new roads, and development on buffering uplands can result in greater runoff, sedimentation, and other non-point sources of pollution. These effects could have devastating impacts on freshwater mussel populations such as the rare brook floater or yellow lampmussel. Future management activity should avoid additional impacts to the area's hydrology.

- An adequate buffer should be retained between timber harvest areas and wetlands. The state minimum shoreland zoning standards restrict harvest and clearing within 250' of wetland borders. Because different species can have different buffering requirements, better protection will be afforded to the collective wetland plants and animals when larger buffers are used. Any timber harvesting within and adjacent to wetlands should be implemented with strict adherence to state or local Shoreland Zoning guidelines and Maine Forest Service Best Management Practices.

- The ecological integrity of peatlands, including all the processes and life forms they support, is dependent on the maintenance of the current hydrology and water quality of these systems. Intensive timber harvesting, vegetation clearing, soil disturbance, new roads, and development on buffering uplands can result in greater runoff, sedimentation, and other non-point sources of pollution. In general, threats to peatlands include peat mining, cranberry harvesting, timber harvest around the forest perimeters, and development.

- Eagles are extremely sensitive to disturbance during their nesting season. Any activities near their nests or within their nesting territory during this period may cause nest failure or may even cause adults to abandon the nest. In general it is recommended that a 330-foot radius be left undisturbed around an eagle nest during any kind of land-clearing or timber harvest activity. Habitat protection within a ¼ mile radius of a nesting site is another significant measure that can help support nesting eagles. Consult with a MDIFW biologist prior to planning any activity that may disturb the forest around an eagle nest.

Visit our web site for more information on rare, threatened and endangered species!
http://www.mainenaturalareas.org

## STATE RARITY RANKS

**S1** Critically imperiled in Maine because of extreme rarity (five or fewer occurrences or very few remaining individuals or acres) or because some aspect of its biology makes it especially vulnerable to extirpation from the State of Maine.

**S2** Imperiled in Maine because of rarity (6-20 occurrences or few remaining individuals or acres) or because of other factors making it vulnerable to further decline.

**S3** Rare in Maine (on the order of 20-100 occurrences).

**S4** Apparently secure in Maine.

**S5** Demonstrably secure in Maine.

**Note**: **State Ranks** are determined by the Maine Natural Areas Program.

## GLOBAL RARITY RANKS

**G1** Critically imperiled globally because of extreme rarity (five or fewer occurrences or very few remaining individuals or acres) or because some aspect of its biology makes it especially vulnerable to extirpation from the State of Maine.

**G2** Globally imperiled because of rarity (6-20 occurrences or few remaining individuals or acres) or because of other factors making it vulnerable to further decline.

**G3** Globally rare (on the order of 20-100 occurrences).

**G4** Apparently secure globally.

**G5** Demonstrably secure globally.

**Note:** **Global Ranks** are determined by The Nature Conservancy.

## STATE LEGAL STATUS FOR PLANTS

**Note**: State legal status is according to 5 M.R.S.A. § 13076-13079, which mandates the Department of Conservation to produce and biennially update the official list of Maine's endangered and threatened plants. The list is derived by a technical advisory committee of botanists who use data in the Natural Areas Program's database to recommend status changes to the Department of Conservation.

**E** ENDANGERED; Rare and in danger of being lost from the state in the foreseeable future, or federally listed as Endangered.

**T** THREATENED; Rare and, with further decline, could become endangered; or federally listed as Threatened.

**SC** SPECIAL CONCERN; Rare in Maine, based on available information, but not sufficiently rare to be considered Threatened or Endangered.