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Project Title: White Mountains to Moosehead Lake Program, Aligning Conservation at the Landscape Scale

Headline Title (2-5 words): Landscape Scale Conservation in the White-Moose

Brief Summary (Abstract):

The White Mountains to Moosehead Lake Program (“White-Moose”) is a cross-sector collaboration to help preserve and strengthen the integrity of habitat connections at a broader landscape scale, strategically and deliberately integrate climate adaptation, and protect the nature-based assets (working forests and recreation) that underlie local economies across western Maine and eastern New Hampshire to the Canadian border.

Project Location: A 2.7 million-acre region extending from New Hampshire’s White Mountain National Forest, across Maine’s Mahoosucs and High Peaks region to the conserved forest blocks of the Moosehead Lake region. (See accompanying map).

Partners:

The Trust for Public Land  
Northern Forest Center  
Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust  
The Wilderness Society  
Mahoosucs Initiative, including the Mahoosuc Land Trust  
High Peaks Alliance  
Appalachian Mountain Club  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust  
Maine Audubon  
US Forest Service  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
US National Park Service  
US Navy  
State of Maine  
State of New Hampshire  
Town of Carrabassett Valley

Background:

The White Mountains to Moosehead Lake region – spanning 2.7 million acres from northern New Hampshire, through western Maine to Moosehead Lake – is among the most ecologically significant, large landscapes in the Northeast. The region provides a connective corridor of contiguous, climate-resilient habitat between the White Mountain National Forest and more than 2 million acres of contiguous conservation lands extending from Moosehead Lake north to the Canadian border.



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The region is notable for its exceptionally productive large blocks of working forest, famed waterways that support wild native Eastern brook trout and endangered Atlantic salmon, important wetland complexes, and some of New England's most dramatic high elevation ridgelines and mountain peaks. Scientific study by The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and others has identified the White-Moose region as a top "climate adaptation landscape" that will provide a critical refuge for native fish and wildlife as the climate warms and shifts. Other science-based collaboratives including Staying Connected and Two Countries, One Forest and the federal America's Great Outdoors program have spotlighted the region as a conservation model for collaboration and strategic conservation at a landscape scale.

Over the past two decades, conservation partners, donors, and local communities have worked together to protect the lands and waters this precious region needs to thrive. In this time more than 250,000 acres were protected in the White Mountains to Moosehead Lake program area. The White Mountains to Moosehead Lake Program was formed and named in 2010 to take a compelling legacy of conservation work to a new level by better aligning organizational strengths, raising public awareness to the importance of land conservation in a changing climate, and leveraging public and private funding in order to protect multiple resources for the benefit of natural and human communities.

Project Goals:

Develop landscape-scale collaboration in the White Mountains to Moosehead Lake Corridor ("White Moose") that protects this essential Northern Forest connector with highly strategic land conservation while modeling innovative cross-sector partnership to leverage community well-being, enhanced natural resources, and increased recreational opportunities.

Strategy Goals Implemented:

1. Climate Change Resilience: Leverage the naturally resilient lands of the White Moose, and its regionally significant role in connectivity, by protecting the most important connecting features, climate resilient sites, and projected habitat refugia. Enhance climate resilience of habitats and working lands by helping landowners to integrate new science-based restoration and management of important areas.
2. Working Forest Economy: Integrate focused conservation of the White Moose's highest value wood baskets with innovation and investment in forest product businesses and systems (from timber to biomass energy) utilizing these lands.
3. Outdoor Recreation: Permanently protect the signature recreation assets within the corridor (foremost the Appalachian Trail, Northern Forest Canoe Trail, and associated viewsheds) and enhance overall recreation opportunities with new trail development and enhancement of recreation-focused businesses, and



#### Climate Impacts Addressed:

The White-Moose focus area was identified as early as 2009 by Mark Anderson and a team at The Nature Conservancy and Two Countries, One Forest as a key point of region-wide connectivity under the “Staying Connected” initiative. This early connectivity data has since been reinforced by other information about the region’s naturally resilient qualities, including Peter McKinley at The Wilderness Society, who stated, “The convergent effects of latitudinal positioning, mountain topography, and forest contiguity...offer a conservation opportunity that is significant at a continental scale.

Also of particular note, analyses provided by David Publicover, of the Appalachian Mountain Club, indicates the White Mountains to Moosehead Lake focus area contains the great majority of unconserved high-elevation land in the northeast.

The combination of high-elevation habitat, regionally unique geology, relatively intact large forest blocks, snowpack retention, and cool water temperatures strongly suggest the region’s role as refugia for climate sensitive species, such as alpine spruce-fir, eastern brook trout, Atlantic salmon, and Bicknell’s thrush.

#### Status of Project Implementation (Timeline, Milestones, Next Steps):

- Fall 2009: White Mountains to Moosehead Lake Program (White-Moose) and collaboration established
- December 2011: First meeting of White-Moose partners
- May 2012: The Trust for Public Land establishes and populates the White Mountains to Moosehead Lake DataBasin GIS Portal. Roll-out of the spatial database portal to partners begins. Use and updating is ongoing.
- July 2012: The Trust for Public Land establishes and roles out the White-Moose Measures of Progress Site: [http://tplgis.org/metrics\\_wmml/](http://tplgis.org/metrics_wmml/)
- October 2012 through May 2013 multiple White-Moose collaboration meetings
- June 2011 – April 2014: Over 21,000 acres conserved via a combination of fee and conservation easements; an additional 23,000 acres are under contract and expected to be completed by July 2014; and 17,000 acres are entering the queue for conservation in the next year or two.
- Summer 2014: Two or three facilitated meetings of White-Moose partners to revisit program outcomes, refine objectives, and set strategies and tactics for taking the collaboration and its impacts to the next level.

#### Project Outcomes:

- (See Status of Project Implementation above)
- White Moose is designated an “Americas Great Outdoors Focus Area”
- Strengthened collaboration across fifteen to twenty public and private partners
- 21,000 acres conserved since 2009 and an additional 23,000 expected to be conserved by June 2014, and at least 17,000 acres possible for permanent protection by March 2015.



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- Framework established with the State of Maine for the designation of a 4,000 acre ecological reserve on high elevation and steep slope habitats across Crocker Mountain.
- Adaptive Management provisions included in pending the terms of the Orbeton Stream conservation easement, with a particular focus on Brook trout and Atlantic salmon habitat.
- Creation of DataBasin White Moose portal and Measure of Progress Site.
- Linking to other collaborations/networks focused on tourism and economic development

Funding Sources:

- Multiple private national foundations, including: The Open Space Institute and Doris Duke, Wildlife Conservation Society, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-Acres for America
- Multiple state and regional foundations, including: The Betterment Fund, the William Bingham Foundation, Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, Horizon Foundation, Sarah K. de Coizart, Jesse B. Cox Charitable Trust
- Private Individuals
- Federal Public Sources: The Forest Legacy Program, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird funding, and coming on line is the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Preparedness Initiative (REPI), and the North American Cooperative Landscape Grant Program
- State public sources: Land for Maine's Future Program; New Hampshire's LCHIP Program, New Hampshire Fish and Game.
- Local source: The Town of Carrabassett Valley, Maine

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Photos/Attachments:

- Map of the White Mountains to Moosehead Lake Focus Area
- One page program description
- Crocker Mountain photograph:
  - permission, yes
  - photo credit: Jerry Monkman, ecophotography.com
  - Suggested photo caption. Cold Stream, The Forks, Maine
- Cold Stream photograph:
  - permission, yes
  - photo credit: Jerry Monkman, ecophotography.com
  - Suggested photo caption: Crocker Mountain, Carrabassett Valley, Maine