

***Wildlands are lands that are permanently protected from development, in which management is explicitly intended to allow natural processes to prevail with “free will” and minimal human interference. Humans have been part of nature for millennia and can coexist within and with Wildlands without intentionally altering their structure, composition, or function.***

**M**aine comprises half of New England’s land area and supports a diverse mixture of forestland, farmland, coastline, mountaintops, wetlands, lakes, rivers, and streams. With 88 percent of the state forested, including the vast northern unincorporated region, Maine is positioned to be the leader in conserving New England’s Wildlands at a landscape scale. Despite a lengthy history of land conservation, including some of the region’s most notable successes, Maine has permanently protected only 23 percent of its forests, the least among New England states. Less than 4 percent of the state is Wildland and most conserved forest acreage in the state remains under commercial timber management.

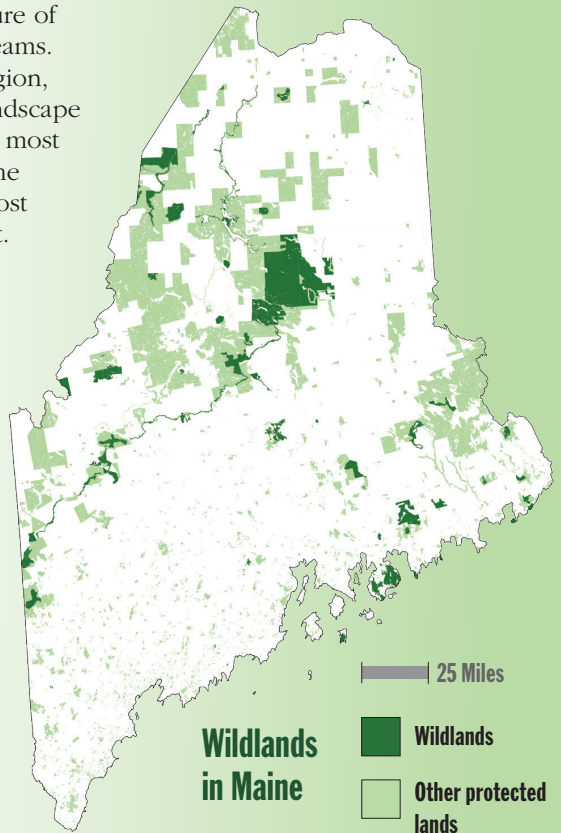
**Wildlands** covered most of Maine and New England for thousands of years. Wildlands are vital for nature and society as they:

- **Acknowledge and support** the intrinsic value of wild nature to exist
- **Preserve** wildlife habitat and biodiversity
- **Mitigate climate change** by sequestering and storing carbon
- **Enhance landscape resilience** through ecological complexity
- **Offer quiet space** for spiritual and physical renewal
- **Serve as references** for science, management, and conservation
- **Support 30x30**, the global effort to protect biodiversity

*Wildlands in New England* is the first regional study in the United States to characterize all “forever wild lands” that are protected so that natural processes can prevail, with minimal to no active management. These lands—designated wilderness areas as well as diverse public and private natural areas and reserves—provide critical support to nature and society. In Maine, Wildlands are a recognized part of the state’s land conservation strategy, which takes an integrated, sustainable, and equitable approach.

To reach the goals for *Wildlands* and to improve the landscape resilience of the region, *Wildlands in New England 2023* makes the following recommendations:

- **Center Wildlands** in an integrated approach to land planning and conservation that includes actively managed forests and farms.
- **Strengthen existing Wildlands** through permanent protection and landscape buffering
- **Create more Wildlands**, thoughtfully and strategically with a diversity of partners, through private and public action.



**Only 3.7% of Maine is considered Wildlands today.**

## Three Maine Wildlands

**Alder Stream Wilderness Preserve.** This 7,292-acre property owned by Northeast Wilderness Trust is protected with a forever-wild conservation easement held by Forest Society of Maine. The Preserve lies within one of the largest, most varied and intact freshwater wetland systems in Maine, supporting nearly 400 species of plants and at least 199 animal species and uncounted species of invertebrates. The Preserve abuts a 6,500-acre private tract, protected with a forever-wild easement by Sweet Water Trust and transferred to Northeast Wilderness Trust in 2021.



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## 100-Mile Wilderness/Baxter State Park region.

The diversity of public and private entities advancing Wildland conservation is exemplified by this northern landscape, embracing Baxter State Park (State of Maine), Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument (National Park Service), Debsconeag Lakes Wilderness Area (The Nature Conservancy), and Nahmakanta Ecological Reserve (State of Maine). Southward it extends along the Appalachian Trail to the Roach Ponds, Katahdin Iron Works, Baker Mountain and Silver Lakes Reserves owned by the Maine Woods Initiative LLC of the Appalachian Mountain Club.



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**Monhegan Island Wildlands.** Monhegan Associates Inc. was founded in 1954 “to preserve for posterity the natural wild beauty, biotic communities, and desirable natural, artificial, and historic features of the so-called ‘wild-lands’ portion of Monhegan Island, Maine.” The Wildlands comprise about 375 acres, slightly more than half of the island and the approach to land management is strictly minimalist, though challenges include a post-agricultural history of invasive plants and the impacts of tourists to this popular destination for art, history, and scenic beauty.



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## State, Regional, and Global Support for Wildlands

The following initiatives make strong cases for Wildlands and emphasize the need for increased permanent protection with measurable targets.

### Maine Ecological Reserve System and Baxter State Park

Maine is the regional center for industrial forestry and has an uneasy history of balancing the many visions for vast Wildlands with local and political support for the wood products industry. State support for Wildlands is found substantially in the protection and management of Baxter State Park and the legislatively designated Ecological Reserve System, which comprises approximately 93,000 acres of Wildlands. That program includes a cap on the total acreage and constrains the addition of lands that would reduce harvest levels from state lands.

### Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities (WWF&C)

WWF&C provides a regional vision and state-specific land protection goals that call for at least 70 percent of New England to be protected as forest—at least 10 percent protected as Wildland and 60 percent protected as Woodland (managed forest)—and all existing farmland to be permanently conserved. This vision intentionally values wild and managed forests, farmlands, and communities and relies on the collaboration of conservation efforts across the region.

### 30x30

Wildlands form a central component of “30x30,” the national and international goal to protect 30 percent of Earth’s land and waters by 2030, addressing the looming challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and threats to human health and welfare.



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## What You Can Do:

- Visit [Wildlands in New England](#) to read the report and access related resources.
- Contact [Northeast Wilderness Trust](#) to learn about their Wildlands Partnership Program.
- Contact other Wildlands Conservation Partners to learn about their efforts and available programs.
- Support local, statewide, and regional conservation efforts in supporting Maine’s Ecological Reserves and in implementing the integrated goals of Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities.

## Maine’s Wildland Conservation Partners:

### Public

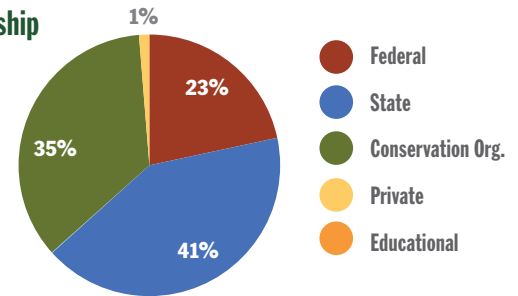
- **State:** Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, Maine Legislature, Baxter State Park Authority
- **Federal:** National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- **Regional and Municipal:** Association of Maine Conservation Commissions, Maine Land Use Planning Commission, local municipalities

### Private

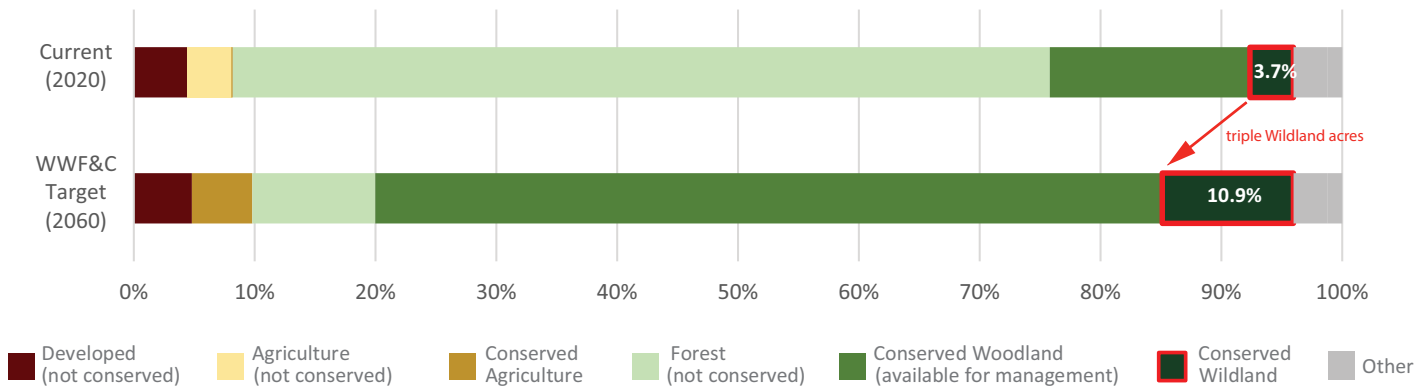
- Conservation organizations, including Northeast Wilderness Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Appalachian Mountain Club, Forest Society of Maine
- Regional and local land trusts including Downeast Lakes Land Trust, Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, Midcoast Conservancy, Frenchman Bay Conservancy, Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust, and Monhegan Associates Inc.
- Colleges, universities, public and private schools
- Private individuals and families

## Wildland Ownership in Maine

722,496 acres



## Land Cover in Maine: Current and WWF&C Target



Copies of the full report, the Wildlands web map, and additional information are available on the website of Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities: [wildlandsandwoodlands.org/wildlands-in-new-england](http://wildlandsandwoodlands.org/wildlands-in-new-england)

To learn more about ways to directly support Wildlands conservation throughout New England, visit [newwildernesstrust.org/](http://newwildernesstrust.org/)

