

Northern Forest Lands Study

August 31, 1989

CASE STUDY

Washington County, Maine

Prepared By

The Irland Group

7 North Chestnut Street

Augusta, Maine 04330

(207) 622-4023



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1 INTRODUCTION

Washington County is Maine's easternmost county. It borders New Brunswick, Canada and has 931 miles of coastline (Figure 1). The land area of Washington County is 1,669,255 acres of which 1,439,000 acres (86%) are classified as Commercial Forest Land. Washington County encompasses 196,345 acres of fresh water including 25 lakes each greater than 1000 acres. Rivers draining in excess of 100 square miles are the St. Croix, Machias, East Machias, and Narraguagus. At six hours away, Boston is the closest major metropolitan area. A list of distances and times to major northeastern US and Canadian cities is provided in Table 1.

The economy of the county is based on natural resources. The largest employer is Georgia-Pacific Corp. with approximately 1000 workers in its Woodland mills which produce pulp and paper, lumber, and waferboard. Numerous wood products mills and logging contractors throughout the county employ several hundred more workers. Other major industries include fishing and blueberry production. Washington County is the nation's leading producer of wild blueberries. Lobster, clams and sardines are also important exports of the region.

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Table 1
Mileages & Estimated Travel Time to Metropolitan Centers

	<u>Distance</u> <u>(Miles)</u>	<u>Driving Time</u> <u>(Hours)</u>
Boston, MA	310	6
Hartford, CT	401	8
New York, NY	518	10
Buffalo, NY	739	15
Albany, NY	438	9
Syracuse, NY	573	11.5
Montreal, PQ	386	8
Quebec, PQ	333	7

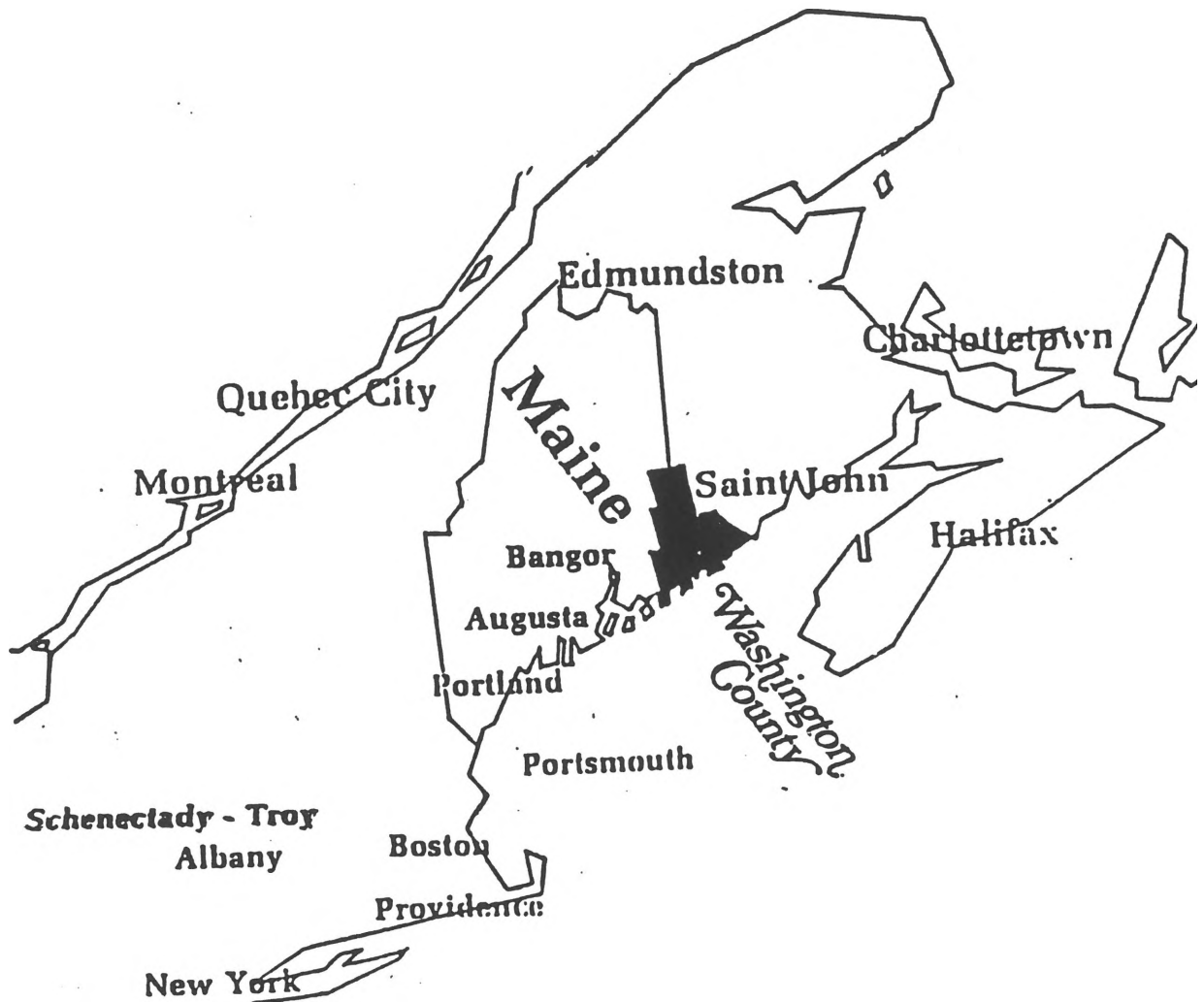
Above mileages are estimated to Wesley, central Washington County.

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Figure 1
Locator Map



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Employment fluctuates seasonally with marine and blueberry harvests and with the operation of canneries and packing plants. Manufacturing of Christmas wreaths is a seasonal enterprise which has grown significantly in recent years. The prevalence of seasonal employment is largely responsible for Washington County consistently being ranked last among Maine's sixteen counties using various measures of income (Table 2).

Washington County's population peaked in 1900 at about 45,000 then declined fairly steadily until 1970. The number of farms and acres in farmland decreased dramatically during this period. Between 1970 and 1980 the population increased from 29,859 to 34,963, a 17% increase due to net migration. U.S. Census and Maine Department of Labor estimate reports a 1986 population slightly lower at 33,900.

Table 2 Income Table: Maine vs. Washington County		
	<u>Per Capita Income 1985</u>	<u>Median Household Effective Buying Income 1986</u>
Maine	\$9,042	\$21,695
Washington County	6,929	15,647

Washington County is comprised of 43 organized towns and 36 unorganized townships. With an average population density of 13 people per square mile, it is one of Maine's more sparsely populated counties. The population is

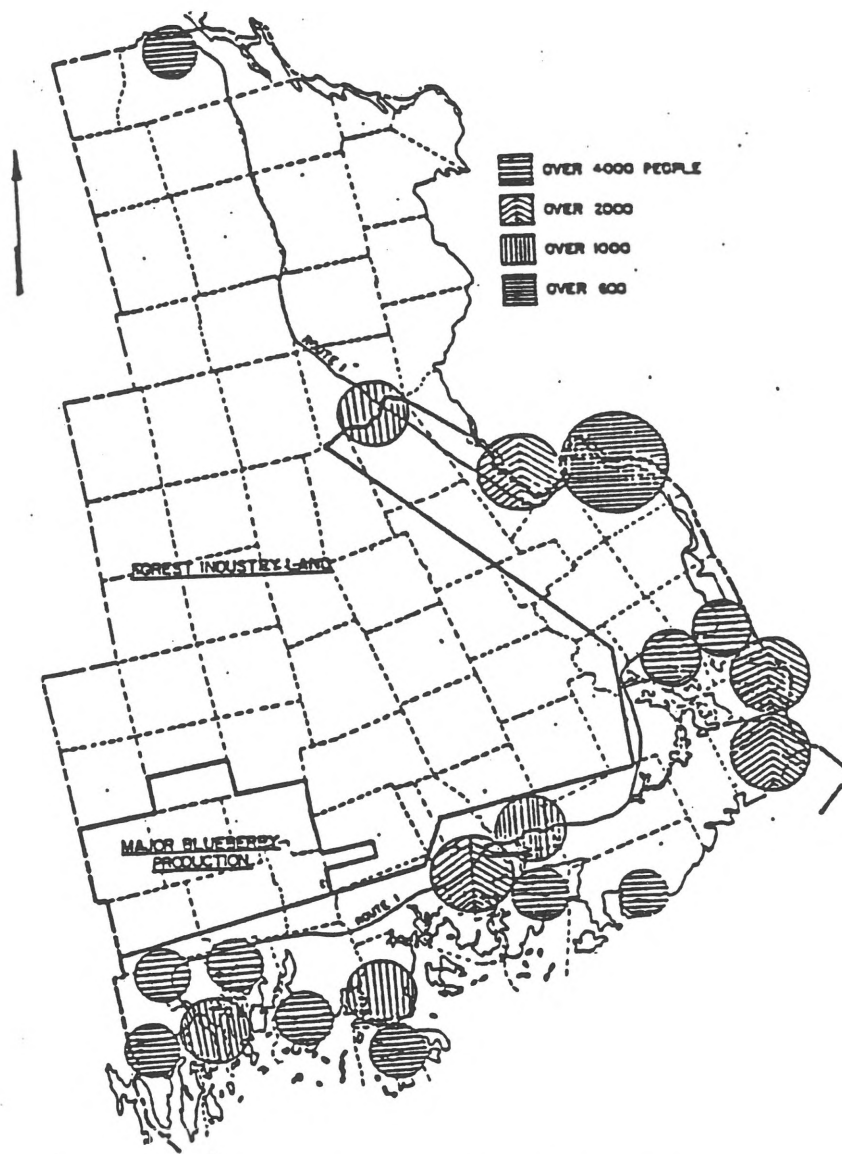
largely concentrated along U.S. Route 1. Calais is the county's largest city with a population of approximately 4,000. Machias, the county seat, is the next largest town with a population of about 2,500. Figure 2 highlights the population centers and major land use categories.

Research for a 1977 Regional Comprehensive Plan documented 111 subdivisions countywide during the 10 year period 1967-1976. A total of 4250 lots were created in these subdivisions for an average of 38 lots per subdivision. Over 70% (78) of the subdivisions were created in the last 5 years of the study period (1972-1976). The comprehensive plan characterizes subdivision activity as distributed among three general types:

- 1.) "Seasonal" - Usually water-oriented, with 10 or more lots, and characterized by professional design and marketing strategy.
- 2.) "Residential Development" - Usually 10 lots or more, oriented towards a village center and municipal services. More or less professional design and marketing strategy.
- 3.) "Informal" - Small, often fewer than 5 lots, typically with frontage on a public road. Often developed one lot at a time without any prior planning.

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Figure 2
Washington County Population Centers



Source: Washington County Regional Planning Commission
Washington County Facts, 1988.

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Subdivision activity during the 1967-1976 study period appears to have accommodated both an increasing resident population and an increasing demand for seasonal property. Washington County does have a sizeable summer population. The natural beauty of its coastline and the recreational opportunities offered by its lakes and rivers are major attractions. Both population trends and characteristics of recent subdivisions suggest that activity since 1980 has been largely a response to demand for seasonal, recreational properties rather than resident housing.

The Northern Forest Lands Study excludes the coastal towns and townships of Washington County. These areas have been excluded because demand for coastal property has been particularly intense and factors affecting this market are quite different from other land markets in the northern forest region. The next sections of this report describe the study area, comparing it to Washington County in its entirety, and examine major subdivision activity within the study area from 1980 through June of 1989.

2 DESCRIPTION OF CASE STUDY AREA

From Steuben to Calais, towns and townships bordering U.S. Route 1-1A and between U.S. Route 1-1A and the Atlantic Ocean were excluded from the study area (Figure 3). Table 3 compares the study area with the entire county. This table emphasizes the rural nature of the area. The study area comprises about 72% of the county's area and contains only 26% of the county's population. Baileyville, also known as Woodland and the home of Georgia-Pacific Corp. in Maine, is the only town in the study area with a population in excess of 2000. Of the 20 organized towns, 10 have populations less than 150. Combined populations of the 34 unorganized towns is approximately 1121.

Outside of Georgia Pacific, major employers are blueberry producers and processors in Cherryfield and Wesley. Many in the study area are self-employed. Many others commute outside of the study area for work. The 23 towns and townships within the study area for which employment data was available had an average unemployment rate of 6.8 in 1987 (Maine Dept. of Labor). Several towns with workforces of 3 to 45 persons had unemployment rates of zero. Danforth's unemployment rate was the highest at 14.9%.

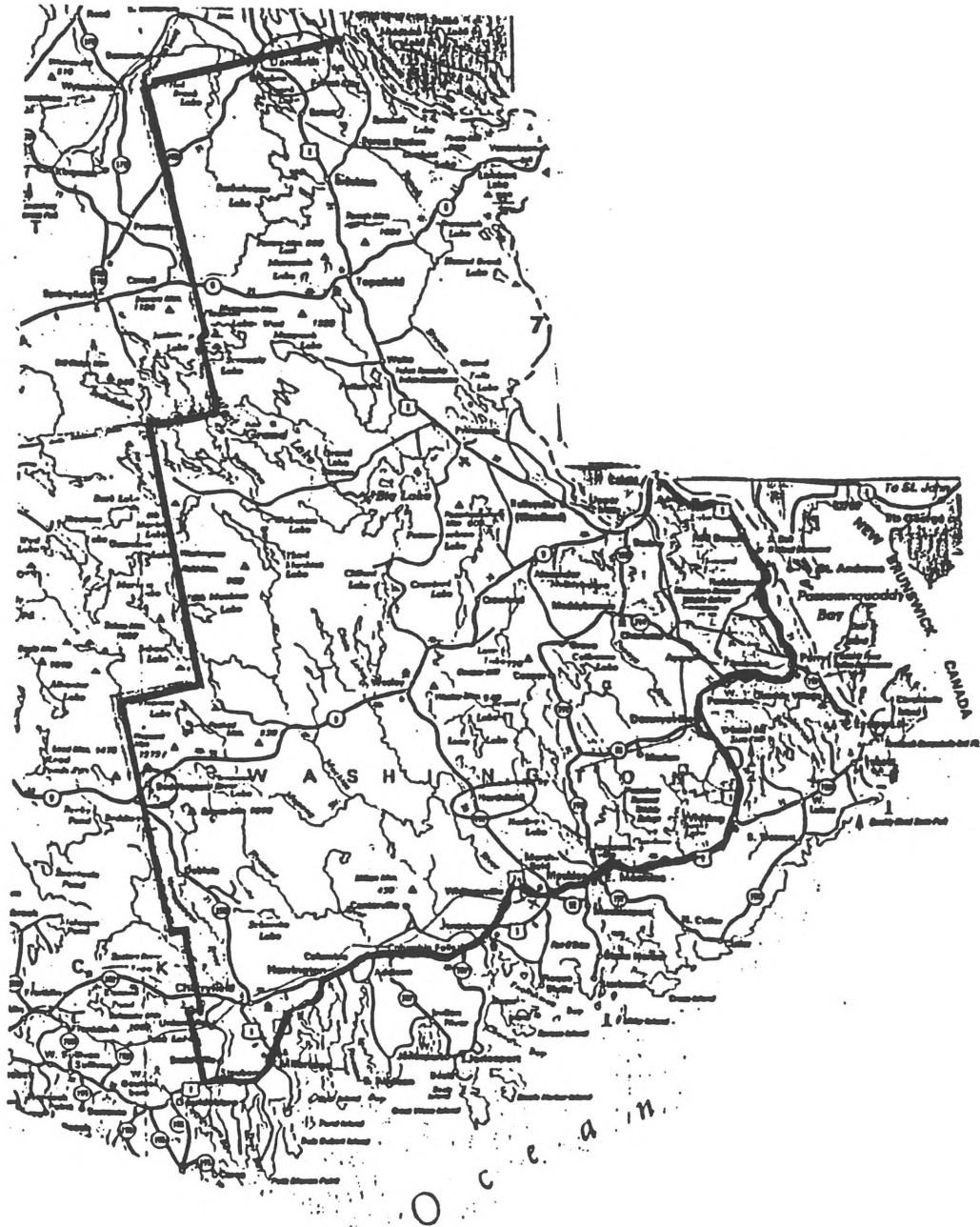
Table 3
Comparison of Study Area and Washington County

	<u>Entire County</u>	<u>Study Area</u>
Population*	34,963	8,939 (26%)
# of Organized Towns	43	20 (45%)
# of Unorg. Townships	36	34 (94%)
Area (sq. miles)	2,612	1,891 (72%)
Population Density (people/sq. mile)	13	5

* U.S. Census 1986 Estimates

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Figure 3
Map of Study Area



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3 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

A basic inventory of subdivisions for the study area was obtained by searching County Registry of Deeds files where subdivision plats are recorded and indexed by town. Table 4 and Figures 4, 5, and 6 presents this information. Table 5 presents the number of acres affected by the 1980-1989 subdivision from each type of ownership. Comparison of the 28 subdivisions recorded during the 1980-1989 study period with the 111 recorded during the 1967-1976 county level study is misleading. The earlier study was county wide. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of the development was concentrated on the coast, outside of our study area.

Table 4
Washington County Study Area
Subdivisions Studied Per Year, Jan. 1980 - June 1989

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Subdivisions</u>	<u>Number of Acres</u>	<u>Number of Lots Created</u>
1981	1	9	15
1982	1	60	10
1983	1	17	5
1984	2	33	9
1985	2	2530	61
1986	11	9459	287
1987	6	4974	101
1988	2	218	20
1989	<u>2</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>24</u>
TOTALS	28	17355	532

Table 5
Town Acres by Ownership Class
January 1980 - June 1989

	<u>ACRES</u>		
	<u>Beddington</u>	<u>Danforth</u>	<u>Northfield</u>
1 Total Acres in Town	19,400	31,806	31,118
2 Industrial Forest Ownership ¹	15,546	18,000	17,857
3 Public/Cons. Reserved	318	32	2
4 Total 2 and 3	15,864	18,032	17,859
5 Total Non-Industrial Private	3,536	13,774	13,258
6 Acres Subdivided in 1980's	3,303	211	1,924
7 Acres Subdivided as % of Town Total	17.0%	.66%	6.2%
8 Acres Subdivided as % of Non-Industrial Private	93.4%	1.5%	14.5%

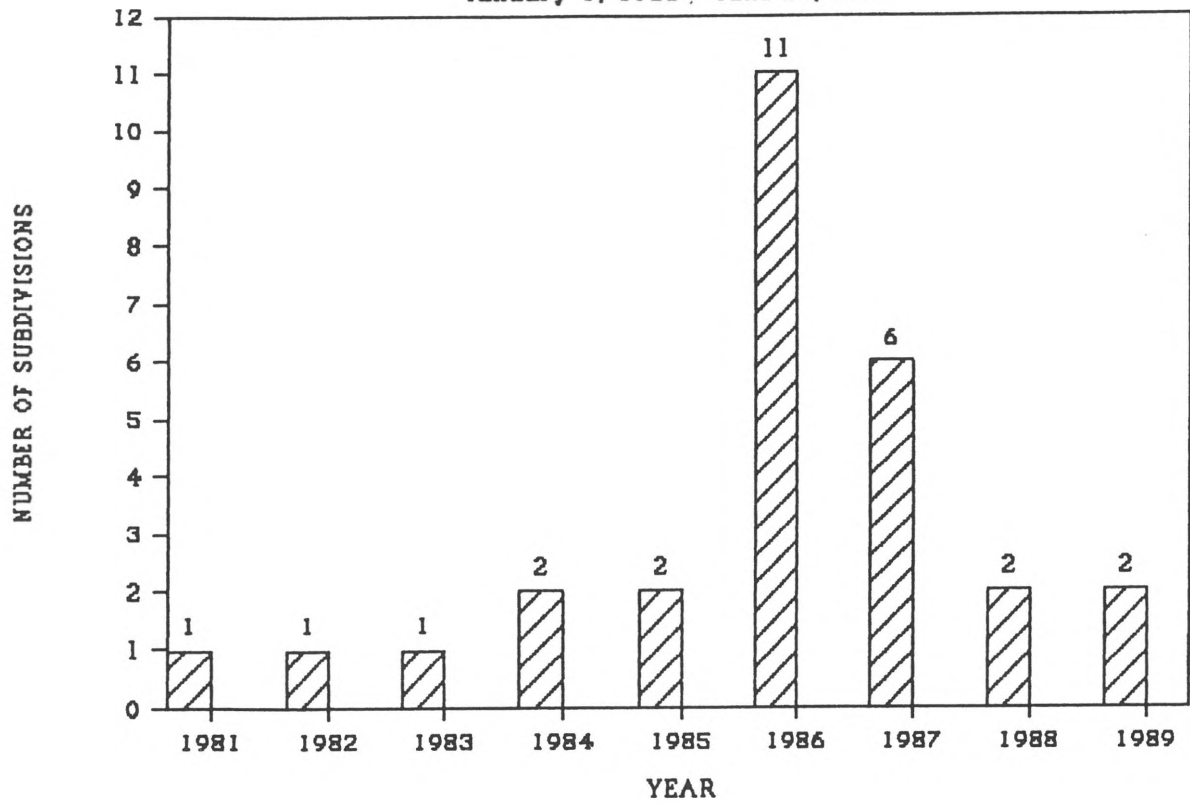
¹ Danforth includes 6,289 acres owned by Champion and 11,711 acres owned by Baskegegan. Danforth has 23,625 acres under tree growth tax.

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Figure 4

SUBDIVISIONS BY YEAR

January 1, 1980 - June 30, 1989

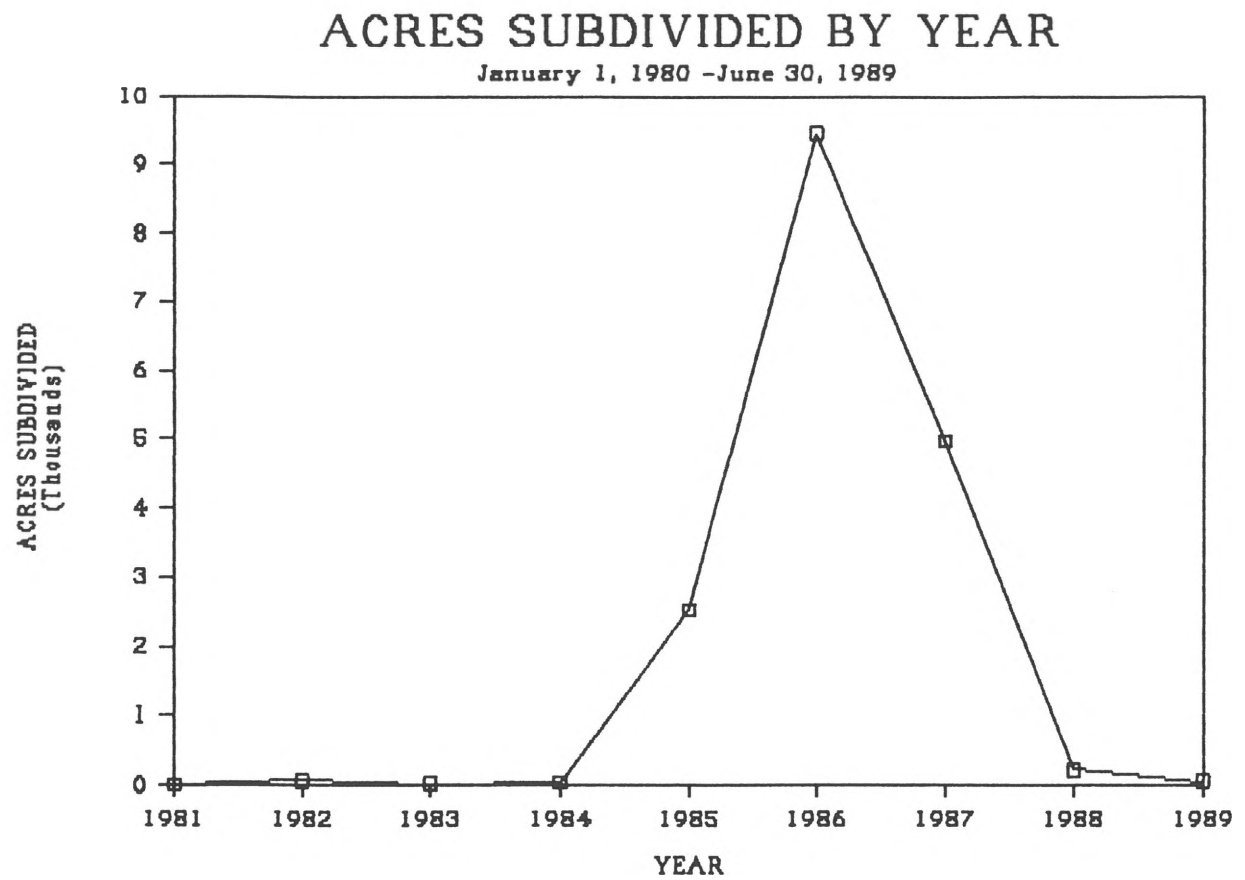


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Figure 5

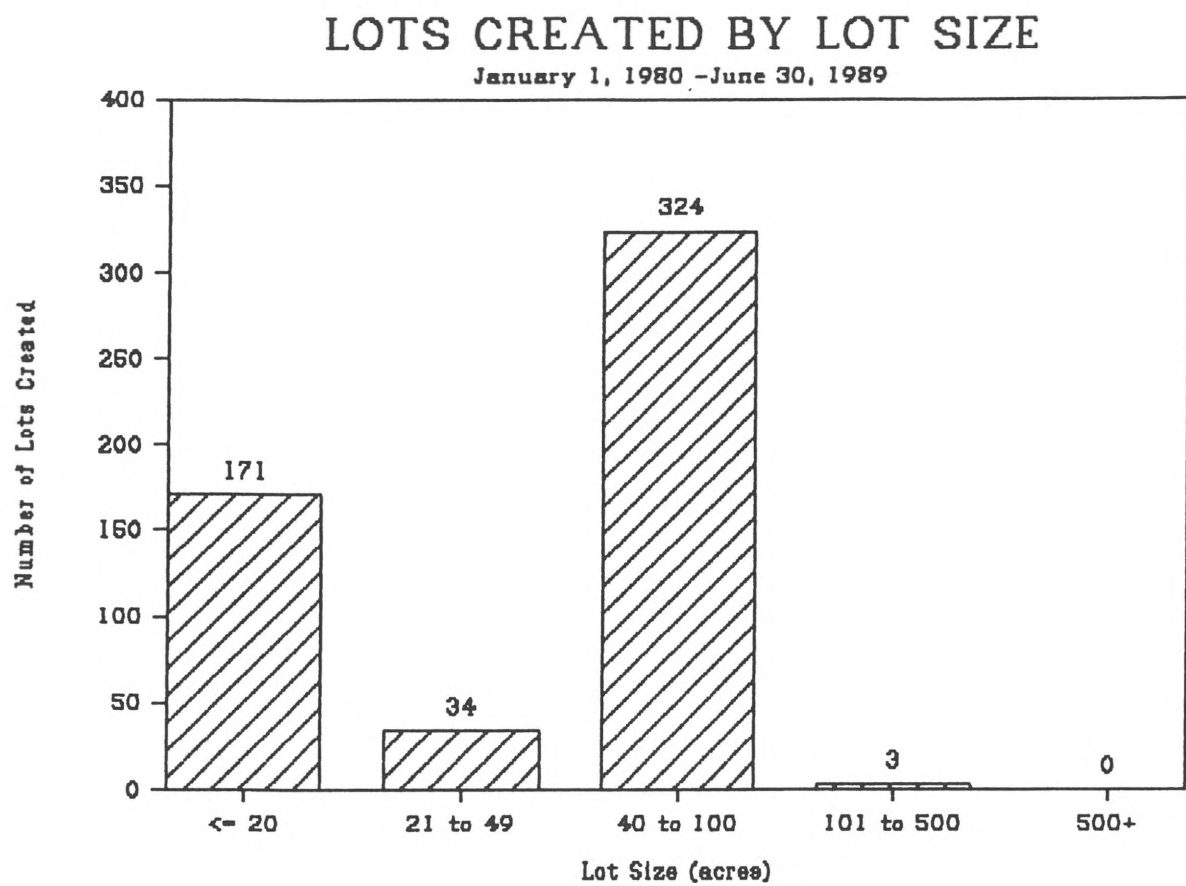


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Figure 6



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Examination of building permits issued by the Land Use Regulation Commission for the 36 townships under their jurisdiction in Washington County offers a comparison of intensity of development between the coastal and inland areas (Appendix 1). In the years 1985-1988, the years for which computer files are available, a total of 141 building permits were issued. Figure 7 breaks down the numbers by year for the 34 inland townships vs. the 2 coastal townships, 42% of the building permits were issued to the 2 coastal townships of Trescott and Edmunds. For the Northern Forest Lands Study Area, i.e. the inland townships, the majority of building permits issued were for seasonal homes (Figure 8, Appendix 2).

A search of LURC files for subdivisions permits issued between 1980 and June of 1989 yielded only 3 records for the study area with a fourth application pending. An additional three subdivisions within LURC jurisdiction were exempt from LURC review due to the fact that lots created were 40 acres or larger. These 3 are, however, included in our inventory.

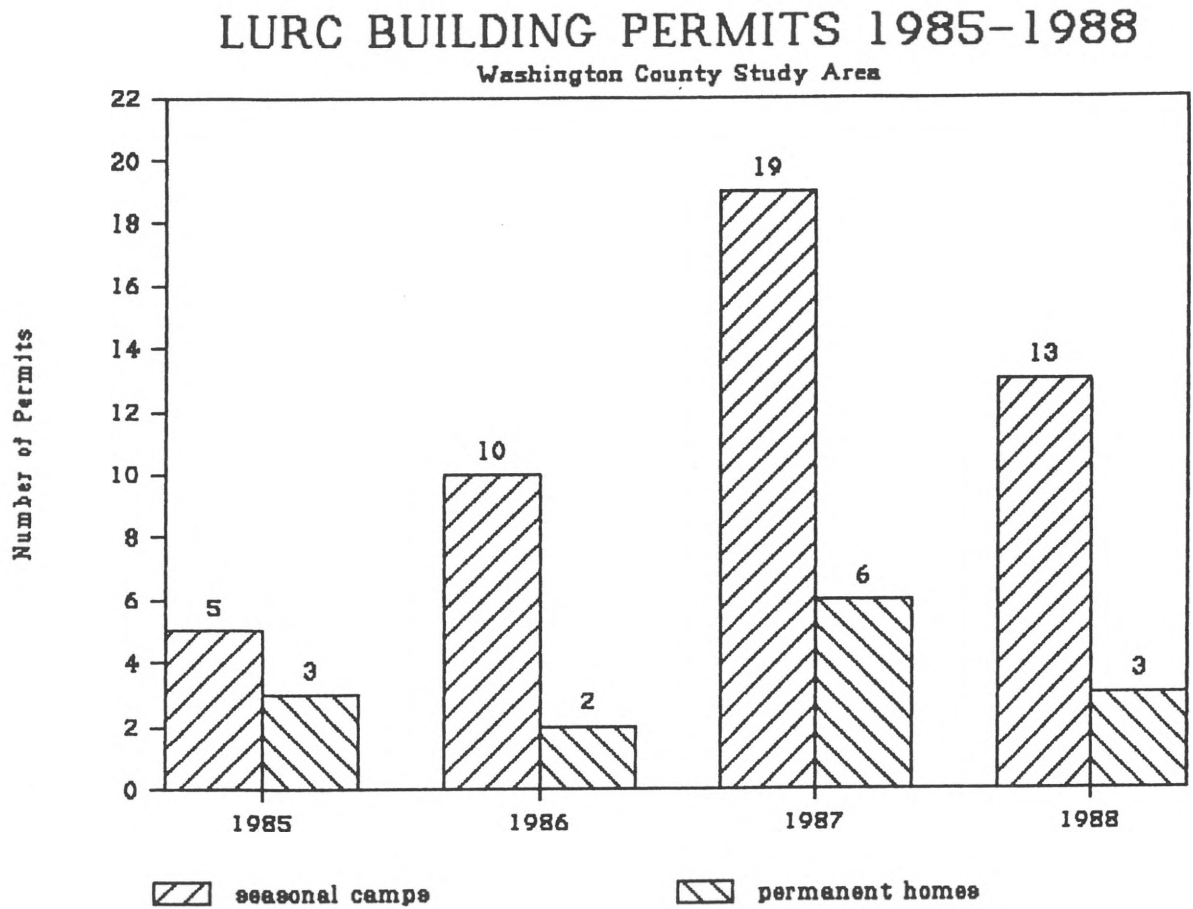
The bullet summary below highlights findings from our inventory and interviews with subdividers, and realtors.

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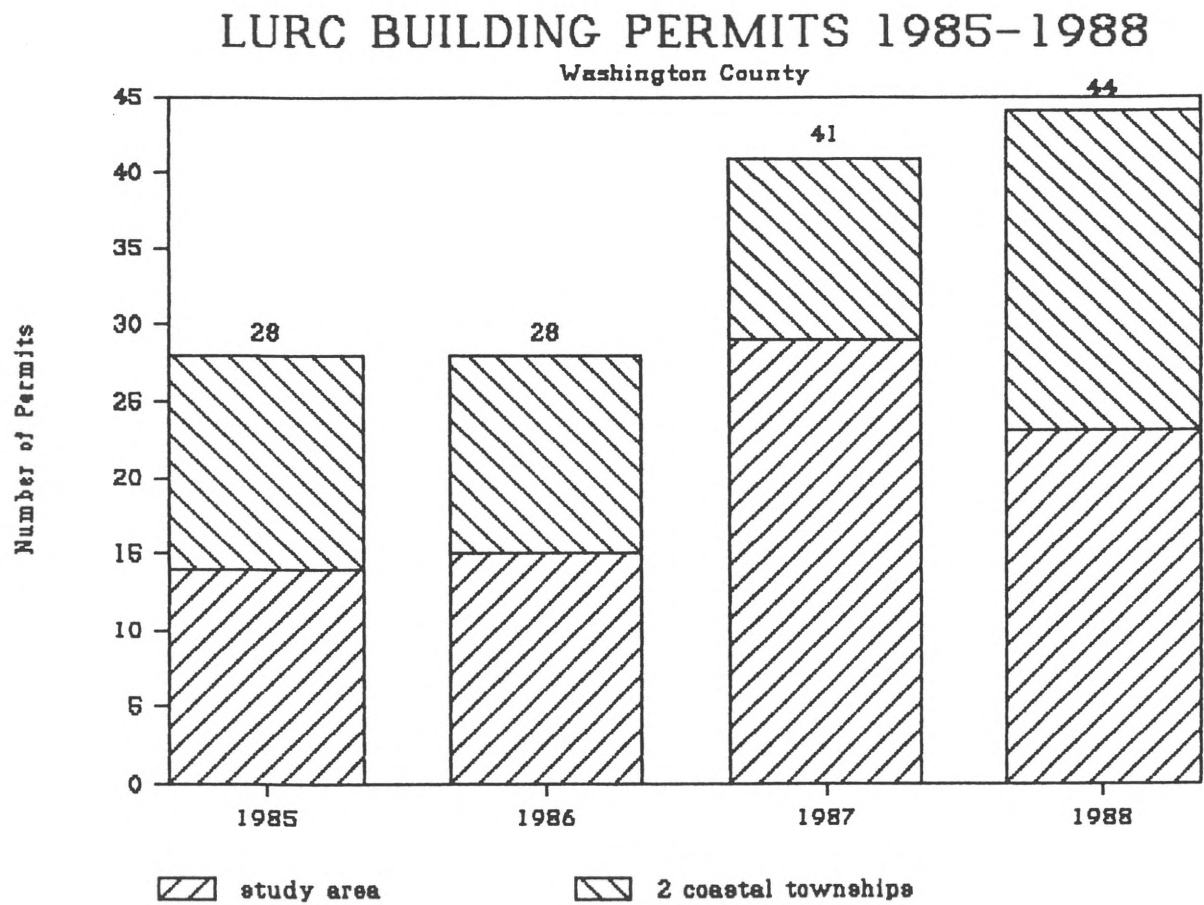
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Figure 7



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Figure 8



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4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1986 was a year of unprecedented subdivision activity in the study area. Subdivision activity has been largely concentrated adjacent to rivers and lakes. Of the 28 subdivisions examined in the 10 year period, only 4 contain no frontage on a lake or major river.

In 1986 and 1987 many lots of 40 acres and larger were created. Most were marketed with shorefrontage or deeded access to a common shorefront lot.

-- 10 of the 28 subdivisions examined were developed by land use corporations with offices in other states as well as Maine.

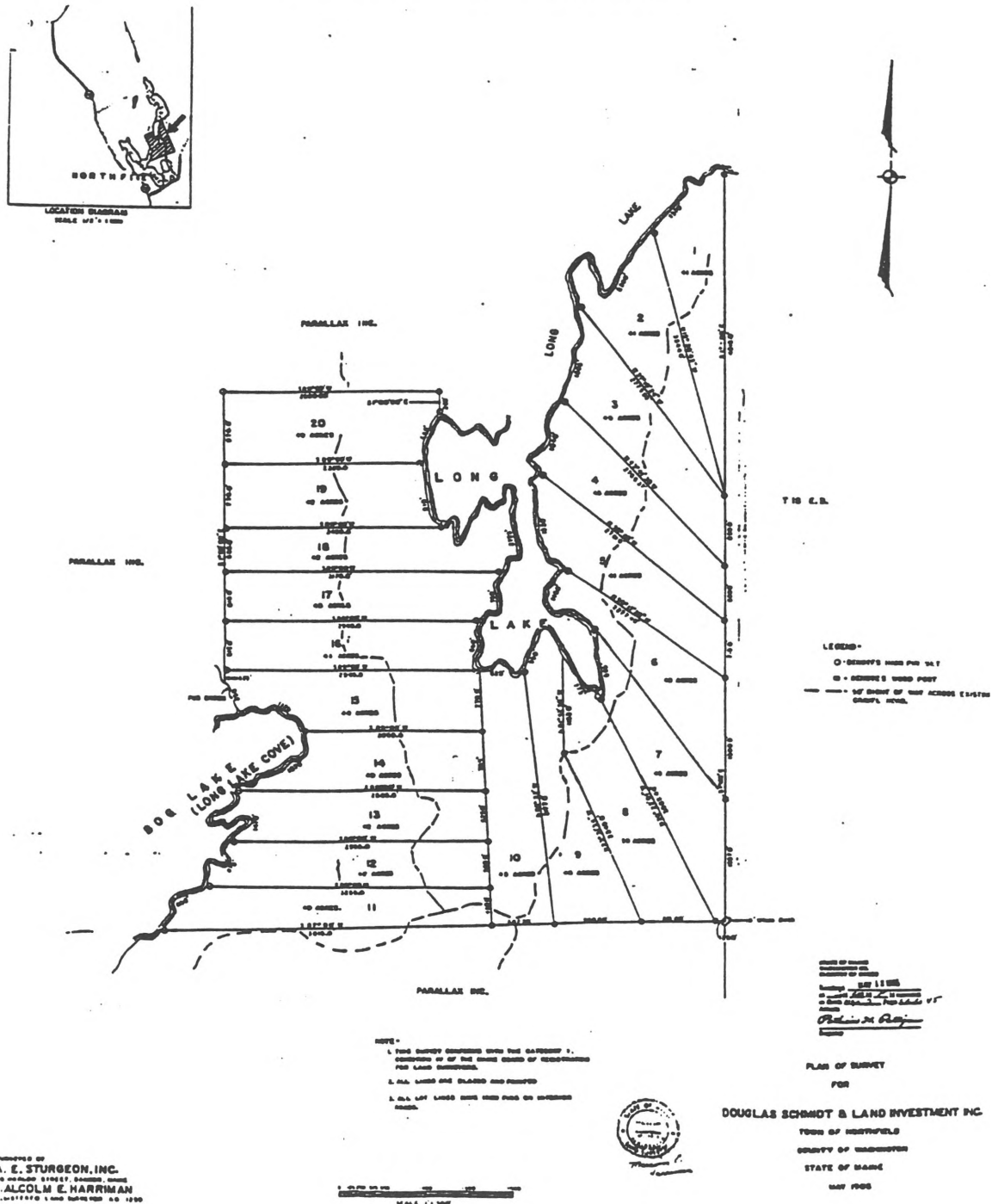
-- Lots of slightly over 40 acres in size are common in those projects created by land development companies, as are spaghetti lots providing waterfront acreage. Figures 9, 10 and 11 provide the layouts of three projects in the study area which demonstrate these practices.

-- Few lots created in the 1980-88 subdivisions and actively marketed remain unsold.

-- Only a small percentage of the 324 lots in excess of 40 acres have been built on.

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Figure 9
Subdivision Plat - Northfield

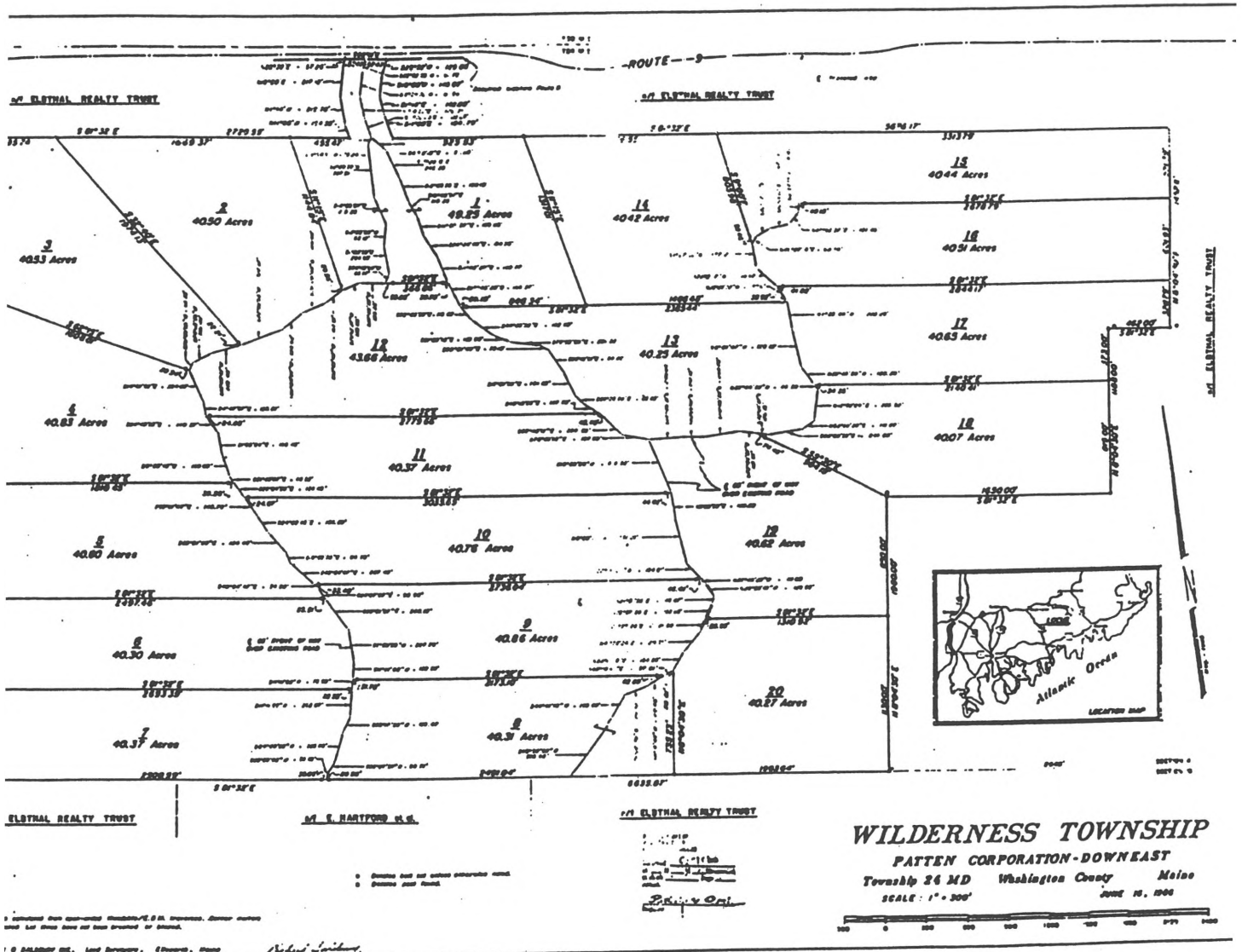


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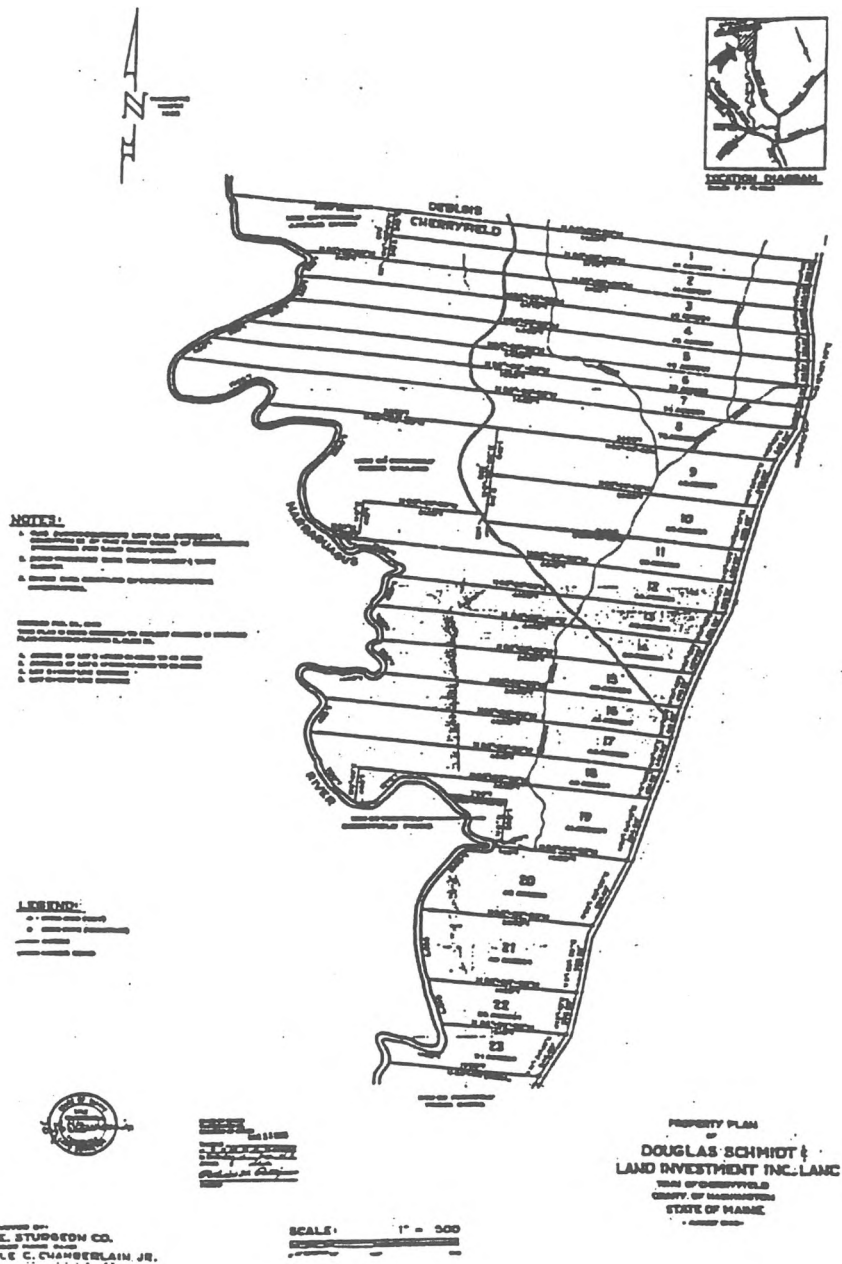
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Figure 10
Subdivision Plat - Patten Corp.



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Figure 11
Subdivision Plat - Cherryfield



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-- Selling prices for lots 40 acres and larger ranged from \$325 to over \$600 per acre.

-- Prices for lots from 5 to 40 acres in size with water frontage ranged from \$2000 to \$9000 per acre.

-- Lots created in the study period were sold as bare lots with the exception of a few lots which were leased prior to subdivision.

Within the study area we chose the towns of Beddington, Danforth and Northfield for a detailed look at all 1980-89 subdivision activity and local land use planning and review. These towns are geographically distributed within the study area and subdivision activity in these towns appears to be representative of the study area.

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5 BEDDINGTON

Beddington is located 44 miles east of Bangor where Route 9 crosses the Narraguagus River. Route 9, 'The Airline Road', is the major route between Bangor and Calais (Figure 12).

Beddington encompasses an area of 36 square miles, much of this area is in fresh water lakes. Approximately 1300 acres are in blueberry production. Over half of the town's land area is owned by Champion International Corp. Beddington's population is around 36 (U.S. Census 1986 estimate). It has a town meeting form of government. The Town Selectmen serve as the Planning Board. Subdivisions are reviewed according to state guidelines.

During the study period (1980-1989) there have been 5 subdivisions in Beddington. Table 6 gives the details on each. A total of 3303 acres have been subdivided. Division of land into lots 40 acres and larger were not reviewed locally. This was in accord with state subdivision review guidelines.

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Table 6
Town of Beddington Subdivision Activity
Jan. 1980 - June 1989

<u>SD #</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Acres</u>	<u># of Lots</u>	<u>Lot Size</u> <u>(acres)</u>	<u># Sold</u>	<u># Built On</u>
1	1982	60	10	5-8	10	4
2	1986	254	12	10-24	10	
3	1986	2661	64	40+	64	2
4	1986	285	13	20-25	13	4
5	1988	<u>43</u>	<u>6</u>	1.9-2.7	<u>0</u>	0
TOTALS		3303	105		97	10

Comments: Of the 105 lots created, all but three have lake frontage or deeded lake access.

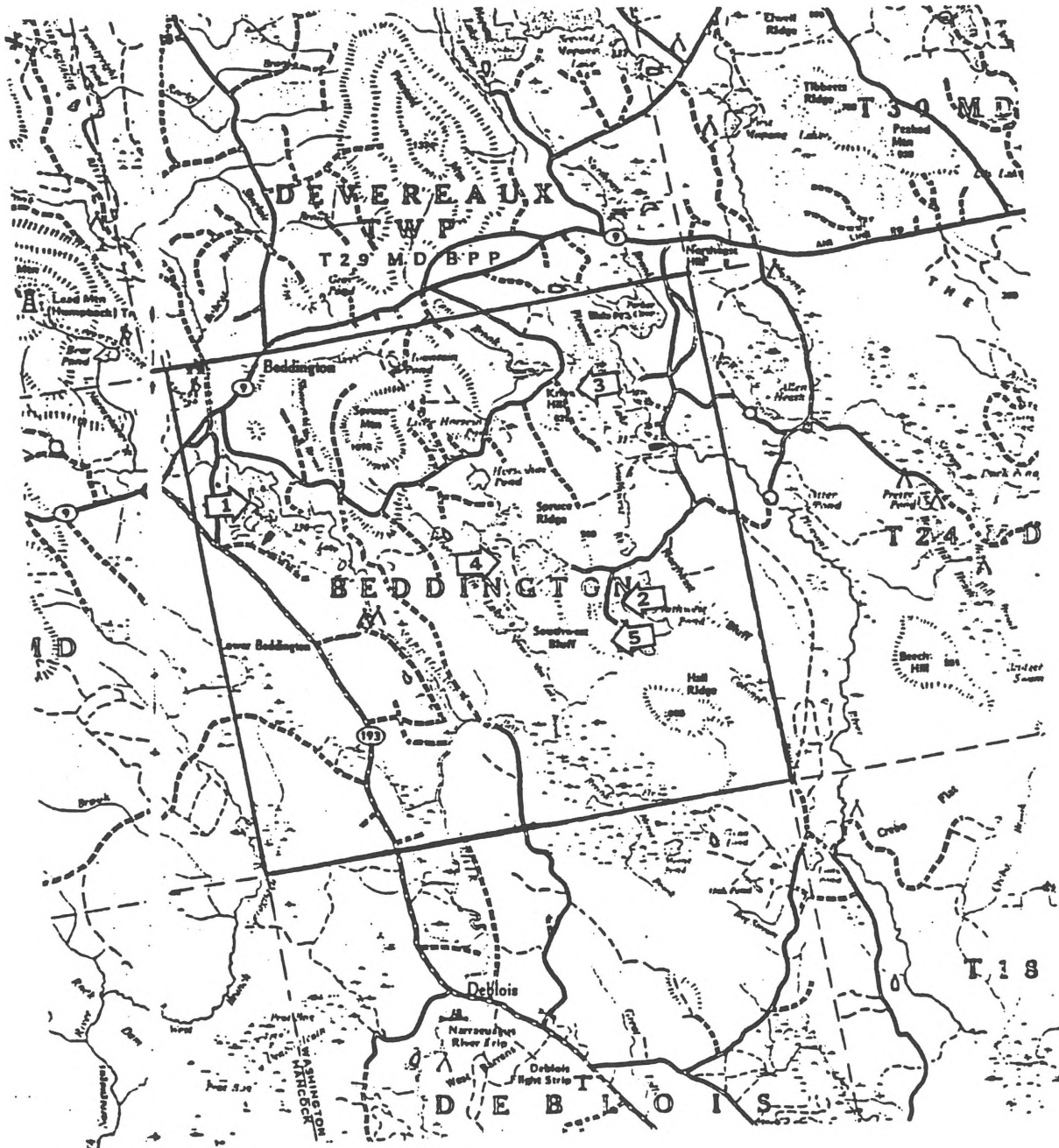
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Figure 12

Map of Beddington



⑤ approximate location of subdivisions

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In 1982 a resident of southern Maine created 10 lots by subdividing 60 acres. This 60 acres was part of a 350 acre parcel straddling Washington and Hancock Counties. Eight of the lots have frontage on Beddington Lake.

The 3 subdivisions listed in 1986 were undertaken by the same land use corporation. All 89 lots created have shorefrontage or deeded access through a common lot. Roads were built or improved to access all lots. Of the 89 lots, all but 2 have been sold. All were sold as bare lots. Information available indicates that less than 10 have been built on to date. At least ten lots are currently on the market for resale.

The most recent subdivision divided a 43 acre lot from 1986 subdivision (SD #3) into 6 lots. Five of these lots have frontage on Southwest Pond. One is being retained by the owner and 4 are currently on the market. The back lot of 31.5 acres may be subdivided and sold in the future. This project is owned by a Massachusetts investor.

Hunting, fishing, and other water recreation opportunities have attracted subdivision activity to Beddington. The primary grantor of land subdivided in 1986 had held the parcel for over 20 years as an investment. The land had been managed by a timber management company and had been harvested 10 years prior to sale.

In addition to lots created for sale by subdivision, a number of lots have been created for lease. Champion International has an active leasing program in Beddington, similar to lease programs operated throughout northern

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and eastern Maine by other large industrial landowners. Between 125 and 150 lots are leased in Beddington. The majority of these lots are lakefront and average approximately one acre in size. Some larger lots are leased primarily for hunting camps. These typically do not have frontage on a major lake or river. Leases are usually renewed for 1 to 5 year periods.

The tradition of leasing by large landowners began about 75 years ago. The majority of leasees are Maine residents. The demand for leases in the Beddington area is largely from Bangor and greater Portland area residents.

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6 DANFORTH

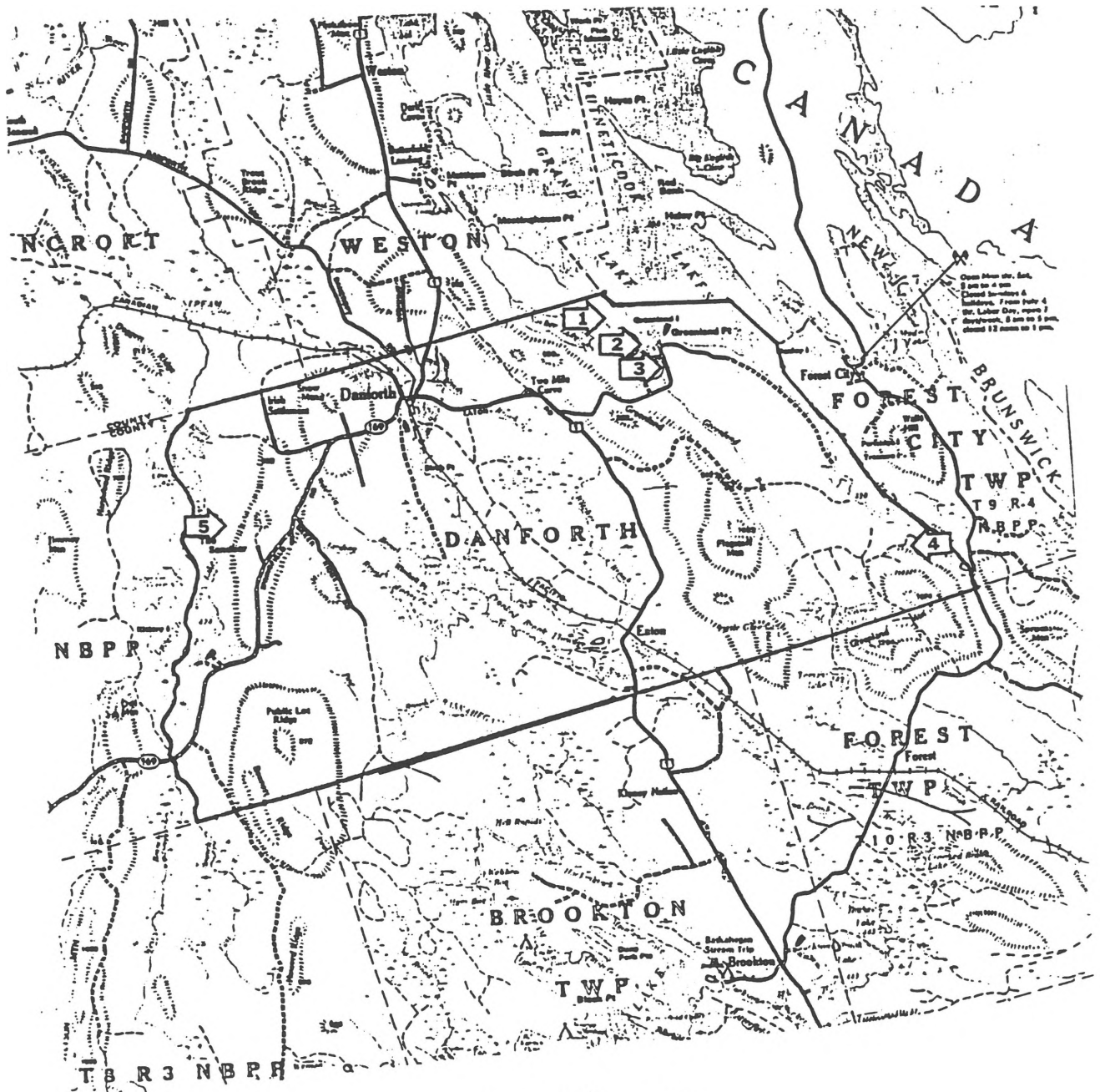
Danforth is located in northern Washington County on U.S. Route 1. It is 34 miles south of Houlton, the county seat of Aroostook County. Danforth is 90 miles from Machias and 110 from Bangor. Danforth and the other towns and townships north of Route 6 are more closely tied socially and economically with Aroostook and Penobscot Counties than with Washington County.

Danforth encompasses an area of 61 square miles. It borders on East Grand Lake, recognized nationally for its landlocked salmon fishery. The Hot Brook Lakes form the town's western boundary (Figure 13). Major landowners are Champion International Corp. and Baskehegan Land Co. In 1988, C.F. Eaton sold 2759 acres, its entire ownership in Danforth, to Five Islands Land Corp.

Danforth's population is around 826, a 4% increase since 1970. Danforth is the center for social services in northern Washington County. Employment is primarily in social services, logging operations, and small wood products mills. It has a town meeting form of government and a Board of Selectmen. A Planning Board was established in 1973. Since 1980 the Planning Board has been active on a regular basis. A comprehensive plan was adopted by the town in 1985. Subdivisions are reviewed in accordance with state statutes.

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Figure 13
Map of Danforth



① approximate location of subdivision

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During the study period there have been five subdivisions in Danforth. Table 7 gives the details on each. A total of 211 acres have been subdivided, creating 61 lots. All lots created are under 20 acres. Four of the subdivisions, 44 lots, have frontage on East Grand Lake. The most recent subdivision is on Hot Brook Lake. Of the 17 lots created in this subdivision, 10 have shorefront and 6 share frontage through the common lot.

All five subdivisions were reviewed and approved by the Danforth Planning Board. The subdivider in each case was a Maine resident. In one instance the original subdivider sold 8 of the 10 lots created to a single buyer for subsequent resale. Subdivision #3 was permitted in 1987 but the owners have not yet decided to market the lots created.

Although the town itself has grown in recent years, growth has been on existing lots. All lots created by recent subdivisions can be characterized as recreational properties with water resources the primary attraction. One local planning board member states that "the maximum desirable development" has now taken place on the local lakes.

Table 7
Town of Danforth Subdivision Activity
Jan. 1980 - June 1989

<u>SD #</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Acres</u>	<u># of Lots</u>	<u>Lot Size</u> <u>(acres)</u>	<u># Sold</u>	<u># Built</u>
1	1981	9	15	.5-.7	15	n/a
2	1987	5	10	.2-.7	10	n/a
3	1987	3	5	.5	0	0
4	1988	175	14	11-18	0	0
5	1989	<u>19</u>	<u>17</u>	.6-1.3	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTALS		211	61		25	0

Comments: 54 of the 61 lots created have lake frontage. Remaining 7 have deeded access through a common shorefront lot. Lots in SD #3 have not yet been put on the market.

7 NORTHFIELD

Northfield is located approximately 10 miles north of Machias on Route 192. It is 78 miles to Bangor via Route 192 and Route 9.

Northfield has an area of approximately 49 square miles. It encompasses all of Bog, Fulton and Horseshoe Lakes and the southern portion of Long Lake (Figure 14). Champion International Corp. is a major landowner in Northfield. Georgia Pacific sold 2,257 acres in the northeastern portion in 1986. They retained plantations in Northfield.

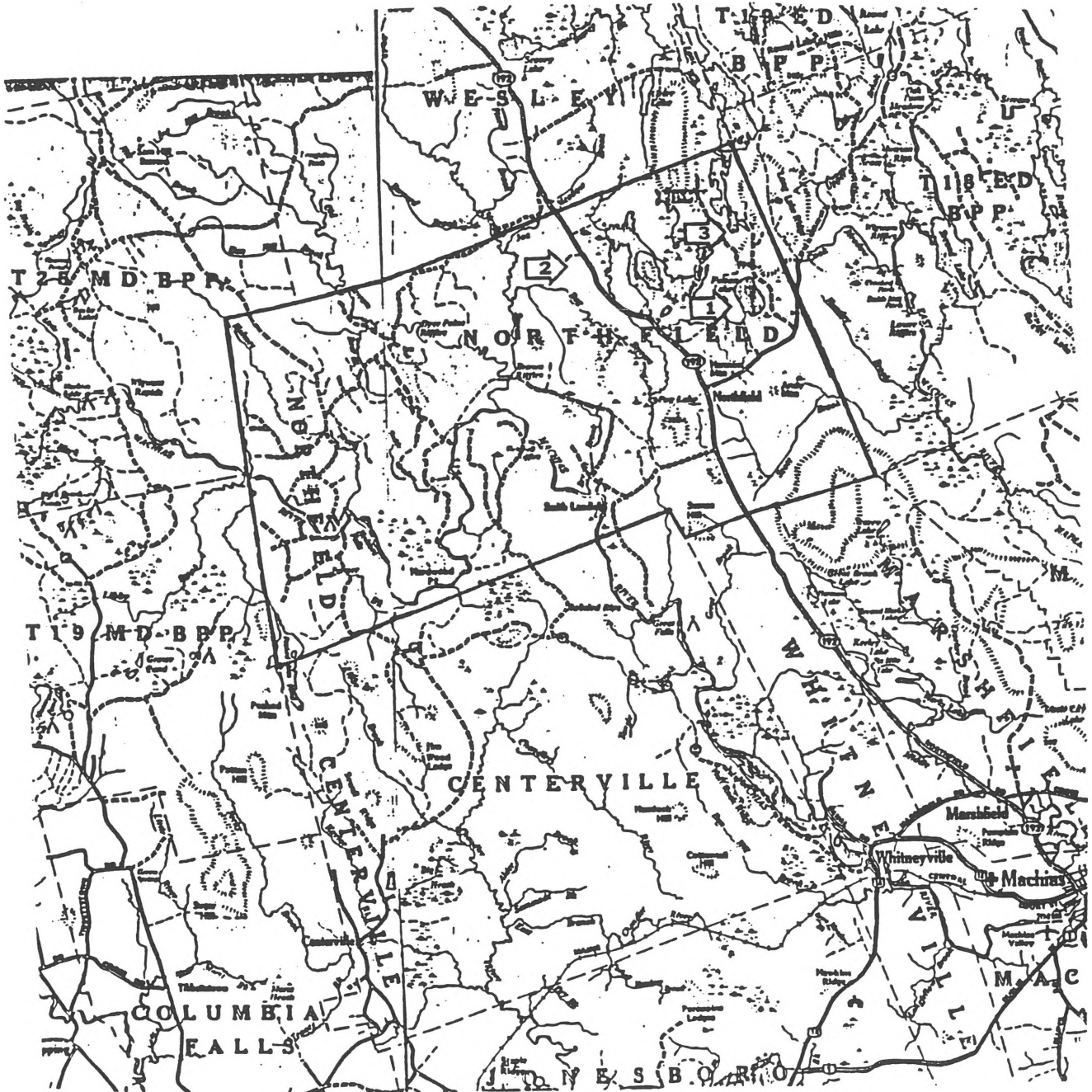
Northfield's population is around 82 (U.S. Census, 1986). This represents a 54% increase from 1970 due to net migration. Northfield experienced a boom in the mid-70's when many people returned or migrated to eastern Maine seeking a 'back to the earth' lifestyle. Proximity to Machias offers jobs and services.

Northfield has a town meeting form of government. It has a Board of Selectmen and an active Planning Board. In 1987 the Planning Board prepared Land Use Ordinances which were ratified at Town Meeting June 27, 1987. The ordinances have been revised, effective June 1988. Northfield has a subdivision ordinance, a large lot review ordinance and a forest practices ordinance.

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Figure 14

Map of Northfield



Ⓢ approximate location of subdivision

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The Large Lot Review Ordinance requires review and approval by the Planning Board for division of any tract into 3 or more parcels 40 acres and larger (Appendix 3). Deblois, Cherryfield and Jonesboro have similar large lot review ordinances. The Forest Practices Ordinance requires Planning Board notification prior to any timber harvesting operation encompassing more than 2 acres (Appendix 4).

Table 8 details subdivision activity in Northfield from 1980 until 1989. Northfield's first subdivision of the 80's was in 1984. This was a parcel of 6.3 acres on Bog Lake subdivided by its Machias owner into 4 lots. Three were sold to friends and one was retained by the owner. All were sold as bare lots for vacation homes.

<p align="center">Table 8 Town of Northfield Subdivision Activity Jan. 1980 - June 1989</p>						
<u>SD #</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Acres</u>	<u># of Lots</u>	<u>Lot Size (acres)</u>	<u># Sold</u>	<u># Built On</u>
1	1984	6	4	.5-4.5	3	4
2	1986	797	16	40-77	16	0
3	1986	<u>1121</u>	<u>26</u>	40	<u>25</u>	<u>5</u>
TOTALS		1924	46		36	8
<p>Comments: All lots in SD #1 and SD #3 have lake frontage. 9 lots in SD #2 have frontage on Route 192. All by two have stream frontage.</p>						

In 1986, a New England land development corporation subdivided a tract of land west of Route 192 into 27 lots, 40 to 77 acres in size. Sixteen lots totalling 797 acres are in Northfield. The remaining lots are in Wesley. Most of the lots have frontage on Route 192 and frontage on either New Stream or Bog Stream. The Northfield Planning Board attempted to review this project under it's subdivision ordinance. The right to review was eventually denied by the Maine Supreme Court. Hence, the large lot review ordinance was passed in 1987.

These lots are being marketed primarily for vacation homes and recreation. About half have been sold to date. None have been built on.

A Bangor-based land investment company was also active in Northfield in 1986. This company subdivided an 1121 acre parcel into 26 lots. Lots range from 40 to 51 acres. Five have frontage on Long Lake Cove of Bog Lake. The rest have frontage on Long Lake. As of May 1989, 24 had been sold with the remaining 2 under contract. Several lots have been resold since original sales in 1986. Original sales were as bare lots. Prices averaged \$575 per acre for these lots. This project faced delays in permitting similar to the previous project while the town's right to review was determined.

Northfield's attraction for development of seasonal, recreational lots is similar to the rest of the Washington County study area. Hunting, fishing,

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and other remote recreation opportunities are abundant. In addition, it is within 15 miles of the coast and near health, educational and other services concentrated in Machias.

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8 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Development of recreational properties has dominated subdivision activity since 1980 in the Washington County study area. Although most lots created have shorefrontage on either a lake or river, in 1986 many lots, 40 acres and larger, were marketed for remote recreation. These lots lacked shorefrontage, frontage on a public road, or utilities. Privacy and affordability attracted buyers to these lots.

Industrial owners of forestland have not been active in the subdivision and sale of land. Only two parcels were sold and subsequently subdivided during the study period. Land trades with the State of Maine to consolidate public land ownerships dominated transactions in the early 1980's. Other transactions by industrial owners of forest land have been largely limited to sales of small parcels to adjacent owners for personal use.

Major changes in ownership of forest land are highlighted below:

-- C.F. Eaton Company sold 10,357 acres in northern Washington County in 1988.

-- Downeast Timberlands' holdings of 63,000 acres in Washington County are currently on the market.

-- C & D Co., a division of Jaspar Wyman and Son, sold 9,543 acres. Wyman is a producer of blueberries. Land sold was forested, unsuitable for blueberry production.

-- Old Winterport Company, a Swiss company, sold all of its holdings in Maine in the mid-1980's including 1500 acres in Washington County which have subsequently been subdivided.

A sample of grantors of land subdivided during the study period revealed that several parcels had been held primarily as an investment by either individuals or realty trusts. Grantors had held the land for from 5 to over 50 years. About 75% of the land had been harvested for timber in the last 10 years. Most used local realtors to sell their property. The economic climate made the mid-80's an opportune time to sell for many.

Subdividing riverfront and lakefront camp lots for lease by major land-owners may be having as great an impact on public access as the subdivision and sale of lots. Demand for leases is primarily from Maine residents. Leasing programs have a long tradition in Maine. Company policies towards leasing may change with an increasing demand for shorefront. It will be interesting to see if leases proliferate or if lots formerly leased will be sold.

Subdividers and realtors were almost unanimous in their appraisal of the future of subdivision activity. They predict a slow down for the next few years after the boom of the mid-80's. They, however, except shorefrontage from this slowdown. Demand is still very strong in this market. When asked what buyers were demanding in terms of lot size, many said "whatever the regulations will allow". Many said 1 acre or larger for shorefrontage was

desirable.

Comments that shorefrontage was no longer affordable to most Maine residents were heard along with comments that larger backlots were also being priced out of reach by increased costs associated with permitting and regulation. Some predict subdivision in the future will be pursued only by the large land use development corporations. Individual property owners will be dissuaded by an increasingly complex and cost prohibitive permitting process.

Washington County has no interstate highway and, by people south of Kittery would not be considered weekend commuting distance. This, no doubt, has limited owner-user demand in the past and kept prices lower than other lakeregions. A surge of investment and/or speculative buying may have prompted the flurry of activity in 1986. This flurry of activity has alerted towns in Washington County of the need for planning. Although property rights are well respected, a strong sense of the need to protect environmental quality and town integrity is evident.

With forecasts for a stable resident population, the area is buffered from intense recreational land development by: 1) distance to metropolitan areas; and 2) proximity to forest based industry. The lakes and rivers will most likely continue to see their shores subdivided. The large acreages of commercial forest land will most likely continue under forest management.

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9 LIST OF REVIEWERS

Copies of Draft Report sent 8/1/1989 to the following:

Nick Greer, Director Washington County Regional Planning Commission 63
Main St. Machias, ME 04654 tel. 255-8686

Dick Miles, Land Specialist Georgia-Pacific Corp. Woodland, ME 04694-0999
tel. 427-1771

Steven R. King, Regional President Patten Corp. P.O. Box 1071 Bangor, ME
04401 tel. 947-1300

Richard Flood, Realtor with Mahan Real Estate, Calais P.O. Box 244 Wood-
land, ME 04694

Town Reviewers:

Ron Varin, First Selectman Box 77B HCR #72 Cherryfield, ME 04622

Majel Marshall, Chairman Danforth Planning Board Town Office Danforth, ME
04224

Greg Patterson, Secretary Northfield Planning Board
Northfield, ME tel. 255-4545

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10 APPENDIX

10.1 APPENDIX 1

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10.2 APPENDIX 2

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WASHINGTON COUNTY STUDY AREA

LURC BUILDING PERMITS* 1985-1988

YEAR	Seasonal Camps	Permanent Homes	All other Bldg Permits**	TOTAL
1985	5	3	6	14
1986	10	2	3	15
1987	19	6	4	29
1988	13	3	7	23
TOTALS	47	14	20	81

* All building permits issued in the 34 unorganized townships located in the study area.

** Includes permits for garages, additions, rebuilding.

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