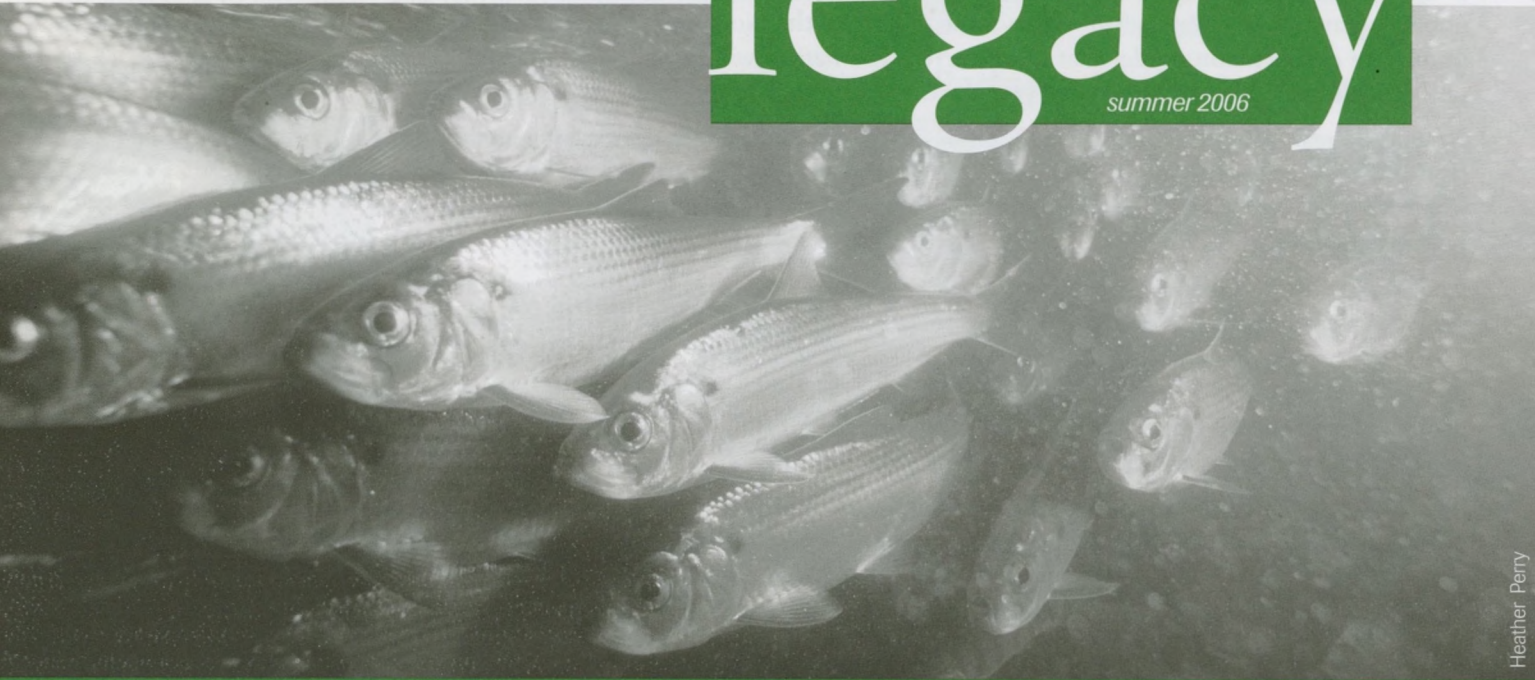


1 maine legacy

summer 2006



Heather Perry

restoring the penobscot for fish and people

to untrained eyes, the run-of-river dams along the Penobscot aren't particularly imposing. But to an Atlantic salmon, each dam is a Great Wall of China, blocking the route to traditional spawning grounds. Those that do manage to climb the fish ladders emerge battered and exhausted.

For shad, rainbow smelt and striped bass, the upstream side of a dam might as well be the dark side of the moon. But that will change. A historic movement is under way to remove two dams and restore sea-run fish to over 500 miles of habitat along the Penobscot and its tributaries.

The Nature Conservancy has joined the Penobscot River Restoration Trust (see page three) in an effort to reclaim much of the river's former glory. The project has already gained national attention as an example of collaborative and innovative conservation. It is "one of the biggest restoration projects on the East Coast," according to Laura Rose Day, the Trust's Executive Director.

The seeds of the project were sown when PPL Corporation (formerly Pennsylvania Power and Light) purchased a series of dams in Maine in 1999. Discussions with the

Penobscot Indian Nation and several environmental groups led to a remarkable announcement four years later, calling for removal of the Penobscot's lowermost dams (see map page four). By that time, the idea had caught fire and the collaboration had grown to include an astonishingly broad cast of characters: the Penobscot Nation, five environmental nonprofits, four Maine state agencies, and three divisions of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The goal is to remove the Veazie and Great Works Dams and to decommission and bypass the Howland Dam to allow fish passage. The Trust holds an option to buy the three dams from PPL by 2009 for about \$25 million. (More funds will be needed for the actual removal of dams and restoration of the river.) In turn, the Trust members agreed to support PPL's option to increase power genera-

continued on page two

first thoughts

No one can miss the scale of the Penobscot River Restoration Project. Look at its projected impact on an entire river system – the second largest in the Northeast. Or consider the innovative conservation model that others across the nation will be watching so closely. Or take stock of its robust, multifaceted partnerships (just look at the logos across the page).

Among the earliest enthusiasts at the Conservancy were our colleagues working at the national level. Scientists in the organization's Freshwater Initiative have long described the plan to restore spawning grounds in the Penobscot system as the single most ambitious river project in the nation.

And it is nearly counterintuitive to imagine this kind of cooperation between such diverse partners: the Penobscot Nation working to reclaim traditions long lost to tribal members; an energy company proactively seeking the proper balance between society's need for renewable energy and a river's need for rejuvenation; federal agencies carrying out their mandates to serve wildlife and human welfare; state and community leaders finding ways to see the future enriched by the bounties of the past.

As the Conservancy conducted its due diligence in evaluating both the potential of this effort to succeed and the value we could bring to it, I was struck time and again by the enormous ecological benefits it will yield. When they write the textbook on compatible development, the first chapter may well be about the revival of this Maine river.

Executive Director
Mike Tetreault



penobscot restoration

continued from page one

tion at six other dams. These increases will allow the company to maintain over 95% of its capacity for renewable energy generation on the river. The first of the capacity increases was approved this May.

The Trust, which originally consisted of the Penobscot Indian Nation and five environmental organizations (Atlantic Salmon Federation, Maine Audubon, Trout Unlimited, Natural Resources Council of Maine, and American Rivers), approached The Nature Conservancy in 2005. Recognizing both the extraordinarily far-reaching conservation values of this landmark effort and the Conservancy's ability to provide special expertise and resources at the state and national levels, trustees voted this February to join.

Conservancy conservation planner Josh Royte, for example, has already taken on a key role on the Trust's scientific team, which will help ensure that the restoration project maintains its strong scientific footing.



Christopher Holbrook

University of Maine researcher Stephen Fernandes documented a spawning population of endangered shortnose sturgeon in the Penobscot just this June.

"The potential to learn from comparative studies of the river before and after dam removal is really exciting," says Royte. "Researchers from around the country will be collecting data about the physical changes in the river, as well as the remarkable recovery we expect to see in populations of fish, birds, mammals and insects."

If previous dam removal projects are any indication, Royte is right to expect remarkable changes on the Penobscot.

"After removal of the Edwards Dam in 1999, animal communities along the Kennebec River rebounded more

Penobscot River Restoration Project

The coalition of conservation groups working to restore the Penobscot River continues to grow. The ambitious goal of the project is to buy three dams on the Penobscot River from PPL Corporation. Two of the dams will be removed and a bypass will be built around the third to allow fish to pass. PPL will be allowed to increase power production on several other dams in order to maintain roughly the current level of renewable energy production on the river. Meanwhile, hundreds of miles of historic spawning grounds will be restored to a suite of 11 sea-run fish, a giant step towards returning the river to its natural condition.



Partners for Restoration



Returning Sea-Run Fish to the Penobscot

quickly than anyone predicted. People thought it might be five or ten years before we saw much change, but fish began breeding above the dam site the same year it was removed."

The increases in fish populations were not lost on the osprey, bald eagles and other species that feed on them - nor were fishermen slow in flocking to the river.

In addition to allowing 11 species of sea-run fish including alewife, shad, Atlantic salmon, sturgeon, smelt and blueback herring to reach breeding grounds that the dams have made inaccessible, the Penobscot Project is expected to have dramatic cascading effects on human and biological communities along the river.

Birds of prey, including osprey and bald eagles should benefit, as should fish-eating mammals such as otters, mink and fishers. The removal of the dams will also bring increased recreational fishing and paddling opportunities and will return traditionally important species to the waters that the Penobscot Nation calls home.



Bruce Kidman

A Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission employee measures an Atlantic salmon caught in the fish lift at Veazie Dam, one of the dams to be removed.

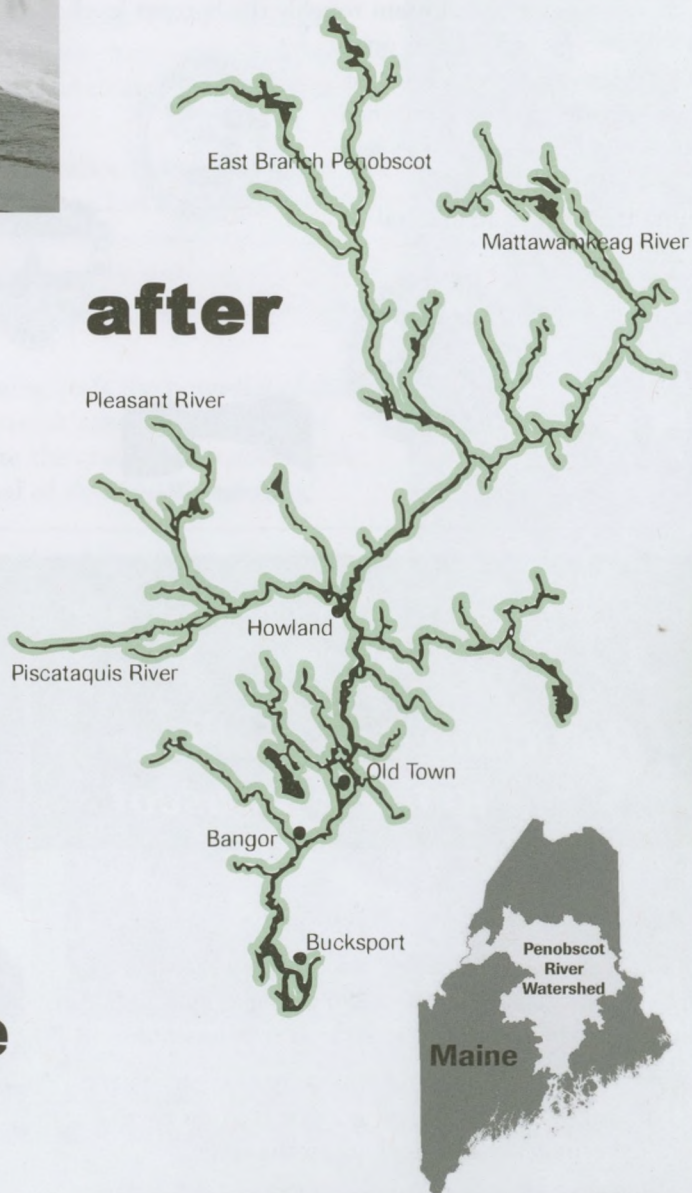
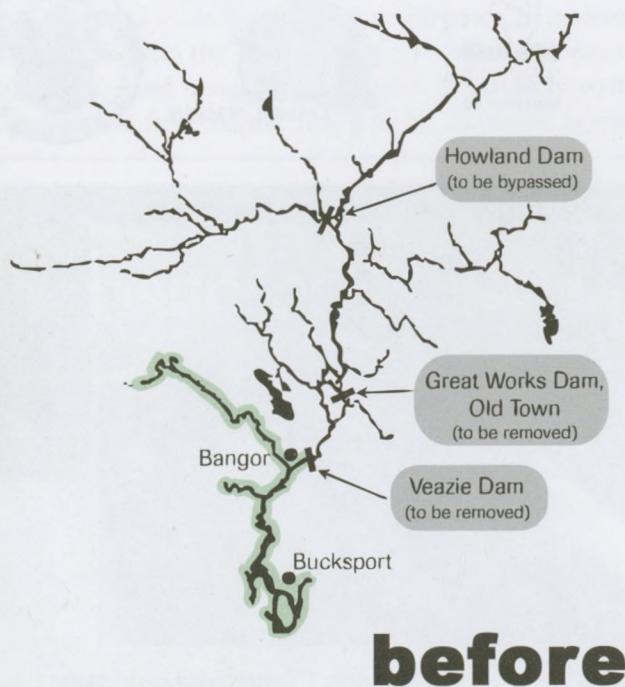
And as Penobscot Nation Chief Jim Sappier points out, others around the country are looking to this creative collaboration as a model.

"Tribes, as governmental entities, do not usually enter into agreements with conservation groups, states, the U.S. Government and industry. Tribes throughout the nation are watching this project closely."

The Conservancy has committed significant staff resources to the coalition's goal of raising public and private funds for the purchase of the dams and for their subsequent removal and bypass. So far, the Trust has raised about a third of the purchase price for the dams.



Fish Access in the Penobscot River Watershed Before and After the Restoration Project



In the illustration above, green areas are accessible to migratory fish. Each fish species has unique habitat needs for spawning. Depending on the species, the project will re-open 500 to more than 1000 miles of habitat. Species expected to benefit include Atlantic salmon, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, striped bass, alewife, rainbow smelt, American shad, blueback herring, Atlantic tomcod, sea lamprey and American eel.



In July, the Conservancy transferred a conservation easement on 195,000 acres buffering Baxter State Park to the State of Maine - along with funds to manage the easement in the future. The Nature Conservancy transferred the working forest easement to the Bureau of Parks and Land with a stewardship endowment of half a million dollars.

The Conservancy purchased the easement in 2002 from Great Northern Paper as part of the Katahdin Forest Project. The easement, which buffers much of the western boundary of the park, calls for sustainable forest management, traditional public access and protection of special natural areas. The transfer coincided with release of \$4.4 million in federal Forest Legacy funds awarded the project in 2005. The Land for Maine's Future Program also contributed \$2 million.

"We have always seen the Katahdin Forest Project as an effort to protect both trees and jobs," said Tom Rumpf, Associate Director of The Nature Conservancy in Maine, at a statehouse news conference. "Through purchase of this easement and some truly extraordinary financing, the

Conservancy helped maintain jobs in the region and the flow of timber to the Millinocket and East Millinocket mills - all while protecting the natural resources northern Maine so famously provides."

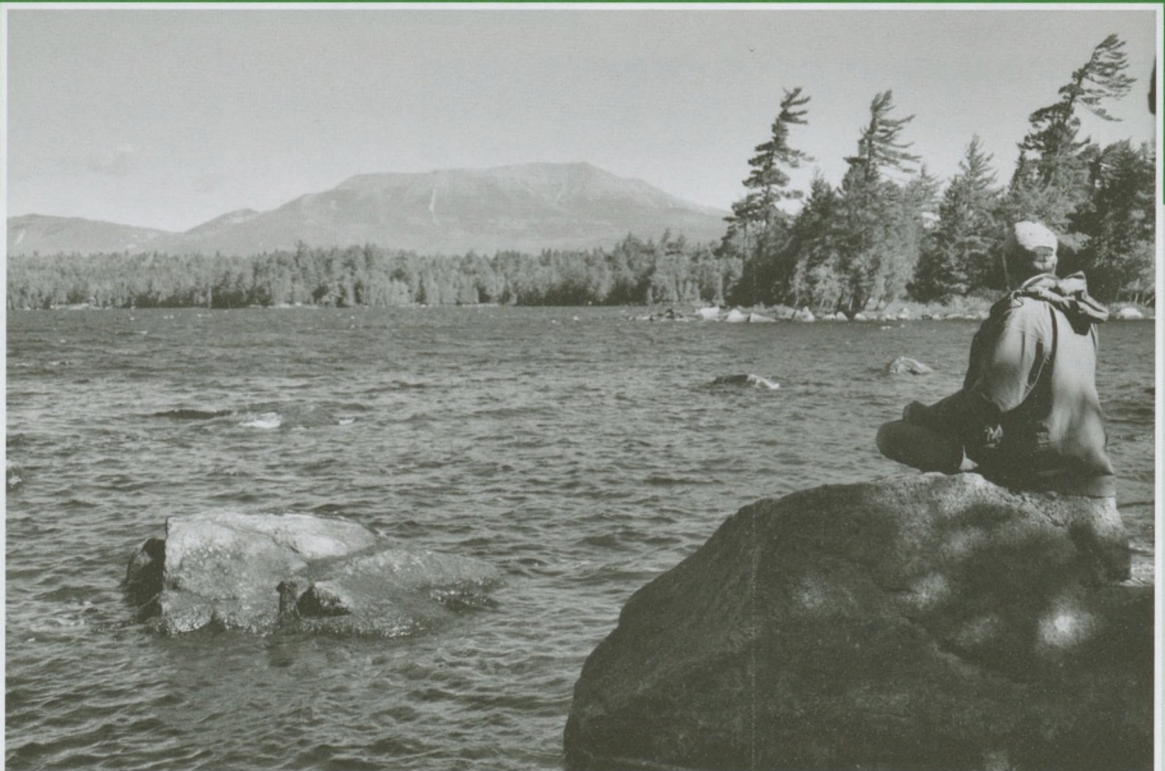
Katahdin Forest Easement

The stewardship funds will be held in a dedicated account at the Maine Community Foundation. The Conservancy has previously donated over a million dollars in stewardship endowments for state-held easements including 8,600 acres in Parsonsfield (Leavitt Plantation Forest) and 3,600 acres in Casco (Jugtown Plains) and 24,000 acres of fee and easement along the Machias River (Machias River I). These funds are used by the Department of Conservation for easement monitoring at these sites (and also for recreational management along the Machias River).

"We are particularly proud to provide the \$500,000 stewardship endowment so that the State will always have the funds necessary to carry out its oversight responsibilities," said Rumpf. "In fact, we believe this kind of foresight should be a model for conservation projects statewide. Simply stated, protection and stewardship are inseparable."

Katahdin Forest Project

In August 2002, the Conservancy invested \$50 million to finance struggling paper mills in Millinocket and East Millinocket then owned by Great Northern Paper. In return, the Conservancy acquired a conservation easement on 195,000 acres abutting Baxter State Park as well as ownership of the 46,000-acre Debsconeag Lakes



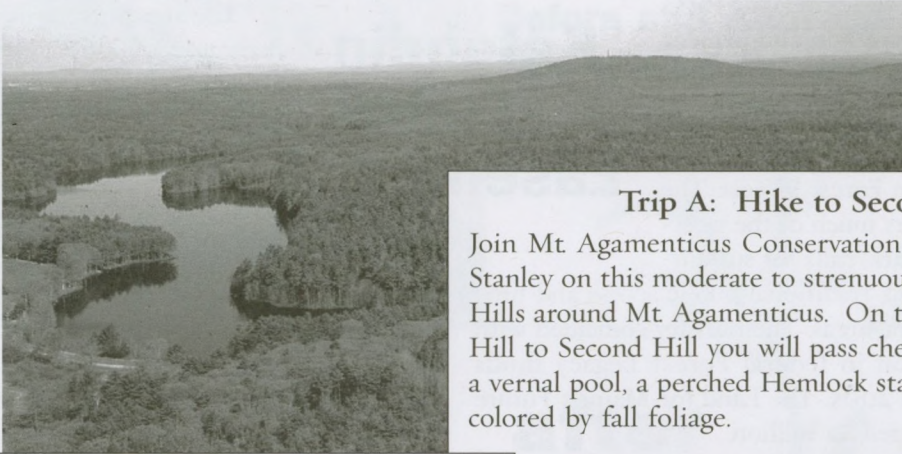
Susan Caldwell

Wilderness Area south of the park. As a result, the Conservancy temporarily held a mortgage on the company's forest holdings. No conservation group had ever financed a paper mill before. Working with Wiscasset-based Coastal Enterprises Inc., the Conservancy attracted a substitute investor using federal New Markets Tax Credits, the first time in the nation such incentives were used to support a forestry enterprise. Since then, several aspects of this innovative approach have been copied around the country.

Celebrate Mount Agamenticus Day Saturday, October 21st, 2006 9:30am – 1:00pm

Enjoy an autumn day taking in the beautiful views and learning about the ecology, management and protection of the Mt. Agamenticus area on your choice of 3 guided tours. All groups will depart from the summit of Mt. Agamenticus and meet back there for a brown bag lunch and discussion. Limit 15 people per group.

Bill Siliker, Jr.



Trip A: Hike to Second Hill

Join Mt. Agamenticus Conservation Coordinator Robin Stanley on this moderate to strenuous hike to 2 of the 3 Hills around Mt. Agamenticus. On the way from First Hill to Second Hill you will pass chestnut oak woodlands, a vernal pool, a perched Hemlock stand, and enjoy views colored by fall foliage.

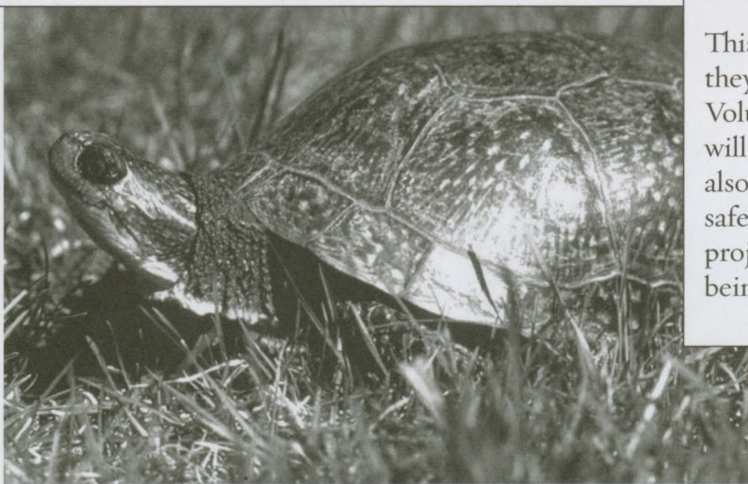
Trip B: Succession

This moderate hike will follow an interpretive loop trail with 10 stations that tell stories about history, plant succession, wildlife and natural communities. Naturalist and York Conservation Commission Chair David Tibbetts will identify species and answer questions about flora and fauna. Keith Fletcher, Southern Maine Program Manager for The Nature Conservancy, will talk about protection efforts at Mt. Agamenticus.



Trip C: Pockets of Plenty

This easy walk will focus on vernal pools and the species they support - particularly turtles. Frank Dehler, Volunteer Leader for the Mt. Agamenticus Turtle Patrol, will discuss new research on local turtle migration. He'll also discuss a five-year volunteer effort to get turtles safely across roads and identify where they cross. This project led to Maine's first "Turtle Crossing" road signs being installed around Mt. Agamenticus this June.



To Register for a Hike Follow these Easy Instructions

Please call the Maine Chapter membership line at (207) 729-5182, ext. 221. Reservations are accepted on a first come, first served basis and space is limited on most trips. Once Conservancy staff have reserved a spot for you over the telephone, you will receive written confirmation including directions to the registered activity and any other important information you'll need to know for the day.

About Conservancy Field Trips: Trips are held rain or shine – so please dress appropriately. Bring plenty of water and lunch or snacks depending on the time of the day. We suggest binoculars, a camera, field guides, insect repellent, sun-screen, etc., to make your day more enjoyable. Field trips will leave sharply at times indicated. No restroom facilities will be available. A member of the Maine Chapter staff will accompany each trip.

Finally, because we often have waiting lists for these trips, please notify us immediately if you will be unable to attend a trip for which you have registered.

Despite rain and fog, a members' hike on the Morse Mountain preserve in May yielded views of rocky headlands, beaches and salt marsh and a few sightings of piping plovers. Gerry Maraghy snapped this shot of a "knarled veteran" northern red oak.



Gerry Maraghy

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Leave a Legacy for Maine

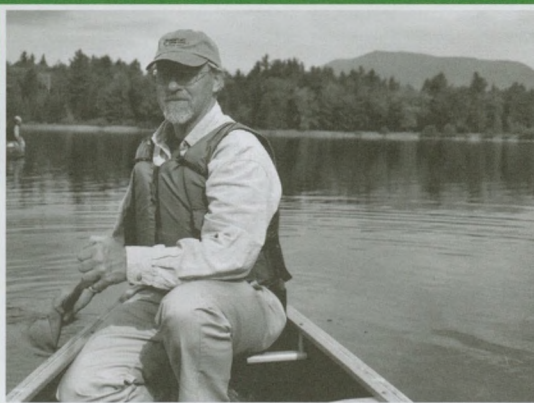
The Nature Conservancy in Maine gets about 30% of its annual operating income from endowments. Most of our endowments come from bequests. Why should you consider a bequest to the Maine Chapter?

Margin of Excellence Endowment income helps us cover extraordinary expenses associated with large, complex transactions and gives us the courage to initiate long-term projects.

Stability and Flexibility Endowment income reduces income fluctuations and covers operating costs, helping us focus on raising funds for major land conservation projects.

Long-term Legacy Endowment gifts make a big impact through asset appreciation. Your bequest will produce tangible conservation results for future generations.

For more information, contact Mason Morfit at (207) 729-5181 x. 227.



Susan Caldwell

Land for Maine's Future - After working hard to pass the land bond on last November's statewide ballot, we were looking forward to seeing how the funds would be allocated. In May, when the Land for Maine's Future Board awarded grants, the news was good. Conservancy staff had worked with the Maine Department of Conservation on four proposals: three tracts expanding Camden Hills State Park; an ecological reserve at Number 5 Bog west of Jackman; a landscape-scale project east of Bangor that we call the Lower Penobscot Forest; and a working forest conservation easement of 27,000 acres abutting the Machias Lakes. We were pleased to see each of these among the top grantees - adding up to a total of \$3.2 million. However, we judge success not only by what we submit, but by what funds our partners can gain for projects that are considered priorities by Conservancy scientists. As it turned out, there were eight additional projects in that category receiving a total of \$3.1 million. Adding these all together, 76% of all the conservation funds allocated by the LMF board went to projects our conservation planners had identified as of the highest importance. Although no project received all it sought and more fundraising lies ahead, the message we took away was this: the state's public funding program is investing in areas of the state that we see as ecologically vital.

One of the remote ponds sequestered within the Lower Penobscot Forest



Bruce Kidman

1 maine legacy

**Thanks for
your support!**



Bruce Kidman

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The Nature Conservancy should be named as: "*The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit corporation organized and existing under the laws of the District of Columbia, with a principal business address of 4245 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203.*" If you'd like the bequest to be used in Maine, please add this language: "*...to be used to further the purposes of The Nature Conservancy in the State of Maine.*"

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