



Maine Coast Protection Initiative

Population shifts to coastal areas, sprawling land use, and increasing demand for waterfront property have intensified the competition for limited coastal resources. Natural lands and traditional working waterfronts are increasingly converted to other uses. A study by the State Planning Office says the majority of Maine's coast will be classifiable as "suburban/urban" by the year 2050 if current trends continue.

Conservation organizations in Maine have joined together to take action. Through the Maine Coast Protection Initiative (MCPI), over 70 organizations are working together to bolster efforts to preserve the unique character of the Maine coast. This coalition is working to change the future of Maine's coast by increasing the pace and effectiveness of coastal conservation.

The Project: MCPI developed a Strategic Conservation Framework using input from land trusts, state and federal agencies, municipalities, and recreation, landowner, fishing, and conservation groups. This Framework defines the Initiative's goals and strategies for coastal resource protection. MCPI efforts will strengthen access to information and the professional and technical capacity of Maine's coastal conservation organizations. MCPI has three long-term goals:

1. A viable network of conserved land that protects priority coastal and estuarine habitat, adequate coastal access to support commercial fisheries and recreational pursuits, and sufficient scenic viewsheds to preserve the unique character of the Maine coast.
2. Land trusts with sustainable, professional, and technical capacity engaged in proactive strategic land conservation and long-term stewardship.
3. Strong support and increased funding for coastal land conservation efforts.

Implementation: Coalition members are working to reach these goals by devising specific action plans, forming partnerships, and developing time frames for implementation. All organizations interested in supporting the goals of MCPI are welcome to get involved in coalition and workgroup activities.

The four-year (2004-2007) budget for MCPI is \$1.5 million, of which \$1.2 million has been raised. Fundraising will continue during 2006. Three grant opportunities for Maine conservation organizations are provided – implementation grants, capacity-building grants, and geographic information system (GIS) grants. Funding will not be used to support specific fee or easement acquisition.

Implementation grants were awarded to nonprofit and state organizations seeking to further MCPI goals one and three. Specific strategies for furthering goals one and three are listed in the Strategic Conservation Framework document. Of the total \$220,000 available, \$162,950 have been awarded.

Capacity-building grants will support goal two and will be available to coastal land trusts seeking to move to a higher level of organizational or programmatic capacity. Three to five land trusts will receive grant funding and Land Trust Alliance staff support for an organizational assessment and the development of a tangible plan to increase conservation capacity. For these grants, \$250,000 is available. Anticipated in 2007 is another grants program for smaller organizational capacity building grants (fundraising dependent).

GIS grants were awarded to organizations seeking to act as GIS Resource Centers for coastal land trusts. A total of \$70,000 was available through this grant program, along with ArcGIS software donated from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).

Learn More and Get Involved: The MCPI Strategic Conservation Framework, grant application materials, calendar, and additional information are available on-line at www.protectcoastalmaine.org.

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