

Environment, Recreation and Agriculture

What are our aspirations for an inclusive and equitable Maine?

Environment

- Land conservation becomes a constant part of life
- Mass transportation improves and you can travel by bike
- Quality of Maine forests improves by 25%
- Vibrant communities without losing forests
- Local conservation initiatives
- Mainers have access to weatherization and energy efficiency
- Factionalism is gone in land and water conservation
- Ecosystem/watershed connections

Recreation

- High Schools have outing clubs
- Every child has recreation opportunities on lakes and water
- Affordable swim lessons
- Another national park in Maine

Agriculture

- Anyone can farm here
- Local food outcompetes major chains
- A lot of aesthetic and sustainable agriculture along the coast
- Every kid knows how to grow food

Other

- Outdoor classrooms
- Average age of Mainers goes down because more young people can find jobs and choose to stay in Maine.
- Emphasis on engagement in science

- Giving rural towns their dignity
- Involve under-represented people in decision making
- Fisherman are primary stewards and contributors to science

Why isn't it like that today?

Issues Related to Government

- Governor LePage and lack of political leadership
- Lack of supportive public policies
- Not quite a true democratic system
- Government does not support resource allocation and education
- Too heavy of a focus on military
- Unfair subsidies to big business and agriculture

- Lack of economic incentives
- Reagan-era ideas of government/shared-resources
- Federal food and agricultural policies/subsidies that skew the real cost of food.

Problems with Current Land Conservation Model

- Natural resource protection/conservation is seen as a luxury for the privileged.
- Land conservation is perceived to be equally as traditional as hunting, fishing and snowmobiling.
- Intact ecosystems are highly undervalued
- Traditional conservation groups are not diverse

External Interests

- Solar affordability because utility companies benefit from and lobby for the status quo.
- Profit motive
- Introduced interests
- Corporate control of food system

Barriers to Collaboration

- Lack of factoring in externalities
- Public vs. Private
- Lack of trust & relationships
- Not enough volunteers to support existing programs
- Lack of coordination
- Limited opportunities for community groups to interact and find common interest to collaborate
- Organizations have not spent enough time figuring out the messages and ways of conveying them that resonate with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Lack of respect and understanding between landowners and recreationalists
- North and south divide
- Lack of a shared vision
- Breakdown of the social fabric at a community level
- Lack of long-term vision

Other

- Lack of funding or misapplication of it
- Transportation to lakes and water
- Lack of intentional leadership education and development in low income communities and communities of color
- Lack of culturally sensitive swimming options
- Breakdown of local owned infrastructure
- Lack of belief in ability to make change
- Inherent and systemic racism
- Poverty
- Lack of education
- Geographic inequities
- Teaching kids a sense of place
- The common perspective that roads are for cars, not public space for people.

- Don't value outdoor education
- lack of awareness of cause and effect
- Fear of change, the unknown
- We don't pay enough attention to those who don't have cars
- Fear of change, the unknown
- Historical devaluing of labor
- Don't want to be inconvenienced
- Media ignores real issues
- Value of local agriculture more widely recognized and willingness to pay more for it helps local farmers, but makes it hard for low income people to benefit

What can we begin to do about it?

Include New Voices

- More conversations with different people
- Recruit board members from unrepresented populations
- Be humble with power, suggest to people that their voice is important.
- Targetting youth (high school and college) for trail work, be sure to include urban communities
- Vote and get others involved
- Recognize the time necessary to engage all voices

Collaborate

- More parties/get together
- Gather around common aspirations, agree on vision and common measurements
- Integrate recreation, food production and conservation
- Seek collaboration and new partnerships across many sectors that can address policies that impede opportunities for inclusivity.
- Look for synergy without destroying culture

Promote Activism and Advocacy

- Hold elected officials accountable for their actions or lack of action
- Education/leadership development in disenfranchised populations
- More organizations engaged in advocacy
- Act within a local level to affect change
- Elect pro environment officials
- Measure and articulate importance of environmental education
- Engage legislators
- Abolish term limits
- Citizen activism around farm bill
- Actively recruit and train individuals from underrepresented populations to run for elected office

Increase Funding and Resources

- More endowment funding for stewardship, advocacy and acquisition
- Northern Maine is need of more non-profits and funders "on location"
- More funders granting money to the environment
- Invest time and money into things that are important to community

Other

- Target/retrofit old mill towns
- Encourage compassion
- Individuals carpool, bike to work and ride the bus
- Educate people about the real cost of convenience
- Tell more about the economic impact of conserving land and ecosystems.
- Overcome sense of hopelessness through better messaging
- Assure that the message is meaningful to all stakeholders
- Funders can evaluate programs and leaders for inclusiveness
- Invest in leadership development
- Practice what we preach
- Reduce barriers, increase incentives and facilitate access