

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

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For more information:
Jay Finegan, 287-3156

Additional contact:
Mark Berry
Downeast Lakes Land Trust
796-2100

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maine Acquires Major Conservation Easement on West Grand Lake in Washington County

AUGUSTA – The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, in partnership with the Downeast Lakes Land Trust, announces the completion of a major conservation project in Washington County. Effective today, the State of Maine has acquired an easement on more than 21,000 acres of land in and near Grand Lake Stream.

The West Grand Lake Forest Conservation Easement guarantees continued public access on popular recreation lands for hunting, fishing, trapping, snowmobiling, hiking, snowshoeing, canoeing, kayaking and other activities. It also ensures that the lands will continue to be available for sustainable timber and fiber production.

“Maine’s natural resources are the backbone of our economy,” said Governor Paul R. LePage. “The Grand Lake Stream area has outstanding fisheries, wildlife and scenic resources that make it an attraction for recreationists from around the world while supporting the highest concentration of Registered Maine Guides in the state.

“The historic working forests that have safeguarded these natural assets are now assured for the future,” the Governor added.

In total, the easement conserves 21,870 acres and is funded with State, Federal and private monies. It includes 17 miles of shoreline on West Grand, Big and Lower Oxbrook lakes, wraps around the village of Grand Lake Stream and conserves a quarter-mile on the west side of Grand Lake Stream above Big Falls. Moreover, it protects 93 miles of frontage on streams, including Big Musquash Stream and a number of native brook trout streams. Additionally, the easement provides an option for the State to construct a new carry-in boat access on the east shore of West Grand Lake.

“We are very pleased to be acquiring the public recreational access rights provided by this easement,” said Walt Whitcomb, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. “These lands support traditional uses, including hunting and fishing, and the easement also guarantees continuation of the primary ATV and snowmobile trails that cross the property.”

The Downeast Lakes Land Trust partnered with the State to propose the project to the U.S. Forest Service’s Forest Legacy Program and the Land for Maine’s Future (LMF) Program. The Forest Service

selected this locally led project as the number one national forest conservation priority in 2011. The project also garnered a top rating in the 2011 round of proposals considered by the LMF Board.

Maine's congressional delegation was instrumental in securing the necessary funding. "As a long-time supporter of the Forest Legacy Program and a member of the Senate Interior Appropriations Committee, I am particularly pleased to see the completion of the West Grand Lake Forest Easement," said U.S. Senator Susan Collins. "The priceless assets protected here are vital to Maine's tourism. I've seen firsthand the strong support of the local community for this conservation effort, and I admire the dedication of the people of Grand Lake Stream to conserve the natural resources that sustain their economy and support Maine's timber industry."

The conservation easement will be held by the Division of Parks and Public Lands within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. The Downeast Lakes Land Trust will establish a \$200,000 easement stewardship endowment to support the Division's ongoing responsibilities for the property.

"Our approach provides local people the opportunity to become stewards of the natural resources that support their economy," said Mark Berry, executive director of the Downeast Lakes Land Trust and the State's partner in the project. "By permanently conserving these lands, and guaranteeing they will always be open to the public for recreation, we're protecting our local heritage and way of life for future generations." ###

West Grand Lake Forest Easement Partner Information

About the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

The Division of Parks and Public Lands, within the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, manages 48 state parks and historic sites, 600,000 acres of public reserved land and 2.3 million acres of submerged land, and provides conservation oversight monitoring of 730,000 acres of conservation easements on private lands. Its multiple-use guidelines provide an extraordinary array of working forests, wildland preserves, outdoor recreation, and more than 20,000 miles of ATV, snowmobile, waterway and coastal trails.

About Downeast Lakes Land Trust

Downeast Lakes Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2001 by local residents in Grand Lake Stream, Maine, with a slogan of "Forests and Lakes – For People – Forever." The Trust contributes to the long-term economic and environmental well-being of the Downeast Lakes region through the conservation and management of its forests and waters. The Trust sustainably manages the 33,708-acre Farm Cove Community Forest for wildlife habitat, forest products, and public recreation, as described on its web site, www.downeastlakes.org. Downeast Lakes Land Trust received *Down East* magazine's Environmental Award in 2006 and was named a 2006 Landowner of the Year by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. In 2007, it became the first local land trust in Maine to earn Forest Management certification from the Forest Stewardship Council.

A map of the conservation easement and photos are available on request.

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