

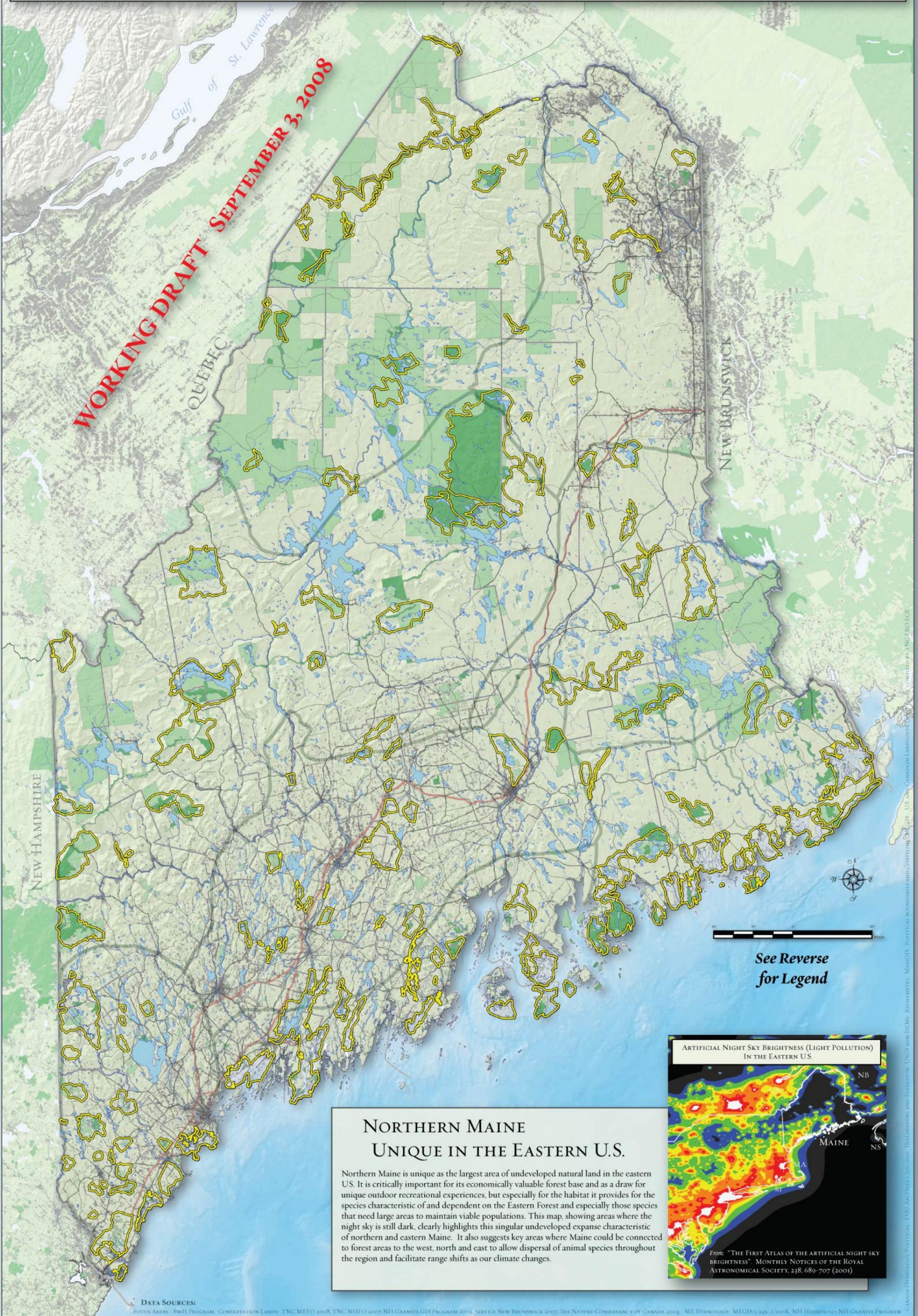


Beginning with  
**HABITAT**



# MAINE CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

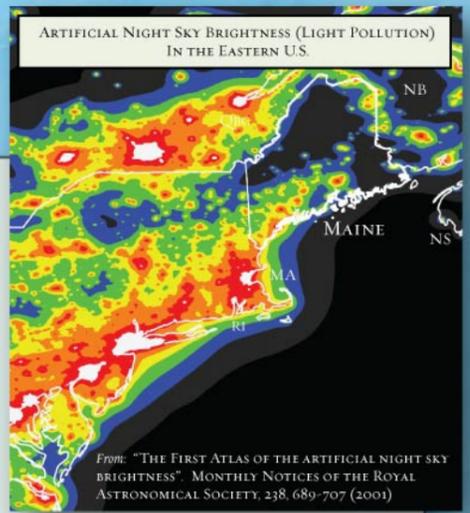
**WORKING DRAFT SEPTEMBER 3, 2008**



**See Reverse  
for Legend**

## NORTHERN MAINE UNIQUE IN THE EASTERN U.S.

Northern Maine is unique as the largest area of undeveloped natural land in the eastern US. It is critically important for its economically valuable forest base and as a draw for unique outdoor recreational experiences, but especially for the habitat it provides for the species characteristic of and dependent on the Eastern Forest and especially those species that need large areas to maintain viable populations. This map, showing areas where the night sky is still dark, clearly highlights this singular undeveloped expanse characteristic of northern and eastern Maine. It also suggests key areas where Maine could be connected to forest areas to the west, north and east to allow dispersal of animal species throughout the region and facilitate range shifts as our climate changes.



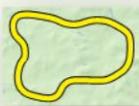
**DATA SOURCES:**  
FOCUS AREAS - BWH PROGRAM, CONSERVATION LANDS - TNC MEFO 2008, TNC NHFO 2007, NH GRANITE GIS PROGRAM 2005, SERVICE NEW BRUNSWICK 2007, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA 2004, MI HYDROLOGY - MEGIS 1:24K, 1/100K, NH HYDROLOGY - NH GRANITE PROGRAM

## INTRODUCTION

In support of Maine's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, working with the Beginning with Habitat (BwH) Steering Committee, has drafted a first iteration map of conservation priorities for the State of Maine. This map builds on the maps and methods of the Beginning with Habitat Program, a core strategy of Maine's SWAP.

**Adequate habitat protection for all Maine's native plant and animal species will be ensured by a range of voluntary conservation measures by public and non-profit entities and private landowners, as well as appropriate infrastructure siting and universal practices such as riparian setbacks.** In addition, it will need to take place at a variety of scales, from relatively small areas at fixed locations for particular populations at risk, to Beginning with Habitat Focus Areas, to large units of conservation land, to the broad landscape matrix. Some of these strategies lend themselves to depiction on a state-wide map, others do not.

## CONSERVATION PRIORITIES



### 1. BEGINNING WITH HABITAT (BWH) FOCUS AREAS: Landscape scale areas that contain exceptionally rich concentrations of at-risk species and natural communities and high quality common natural communities, significant wildlife habitats, and their intersection with large blocks of undeveloped habitat.

These non-regulatory areas are intended as a planning tool for landowners, conservation entities and towns. BwH focus areas, unlike some other habitat values, are tied to specific environmental settings and are not geographically transferable. Thus they warrant place-specific conservation attention through a variety of methods ranging from conservation acquisition to focused implementation of best management practices. It is hoped that identification of BwH focus areas will help to build regional awareness and concentrate conservation initiatives in those areas of the landscape with the greatest biodiversity significance.



### 2. MAINTAINING AND EXPANDING EXISTING CONSERVATION LANDS: Lands with permanent legal protection from development.

Permanent conservation lands should be distributed to capture the variety of natural landscapes across the biophysical regions of Maine (shown by gray lines on map) and be large enough to maintain their natural character while supporting a variety of public uses.

Conservation Lands can be characterized by the level of biodiversity protection they afford. One system for characterizing protection and management status is by assigning a 'Gap' status to each parcel of land. Gap Status levels were developed by USGS as part of the Gap Analysis project to analyze the degree of protection of areas of high biodiversity value based on legal status and management approach.

On this map, conservation lands with Gap Status Codes of 1 or 2, and Areas designated as Ecological Reserves on MDOC lands are shown in dark green. Lands with Gap Status Code 3 are in medium green.

#### Gap Status Code Definitions:

Status 1: An area having permanent protection from conversion of natural land cover and a mandated management plan in operation to maintain a natural state within which disturbance events (of natural type, frequency, intensity, and legacy) are allowed to proceed without interference or are mimicked through management.

Status 2: An area having permanent protection from conversion of natural land cover and a mandated management plan in operation to maintain a primarily natural state, but which may receive uses or management practices that degrade the quality of existing natural communities, including suppression of natural disturbance.

Status 3: An area having permanent protection from conversion of natural land cover for the majority of the area, but subject to extractive uses of either a broad, low-intensity type (e.g., logging) or localized intense type (e.g., mining). It also indicates protection to federally listed endangered and threatened species throughout the area.

*MDOC Ecological Reserves - Because they are not permanent by legal status they would be coded as Gap 3. However, their purposes and management are equivalent to Gap 2 and they are thus shaded dark green.*

Definitions of GAP status levels (after Crist, P.J., B. Thompson, T. C. Edwards, C. G. Homer, S. D. Bassett. 1998. Mapping and Categorizing Land Stewardship. A Handbook for Conducting Gap Analysis (<http://www.gap.uidaho.edu/>)).

NATURAL LANDCOVER  
(PALE GREEN)



CONVERTED LANDS  
(GRAY SPECKLING)  
INCLUDES BOTH DEVELOPMENT AND  
AGRICULTURAL LANDS

### 3. MAINTAINING THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE

As the inset map on the reverse demonstrates, Maine, especially northern and eastern Maine, is unique in the region for its large area of undeveloped land in natural forest. This broad working forest landscape provides important habitat for most of Maine's wildlife species. It is important that the working forest landscape include a variety of stand types and ages and patch sizes to meet varied habitat needs. However, particular management practices and outcomes need not remain fixed in particular locations and thus do not lend themselves to a static map.

Effective conservation and management of this broad forest matrix will depend on management planning at the landscape scale, working forest easements and policies that facilitate such planning, and careful infrastructure siting and design.

On this map, Natural landcover is shown in pale green. Developed and Agricultural lands are gray speckling.

## WHAT'S MISSING - NEXT STEPS

#### COMPLETING STATEWIDE INVENTORY

While the majority of Maine has been subject to a systematic landscape analysis and targeted inventory by Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Maine Natural Areas Program over the last decade, the inventory of the Central and Western Mountains biophysical sections (~5.5 million acres) is still in progress and Focus Areas may be incomplete.

#### EARLY SUCCESSIONAL HABITAT

Priorities for species needing grasslands and other early successional landscapes, such as upland sandpiper and New England cottontail, have not yet been mapped, but will be included once a systematic prioritization has been completed.

#### AQUATIC HABITATS

While riparian areas are the back-bone of the Beginning with Habitat landscape approach to habitat conservation, lakes and rivers of particular statewide importance are not yet highlighted, pending completion of a more systematic assessment currently underway.

#### HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, working with Beginning with Habitat partners, is developing a spatial prioritization for landscape connectivity at the regional and state-wide scale. When completed, the results will be added to this map as appropriate.

Beginning with  
**HABITAT**



**BEGINNING WITH HABITAT (BWH)** is a habitat-based landscape approach to assessing wildlife and plant conservation needs and opportunities and is an essential component of Maine's State Wildlife Action Plan.

**BWH PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES:** Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Natural Areas Program, Maine State Planning Office, Maine Audubon Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Department of Transportation, and the Maine Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit

[HTTP://WWW.BEGINNINGWITHHABITAT.ORG/INDEX.HTML](http://www.beginningwithhabitat.org/index.html)