

## **A FOREST IN CONFLICT: THE PROPOSAL FOR A 3.2 MILLION ACRE NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE IN MAINE'S WORKING FOREST**

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The proposal of a Maine Woods National Park and Preserve in the mostly industrial forest land of northern Maine has caused many debates. Questions about traditional uses of the north woods, issues of access and economic impact, are at the heart of the conflict.

In March of 2003, Maine Governor John Baldacci announced the Fall 2003 Blaine House Conference on natural resource industries. It was a gathering of experts from the fishing, farming, forestry, aquaculture, and tourism and recreation industries in Maine. They discussed challenges they face, contributing factors to those challenges, creative plans for sustaining them, and Maine's natural resource-based economy. The conference steering committee of 39 members was surveyed in the summer of 2003 regarding the proposed national park and issues surrounding the debate. The purpose of the survey was to examine diverse forest values, bring greater perspective to this issue, and inform further research.

The survey respondents believed there could be a "common ground" solution for Maine, especially in light of the decline of the timber industry and the rising value of outdoor recreation and tourism. They categorized the park proposal as an important natural resource policy issue. It is for that reason that this survey has led to further research designed to examine the proposal in the context of diverse values of the forest, as well as the array of conservation strategies for northern Maine.