

## WCCOG Annual General Meeting Dec 3, 2018

### Communities and Conservation conversation – Summary of Lessons Learned & Next Steps

- We need more conversation – soon - on changes to tax policy system under which these transactions operate:
  - Tree growth
  - Open space
  - Minimum % contribution to taxes on conserved lands
- Use the Downeast Conservation Network (where LTs meet/talk) and WCCOG (where towns meet/talk) to provide a bridge that provides a better mechanism for town ideas to reach conservation community
  - Follow up on DMR-approved water quality testing (LT staff assist to Towns)
- Broaden the participants in this conversation to include:
  - all conservation landowners in this discussion (state, feds, private foundations, corporate landowners)
  - Legislators in Augusta and southern ME – not just Washington County
  - Call upon MMA LPC<sup>1</sup> members Lewis Pinkham and Harry Fish to bring issues forward
- Involve towns from the beginning in these transactions; need work on how to codify this
- Work to develop guidelines or a mechanism for towns and conservation groups to work through that can recognize their respective needs and decisions – a decision making tool
- Fit the Downeast conversation within the larger potential economic impact conversation
  - Explore opportunities for making Washington County more of a destination, as a way to bring in other revenue. Link conservation with destination
  - Remember to value what we have – recognize that we have no water quality problems, that we can build our fisheries back (its not possible elsewhere, eg the Chesapeake and the entire mid-Atlantic fishery, but it is here). Look at alewives, the opportunity their restoration offers, and its value to the near shore fishery, as we go to the state with requested changes.
- Research questions
  - The questions that the Economic Study (that Tora presented at the meeting outset) did not look at including: other benefits, costs and fiscal impacts to towns, and the imbalance of how benefits are distributed (to whom, where and when)
  - Municipal impacts – weight of this issue relative to others
  - Only tax implications; people like the conservation; are there other issues besides tax issues that people are concerned?
  - Impact of rockweed harvesting on this conversation, the region economically
  - Data needed for each town (values before/after, tax program enrolled lands, tax impacts as a percentage of total valuation)
  - Inventory of the various economic drivers that are in place – how they could grow; their tax implications
  - Pull from other places
  - Explore any/all options for funds to support the above

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<sup>1</sup> Maine Municipal Association Legislative Policy Committee