



Estimating Willingness to Accept Recreation Access Policies, Incentives, and Compensation among Private Forest Landowners in Maine's Inland Rim Counties

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In Collaboration with the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine (SWOAM)

Objectives:

- Identify landowner attitudes about public recreation access, and determine the factors that impact these attitudes.
- Explore possible programs or policies that could positively impact landowners decision to provide public recreation access.

Funding support for this project was provided by the Northeastern States Research Cooperative (NSRC), a partnership of Northern Forest states (New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and New York), in coordination with the USDA Forest Service.

<http://www.nsrcforest.org>

Project Summary

Rationale:

Maine has a traditional open access policy to private lands that dates to colonial times. Considering it is the most privately owned state in the nation, this access has been an integral and valuable asset for recreation, hunting and fishing. However, recent research indicates that increasingly there are more and more landowners are opting to post their land against trespassing. This study aims to determine what factors impact landowners decisions to allow public recreation access, and to find valuable solutions to alleviate the externalities resulting from public access to private lands.

Methods: The study involved three phases: focus groups, mailed questionnaire, and a pilot study

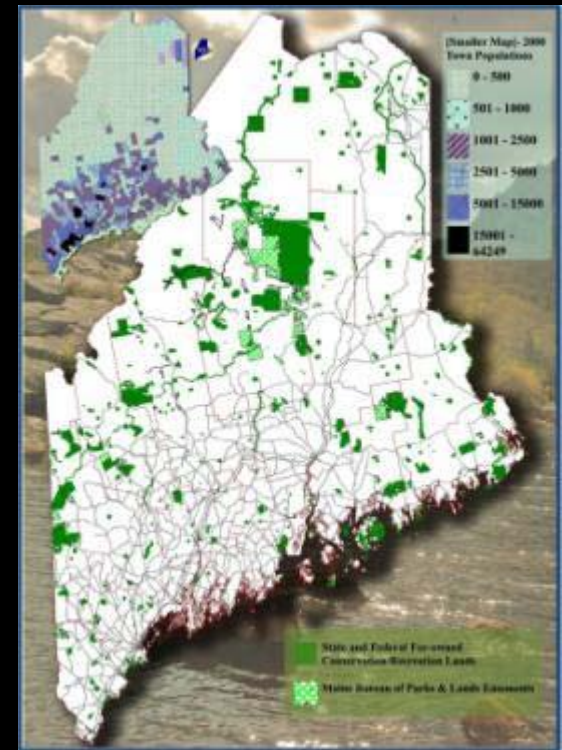
Major Findings: Many of the problems associated with public recreation use results from careless or callous behavior from recreation users. Addressing recreation user behavior and encouraging greater respect for landowners and the land may have the greatest impact for small woodland owners in Maine.

Implications for the Northern Forest region: Finding valuable solutions for landowners may secure public recreation access within this highly privatized region of the nation, and maintain the economic vitality these landowners provide to the area.



Background

- 17M acres of forests
- 5.7M acres of family forests
- 94% privately owned
- \$1B annual economic impact of outdoor recreation & tourism
- 98% primitive camping, over 90% snowmobiling, 60% hiking, 59% cross-country skiing occur on private land
- Strong landowner liability protection
- SWOAM study showed just under 15% posting in 1991, up to 39% in 2006.



White space is privately owned land

Current Interests

- Increased Documentation and Awareness
 - “Charting Maine's Future: An Action Plan for Promoting Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places” (2006)
 - Recreation Access and Landowner Relations Liaison Position in Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife developed by Governor Baldacci in 2007



Governors' Report

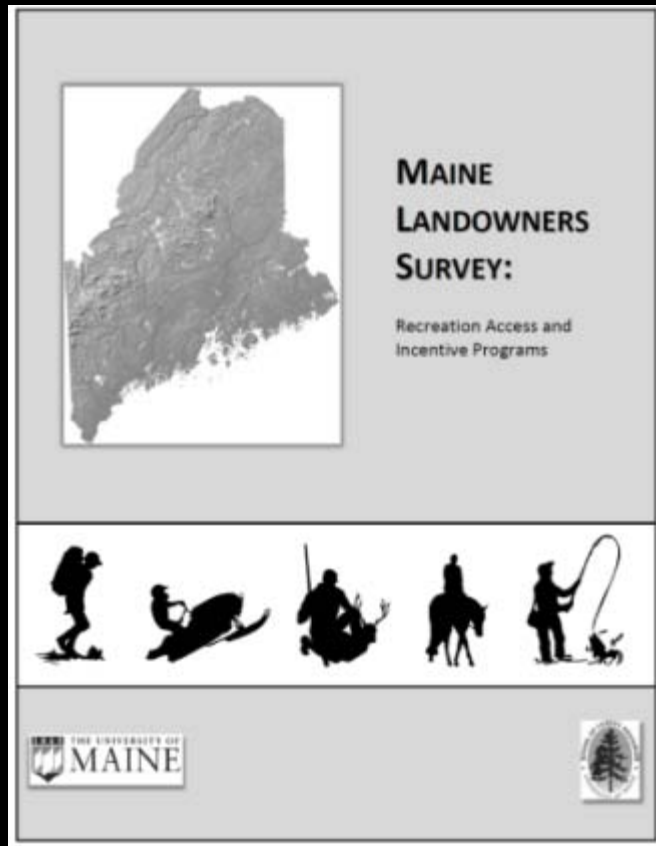


Methods – Phase 1: Focus Groups



- Focus groups held with landowners in 6 locations throughout state: Farmington, Presque Isle, Machias, Wells, Bremen, and Baldwin . Additional focus groups held with recreation, landowner and agricultural interest groups, and government agency representatives in Augusta.
- Discussed issues related to public recreation access, possible solutions, programs and policies.
- Each group evaluated 4 programs: a mitigation fund, white goods deposit program, public media campaign, and a direct financial incentive program.

Methods – Phase 2: Mail Questionnaire

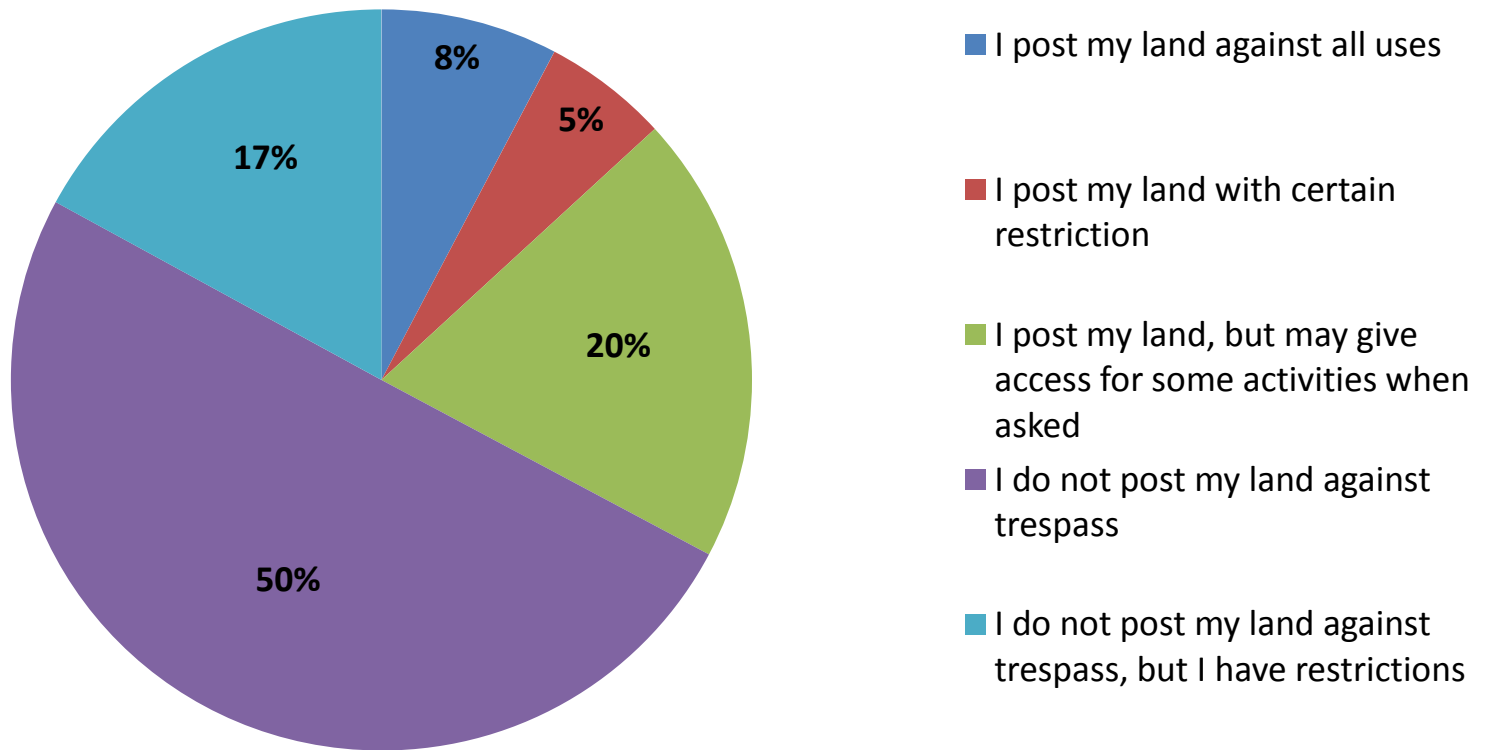


- 12 page questionnaire, 37 Questions
 - Questions inquired about reasons for owning land, activities occurring on parcel, problems faced by landowner, policy preferences and landowner demographics.
- Survey mailed to 1600 landowners within Maine
 - 800 within the Unorganized Territories
 - 800 throughout remainder of state
- Response rate over 50%

Methods – Phase 3: Pilot Study

- Currently under development
- Preliminary study findings presented at Landowner Relations Conference In December 2010 in Augusta
 - Invite-only conference organized by SWOAM and the Sportsment Alliance of Maine
 - Attendees included members of sportsmen and recreation interest groups, and representatives of the tourism sector and public agency representatives
 - Conference attendees will reconvene in upcoming months to discuss pilot study details

Questionnaire Results – Landowner Access Policies



Questionnaire Results –

Landowners who plan to restrict or prohibit recreation access in the future

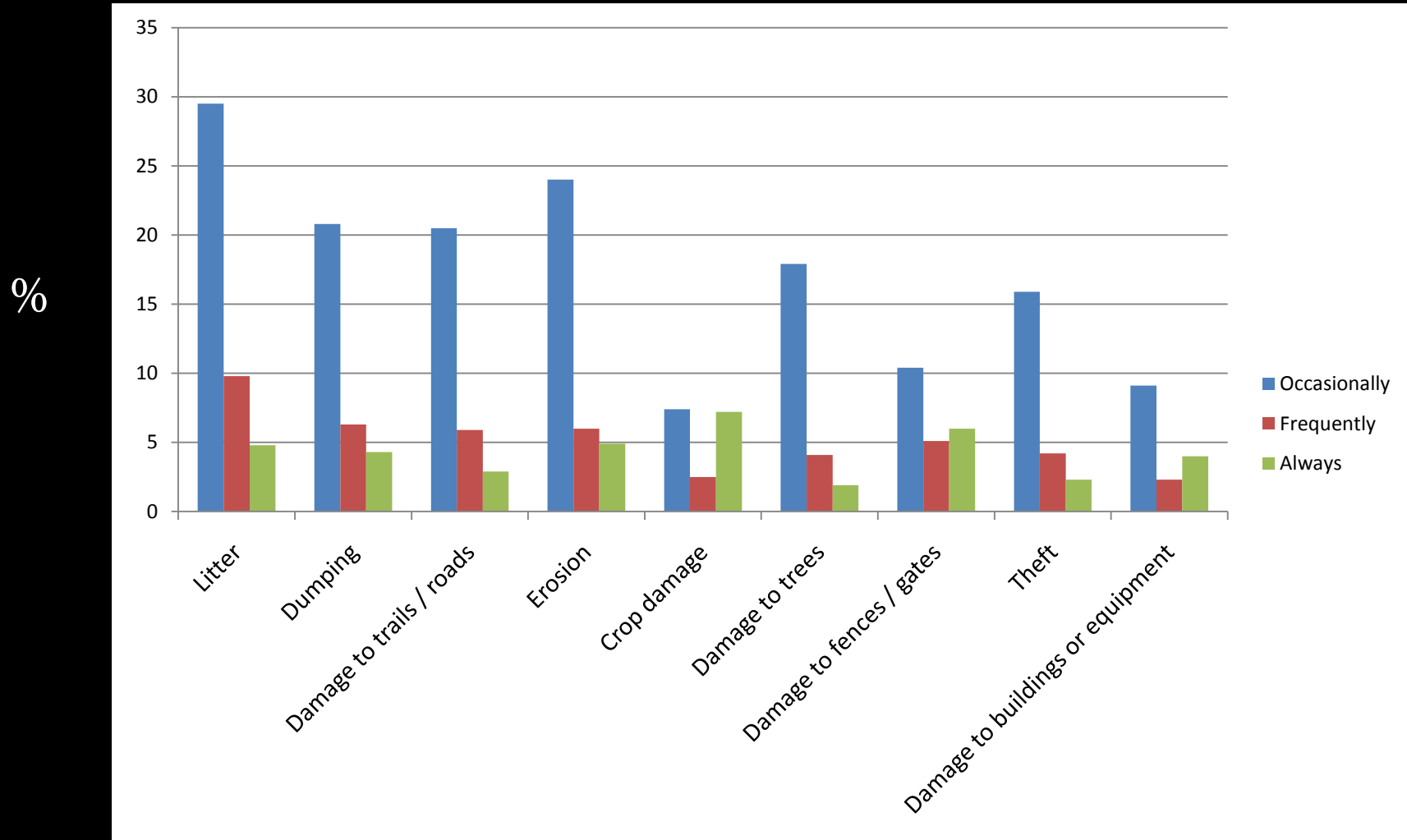
- **No** **42.1%**
- **Maybe** **28.5%**
- **Yes** **29.3%**



Questionnaire Results

- Issues landowners face from public recreation access: unwanted motorized recreation, off-trail use/damage, dumping/litter, damage to crops and trees, damage to fences and gates, trespassing, loss of privacy, erosion and theft.
- Lack of law enforcement officials, slow response time and the burden of proof is an ongoing challenge.

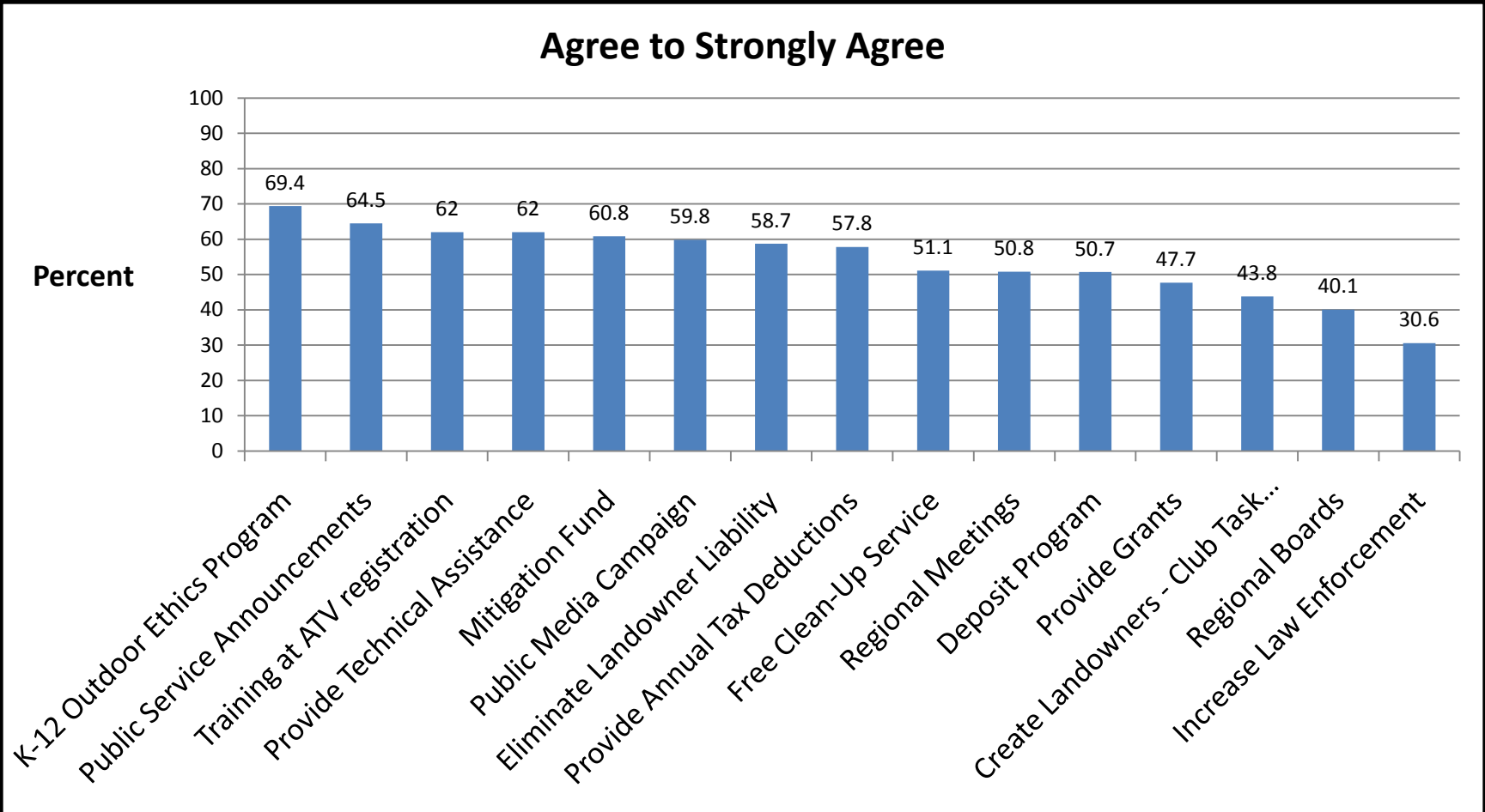
Questionnaire Results – Frequency of problems on parcel



Possible programs presented in questionnaire - “Which option would positively impact your decision to allow public recreation access?”

- K-12 Outdoor Ethics Program
- Public Service Announcements
- Training at ATV registration
- Technical Assistance for Recreation Mgmt
- Mitigation Fund
- Public Media Campaign
- Increased Law Enforcement
- Eliminate Landowner Liability
- Annual Tax Deductions
- Free Clean-Up Service
- Regional Meetings
- White Goods Deposit Program
- Provide Grants
- Task Force
- Regional Boards

Option that would positively influence landowner's decision to allow public recreation access



Implications and applications in the Northern Forest region

- Demonstrate to private landowners that their concerns are being addressed
- Aid in alleviating problems faced by landowners
- Identify public education needs and potential areas for policy change
- Educate recreation users and youth of appropriate behavior
- Strengthen landowner and recreation user relations
- Secure recreation access within the state
- Inform legislators and policy makers

Future Directions

- Partnership with SWOAM on the Environmental Funders Network Quality of Place Program will continue through 2013
- Pilot program testing preferred policies and programs will be conducted between 2011-2012
- Information sharing with policy makers will occur in 2013

List of Products

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Maine Agricultural Trade Show, January 2011, Augusta, ME. “Woodland Owner Attitudes Toward Public Use of Private Land in Maine: What it Means for Landowner Relations.”

Landowner Relations Conference, December 2010, Augusta, ME. “Finding Common Ground: Examining Meaningful Incentives for Small Woodland Owners in Maine.”

International Symposium on Society and Natural Resources, May 2010, Corpus Christi, TX. “Taking the Behavioral Assumptions Framework to the People: Policy Preferences among Landowners, Interest Groups and Agency Employees towards Recreation Access Incentives.”

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

National Association of Recreation Resource Planners, May 2010, Portland, OR

“Exploring Incentives for Public Recreation Access in a Dominantly Privately Owned Landscape: Differing Perspectives between Landowners, Interest Groups and Government.”

Maine Agricultural Trade Show, January 2011, Augusta, ME

“Exploring Incentives for Public Recreation Access in a Dominantly Privately Owned Landscape: Differing Perspectives between Landowners, Interest Groups and Government.”

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Bangor Daily News, June 1st 2010

“Plan seeks secure outdoors funding: The yearly dilemma could be addressed by an amendment to the Maine constitution “

NEWSLETTER

ATV Maine, January 2010 <http://www.atvmaine.org/pdfs/enewspaper.pdf>

“Exploring Meaningful Incentives to Encourage Greater Public Access to Private Lands.”

WEBSITE

Bremen Conservation Commission, <http://bremenconservation.blogspot.com/2010/07/public-access-incentives-study.html>

“Public Access Incentives Study: Maine Landowners Sought for Study on Public Access Incentives, UMaine 2010 Research, Midcoast Area ”

TELEVISION

Wildfire Maine, aired February 23rd 2011. Mentioned by guest speaker and executive director of SWOAM, Tom Doaks