



STATE OF MAINE  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
1 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage  
GOVERNOR

October 10, 2017

The Honorable Paul Davis, Senate Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

The Honorable Michelle Dunphy, House Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Davis and Rep. Dunphy,

This letter is in response to your September 28, 2017 letter requesting answers to two questions and participation from representatives from the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) and Maine Revenue Services (MRS) at the committee's October 12 meeting.

My Administration's Office of Policy and Management is now in the process of researching information related to the amount of land owned by nonprofit organizations. Before the last budget was passed, it was very difficult for state agencies to analyze this information because, unlike with conservation easements, the law didn't require a central registry containing the data. This has made their work much more difficult and time consuming; nonetheless, it is still very important to the taxpayers of Maine. I have attached a map, which is not yet complete, but provides a good visual of the amount of conserved land owned by the state, federal government, and land trusts which includes easements and fee ownership land. This map will be updated as more information is gathered.

Assuming all organizations obligated to submit data do so by the deadline, our goal is to have a comprehensive report finished by the end of the calendar year. Because Administration officials are still in the process of gathering this important information, I am respectfully declining your request for representatives from DACF and MRS to attend the October 12 meeting. Once we compile the information gathered, we will share it with the Legislature. If the committee has specific questions of state agencies in addition to the information requested in your September 28 letter, they should be sent in writing to my attention, and my Administration will answer them. Please find answers to the two requests below.

- 1. An update on Part TT, section TT-1 relating to the conservation easement registry;*  
**As required by Part TT, section TT-1, the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has worked with InforME to expand the conservation easements registry to include registration of parcels owned in fee for conservation purposes. On September 25, 2017, the Department sent letters to over 300 organizations that may own conserved lands to inform them of the new registration requirements.**



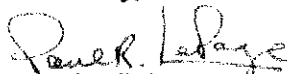
The new Conserved Lands Registry opened on the Department's website on October 1, 2017 and will remain open through November 30, 2017 to solicit data to meet the obligations set forth by the legislation. At this time, it would be premature for the Department to report on data from the new registry. Since this is the first time these organizations have been obligated to provide details of their real estate holdings, beyond conservation easements, the Administration will provide the Legislative Branch a report on this data, as well as its policy implications, once available.

2. *The department's perspective on the economic impact of conserved lands owned by nonprofit organizations;*

The Department does not have economic impact data relative to conserved lands owned by nonprofit organizations, and the types of reports the committee is likely to obtain from nonprofit organizations will be speculative at best. Over time, the Administration has seen value in the conservation of working forests and farms, since it ensures such land remains on the tax rolls, adding production value to the state economy, and typically remains accessible for outdoor recreation. However, preservation of land and its removal from the local tax rolls is concerning because it creates a tax shift that places an unfair burden on Maine citizens.

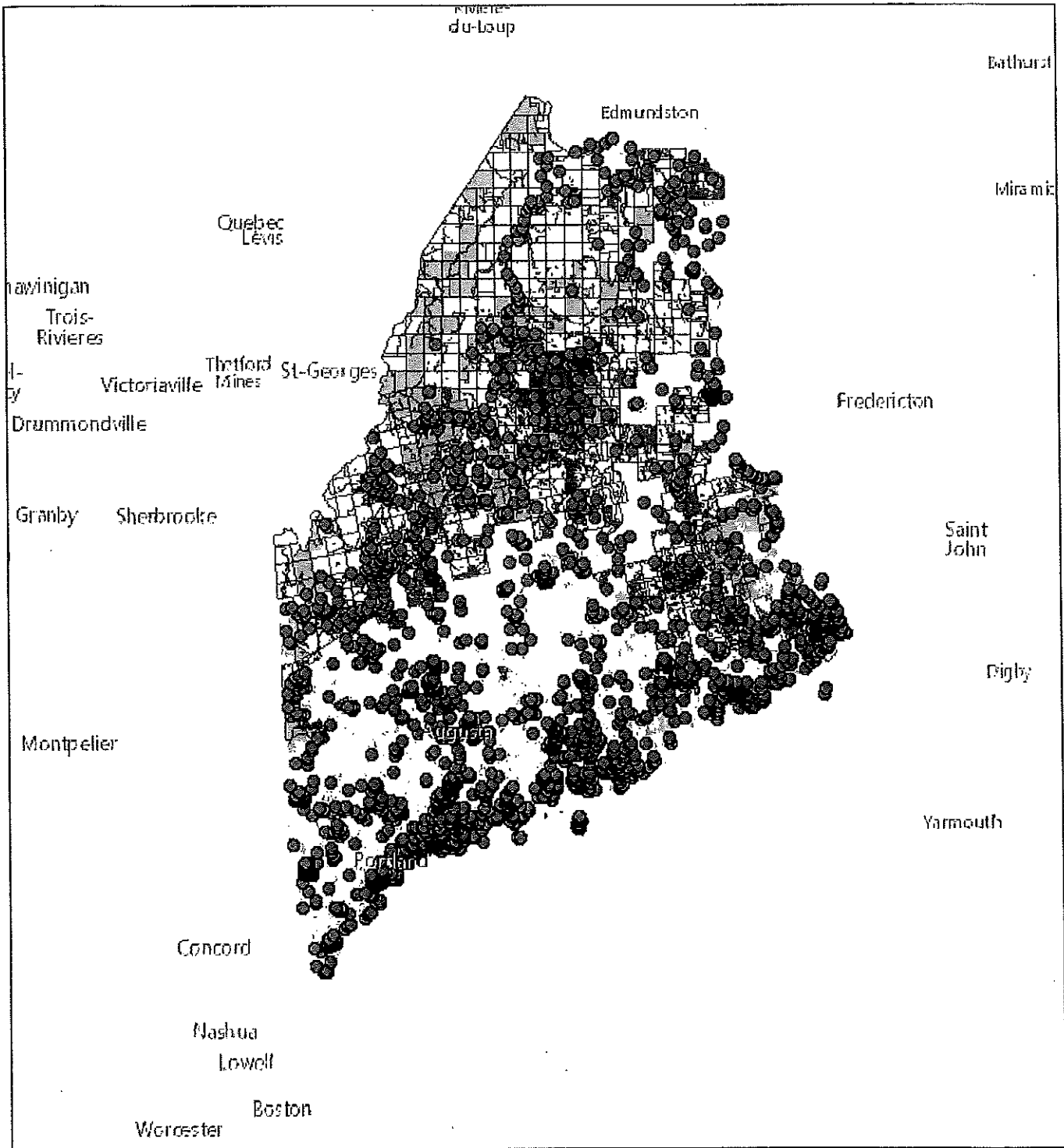
Again, if the committee has specific questions while conducting its work, please send them in writing to my attention, and my Administration will respond accordingly.

Sincerely,

  
Paul R. LePage  
Governor

CC: Commissioner Whitcomb, DACF  
Acting Commissioner Alec Porteous  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

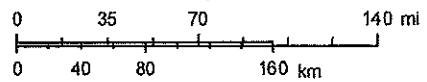
# Maine Conserved Lands



August 17, 2017

1:4,445,777

- Conserved\_Properties\_Point
- Parcels\_Unorganized\_Territory
- Conserved\_Properties\_Polygon\_State\_Ownership
- ▨ Conserved\_Lands\_All



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