

# Bangor Daily News

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## MAINE CAN'T CUT MORE TREES FROM ITS PUBLIC FORESTS ON A WHIM

As lawmakers departed Augusta last month, they left a debate unsettled about how much wood to cut from Maine's public forests, how to use the revenue from those logging operations, and what will become of \$11.5 million in voter-approved, land-protection bonds.

In the coming weeks, a 15-member commission will start meeting to sort out parts of the debate — mainly, how state officials should determine how much wood to cut from 400,000 acres of state-owned land and the proper use for the related revenues.

The commission, written into the state's new two-year budget, evolved this spring out of a dispute among lawmakers and Gov. Paul LePage over the governor's push to harvest more timber from state-owned forests. His initiative would direct the additional harvest revenue to the Efficiency Maine Trust so rural, low-income households could access funds to upgrade to lower-cost heating systems.

Lawmakers have twice rejected LePage's plan. But LePage still demands that the Legislature approve his timber harvesting plan before he releases \$11.5 million in bonds voters approved in 2010 and 2012 to fund the Land for Maine's Future program.

The commission's meetings are coming at the right time. The panel — which will include lawmakers and foresters along with tourism, outdoor recreation and commercial timber industry representatives — can contribute to the debate in a big way. Its members should weigh in on whether it's time for Maine to refresh its approach to managing public lands and take a position on the best use for funds from timber harvesting operations on state-owned land.

### The land at issue

Maine has more than 600,000 acres of public land holdings, mostly dotting the northern two-thirds of the state, much of which has been in state hands since Maine separated from Massachusetts in 1820.

The land is mostly open to the public and set aside for ecological reserves, wildlife habitat and backcountry recreation. Some 400,000 acres are also open to logging, and that land has been thrust into the spotlight over the past two years as LePage has pressed for the ability to harvest more timber each year.

But under state law, Maine's public lands are supposed to be managed for multiple uses: preserving the lands' ecological value, protecting wildlife habitat and promoting outdoor recreation in addition to harvesting. The amount of wood cut from the land each year has generally been well below the amount a commercial timber harvesting operation would cut from its land each year.

### More than timber

In the late 1990s, Bureau of Parks and Lands foresters and outside experts, using public input, developed a vision for how Maine's public lands would be managed. The result was Maine's Integrated Resource Policy, which set species diversity and preservation of mature and old-growth trees as goals for state-owned timberlands — goals that wouldn't necessarily apply to commercially owned forests. The bureau's more finely tuned regional management plans, which set out 15-year goals for various land parcels, reflect those priorities.

Over the past decade, the result

has generally been conservative harvest levels well below the public lands' "annual allowable cut" and tree growth on public lands that is 18 percent faster than all of Maine's other forests, according to the Bureau of Public Lands.

"Their first purpose is not for timber harvest revenue," said Amanda Mahaffey, Northeast region director of the Forest Guild, a professional foresters' association. "Their first purpose is to preserve ecological integrity across Maine's landscape."

"What that means is their foresters practice a level of forest management that is more refined," said Robert Seymour, the Curtis Hutchins professor of forest resources at the University of Maine in Orono.

### More trees harvested

With more wood on its lands and recent favorable harvesting conditions, the bureau has increased its cut over the past seven years.

"That the harvest can go up now, I think, is a tribute to their excellent historical stewardship," Seymour said.

The account where harvest revenues go, the Public Reserved Lands Management Fund, which funds bureau operations and public land improvements, has built up a balance — \$8 million in June — that LePage has been eager to tap.

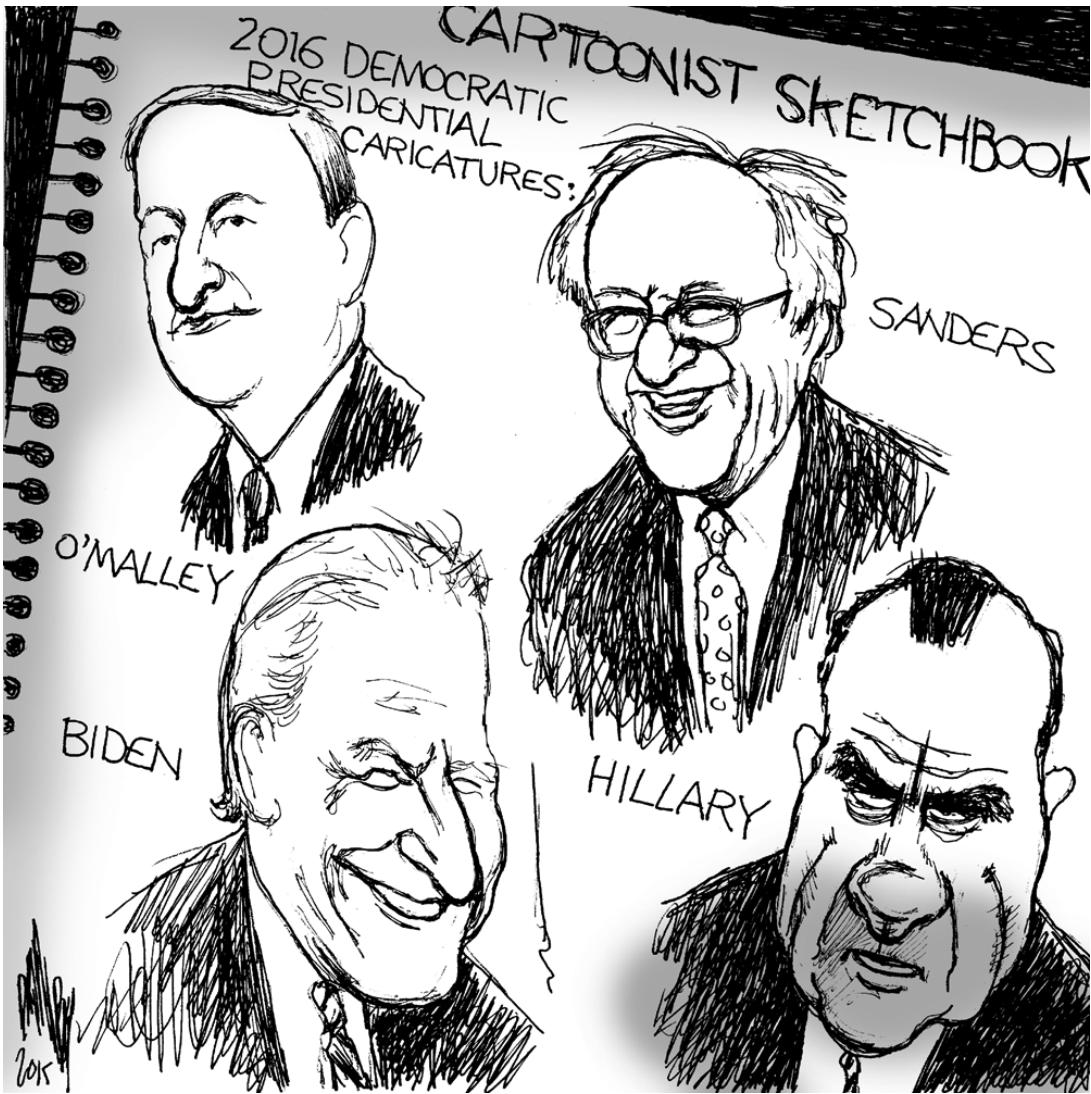
The Bureau of Parks and Lands, based on traditional calculations, set its 2013-14 harvest level at 141,500 cords of wood. But the LePage administration wants to increase the cut even more: At one point in 2013, according to administration emails obtained by the Natural Resources Council of Maine, the administration sought to grow the cut to 227,000 cords per year before settling on 180,000 cords — which approximately matches the forests' growth rate — in the bureau's latest annual report. In the state's two-year budget, legislators limited the bureau to 160,000 cords.

LePage and the Maine Forest Service have repeatedly said Maine needs to excise more trees from state-owned forests before they succumb to a coming infestation of spruce budworms — which largely target fir trees. But foresters are far from certain the budworm will hit Maine public forests in a devastating way in the coming years. The Bureau of Parks and Lands, after all, has long emphasized cutting fir trees as a way to guard against an infestation.

The problem is that the higher harvest levels sought by LePage don't correspond with any formal change in management plans, much less a change that has involved the public input that is traditionally a part of the Bureau of Parks and Lands' management process and a requirement of the bureau's forest sustainability certifications. They correspond with LePage's desire for more revenue to use for a purpose unrelated to public lands — a questionable and unprecedented use for the Public Reserved Lands Management Fund that could set a dangerous precedent for using the funds in the future for any purpose, related to public lands or not.

Perhaps the public lands commission will determine that the Bureau of Public Lands needs to update its management vision, inviting public input and potentially setting different, science-based goals that include a higher harvest.

But until such a land management reboot happens, the LePage administration isn't standing on solid ground in demanding higher harvest levels, then redirecting the revenues to an unrelated purpose.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Helping those in need

Working two days each week planting, watering, weeding and picking, the volunteers and staff of Northeast Occupational Exchange of Bangor have harvested to date about 40 pounds of radishes, 215 pounds of green and yellow beans, and about 10 pounds of carrots. All the food will be donated to those in need in the community and to help the First United Methodist Church with the meals it provides Thursday evenings. At Northeast Occupational Exchange, we also help people learn to prepare nutritious meals and show them how to live on low budget. Anyone interested can find us in the garden at First United Methodist Church 9 a.m. to noon Mondays and Thursdays.

**Sharon Nason,**  
case manager,  
Northeast Occupational  
Exchange of Bangor  
Glenburn

### Clean elections loop

The Maine clean elections initiative on this November's ballot is a progressive assault on freedom and the First Amendment. The initiative would abridge speech and impose the a regulatory state on campaigns and elections. The lead advocate, Andrew Bossie, says to support the campaign for the clean elections initiative, advocates have accepted \$600,000 in out-of-state funds.

No opposition to the initiative has emerged.

The more powerful our government, the more incentive private interests have to try to influence policy, hence corruption and crony capitalism. Every round of campaign fi-

nance reform has created loopholes and crises. McCain-Feingold gave us Citizens United. Now we can get a progressive feedback loop, where campaign finance reform grows government that grows corruption and cronyism that grows the need for more campaign finance reform. It's a progressive jobs program.

Freedom is the answer, not the problem.

**Jon Reisman**  
Cooper

### WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. OpEds may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

### Trump of the ages

As a down-home Mainer, born and raised in this wonderful place we call Maine, I believe in giving praise where praise is due, and Donald Trump has done what few in American human history have been able to do: He has identified that percentage of the American population that truly, unreservedly is deserving of recognition as the idiot fringe.

But who would have thought that about 23 percent of this nation would have overlooked the fact of his phony hairdo as tell-tale evidence that something was missing between his ears. And then, when he opens his

mouth, the dumbest, vulgarest inanities come so effortlessly flowing forth. It is little wonder that so many have been so mesmerized.

Trump is a pied piper, an ass of the ages, and I hope that when this current saga has played out, he gets the recognition he truly deserves for defining the dimension of our population that so hopelessly struggles daily with the slings and arrows of reality.

**Phil Tobin**  
Ellsworth

### Why get a tattoo?

An Aug. 10 BDN article had three photos, one quite large, that showed three different women with apparently beautiful young healthy skin getting semicolon tattoos. The tattoo artist's arm is covered with tattoos, and I hope his skin is healthy like the three women getting their semicolons.

Perhaps the upside of this "news," or ad, about semicolon tattoos for those who share depression is that the semicolons are minimal damage to their lovely skin. Business for Saylorink Tattoo must be booming, now that the BDN has shown its clients and explained their depression.

So often we see parents full of tattoos and their darling children so far tattoo free and beautiful. Old, wrinkled skin may benefit; but once we get the wrinkles, we are just so happy to be living and breathing. It depressed me to view the space in the BDN devoted to this tattoo "news."

All three women pictured looked lovely without the semicolons inflicted on their bodies.

**Martha F. Barkley**  
Belgrade Lakes

## .COMMENTS

**OpEd contributor, Mark Eves, "Democrats push proactive agenda of good jobs, strong wages":**

Excellent OpEd. Unfortunately, Gov. Paul LePage's apologists simply do not care about any of the achievements and policy ideas mentioned in this piece.

— RedFaced1

Good jobs and strong wages have been promised by every politician in every election since elections began. Sing a new song — the old ones are getting tired.

— James\_63

The accomplishments were achieved by working together, which up until LePage arrived in the governor's office always worked. I tip my hat to Republicans and Democrats for finding

common ground and doing what is best for Maine. Going forward, they should just lock the governor in his office, cut off the phones and continue the progress. The governor just gums up the wheels of progress and is not needed.

— vhiwater

I listen to both sides. One wants training and advanced education, and the other wants to promote industry to create jobs. Which comes first, job training or a job to put the trained person into? If the trained workers do not find jobs here, they will go where they can. The way I see it, and I could be wrong, is we need jobs to keep people or bring them into the state.

— Foggy

It might seem chicken and egg, but unless there are people

here to hire there's no incentive to move here. A better compromise might be to offer incentives that reimburse companies that move here to train their employees, bringing up both the educational levels to draw more businesses and the people to fill them.

— Roy Crumbesium

When Democrats become proactive on jobs, wages and the middle-class workers, I will vote for them. The last Democrat I supported at the federal level was Mike Dukakis, 25 years ago.

— Harry Synder

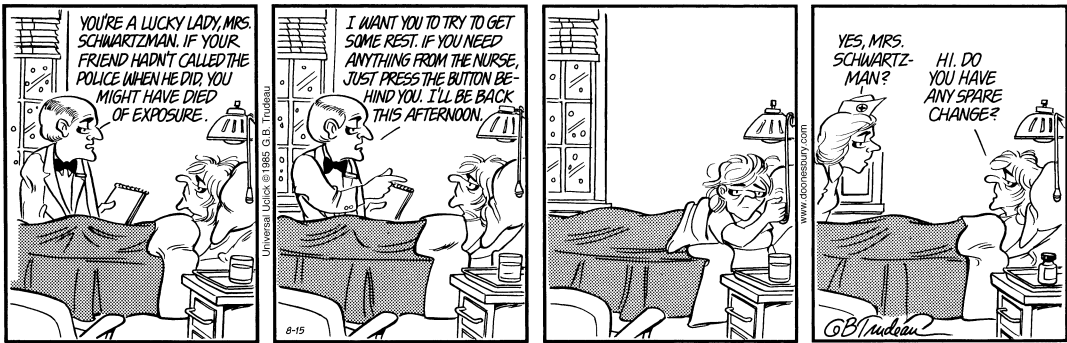
Both sides need a push start.

— TaxME4BetterEverything

Go enjoy your summer break, Mark. I'm sure there's some schmoozing needing done somewhere.

— letsbehonestforonce

## DOONESBURY



## GARRY TRUDEAU