

MAINE OUTDOOR HERITAGE FUND BOARD**Chapter 25: MAINE OUTDOOR HERITAGE FUND - STRATEGIC PLAN (January, 2026)****Overview**

The Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund was established in July 1995 through L.D. 717, An Act to Establish the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund. As stated in Title 12, MRSA c. 903, section 10303,

"The fund is for the sole purpose of maintaining, improving and expanding state and local natural resource conservation programs and associated compatible public uses in accordance with the strategic plan provided for by section 10308, subsection 5, paragraph A."

Title 12, MRSA c. 903, section 10308 charges the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Board with adopting a strategic plan for each of the funding categories listed in section 10307. As the law states, "The strategic plan must identify the priority areas for funding...using the criteria listed in section 10309." This strategic plan is intended to fulfill the requirements of Title 12, MRSA c. 903, section 10308 stated above, and to provide direction to the Board and natural resource agencies on the long-term funding priorities of the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Guiding Principles

The Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Board will be guided by the following principles as it considers grant requests during the period of its duration, which is expected to be the next six years. It will give preference to projects that most substantially accomplish one or more of these objectives:

- conserve the best of Maine's outdoor heritage and achieve outstanding natural-resource or recreational benefits;

Maximize degree and diversity of public/private partnerships or other types of matching contributions. Projects with a 1/3 or higher cash match will be given the highest priority evaluation. Contributions are intended to support only project-related expenses, including salaries. Matching contributions must consist of funds raised specifically for the project proposed and should not include salary costs of natural resource agency staff that are funded by the State General Fund. In-kind contributions that occur during the duration of the project will be considered matching contributions. Proposals that are funded will receive funds according to a schedule determined by the Board. For additional information on matching contributions: refer to MOHF Matching Contributions and Partnerships found on MOHF webpage, www.maine.gov/ifw/mohf.

- form alliances between natural resource agencies, interest groups, and organizations based on shared visions and mutual responsibility. These groups and organizations could include Universities, Municipalities, Tribal Nations, Conservation Groups, other Not-For Profit, and For-Profit Corporations;
- address natural resource concerns of statewide significance and/or broad geographical distribution;

- Prioritize natural systems that have the potential to be climate resilient, and prioritize actions that help a natural system adapt to climate change.

Fund Distribution Categories and Grant Criteria

As specified in Title 12, MRSA c. 903, section 10307, Sponsoring Natural Resource Agencies may apply for a Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund grant, independently or in partnership with other entities. The Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Board encourages Universities, Municipalities, Tribal Nations, Conservation Groups and Not-For-Profit and For-profit corporations interested in projects to contact the appropriate Sponsoring Natural Resource Agency as reported on the MOHF webpage, www.maine.gov/ifw/mohf. Applicants are encouraged to review and address State Priority Reports and other supporting documents as listed on the MOHF webpage.

Dollar amount of grants will vary. The Board will allocate funds according to four major fund distribution categories outlined in Title 12, MRSA c. 903, section 10307 and stated below. The percentage of overall Board funding allocated to each of the four categories is also outlined in Title 12, MRSA c. 903, section 10307 and stated below.

1. Conservation of fisheries and wildlife, and habitat (35%)

The Board shall consider whether a project involves:

- a) Protection/enhancement of a species, species group, natural community or ecosystem adversely affected due to lack of management or habitat loss;
- b) Protection/enhancement of a species, species group, natural community or ecosystem that is adversely affected due to unusual vulnerability to human or natural disturbances, or need for a special or limited habitat type;
- c) Provision of benefits vital to the future welfare of a species or species group;
- d) Education about fisheries, wildlife, natural community, and habitat conservation;
- e) Equipment and training to improve efficiencies in fisheries, wildlife and habitat conservation efforts;
- f) Protection/enhancement of a species, species group, natural community or ecosystem of statewide or regional significance;
- g) Long-term monitoring of fisheries and wildlife, and habitat; or
- h) Climate change, mitigation, resiliency or adaptation strategies.

2. Acquisition and management of public lands, parks, wildlife conservation areas, and public access and outdoor recreation sites and facilities (35%)

Land acquisition projects may involve a range of land types (eg. forestlands, agricultural lands, wetlands, grasslands) that support wildlife conservation and public recreation. The Board shall consider whether a project involves:

- a) Public outdoor recreation sites and facilities or lands of statewide or regional significance;
- b) Acquisition and public management of habitat or species, species group, natural community or ecosystem of statewide or regional significance;
- c) Acquisition and public management of habitat of a threatened or endangered species listed under state or federal law;
- d) Acquisition and public management of rare or exemplary natural communities or ecosystems as determined by the State's Natural Areas Program database;
- e) Protection/enhancement of rare or exemplary geological features;

- f) Areas with proximity to lands dedicated to conservation purposes or public recreation.
- g) Education about the management and use of public lands, parks, wildlife conservation areas, and public access and outdoor recreation sites and facilities;
- h) Equipment and training to improve efficiencies in the management of public lands, parks, wildlife conservation areas, and public access and outdoor recreation sites and facilities;
- i) Development and maintenance of outdoor recreational facilities and access sites;
- j) Long-term monitoring of public lands, parks, and wildlife conservation areas; or
- k) Climate change, mitigation, resiliency or adaptation strategies.

3. Conservation of endangered and threatened species (15%)

The Board shall consider whether a project involves:

- a) A species or species group listed as endangered or threatened under state or federal law;
- b) The habitat of one or more species listed as endangered or threatened species under state or federal law;
- c) A species or species group not listed as threatened or endangered but, based on the best available scientific information, potentially warranting listing in near future;
- d) A species, species group, natural community or ecosystem that has been documented as being in decline or recognized as being at risk of extirpation from the State;
- e) A species, species group, natural community or ecosystem thought in the best professional judgment of biologists to be in decline or in danger of extirpation from the State but whose status is undetermined;
- f) Education about conservation of rare, threatened and endangered species, species of special concern, and/or exemplary natural communities;
- g) Equipment and training to improve efficiencies in the conservation of rare, threatened and endangered species, species of special concern, and exemplary natural communities;
- h) Long-term monitoring of rare, threatened, endangered species or habitat; or
- i) Climate change, mitigation, resiliency or adaptation strategies.

4. Natural resources law enforcement and protection of public health (15%)

The Board shall consider whether a project involves:

- a) Public health or safety concerns of statewide or regional significance;
- b) Biological or environmental indicators that would signal threats to Maine's air quality, water quality, wildlife or wildlife habitat, and/or health of Maine's ecosystems;
- c) Environmental education for the public or law enforcement personnel;
- d) Cross-training between natural resources state agencies;
- e) Equipment and training to improve efficiencies in natural resources law enforcement;
- f) Education of the public about natural resource laws and enforcement; or
- g) Climate change, mitigation, resiliency or adaptation strategies.

For additional information on fund distribution categories: refer to MOHF Category Objectives found on MOHF webpage, www.maine.gov/ifw/mohf

**Definitions of Terms used in Strategic Plan
(from Title 12, MRSA c. 903, section 10301)**

1. **Acquisition.** "Acquisition" means fee ownership, easement, lease, right-of-way, and other less-than fee interests in land.
2. **Board.** "Board" means the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Board.
3. **Coordinator of the Natural Areas Program.** "Coordinator of the Natural Areas Program" means the person appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to be responsible for coordinating the Natural Areas Program.
4. **Fund.** "Fund" means the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund.
5. **Matching funds.** "Matching funds" means any combination of public and private funds used in conjunction with the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, including, but not limited to, private contributions of cash or securities, money from municipal or other public agencies, money from a federal matching program, in-kind contributions or any combination thereof.
6. **Natural resources agencies.** "Natural resources agencies" means state agencies, bureaus, boards, commissions or other instrumentalities having jurisdiction over the protection of the State's natural resources.
7. **Public-private partnership.** "Public-private partnership" means any partnership between federal agencies, state agencies or individuals or any combination of federal agencies, state agencies or individuals, including corporations and private persons or organizations, where at least 1/3 of the funding is contributed by a nongovernmental organization or individual.
8. **Wildlife.** "Wildlife" means wild organisms, including vertebrate, invertebrate and plant species.

MOHF reference documents can be found on the [MOHF](http://www.maine.gov/ifw/mohf) webpage, www.maine.gov/ifw/mohf.