

Maine Conservation Commissions

Maine Association of Conservation Commissions
January 2008

History

Municipal Conservation Commissions authorized by the legislature in the early 1970s in response to an emerging environmental consciousness.

- * Nader Report: The Paper Plantation
- * Coastal oil refinery proposals
- * Pollution concerns
- * 'Back to the Land' Movement, MOFGA
- * *Maine Times*, Advocacy Journalism

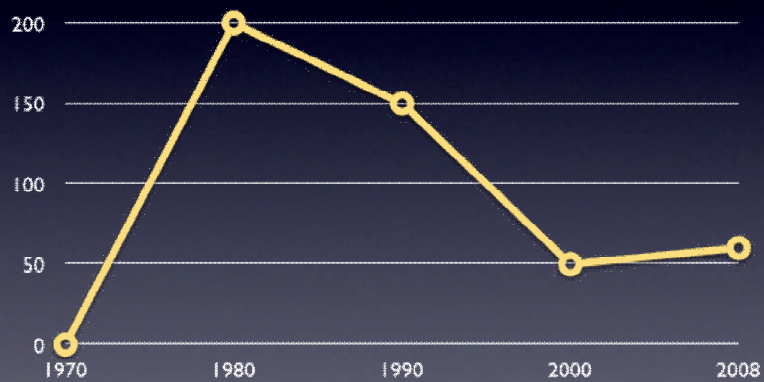
Duties of Conservation Commissions. The commission shall:

- A. Keep records of its meetings and activities and make an annual report to the municipality;
- B. Conduct research, in conjunction with the planning board, if any, into the local land areas;
- C. Seek to coordinate the activities of conservation bodies organized for similar purposes; and
- D. Keep an index of all open areas within the municipality, whether publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wetlands, for the purpose of obtaining information relating to the proper protection, development or use of those open areas. The commission may recommend to the municipal officers or any municipal body or board, or any body politic or public agency of the State, a program for the better protection, development or use of those areas, which may include the acquisition of conservation easements.

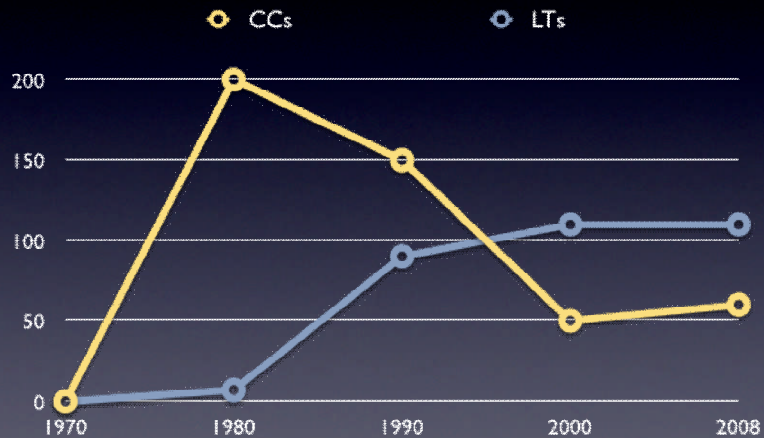
Powers of Conservation Commissions. The commission may:

- A. Advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which it considers necessary;
- B. Have the care and superintendence of the public parks and, subject to the approval of the municipal officers, direct the expenditure of all money appropriated for the improvement of those parks;
- C. Acquire land in the municipality's name for any of the purposes set forth in this section with the approval of the municipal legislative body; and
- D. Receive gifts in the municipality's name for any of the commission's purposes and shall administer the gift for those purposes subject to the terms of the gift.

No. of Conservation Commissions



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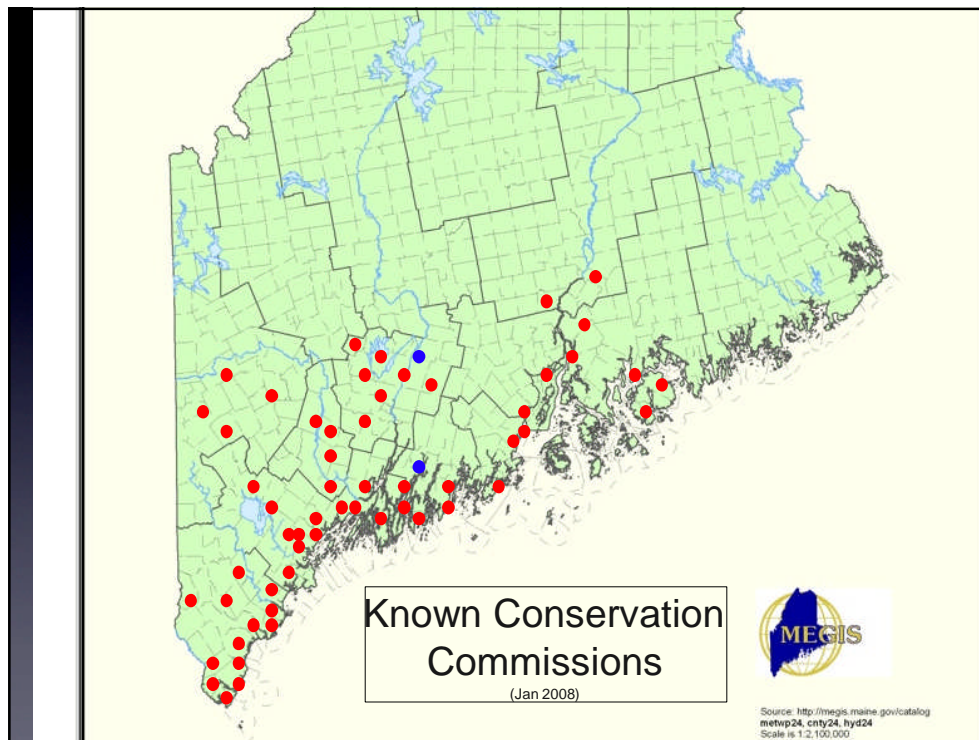
Why the Decline?

- * Rise in Land Trusts
- * Didn't find a new mission
- * Lack of policy maker attention
- * Lack of a state organization to provide advocacy & support.

Good News: Interest in Municipal-level Conservation Growing!

- * 8-10 new or re-newed Conservation Commissions in the past 18-24 months.
- * Brookings Report influence?
- * Growing concern about the loss of Maine's "Quality Places."





Conservation Commission Value

Good Conservation Commissions do at least three things in their community:

- * Educate: Make citizens and policy makers aware of environmental issues in your community.
- * Advocate: Urge the adoption of policies and practices that reflect the needs of the community.
- * Activate: Do things that actively enhance the quality of their community's environment.

Conservation Commission Activities

Bar Harbor: Wetland ordinances, light pollution (Dark Skies initiative)

Lamoine: Groundwater (aquifer) quality, light pollution
(with Bar Harbor), offshore dragging, land acquisition.

York: Groundwater quality – septic tank mapping, use & maintenance.

Manchester: Open Space Planning, recycling, photo contest.

Falmouth: wood fired boilers, invasive species, open
space acquisition, energy issues, vernal pools.

Saco: Planning Board advisor; invasive species control
(loosestrife), land acquisition bond, education).

St. George: Protection of interior wetlands, trails.

Ogunquit: Shorebird nesting habitat, pesticide education.

Kittery: Planning Board site reviews.

Augusta: Open space preservation.

Veazie: Planning Board site reviews, town forest management.

Scarborough: Planning Board site reviews, vernal pools.

Raymond: Open space planning.

Wells: Open space acquisition, land management.

Holden: Land acquisition, trails.

Harpswell: Open space planning.

Lincolnville: Duck Trap River shoreline protection, town forest.

Durham: Farmers' Market.

What's It Take for Success?

- * A clear mission and purpose
- * Supportive elected and appointed officials
- * Good leadership (chair)
- * Diverse, representative membership
- * Committed members (willing workers)
- * Clear goals and related action plan
- * Passion for the work & willingness to engage
- * Respect for the diverse interests represented by people with a stake in the future of your town.
- * Connections, good relationships.

The End

