

Conservation Easements are Forever

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The recent announcement that Weyerhaeuser is planning to acquire Plum Creek and their lands has prompted a number of inquiries to the Forest Society of Maine (FSM). People are asking: *will the approximately 360,000 acres of Plum Creek land covered by the Moosehead Region Conservation Easement and held by the Forest Society of Maine remain intact?* The answer is a resounding “yes!”

One of the powerful aspects of conservation easements is that they are permanent and “run with the land,” meaning that they are in full force and effect no matter who owns the land. A conservation easement is a legal agreement that permanently restricts certain land uses and activities for the benefit of future generations. Easements can be used to preserve important public benefits such as wildlife habitat, public access, recreational features, and productive, undeveloped forests.

As we have observed in Maine over the past few decades, large tracts of forestland can change ownership. One of the benefits of conservation easements is that they help bring continuity and predictability when these changes occur. As the sale of Plum Creek moves forward, FSM will work with the new landowner’s representatives to ensure that both the goals and the specific terms of the easement are met including provisions that the lands are managed sustainably, fish and wildlife habitat is protected, and public recreational access continues. FSM is experienced in working with new landowners and managers through these transitions.

FSM’s staff will continue to work in partnership with the communities in the Moosehead Lake region to support the Branding Initiative, hiking trail planning effort, and other related activities. FSM’s legal responsibility to monitor and enforce the terms of the Moosehead Region Conservation Easement and all the other easements we hold will continue into the future, no matter who owns the land.

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