CONTESTED CONSERVATION OF THE SNOWMOBILE COMMONS: PRIVATE LAND, PUBLIC RIGHTS, AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN MAINE'S SOCIAL WILDERNESS

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Contested Conservation of the Snowmobile Commons:

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Nearly half of Maine's 16 million acres of privately-owned forestland has changed hands in recent decades. As the vast industrial forest contracts under the pressures of new development and land use constraints, the effects of these changes are strongly felt by a rural populace already contending with job losses and other consequences of economic restructuring. Local communities have expressed particular concern about the impacts shifts in land ownership and management are having on Maine's "open land tradition"—the longstanding right of the public to permissively access and use private lands. Several new conservation landowners have levied restrictions based upon environmental ethics and values that exclude some customary uses of the land, and these owners have consequently emerged for many north woods residents as the greatest threat to the private commons.

Using snowmobiling as an entry point, this research grounds these large-scale economic and environmental transformations and ensuing resource conflicts within

the north woods communities being affected. I examine how snowmobiling—arguably the most contentious land use in present-day disputes—is deeply rooted in the working forest, its tradition of common property, and rural Maine's communities, cultures, and economies. The activities of snowmobilers, their social relations, and institutional arrangements together comprise the snowmobile commons. My research contends that snowmobiling helps to make visible various practices of stewardship, local histories and heritages, collective involvement in land management, and the diverse economies that exist in Maine's forests. Ultimately, this dissertation reveals that the heritage of snowmobiling in Maine and its integration with various aspects of rural life have left indelible physical, economic, and cultural imprints on the landscape that are not easily swept away by seemingly inevitable forces of change.

This research extends First World political ecology scholarship by exploring the history and culture of America's snowbelt, offering new insights into the diversity and viability of common property regimes, and reframing discourses of rural restructuring and studies of the transition to post-productivism in the global north. I employed a combination of research methods including in-depth interviews with key informants, participant observation, and analysis of formal and informal documents.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Much has been written about the extensive changes underway in Maine's north woods in the past few decades, particularly because they appear to typify the kinds of transitions taking place throughout rural America: new land values, most commonly development and conservation, are increasingly replacing declining natural resource-based industries that once undergirded rural economies. Beginning in the 1980s, a legion of new owners have entered Maine's land market, since which time just less than half of the state's nearly eighteen million acres of forestland has changed hands. Amidst fears that the repeated buying and selling of land and ensuing fragmentation and development of Maine's hinterlands will ecologically damage this great expanse of unbroken forest, millions more acres have been recently purchased for conservation. And, much like elsewhere, local communities are fighting to make their voices heard as the future of the woods, and their rural livelihoods, appear to hang in the balance.

But within this familiar, overarching narrative of rural change is a fascinating history and legacy of private land tenure and public access rights that make Maine unique and significantly influence how rural restructuring and associated changes are navigated and negotiated within north woods communities. I use snowmobiling as my entry point into understanding the regionally distinctive and interrelated social histories, cultures, economies, natures, and institutions that shape and are affected by

these ever-changing dynamics. At first glance snowmobiling may appear trivial and fairly unimportant, simply one of many leisure activities in Maine's woods. Yet it provides an invaluable lens through which to view and analyze the changes taking place in the forest. Visitors to rural parts of America's snowbelt[1] in the thick of winter will quickly become aware of the immense popularity of snowmobiling. The machines are everywhere. This is especially the case in Maine, which boasts one of the best trail systems in the country and where more people own snowmobiles, per capita, than any other state (Vail and Heldt 2004). However, this widespread use, which dates back more than fifty years, is deeply rooted in the working forest, its tradition of common property, and rural Maine's communities, cultures, and economies. Together the collective practices of snowmobilers, their social relations, and institutional arrangements comprise the snowmobile commons.

Major shifts in rural Maine economies and land market dynamics have serious implications for local communities whose livelihoods and cultures are intertwined with the north woods in myriad ways. Today's forest products industry employs far fewer people than a few decades ago, with job losses closely following the new investment-owners' separation of the land, trees, and mills. Meanwhile, most of the conservation interests that have entered the fray have maintained existing uses like sustainable timber harvesting and snowmobiling, while a few others have established

[1] In this dissertation, I use the term snowbelt to describe the northern parts of the United States stretching from the Midwest to the Northeast, which receive considerable snowfall.

land use restrictions that do not sit well with local users. These latter landowners have brought with them new environmental ethics, values, and hopes for change in Maine's forests that don't necessarily include a place for longstanding customary uses of the land. As a result, they have ignited particularly contentious debates over the rights of private landowners and the public's traditional uses, and have emerged for many northern Mainers as the greatest threat to the private commons. Adding to the discord is a divide, both perceived and real, between northern and southern Maine—a demographic, cultural, economic, and political rift that is strongly felt within rural Maine communities that are surrounded by the beautiful and treasured north woods but struggling economically. As such, it is not surprising that many northern Mainers react with a deep distrust of and animosity towards outsiders who are not simply unlike them, but who assert this difference in a way that has material consequences for rural residents.

Snowmobiling is arguably the most contentious land use in present-day disputes between north woods community members and conservationists. My research reveals that tightly woven into this conflict are disparate social constructions of nature, environmental stewardship, and human impacts; seemingly incompatible cultural heritages; clashing views of the rights of private property owners versus the customary right of the public to access private lands; and divergent perceptions of rural economies and economic development in the woods. To understand these complex dynamics my research examines the socio-political dimensions of rural

restructuring and transformations in land ownership, with attention to livelihood struggles and practices. At the same time, I analyze how these "forces" and the *discourses* of these processes are mediated and challenged by individuals and communities at the local and regional scale. Ultimately, my research reveals how the heritage of snowmobiling in Maine and its integration with various aspects of rural life have left indelible physical, economic, and cultural imprints on the landscape that are not easily swept away by seemingly inevitable forces of change.

Background

> I think in Maine our parks, our outdoor recreation, honestly is the soul politically of a lot of people. We have [a] deep-rooted political and cultural commitment to the big outdoors and it means a lot to all of us. So as a result, we get very intense about it and everybody has their little slice of heaven and we all commit to it (Dan[2] interview 2011).

Maine is the most rural state in the nation and is also the most sparsely populated state east of the Mississippi River; however, more than seventy million people live within an eight-hour drive. As the largest expanse of forest ecosystem in the country located near major population centers, the north woods represent a unique natural resource and a premier recreation area for nearly thirty percent of the total United States population (never mind the thousands who annually drive east and

[2] For confidentiality purposes, pseudonyms have been used for all interview subjects. A complete list of pseudonyms and interview dates is provided in the References section.

south across the Canadian border to vacation in Maine). However, this proximity has intensified land management challenges in a working forest where opinions about the north woods are "shaped by a century of urban wilderness fantasies, […] making this a land of wildly conflicting expectations" (Judd 2007, 8–9).

Conflicts are especially complex and intense within state lines where a stark cultural and economic rift separates the forested, rural north from the sub/urban south. Many of those residing in north woods communities once were or continue to be somehow associated with natural resource-based industries; they are farmers, guides, mill workers, innkeepers, and others whose livelihoods are vitally connected to the woods in both a direct economic and more cultural sense. While many forest products jobs have disappeared in recent decades and out-migration has depressed and aged regional populations, the woods continue to serve as a largely privately owned commons and multiple-use space that sustains local communities in myriad ways. The north woods may be considered fairly empty of full-time residents, but it is clearly occupied by *uses*, covered with thousands of miles of logging roads, trails, dammed rivers, and other telltale signs of human activity.

Meanwhile, the state's more southern urban regions, which are wealthier on average than their northern counterparts and are growing and spreading, are filled with people who also possess claims to the north woods as their cultural and ecological heritage, though their uses of the forest and general perceptions of nature are often quite different. Opinions on land conservation, management, and public

versus private ownership are particularly polarized, presenting especially tough challenges when deciding the land's optimal value, which users have rights to this distinctive natural and cultural landscape and its future use and protection, and how these rights and cultural heritages are asserted and balanced.

Fairly recent economic transitions and the associated widespread sales of vast swaths of forestland beginning in the early 1990s have galvanized the conservation community. Various conservation interests secured more than two million acres in Maine between 1994 and 2006, and despite the sluggish economy, more than one million acres of land were protected in 2011 alone (Quimby 2012, Clark and Howell 2007).[3] Maine has ninety-eight private land trusts that together safeguard just less than two million acres, the second largest acreage in the nation according to a survey by the Land Trust Alliance (Quimby 2012). Although there are serious uncertainties surrounding the intentions and future land management plans of the financial investors and development interests that now hold majority ownership of Maine's forests, north woods residents' tend to harbor greater suspicion of and animosity toward certain conservation groups and individuals. Most anger within north woods

[3] This number includes more than 900,000 acres in western Maine purchased by "kingdom buyer" and media mogul John Malone in February 2011. Although not officially designated as permanently protected conservation land, Malone commented that the timberland "fit our interests in land conservation and sustainability" (Miller 2011a). Thus far he has continued to maintain the land's certification as sustainably managed forestland and allowed public recreational access, explaining, "My interest in land conservation is well known and this […] will further enhance these efforts" (Miller 2011b).

communities is directed at environmentalists or "enviros" who represent the elite, urban "other;" following the acquisition of large land parcels, some conservation interests have erected gates across roads and trails and eliminated consumptive uses on their land, usually with little to no input from surrounding residents who have grown accustomed through the years to regularly meeting with landowners and having their voices heard. Motorized recreation, including snowmobiling, has often been the first thing to go. Such restrictive conservation strategies and land management policies make it appear as though "outsider environmentalists" are aiming to control a landscape they hardly visit, effectively dismissing the rights or interests of people who call the forest their home.

Two in particular have most angered north woods residents in recent years—the Massachusetts-based Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) and Roxanne Quimby, an individual philanthropist and conservationist who made hundreds of millions of dollars from the sale of Burt's Bees, a personal care products business she cofounded and originally based in Maine.[4] Both hope to preserve the region's wild and remote

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[4] Because Quimby's personal and business history is arguably an essential part of local contempt for and opposition to her land use policies, it seems prudent to provide a condensed history here. To begin with she grew up in Cambridge and Lexington, Massachusetts, attended art school in San Francisco, and followed the back-to-the-land movement to the north woods of Maine in the mid-1970s. This part of the story alone endows her with outsider status in the Maine woods. A decade later she met up with reclusive beekeeper Burt Shavitz and together they founded Burt's Bees, originally a small honey and beeswax candle company in Guilford, Maine. She proved to be an astute businessperson and the company quickly grew. She moved it south in the early-90s, another mark against her, after which the company really took off. In 2007, she sold Burt's Bees to Clorox for just under one billion

character and attract new users to the woods by catering to "something different" than the tradition of open access to the forest for hunting, snowmobiling, and other customary public uses. They have purchased a total of more than 250,000 acres of forestland over the last decade, eliminating a number of snowmobile trails and restricting other unwanted uses. AMC has acquired two large land parcels in the 100-Mile Wilderness Region just east of Greenville and Moosehead Lake, starting with the 37,000-acre Katahdin Iron Works tract purchased from the International Paper Company in 2003 and followed six years later with the 29,000-acre Roach Ponds tract (figure 1). AMC's long-term goal is to conserve up to 100,000 acres in the area through ownership, partnerships, and other means (Jason interview 2011).

Quimby, on the other hand, began systematically buying land in the north woods thirteen years ago, and soon thereafter established a foundation, Elliotsville Plantation, Inc. (EPI), to manage the acquisition and management of the more than 190,000 acres she has since purchased, most of which is in the Katahdin region (figure 2). Five of her parcels are designated as "sanctuaries" and EPI's stewardship goal is to preserve their wilderness character, "leaving the lands unimpaired for future use and enjoyment, including recreational, aesthetic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use" (EPI no date a).

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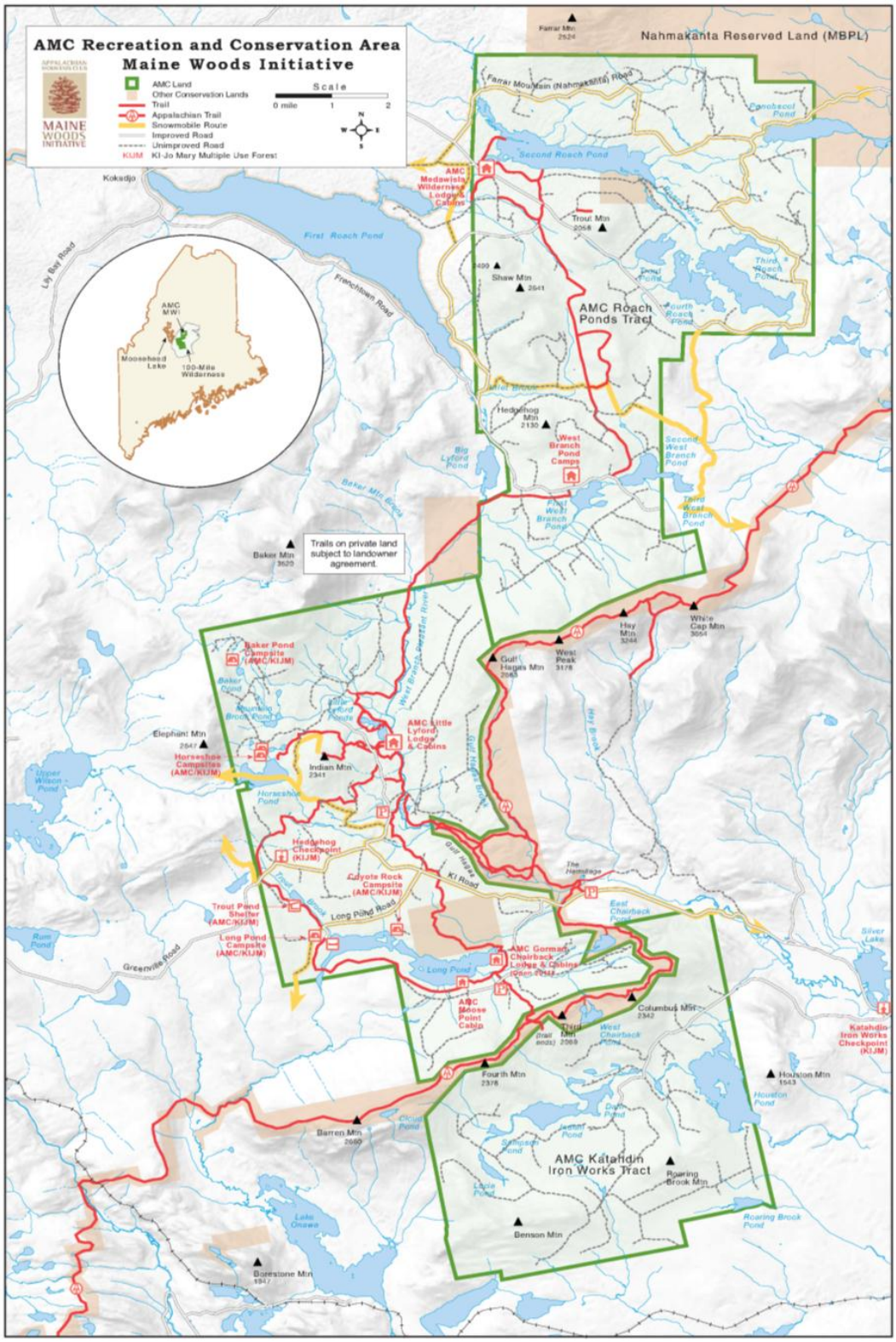
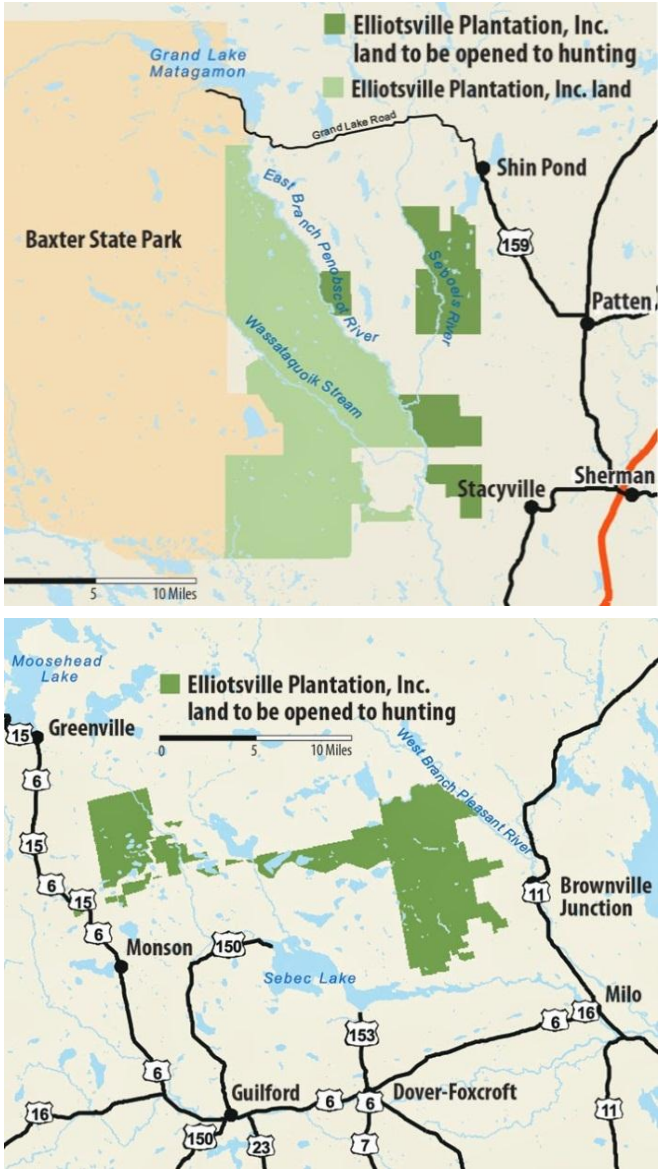
dollars and for more than a decade has devoted herself and her fortunes to preserving Maine's wilderness. She is the third wealthiest Mainer and in 2013 landed at number eighty-eight on the list of the largest 100 landowners in the U.S. (Baker 2013a).



Source: Appalachian Mountain Club

Figure 1. The Appalachian Mountain Club's Maine landholdings (Roach Ponds and Katahdin Iron Works tracts)



Source: Bangor Daily News, 9 September 2013

Figure 2. Elliotsville Plantation Inc.'s major landholdings in Maine

Starting in April 2011 Maine news was dominated by Quimby's proposal to donate 74,000 acres of her land abutting Baxter State Park to the National Park Service to form a Maine Woods National Park (see light green area in figure 2). The Park Service expressed interest in Quimby's proposal because the densely populated Northeast has so few parks compared with other regions of the country and only one

national park, Acadia National Park, which at roughly half the size of the proposed park attracts more than two million visitors a year (Associated Press 2011). This controversial conservation endeavor represents only the most recent of numerous cultural clashes over the politics of nature conservation and conflicting rights to use and enjoy the exceptional resources within Maine's north woods.

However, Quimby encountered venomous opposition from numerous local communities and interests, as well as the state's Republican governor and state legislature, which overwhelmingly voted to pass a June 2011 resolution opposing the creation of a park. Although polls found that the majority of Mainers supported a park, Quimby faced an uphill battle securing local support and the critical subsequent backing of Maine's congressional delegates (Miller 2011c). In mid-2011 she quietly handed over the reins to her son, the new president and public face of EPI, and in December 2012 the Quimby family withdrew their original park proposal submitted to the Park Service.

Relevant Literature

This research fits squarely within a relatively recent yet large body of work called "First World" political ecology, which emerged following the recognition that since its inception in the 1970s, political ecology had focused almost exclusively on natural resource conflicts in developing countries. Despite very clear and important differences between First and Third World contexts, researchers producing work as

part of this subfield have argued that there is "nothing about the epistemology, methodology, philosophy, or politics of Third World political ecology that bars its deployment in other contexts" (Robbins 2002, 1510). They contend that what largely defines political ecology and unites such disparate cases is a focus on the following themes related to environmental conflicts:

> access to and control over resources; marginality; integration of scales of analysis; the effects of integration into international markets; the centrality of livelihood issues; ambiguities in property rights and the importance of informal claims to resource use and access; the importance of local histories, meanings, culture, and 'micropolitics' in resource use; the disenfranchisement of legitimate local users and uses; the effects of limited state capacity; and the imbrications of all these with colonial or postcolonial legacies or dynamics (McCarthy 2002, 1283).

Indeed, many of these themes are a central part of disputes over the protection and human use of Maine's north woods. However, my research extends First World political ecology in several important ways, contributing to the ongoing growth and development of this burgeoning field. Geographically speaking, many of the studies of rural land and resource conflicts have coalesced around the American West (Robbins et al. 2011; Kosek 2006; Robbins 2006; Walker 2003; Walker and Fortmann 2003; Sayre 2002; Wilson 1999; McCarthy 1998, 2002). This extensive body of scholarship has explored environmental struggles, public land use, property rights, new development pressures, and the role of state and federal government regulation. By expanding the geographical extent of this field and examining similar issues faced by rural communities in the Northeastern U.S., this dissertation looks at markedly

different cultural and ecological histories, natural environments and seasons, land tenure configurations, economic development strategies, and roles played by the state and federal government.

To begin with, I explore the history and culture of the snowbelt, a climatological and cultural area largely overlooked by political ecology research within the coterminous U.S. While there are of course some exceptions to this general inattention (Heikkinen et al. 2010, 2012; Stoddart 2012; Cadieux 2011; Carothers 2011a, 2011b; Desbiens 2004; Hurley et al. 2002; Emery 1998, 2001), snow-covered landscapes and the relatively isolated, northern, rural environment are central to my examination of how the winter season and snowmobiling have affected the social and economic lives of rural residents. It was evident early in my research how little scholarship has been produced on the history and culture of snowmobiling in the contiguous U.S., particularly from an ethnographic standpoint. Very few manuscripts were found on the topic (see Reich 1999, Tuite 1969, Whittaker and Wentworth 1972). In addition, neither the Maine State Archives nor the Maine Historical Society contained special materials on the history of snowmobiles and snowmobiling in the state. Most academic writing on snowmobiling is in relation to recreational conflicts (Davenport and Borrie 2005, Vail and Heldt 2004, Vittersø et al. 2004, Vail 2002, Jackson and Wong 1982), environmental impacts[5], and formal rural economics (Vail

[5] Countless environmental impact studies have researched a whole host of environmental issues associated with snowmobiling including air quality and emissions, water quality, the

2002), including numerous state-specific economic impact analyses of snowmobiling (see Okrant and Goss 2003, Reiling 1999, and Reiling et al. 1996, among others). However, I tackle new ground by using snowmobiling as the framework for my research and analysis of regional land use and conservation conflicts, exploring how snowmobiling relates to rural narratives of community livelihoods, local practices of stewardship, and common property regimes.

Political ecologists are engaged in an extremely active conversation about the transformation of rural economies, landscapes, and demographics in the global north including the transition to post-productive landscapes (Brogden and Greenberg 2003, McCarthy 2002, Sayre 2002); diversification of rural economies (Che 2006); the related processes of exurbanization, amenity migration, and rural gentrification (Cadieux 2011, Cadieux and Hurley 2011, Hurley and Halfacre 2011, Yung and Belsky 2007, Nesbitt and Weiner 2001); and the effects of globalization on rural areas (McCarthy 2008, Woods 2007, Cloke et al. 2006, Nelson 2002). However, this dissertation reframes the typical discourse of rural restructuring found within much of the First (and Third) World political ecology research and offers new insights into studies of the transition to post-productivism in the global north. My research shows how snowmobiling is closely tied to the productive landscape; it evolved in tandem

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soundscape and noise pollution, wildlife, and vegetation and snow compaction (for an exhaustive list of relevant research and impact studies, see American Council of Snowmobile Associations [2012]).

with rural, natural resource-based economies and has heavily relied on logging roads and other manifestations of the working forest. It is therefore quite different from other forms of recreational tourism considered at odds with industrial uses of the woods, often practiced by "outsiders" or in-migrants to rural areas who possess different environmental values. As such, this dissertation uses snowmobiling to complicate a trajectory of change in rural areas that sees "old" productive forms of capitalism and associated uses of the forest replaced by a new, amenity-based consumption economy that has a more passive relationship with the land. Snowmobiling may technically be part of the tourism sector but it is also a local traditional use, connected to the history and people of the north woods.

In addition, the kind of new residential development studied in most First World political ecology research is quite different from what's happening in Maine's woods. In the American West (Walker 2003, Walker and Fortmann 2003, Robbins et al. 2011, Nelson 2002, Sayre 2002) and other regions (Cadieux 2011, Hurley and Halfacre 2011) pressures on rural areas are primarily the result of amenity-driven exurbanization. In this body of research, rural communities experiencing in-migration, gentrification, and undergoing rapid growth are relatively close to major population centers like Sacramento, the Bay Area, or Toronto. However the north woods region is much further away from major cities; Boston, the closest large metropolitan area, is a four and a half hour drive from Millinocket and Greenville, considered north woods gateway communities. Second home purchases in these

distant areas are on the rise, but they are not yet at a scale or pace that is transforming rural populations and landscapes. Furthermore, most new homeowners are only occupying their properties for a fraction of the year, much like the absentee ownership documented in ranching communities out West (Gosnell et al. 2006, Haggerty and Travis 2006). As a result, the development potential of the land remains largely unknown or as yet unconfirmed, while the conservation potential of this large expanse of forestland within the populous northeastern U.S. is crystal clear. As most financial investor-owners sit on their investments and in the meantime uphold existing resource use practices and land management policies in Maine's forests (i.e., harvesting timber and allowing public access), conservationists, not exurbanites, are the most visible harbingers of cultural change and reductions in resource access on private lands. My research makes clear that until development values rise or other new values emerge that these financial investors can tap into (or help create), local communities perceive relatively large-scale conservation to be a greater, more imminent threat to rural livelihoods.

Oftentimes First World political ecology scholarship that indirectly or directly explores issues of tradition, cultural heritage, and customary practices related to the access to and use of natural resources does so through the lens of indigeneity (Berkes

and Jolly 2001, Willems-Braun 1997)[6], subsistence activities (Barron 2010, Hurley et al. 2008, Emery and Pierce 2005, Emery et al. 2003), and sovereignty rights (Braun 2002). In relation to indigenous claims to resources and lands, there are several Native American populations in the north woods, and I do spend some time discussing the clear parallels between the Wabanaki's philosophy of land ownership and use and Maine's open land tradition. However, my focus on the centuries-old Anglo origin of the public's right to use Maine's private land, which dates back to pre-colonial times, extends traditional natural resource claims beyond their correlation with indigeneity. Maine's north woods communities are primarily populated by Euro-Americans who inhabit an intriguing temporal middle ground—while not indigenous, their families have lived on and worked the land for several centuries, and local rights are articulated in the context of this history. Meanwhile, this dissertation further broadens understandings of tradition with its departure from subsistence practices like the gathering of non-timber forest products, and its attention on a mechanical recreational activity. Snowmobiling may seem far from a traditional subsistence activity, yet many in Maine group it with hunting and fishing as a customary practice central to rural livelihoods and dependent upon the continuation of public access to and consumptive uses of the woods.

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[6] See also Helander-Renvall (2008), Pelto (1973), and Pelto and Müller-Wille (1972), which explore cultural adaptations and the impact of the technology of the snowmobile on indigenous Sami communities that practice reindeer herding in North Finland.

Common property arrangements are more widespread in the global south, particularly in forested environments, which explains why much of the literature on forest-based commons is geographically focused on developing countries (see Agrawal 2007). Furthermore, largely due to this focus on the global south where increases in community control often result from decentralization by national governments, forest commons scholars have paid limited attention to other forms of property through which forests are managed (e.g., private property, co-governance arrangements) (Agrawal 2007). However, commons research is characterized by its emphasis on the diversity of common property regimes, and First World political ecology has certainly continued to diversify the field by using the theory of the commons to study complex social-ecological systems and common property regimes throughout the global north (Brewer 2012, Robbins et al. 2011, Acheson and Acheson 2010, Murry et al. 2010, St. Martin 2009, Berkes et al. 2003). This dissertation builds upon some existing research exploring the public's use of private land for snowmobiling and other forms of outdoor recreation in Sweden (Sandell and Fredman 2010, Zachrisson 2010, Anttila and Stern 2005, Hultkrantz and Mortazavi 1998) and comparing Sweden with Maine (Vail and Heldt 2004, Vail and Hultkrantz 2000), deepening commons scholarship through its examination of Maine's snowmobile commons, a unique configuration of social and institutional arrangements governing the public's use of private forestland. Disputes over the maintenance of the private commons differ from conservation conflicts in the American West, many of which center on access to natural resources

on federally-owned public lands. The federal government is a minor player in Maine's conservation story, and local communities hope to keep it that way. Meanwhile, the state government, which also owns and controls a very small percentage of Maine's forestland, has largely facilitated the public's use of private lands through the years and is therefore an integral part of the private commons. This complex arrangement relates to concerns expressed by Agrawal (2007) and Berkes (2008) who contend that commons research has a history of emphasizing the community level, which can fail to demonstrate how "processes at multiple social and institutional levels interact with each other to generate outcomes relevant to forest governance" (Agrawal 2007, 128). My research aims to address this limitation by illustrating the network of interactions and partnerships at various scales among community members, landowners, and the state in the maintenance of the commons.

Areas and Scales of Study

Technically, this research is not geographically situated in any one place—interview subjects live and work throughout the state of Maine, in northern and southern regions, rural and urban environs. However, given my interest in how rural communities are navigating recent changes in land tenure and public access to the forest, as well as regional economic instabilities, the primary research area is the north woods. Snowmobile trails may traverse all corners of Maine, but my research is ultimately concerned with the political and economic dynamics among riders,

landowners, tourists, and conservation interests that unfold within the vast, unbroken swaths of forestland in northern and western Maine. As such, this paper explores the north woods as a distinctive space and place including its histories, cultures, communities, landscapes, and economies.

Recalling Blaikie and Brookfield's (1987) seminal work that stressed the importance of "regional political ecology," Walker (2003) issued an appeal for a regional approach to political ecology that could help provide greater coherence within the field by avoiding problematic binaries like first/third world or rural/urban studies. A regional analysis stresses the importance of local-scale dynamics, like the closure of a paper mill, but situates these dynamics within broader scales of regional, national, and global-scale processes (Walker 2003). Bebbington (2000) likewise argues that when "working at a regional level, it becomes more possible to narrate stories that do more justice to human agency while, at the same time, being clear on structural constraint" (514). This regionalism was a natural choice for my research given that conservation conflicts in Maine are largely framed within the scale of the north woods or northern forest. The north woods therefore provide the theoretical and analytical framework for my research and serve as a "*meso*scale that mediates between local and global processes" (Walker 2003, 12). This enables me to reach beyond a focus on community-scale studies, largely informed by ethnographic histories, and tackle comparative, larger-scale questions.

Most of Maine is quite rural; one can drive for ten minutes in almost any direction leaving Portland, Maine's largest city, and presumably be in "the country." But when one speaks of Maine's expansive forestland—the vast wooded landscape dominated by spruce-fir hardwood forests and abundant lakes and ponds connected by intricate stream and river networks—the north woods is the subject. There are plenty of forests in southern Maine, but they are hedged in by half of the state's population, urban and suburban development, small towns and small farms; in the south and along the coast, most of the forests are patched together plots of only a few acres held by relatively small landowners. Conversely, in the north, human population is sparse and very little land has been developed or even cleared for agriculture. Thus a satellite view of the state reveals a clear boundary demarcating the expanse of contiguous forest stretching from the White Mountains on the Maine–New Hampshire border, north and across the state, and then southeast to the coast—millions of acres of seemingly undeveloped forestland. After zooming out further to take in a view of the entire northeastern U.S. northern Maine's immense, densely forested area becomes even more discernible, underscoring the true uniqueness of the woods to the greater area. But this ecological boundary also delineates a distinctive cultural region. Although many communities encompassing a wide diversity of histories, cultures, politics, and economies comprise the north woods, they all nonetheless share a sense of place and regional identity forged through a life in the forest and, in many ways, of the land. This dissertation situates Maine's turbulent

environmental and political disputes within these rural, community-based cultural and economic histories and relationships.

In addition I would like to draw attention to two smaller-scale research "sites" that emerged during the course of my interviews, analysis of various texts, and close monitoring of current events. The first is not a place but a person—Roxanne Quimby—a familiar name to anyone following the news in Maine's north woods. To deem Quimby a controversial figure in the region and state would be an understatement. She has been the public embodiment of disruptive and unwelcome change in the north woods since 2000 when she purchased her first piece of land and closed the roads to logging trucks, blocked snowmobile trails, prohibited hunting, and cancelled leases on her property, all in her effort to protect and restore the forest to her ideal form of nature: wilderness. In April 2011 she officially announced her plan to donate 74,000 acres of her land to the National Park Service for the creation of a Maine Woods National Park. But after more than a year of public meetings, closed-door negotiations, numerous resolutions opposing a park, and even a visit from the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Quimby withdrew her park proposal and took a step back to reexamine her approach and vision given her fundamental need for (and hitherto lack of) majority local support. The attention she has received, particularly in the form of local opposition, is not simply attributable to her continual land acquisitions and restrictive management approaches (explored in chapter 4) but is also the result of what she represents culturally, economically, and environmentally (see

chapter 2). These differences render Quimby an outsider, an elitist "from away"—the descriptor levied on people from southern Maine, out of state, or simply those deemed culturally at odds with the rural Maine way. Consequently, she has become the perfect figure for rural Mainers to oppose during their defense of regional cultures, livelihoods, and territory against what they perceive as the intrusion of exclusive outside interests.

Meanwhile in 2008 and 2009 I conducted informal, preliminary phone conversations with various people familiar with snowmobiling and conservation efforts in the north woods in an effort to determine potential areas of focus. During those calls several contacts explicitly advised me to steer clear of Millinocket, a small gateway town to the north woods. They explained that the battle lines were already drawn thick, and issues were far too contentious for me to extract nuanced, multi-layered insights. However, it became clear during my research that it has been a battleground for good reason. For one, given its close proximity to Baxter State Park, Mount Katahdin, and Quimby's proposed national park, there has always been a need to balance diverse uses and users and navigate tensions between local communities and visitors to the woods (chapter 2). It is also a mill town, built by the Great Northern Paper Company, and therefore tethered to the rise and decline of Maine's forest products industry, described in chapter 5. Finally, Millinocket and the surrounding area are home to some important people and markers in the history of snowmobiling in Maine (chapter 3). The region's snowmobile trails are considered

some of the best and most used in the state, and snowmobiling has become one of the region's major economic drivers. For all of these reasons, Millinocket emerges at various points throughout this dissertation; its people, economy, and its past and potential futures help contextualize a long history of conflict in the woods.[7]

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 lays the foundation for the rest of the dissertation by examining the implications of two parallel yet divergent cultural histories and heritages within Maine's north woods. Each produces contrasting, often conflicting, social constructions of nature based upon very different ways of living in or engaging with the landscape. I trace the legacy of preservation inspired by a wilderness ethic and rich history of visitors, like Henry David Thoreau, seeking restorative experiences in the woods. This manifestation of conservation separates humans from the natural world, thereby creating the need for the protection of a sacred "other" space from human desecration. Nature, consumed during leisure time as a means of escape from modern ills, is separated from daily living and the productive values of the working forest. My research reveals how the present-day conservation efforts of Roxanne Quimby, among others, continue to privilege the spiritual over the utilitarian, which provides grounds for the dismissal of various local uses of the forest that are deemed destructive or inappropriate. The chapter contrasts the wilderness ethic with another

[7] A more detailed research methodology is provided in Appendix A.

strong cultural heritage in the north woods—the longstanding and proud tradition of the working forest—which reveals a landscape shaped by the interactions of people and nature over time. Snowmobiling embodies this human history and environmental presence; it is closely connected to the forest's industrial past and present and reflective of a land ethic wherein people, rural livelihoods, and environment are intertwined. Through an examination of snowmobilers' stewardship activities and perceptions of Maine's nature, I contend that the machine and its imprint on the forest represent—and in fact further differentiate—the fundamentally different beliefs about human relationships with nature and what constitutes environmental degradation and conservation. While some conservationists may perceive the snowmobile as an ecological and aesthetic menace that represents the evils of modern technology and undermines the wilderness experience, the stewardship practices of snowmobilers reflect responsible shared use of the forest and respect for the land.

The inherently social aspect of snowmobiling and its weaving together of community and environment, work and play, has deep roots. Chapter 3 uses stories and memories shared during interviews to piece together snowmobiling's socio-cultural history, revealing the machine's close ties with rural Maine's landscape and people. Snowmobiles were invented and built to serve the utilitarian needs of snowbelt industries, businesses, and residents, but their popularity soared when the machine was adapted for recreation in the 1950s. I document the eagerness with which rural Mainers embraced snowmobiles as they sought an escape from winter

isolation, reveled in the unparalleled freedom to explore the vast forestlands, and spent cherished time with family and friends collectively exploring Maine's vast woodlands. Riders formed snowmobile clubs, built relationships with landowners to regulate their use of the forest, and created an elaborate trail system connecting rural communities and businesses throughout the woods. The machine's connection to the working forest and the cultural fabric of rural living illustrates how the woods are a truly social nature, occupied by various human uses and users. Nature is integrated with daily life, work, and recreation, and people are linked to one another through their engagement with the forest.

The social interactions described in chapter 3 have helped sustain rural communities and the snowmobile commons, an intricate network of trails and relationships connecting people and places. Chapter 4 further delves into the unique common property regime that exists in Maine's private forestlands and the implications of recent changes in ownership and land use for Maine's open land tradition. Since colonial times, the public has accessed and used the privately owned north woods as though it were a common-pool resource. Snowmobilers have forged close working relationships with landowners to ensure the continuation of this customary right, while the state has also encouraged and upheld this tradition through various laws and regulations, task forces and policies. However, forestland tenure configurations have changed enormously in the past two decades; there has been a shift away from vertically-integrated forest products companies owning large

parcels and toward a patchwork of smaller owners, including numerous investor-owners and conservationists. I explore why local users appear to be less concerned about new corporate landowners and their lesser known land use and management objectives than they are about a handful of conservationists, particularly Roxanne Quimby and the Appalachian Mountain Club. I argue that despite most of the focus being placed on the public's present and future loss of access to various tracts of land, also of great concern is the disintegration of ties between landowner and user. For if the commons are understood not as a place or thing but rather the dynamic social institutions that govern a space and its resources, then the disappearance of these relationships and networks can have serious consequences. Indeed, my research reveals that conservationists like Quimby and AMC have increased the distance between themselves and local communities by ignoring the long history of close communication and cooperation among landowners and various user groups, particularly snowmobilers, and by failing to involve north woods communities in land management and decision-making. Finally, the chapter examines how a distinctive and contradictory form of private property rights has taken form in the Maine woods where one's inherent property rights are stressed alongside the public's rights to access and use those private lands. Whereas Quimby believes that a national park represents the most democratic form of public access, local users and property rightists reject federal ownership and instead argue that keeping private lands private

and private lands *open* best exemplifies equitable public use and democracy in the woods.

Rural Maine economies represent the final, critical piece to understanding conservation conflicts in the north woods, and chapter 5 explores how connections between the two recent histories of snowmobiling and rural economic change provide a powerful economic counternarrative for the region. Snowmobiling was able to grow in popularity because of strong rural-based industries; as these have declined in recent decades, snowmobiling has emerged as a critical economic engine for north woods communities. The chapter illustrates how snowmobiling represents a powerful expression of local use and the vitality of local community economies, disrupting common characterizations (including within conservation circles) of dying or dead rural economies in need of economic development interventions. I show how the market-based arguments for conservation advanced by Quimby and others rely on the dual construction of a singular north woods environment alongside a singular north woods economy: the archaic industrial forest created by an outdated, extractive industry is best replaced by a wilderness, which will draw new users and tourists. Both social constructions facilitate the erasure of multiple, non-industrial uses and community economies in the woods and the other natures these activities produce. Snowmobiling is one of these diverse practices that has contributed through the years to the maintenance of relationships and community-building, described in chapter 3, which constitute the commons.

I close the chapter by contending that snowmobiling provides a unique framework for analyzing and understanding rural economic transitions. Because the machine is closely tied to the productive landscape, having evolved in tandem with rural natural resource-based economies, it ruptures the traditional analysis of rural economic restructuring that replaces "old," resource-based production with newer amenity-based consumption. It is a different kind of recreation, one that is homegrown with utilitarian, anti-elitist roots, closely integrated with community and therefore not wholly dependent upon tourists "from away." This strong community foundation and snowmobiling's extensive existing social and physical network within the north woods have made it an invaluable tool in maintaining the commons.

In conclusion I draw attention to a number of changes afoot within the industry and culture of snowmobiling and the snowbelt climate, which raise important questions about the future of the activity and the continuation of Maine's snowmobile commons. These transformations relate to regional economic changes, generational and associated cultural shifts in north woods communities, the increasing industrialization and commercialization of snowmobiling, ownership instabilities, and global climate change, each of which has the potential to seriously affect the economy, culture, and community of snowmobiling in Maine.

Chapter 2. Conservation and the Social Wilderness

Introduction

The woods are full of us (Franklin 2011, x).

The woods of Maine possess a powerful mystique that manages to encompass multiple, sometimes overlapping but often divergent, cultural histories. One is the working forest, the proud tradition of the Maine lumberman and the hardy settlers and survivors of the state's oft harsh landscape and seasons. The other is the legacy of preservation, a history of people who recognize the woods' natural magnificence and seek restorative experiences within the forest wilderness. Contrasting social constructions of nature produce certain expectations for one's experiences in the woods, and they prescribe different uses often practiced by different groups of users. Experiences in and relations with the natural world—whether the land directly sustains one's livelihood or offers a space for quiet retreat—shape one's consciousness and understanding of what exactly "nature" is and represents, how it should be used or protected, and ultimately, what, and perhaps *who*, does and does not belong. By the 1800s, Maine was already a landscape of conflicting frontiers, perceptions of the woods, and visions for the future. Yet more than 150 years later, fundamental questions surrounding which woods deserve reverence and protection—the multiple-use, working forest or the special wilderness frontier—continue to reverberate through the trees.

The Environmental and Cultural Backdrop

The term "northern forest" originated in the late 1980s to describe 26 million acres of contiguous hardwood and evergreen coniferous forests that stretch from northern New York east through parts of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, and north into Canada. As the largest stretch of intact forest in the eastern Unites States, it is comparable in size to other regions of particular ecological interest in North America including California's Sierra Nevada and the National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern Alaska. However, many such areas in the western United States are less connected to and influenced by human habitation and other development—they attract fewer visitors and fewer people live and work in these areas. The northern forest, on the other hand, has a long history of human occupancy; European settlers arrived as early as the 1620s, almost entirely displacing established Native American communities that had migrated to the area between 10,000 and 11,000 years prior. Today, about one million people live in the northern forest's network of rural communities—villages and towns that emerged and have since expanded and contracted around forest-based economies (and vice versa) including agriculture, the lumber and paper industry, and nature-based tourism. Maine, as the most heavily forested state in the country proportionately, contains the largest share of northern forestland. More than seventeen million acres of the state's twenty million-acre area is forested, and just less than eleven million acres of this land is considered Maine's "north woods." The north woods, as both an ecological and cultural region, is the

swath of forest that blankets the northern two-thirds of the state, as well as the rural townships and unorganized territories inhabited by approximately several hundred thousand "locals" who live, work, and recreate in the woods.[8]

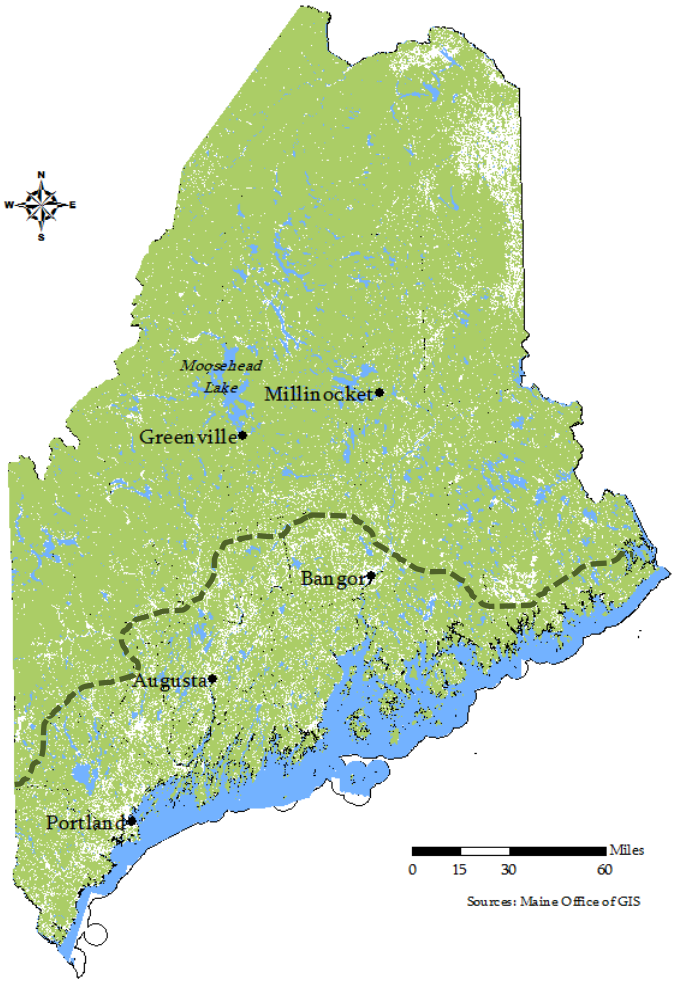

Figure 3. Forest cover in Maine (with north woods boundary)

[8] The unorganized territories (or UT) are the millions of acres of mostly privately owned land comprised of named and unnamed townships (e.g., T13 R8 WELS or T1 R1 TS) that lack local governance. The UT thus serves as a legal entity whereby the state controls all public functions including land development decisions.

Although the 2010 U.S. Census classified 61.3 percent of Maine's 1.3 million people as residents of rural areas, fewer than 300,000 live in the four counties that encompass most of the north woods: Aroostook, Somerset, Piscataquis, and Penobscot. Meanwhile, approximately half of the state's population lives in southeastern coastal areas within thirty miles of Portland, the state's largest city, and the region is growing rapidly (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

Ecologically, there has been little evidence of stability or equilibrium in Maine's forest structure since glaciers retreated from the land and ocean waters receded 12,000 years ago. Maine forests were not static entities even prior to human habitation, and various changes in their structure and function have been the result of both natural and human caused processes. Natural succession following nonhuman disturbance is responsible for the establishment of mature forests after the last ice age, as well as the eventual replacement of these first tree species (spruces, paper birch, alder, balsam fir) by southern softwood and hardwood species (Trombulak 1994). A climactic cooling trend 1,000 to 3,000 years ago led to further changes in species composition and forest structure that resulted in the region's present day spruce-fir coniferous forests (red spruce, black spruce, white spruce, balsam fir, eastern larch, and northern white cedar species) and northern hardwood forests (maple, beech, birch species) (Trombulak 1994). Smaller-scale natural disturbances, such as fire, winds, and insect attacks, also caused and continue to trigger ongoing changes in forest structure and function. Cronon (1983) concludes,

> Just as ecosystems have been changed by the historical activities of human beings, so too have they had their own less-recorded history. […] The period of human occupation in postglacial New England has seen environmental changes on an enormous scale, many of them wholly apart from human influence. There has been no timeless wilderness in a state of perfect changelessness, no climax forest in permanent stasis (11).

In the wilds of Maine's north woods, a long history of human occupation and a variety of land use practices have also considerably altered forest composition.

Maine's original forest area at the turn of the seventeenth century has been estimated at just less than 18.7 million acres, accounting for roughly ninety-two percent of the state's total land (Irland 1998). But prior to European settlement, Maine's largely unbroken old-growth forest was hardly untouched and pristine. Native communities were widespread throughout the north woods area, though the harsh winters and poor soils unsuitable for farming resulted in relatively low population densities that averaged around forty people per 100 square miles at the turn of the seventeenth century (Cronon 1983).[9] Northern New England Indians were primarily hunters and gatherers whose movements across the landscape were dictated by seasonal cycles. While they did burn undergrowth to encourage certain seedlings, it was not at the same broad extent as Native American communities in southern New England (Olwig 2002, Warren 1997, Cronon 1983). However, Native populations and their forms of land management were steadily supplanted as European settlements increased in number and size, driven by an emerging forest products industry as well as a growing demand for farm land. English colonists' extensive clearing of land for settlement, agriculture, and commercial timber harvesting significantly altered Maine's forest ecosystems, and over the course of about 200 years, much of the massive spruce-fir and northern hardwood forests were cut (Trombulak 1994).

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[9] Collectively considered the Wabanaki, Maine's Native American ethnic groups or tribes have included the Maliseet, Micmac, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Kennebec, and various Abenaki groups (Prins 1995).

European-American farm settlements began to crop up along the southern Maine coast following the establishment of the colony of Massachusetts Bay in 1630 (Labaree 1979). This first wave of settler farmers cleared patches of forest for pasture and cropland. Stumps were pulled and burned or used to build homes and create livestock fences. The surrounding forests subsequently became an important source of building material, fuel, livestock feed, and non-timber forest products, such as potash and hemlock bark, which were utilized by the tanning industry (Northern Forest Alliance 2002). In the first half of the nineteenth century, villages and small towns depended on agriculture for subsistence; up to eighty percent of the land in some areas was devoted to growing crops to feed humans or livestock, with the remaining forests heavily used for firewood and lumber (Maine Forest Service 2003). However, farming declined over the latter half of the nineteenth century through 1940 due to a number of factors such as the rise of modern industry, the Great Depression, and Americans' movement westward in search of better land (Maine Forest Service 2003).

Lumber was the most valuable of Maine's resource-based products and was extremely labor intensive. Thousands of workers were needed to cut and delimb trees, including white pines reaching more than 200 feet in height; haul the logs through the woods or drive them down river; process the wood in mills; and transport the wood to market (Rolde 2001). The more than 5,000 big rivers and tributaries of the north, which for several thousand years had provided an invaluable transportation system through the wilderness for Wabanaki traveling by birch bark

canoe, now served the timber industry by enabling the transport of logs to the coast and supplies back north to the logging camps. Maine became an early leader in lumber production and contributed profoundly to American logging techniques and folklore (Allin and Judd 1995). North America's first sawmill was built in South Berwick, Maine in 1631 (Allin and Judd 1995), and nearly every settler community in the ensuing years had at least one sawmill and engaged in the burgeoning lumber trade (Churchill 1995). By 1832, Bangor was the world's largest log-shipping port, and fifteen years later the state contained 1,500 sawmills (Clark 2008). Owing to new developments in transportation technology, such as railroad construction, and the emergence of new markets for saw timber, more than thirty percent of Maine's forest had been cut by the mid-1800s and every river system in Maine had been logged (Judd 2007). The new use of wood pulp in paper-making led to sharp increases in timber harvesting in the latter half of the nineteenth century, further intensified by the development of the portable sawmill in the 1880s; paper companies subsequently began expanding their operations deeper into the north woods where streams and rivers were extensively damned and released to drive logs downstream to mills.

By the end of the nineteenth century, virtually all of Maine's forest had been harvested, but over the course of the next century forests were reestablished following a significant decline in clear cutting and the dominance of more sustainable partial harvest methods. Three centuries of farming and logging have left behind replacement forests that are at earlier stages of succession and are smaller, younger,

and denser than the original old growth. Approximately 5.4 million cords of wood were harvested in 2011 (Maine Forest Products Council 2013), but the state is more forested today than 100 years ago with forests once again covering nearly ninety percent of Maine's landscape, the highest proportion in the country.

This history, albeit condensed, is important because it contextualizes conservationists' present-day calls for wilderness protection and a restored Maine woods, and it provides insight into the cultural heritage of north woods communities, many of which directly supported the state's forest products industry. The term "working forest" is not applied lightly in these spaces where family livelihoods, communities, and local and state economies have been built upon the work carried out in Maine's forests and fields.

When different sides in struggles over the future of Maine's woods wrangle over the meaning of nature and humans' place within it, the region's socio-ecological histories are both woven into and excluded from the dialogue. For "admitting that ecosystems have histories of their own still leaves us with the problem of how to view the people who inhabit them. Are human beings inside or outside their systems" (Cronon 1983, 12)? Nearly every conservation group with an interest in the north woods acknowledges the importance of local economies and cultures, but many are motivated by a different cultural heritage, one that positions humans in a fundamentally different place in relation to Maine's nature. Therefore, in addition to examining the region's environmental history, one must scrutinize the roots and

contemporary implications of meanings and judgments attached to ideas of nature, including wilderness, conservation, and rurality. These perceptions, usually borne of experience and therefore fundamentally reflective of cultural difference, inform present day policy and efforts to preserve contrasting cultural spaces.

Romancing the Forest

Around the same time that trees were being rapidly felled in Maine's forested interior, Western perceptions of wild nature were transforming in ways that crucially influenced America's nascent conservation movement. The wilderness, long associated within Western cultures with savagery and wastelands that endangered human settlers, assumed a new position of value with the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the closing of the American frontier in the late 1880s (Wilson 1992). Steeped in Enlightenment traditions and epistemologies that positioned nature in opposition to human culture, the Romantic Movement recognized nature's restorative and sacred qualities. A nostalgia for and romanticization of nature and all things remote and mysterious, transformed previously foreboding aspects of wilderness into desirable qualities capable of invigorating the human spirit. Wilderness subsequently became something of exceptional value, pristine and pure. Whereas this new form of wilderness now had positive, not negative, effects on the human condition, it remained necessarily external to society. Such perceptions of the natural world as refuge, an "other" to America's newfound urban industrialism, effectively created the

need for its protection while also transforming rural, wild spaces into tourism destinations for moneyed city folk. Through their transformative journeys into America's unsettled frontiers, John Muir and Henry David Thoreau, among others, were early practitioners of adventure travel and travel writing aimed at an educated and eager readership. They were also early champions—the forefathers even—of American preservation with a capital "P," the dominant discourse of conservation that aims to save nature by minimizing or altogether eliminating certain human impacts.

Intrinsic to romanticizing nature and advocating its protection is the aesthetics of landscape—the idea that certain features elicit a profound, almost unconscious sense of beauty. Not surprisingly, America's first national parks, such as Yellowstone and Yosemite established in 1872 and 1890, respectively, contain extraordinary and breathtaking natural features, while less sublime landscapes were initially deemed less worthy of protection (Cronon 1995). Some natural environments clearly *feel* more like wilderness than others, and perhaps none more so than America's forests, which for many represent some of the last remnants of pristine nature in the United States. The forest's tall trees, deep roots, and thick vegetation stir up feelings of antiquity, complexity, and immense physical *and* historical scales, "Like the sea or the sky, the forest is a kind of archetype of the foundations of the world. The forest represents—more literally it re-presents, presents again and again to those who enter it—the elemental forces of nature" (Rolston 1998, 157).

Men like Thoreau and Muir, who wrote, "The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness," (Wolfe 1979 [1938], 313) lobbied consistently for the establishment of parks and human exclusion from "the wild." Notions of both the sublime and frontier have helped construct the forest's powerful aesthetic of beauty, intrinsic good, and timelessness, which are evident in various environmental campaigns to save ancient or old-growth forests (Proctor 1995). In fact, prominent conservation groups such as the Wilderness Society, which was the first group to propose large-scale protection of the Maine woods in 1988, were established in direct response to the popularity of the "ancient forest" environmental cause and its powerful ethical, spiritual, and political dimensions (Proctor 1995). The nature/culture dualism that separates human society from the environment is upheld by this notion of the "prehistoric and perennial [forest], especially in contrast with ephemeral civilizations, their histories, politics, and arts" (Rolston 1998, 158), which overlooks how centuries of human intervention have shaped the actual physical embodiment of nature.

For close to two centuries, Maine has epitomized this notion of the natural sublime and the special place deep, forested wildernesses hold in the hearts and minds of Americans. The cultural mystique that is central to both the state's and nation's wilderness identity has long surrounded the north woods and its features, drawing visitors north. Maine attracted wealthy sportsmen and nature enthusiasts seeking an escape from the turmoil and stress of a mid-nineteenth century industrializing

America, establishing a recreational tradition that emerged concurrent, yet in contrast, with the industrial-scale exploitation of the state's forest resources. As trees were being cut by lumberman, and mill workers and farmers settled and built communities in the woods, large numbers of city folk were journeying north to adventure in Maine's forests. Nature retreats were particularly desired in New England, which contrary to popular bucolic and agrarian imaginings was actually the most heavily industrialized part of the United States through the nineteenth century (Ryden 2011).

The particularly strong draw of Maine's woods is in large part due to Thoreau's adventures canoeing Maine's rivers and hiking her trails from 1846 to 1857, which he chronicled in his definitive work, *The Maine Woods* (1987 [1864]). However, Thoreau is also generally known and cherished by the conservation community for his entire oeuvre, specifically his writings from his Massachusetts home on Walden Pond where he lamented the destructive ecological alterations that had followed two centuries of European settlement—the forests were far less extensive and the trees much smaller in this tamed and imperfect natural landscape (Thoreau 1962 [1906]). But in Maine he claimed to have found wilderness in its original state; thus, many groups doing conservation work in the region derive inspiration from Thoreau's reflections on his time in the north woods and appeal to a similar spirit possessed by their supporters and membership. For example, Roxanne Quimby, described as "an artsy person—arts and writing," is largely "driven by Henry David Thoreau's writings

and experience" (Bill interview 2011[10]). She has plans to open a writer's retreat dedicated to Thoreau at some camps she acquired on the East Branch of the Penobscot River (Bowley 2011) and her proposed national park was going to memorialize Thoreau who traveled through the area (Bill interview 2011).

Founded in Boston in 1876 to cater to the recreational desires of well-heeled urbanites, AMC is the oldest outdoor recreation and conservation organization in the United States. As explained by the organization's Maine Policy Director, it embraces a similar cultural history,

> I think we (AMC) do want to talk about the mystique, the magic of the place, and it's definitely there. It's how do you convey the idea of being by yourself in a canoe, paddling, or watching a moose on a pond? Or sitting on the porch of your cabin reading and watching a fox come by? That type of experience is very rare. There are places [in Maine] where you can really get out into the woods and be by yourself, which is very different from hiking across the spine of the northern Presidentials [in New Hampshire] above tree line. We're a completely different experience. To the extent that we can convey [to our membership] that you can have these magical moments in the woods whether it's winter and summer. A lot of people take inspiration from Thoreau. And what's neat about the north woods is you can go to a lot of the places today that Thoreau went to and they're not that much different. Yes, it depends on what you define as different, but they aren't totally developed, there are still woods there; they may not be as big of trees as when Thoreau went there, but that's a really neat legacy of the north woods (Jason interview 2011).

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[10] Roxanne Quimby infrequently grants interviews, but she has employed a spokesperson and advisor ("Bill") through the environmental consulting firm that conducts ecological and other studies in support of her land management and acquisition company, Elliotsville Plantation, Inc. Bill is a native Mainer with a background in forestry, and he has served in this capacity for Quimby for nearly five years.

With the north woods just a few hours' train ride or drive north from Boston, Maine's forests quickly became a popular AMC wilderness destination. Immediately after its founding, the organization played a major role in promoting Maine's Katahdin region by organizing member camping and mountaineering expeditions that were likely inspired by Thoreau's writing on his ascent of Katahdin. This experience climbing Maine's highest peak triggered feelings of terror in Thoreau and elicited the realization that "that this was primeval, untamed, and forever untameable *Nature* […] Nature was here something savage and awful, though beautiful" and "made out of Chaos" (Thoreau 1987 [1864], 6:1; emphasis in original).[11] By 1917 the club was sending mountain guides to the area to meet demands of an increasingly enthusiastic and growing climbing and camping community, and by 1940 the mountain was attracting at least 10,000 hikers a year (Austin 2008). Accounts of these adventures, together with descriptions of the region's energizing and renewing qualities, were included in AMC's annual bulletins (Austin 2008), one of countless examples of historical and present day portrayals of northern Maine as premodern and restorative (Ryden 2011).

Thus environmentalists pushing for permanent protection of Maine's vast, forested interior frequently use the region's treasured past to help cement its

[11] This is analogous to philosopher Edmund Burke's (2008 [1757]) concept of the sublime, developed a century earlier, which is defined by the power of nature to instill horror and terror.

worthiness as a national issue and a space that transcends local heritage and use and access rights. Such framing is commonplace in environmental conservation endeavors, which are often described as moral obligations that are for the good of all humanity, particularly in today's globalized world—when corporate profit-driven resource exploitation knows no boundaries, why should resource conservation? This scaling up of environmental problems is common within north woods conservation circles, which, for example, display nighttime satellite photos of the entire eastern seaboard that highlight the large patch of total darkness that comprises the north woods to illustrate why "this is a national issue. It's the largest undeveloped block of land east of the Mississippi, and it has national significance" (Harkavy 2005).

Several prominent national environmental organizations have identified the protection of Maine's north woods as a major priority, including The Nature Conservancy, which is a major landowner and conservation partner in the region dating back to 1998, and the Sierra Club, which "seeks to protect Maine's wilderness heritage through efforts to link existing public lands and unprotected areas, create new opportunities for wilderness recreation, and allow forests to return to a mature and natural state" (Sierra Club Maine Chapter 2011). Roxanne Quimby's spokesperson suggested that an area's scale of significance is determined by its grandeur and noteworthy features and ecology, arguing that people from outside Maine are drawn to "a treasured place like [Baxter State Park], which is of national significance, whereas this [area west of Baxter] is a little more of state significance, not quite as

spectacular" (Bill interview 2011). When then asked what makes Quimby's proposed park area just east of Baxter a national issue, he offered,

> Henry David Thoreau. Mount Katahdin. The Appalachian Trail. Two nationally designated wild and scenic rivers: East Branch of the Penobscot, the Wassataquiok Stream, which is a free-flowing wilderness. Atlantic salmon habitat—nationally threatened, endangered species. Lynx habitat. That probably captures it. Those are the things that we're looking at that are of national significance. And they're not represented anywhere else in the national park system.

RESTORE: The North Woods, which sprouted from the Wilderness Society in 1991 and had developed its own, better focused plan for a large national park by 1994, is one of the most contentious leading voices in regional preservation efforts. With two offices, one outside Augusta, Maine and the other in Massachusetts, this advocacy group has been ever-present in the movement to protect Maine's forests. Its literature explains that the organization seeks "to re-ignite a wilderness movement in New England by inspiring a cultural commitment to wild forests in this region," with a primary aim of "realizing Thoreau's vision" by creating a 3.2 million-acre Maine Woods National Park and Preserve that would return the forest to its "magnificent, primeval" state and have "people once again living in harmony with nature." To locals, however, RESTORE epitomizes the unfortunate tradition of outsiders imposing their narrow environmental values on resident communities.

This goal of reestablishing people's harmonious relationship (whatever that may mean) with the woods brings to light how, similar to constructions of nature, the

rural landscape (as a worked-on and lived-in space) and its inhabitants are also subject to social constructions and imaginings that can impose simplistic cultural frameworks and erase local histories and complexities. Rural life is commonly depicted and understood within dominant discourses in terms of its closeness with nature and opposition to urban life. Paradoxically, while discourses of nature divorce humans from the natural environment, discourses of rurality locate country inhabitants close to nature—thus, rural people are stuck in a contradictory state that expects harmonious living, but within a set space and through set relations that somehow preserve the sanctity of human-free nature (e.g., separating the garden from wilderness) (DuPuis and Vandergeest 1996).

This construction and Euro-American understanding also separates activities and their respective realms. For example, many people regard work—the relatively unenjoyable thing we do to earn a living—and play—the fun, extracurricular pursuits our work affords us—as distinctly separate spheres of activities. In other words, when one is in the factory or even field, one is working; when one is in the wilderness, one is playing. This concept of leisure time and nature as a purely rejuvenating and recreational space arose out of industrial capitalism, which heralded a shift from a pastoral approach to a consumer attitude towards nature (Wilson 1992). During this transition, work became defined as a distinct sphere of life, separating the time spent in "meaningless" jobs in unhealthy, urban areas from regenerating experiences in natural spaces. In Maine's woods and elsewhere, "elite urban tourists and wealthy

sportsmen projected their leisure-time frontier fantasies onto the American landscape and so created wilderness in their own image" (Cronon 1995, 77). Thus, leisure, and specifically nature tourism, became an activity with its own politics and place on the landscape, effectively constructing the space to which Americans retreated in a search for life's meaning (Wilson 1992).

On the other hand, Hasselstrom (1996) quotes famed author and intellectual Wendell Berry as noting that "farmers do not *go* to work; a good farmer is *at* work even when at rest" (72; emphasis in original). With many rural livelihoods, jobs are part of a daily process that leaves less space between work and play. Vitek (1996) elaborates on this, further dissolving boundaries in his explanation of the connection between people and place, rural communities and the rural landscape,

> Here one can be certain that the land is not mere scenery and hiking trail, or resources in need of extraction. Here the land becomes part of people's lives, intermingled with buying and selling, working and playing, living and dying. It is both history and future. In rural communities is an opportunity for the land's rhythms to become part of everyday life, an immediate linkage between the land's fertility and the community's prosperity. Those who work directly on the land know it in ways that are simply unavailable to those who wish to keep their hands clean and their preconceptions unchallenged. In rural communities one learns that it is possible to love the forest one cuts; to honor the bull calf on his way to the slaughterhouse; and to respect the land one clears, plants, and harvests. To the farmer or rancher these are not logical contradictions to be avoided for the sake of some artificial consistency, but immediate and natural paradoxes one accepts up front and lives by (3).

While the wilderness conception of nature, with values based on a rigid division between the human and non-human, is arguably most appealing to cultures

situated away from the rural world, those who live in the north woods and other rural areas are generally familiar enough with the hard work required by country living to view wilderness, or "natural" nature, as a less than ideal environment. As William Cronon memorably wrote,

> the dream of an unworked natural landscape is very much the fantasy of people who have never themselves had to work the land to make a living—urban folk…Only people whose relationship to the land was already alienated could hold up wilderness as a model for human life in nature (1995, 80).

Interestingly, the common understanding of rural spaces and people as close to nature is also tied to specific landscapes and uses, such as the idyllic country town or family farm, whereas another type of rural America—the extractive landscape—generates a vastly different set of images and values. While the agricultural lifestyle is generally perceived as in balance with nature's rhythms, managed through environmental stewardship, and "the way individual, family, and community life is 'supposed to be'" (England and Brown 2003, 317), extractive rural landscapes and the communities within are viewed as uncontrollable, individualistic, and centered around the company town or logging camp. Unlike "good farmers" (reminiscent of the "noble savage" discourse that characterizes various Western conservation efforts in the global south) who are imagined as deeply connected to the land, those who work in resource-based industries like logging, are positioned in conflict with nature—a stark contrast to the bucolic New England village. Thus, urban residents or

environmentalists may be able to deem a family farmer's seemingly harmonious lifestyle as an acceptable human presence on the landscape, but the tree cutter or mill worker buzzing through the forest on a snowmobile and shooting moose usually exists outside of and even contradicts more romantic characterizations.

The Snowmobile Ethic

Just as there is no pure form of rurality, there is no singular "nature," only various sometimes contradictory natures produced by and through diverse social practices (Macnaghten and Urry 1998). Thus, we can understand how in the case of Maine's north woods, the forests that people are fighting to either preserve or keep open for multiple uses are actually different forests, perceived and experienced differently by various individuals and groups. Views that establish or maintain a dualism between nature and humans, like the *wilderness ethic*, are often foundational to conservation ideologies and activities. However, they conflict with other constructions of the north woods, its people, and alternative embodiments of conservation that call attention to the forest's social history and cultural heritage—the working forest as Maine's *other* frontier. Rural inhabitants tend to possess a *land ethic* (a term coined by Aldo Leopold), perceiving themselves as stewards of their inherited lands, and view nature shaped to human needs (e.g., "improved land" such as fields, farms, pastures, orchards, villages) as decidedly natural, if not the ideal natural landscape. These contrasting ethics produce differing ideas about how best to

show respect and care for the environment. In his book, *Common Lands, Common People* (1997), which details the local cultures of resource use in northern New England and the interrelated local and popular roots of conservation thinking, Richard Judd emphasizes the importance of understanding how land is locally perceived. He broadens understandings of conservation by viewing the land ethic as a central part of the grassroots cultures of American conservation thought. This ethic was neither uniformly conservationist nor anti-conservationist, but "absorbed a complicated mix of Christian theology, practical wisdom, economic incentive, and secondhand natural history…giving local land-use practices a definably moral cast" (xii). In fact, the earliest calls for forestland conservation in Maine prompted by the rapid expansion and intensification of cutting in the late-1800s, emanated from farmers who were concerned about the disappearing forest and the smaller woodworking mills that supported local communities (Judd 1997, 2007). Attitudes rural New Englanders held toward nature and the landscape in the mid- to late-1800s tended to share three commonalities:

> a concern for landscape caught in the throes of change, a moral assumption about the balance of natural and cultural elements in this changing landscape, and a strong pride in place that bonded the people to the land and legitimized their prescriptions for its common stewardship (Judd 1997, 2).

Meanwhile, the mainstream environmental movement was predicated on privileging spiritual and recreational, rather than utilitarian, concepts of land use. Romantic notions of wilderness projected nature as separate from humans, an

intricately and delicately balanced system that cannot be disturbed without changing, possibly destroying, the equilibrium of the whole (Worster 1977, 82). By the end of the nineteenth century, such contested beliefs about nature resulted in a variety of struggles over land and resources in northern New England that continue to this day (Judd 1997). These clashes are exemplified in a friendly correspondence with Wendell Berry, wherein the poet and author David Budbill vented his anger towards "militant ecology people" in Vermont (with whom he ironically conceded his membership), declaring,

> I don't care about the landscape if I am to be excluded from it. Why should I? In Audubon magazine almost always the beautiful pictures are without man; the ugly ones with him. Such self hatred! I keep wanting to write them and say, 'I belong to the chain of being too, as a participant not an observer (nature is not television!) and the question isn't to use or not to use but rather *how* to use' (Berry 1977, 29).

Complexities continue to flourish in Maine's working forest, a multiple-use landscape where people and the environment are fundamentally interconnected through daily living and local economies; care for the earth is expressed via active stewardship, not hands-off preservation; and spaces for work and play are one and the same. Snowmobiling embodies this multidimensionality. Due to the mechanical character or even disruptiveness of their activities, motorized recreationists are presumed to value the "naturalness" of the natural world less than non-motorized recreationists such as hikers. But riders who tear through the woods along highway-

like trails on the backs of gas guzzling, noisy machines also express deep appreciation for all that the woods provide and some spend considerable time caring for the land.

Dissimilarities in environmental ethics arose repeatedly in interviews with snowmobilers and those within the conservation community, which exposed differences in perceptions of what counts as "natural" and, consequently, how best to take care of the land both on and off the snowmobile trail. Dave and his wife, Anne, who have lived on their homestead (for many years a working dairy farm) for more than five decades, have recently been in conflict over their farmland with conservation groups, particularly the Audubon Society. A few years ago, a Maine state game warden relocated some troublesome beavers to the brook that runs behind their home, and their hay fields flooded as a result. While they now have trouble reaching their woodlot, the newly flooded areas have become a haven for various bird species, sparking great interest among bird watchers. Dave and Anne expressed anger and frustration at their subsequent inability to take any actions to stem the flooding on their land,

> [The Audubon Society wants] that water there [for birding]. They don't want to break the dam or anything. This whole meadow, that whole area up there, I used to hay up there and we used to sell it to strawberry growers to cover their crop in the wintertime. And now there's no meadow hay to be cut. That's all flooded right now (Dave interview 2011).

Although Dave laughed when he proclaimed, "We don't have the rights when it comes to beavers and environmentalists!" he and his wife lamented that

environmentalists don't seem to understand their needs as farmers and the reasons behind their land management decisions, with Anne summarily concluding that environmentalists "think of birds more than they do people."

> They didn't want us to hay before August because one certain bird nests up until August. Well that's crazy! Our hay's gotta be cut startin' the end of June 'cause it's better in June than it is in August. In August it's startin' to get old. They want it *their* way; they don't seem to listen to us at all 'cause we try and try to explain to 'em (Anne interview 2011).

> The restrictions, like when [farmers] can spread the manure, how close to the stream they can till the land—there's all kinds of restrictions put on them now. I can see not dumping stuff on the land that's gonna hurt the environment. But when they said none at all, like not the manure… I can see it in the wintertime when everything is frozen and as soon as it thaws, it runs off. But during the summer, it doesn't hurt it; it soaks into the land. Animals have been here for hundreds of years. […] I cut all those pines off and built this house [fifty-five years ago]… And those pines have grown up now as big as ever. They replaced themselves. You gotta use what's around ya and it will replace itself (Dave interview 2011).

This is reflective of a land ethic, an interconnected understanding of people and the land through work and daily living, as nature in flux and resilient. It also indicates a perceived cultural divide, with conservation groups seemingly unable to understand rural residents' concerns and economic needs—a rift that is eerily reminiscent of tensions that existed more than 100 years ago between rural folk espousing beliefs of stewardship and democratic access, and out-of-state recreationists expecting a particular type of wilderness protection and experience during their Maine vacation. Local impressions of the conservation movement at that time, "cast urban, elite champions of preservation against resistant petty resource users" (Judd

1997, 197). For example, writing to the *Maine Farmer* in 1899, a New Hampshire farmer complained of the constrictions he faced resulting from a new body of conservation laws passed at the insistence of urban hunters and anglers, "You are not permitted to kill game on your own land nor catch fish in your town streams…Your forests are ruined by fires set by these roving hunters, and you are blamed for not caring for your woodland" (Judd 1997, 197).

Many of the snowmobilers with whom I spoke preferred a form of stewardship and forest aesthetic that includes human activities and contrasts sharply with environmental groups hoping to "manage the woods like a wilderness" (Bill interview 2011) and return the forest to a more "natural" unaltered state. While recalling a trip to Germany, Dave revealed his land ethic of respectfully and responsibly using a forest's resources as well as his preferred aesthetic of a more managed environment,

> I been [sic] to Germany and their woods over there—you oughtta see their woods; it's beautiful. People will walk through the woods; a limb falls down, they pick it up and take it home. They clean the land up that way. There's no undergrowth, you can walk anywhere. Here you can't. You gotta dodge limbs to get through the woods. Over there it's beautiful—you can go anywhere, there's not undergrowth and the trees are beautiful. If you cut a tree, you gotta plant two to replace it, that's how the law is. They got a lot of forests around there. They're a lot older than we are and they still got a lot of forest, and they *use* the wood (2011).

Seeing Maine's working forest as a cultural and economic good directly informs perceptions of the physical space and aesthetics of nature, producing an ideal

natural landscape that embodies various forms of human work and activity. Every snowmobiler with whom I spoke possessed this general view of nature and stewardship. The director of the Off-Road Recreational Vehicle Office within Maine's Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Division of Parks and Public Lands (DPPL)[12] explained that snowmobilers are

> more tolerant than a lot of other…oh, the hiking community, the AMC-type folks… snowmobilers are *a lot* more tolerant of a working forest. They enjoy seeing logging—it's interesting to see the process. Obviously the stumps and the brush [are] covered up in the wintertime, so just that natural condition—it looks pretty, it creates views. But they understand working forests, they know what makes the economy go (Tom interview 2011).

When asked if he sees connections between snowmobiling and stewardship, he further explained, "Absolutely, because, again, the majority [of early riders were] people that *worked* in this environment, and they had snowmobiles for work, they used them for forestry, they used them for trapping and fishing and access, so that's where it all started" (2011).

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[12] At the time of my interviews, the Division of Parks and Public Lands was called the Bureau of Public Lands, within the Department of Conservation. In August 2012, the governor initiated the merger of the Department of Conservation with the Department of Agriculture to form the joint Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. The Bureau of Public Lands was also renamed at this time.

DPPL is in an interesting position in terms managing its properties for multiple uses in that sustainable harvesting provides the majority of DPPL's land management funding. Tom explained, "There's no general fund taxes, there's no other income sources, so our managers understand the need for diversity and working forests, but they also need to work with recreation, and that means *all* recreation" (interview 2011). Not only does harvesting support the Division's activities, but DPPL's conservation activities are also directly tied to community economic development in that harvested wood is processed in local mills.

For example, George, who purchased his first snowmobile in 1967 after using them for his job in the woods, directly tied his responses to questions about his ethic of stewardship to his work on the land, both in the woods and around his farm:

> I [worked] in the backcountry a lot, and when I was mineral drilling I used to take a dozer and I used to make roads through the woods to get to our destination. We didn't wanna cut too much; we tried to make our roads where we wouldn't have to cut too many trees, disturb too many waterways…
>
> I don't like bushes and weeds growin'! […] I cut my firewood, but I don't go damage a lot of woods just for whatever. I've cut a few great big trees. I had a great big maple, it was getting rotten and I was afraid it was gonna get on the house. Had a pine tree there and that was rotten in the middle, so I cut four of them right here—got a lot of wood. I like to take care of the land. I made nice ditches so it would drain good, you know. I love the woods, I love trees. […] I don't want to see anybody destroy natures [sic], nothing like that. I've always loved the woods and take good care of them out there, and I hate to see pollution out there and anything like that (interview 2010).

Dave similarly replied, "I don't go in the woods and cut trees unless I get permission to and everything like that. I watch out for the environment, and I don't want to damage any area if I can help it" (2011). And John, a landowner and proprietor of a prominent outdoor adventure business and associated amenities in Millinocket, has no qualms calling himself a conservationist despite his immersion in the snowmobiling industry. During the first decade of his foray into nature-based tourism he focused on non-motorized, human powered recreation like river rafting and cross-country skiing, but he feels his stewardship ethic was not compromised by his decision to start renting snowmobiles and grooming trails in the mid-1990s, and

he thinks the same is ultimately true of other landowners, specifically the forest products industry.

> Our [business] mission specifically states and involves the idea of sustainable, responsible, shared use of natural resources in the state of Maine. And I think most landowners really have the same values, although people perceive that they don't. There are plenty of people who think, "If you cut trees you don't care about the land." When in reality, I know the foresters up here and the foresters for the large landowners are intensely concerned for the way their land is maintained and cared for. So I try to operate my business in a way that teaches our customers that there's good stewardship being deployed for the management and maintenance of these large tracts of land (John interview 2011).

Interview subjects also drew explicit connections between snowmobiling and snowmobilers and one's responsible use of and care for the land by discussing numerous trail maintenance activities—building bridges, trimming trees and bushes, grooming the trails, removing signs at the end of the season—as well as considerate riding practices like staying on the trails and riding only if there's a good bed of snow, "You'd see [the snowmobile club groomers] were making an effort between the weather and conditions. I just enjoyed respecting the trails" (George interview 2011). A project manager with the Trust for Public Land who has worked on various land deals in the Maine woods for fifteen years explained,

> People who snowmobile care a lot about wildlife, they care a lot about beautiful scenery, they care a lot about the big woods and the feel of the big woods, and they have a land ethic. It may be different than John Muir's or Roxanne Quimby's, but it's not like they don't care. The snowmobile community "gets" stewardship because the quality of the trail experience takes a lot of investment to build and maintain. Those guys get that to have good snowmobiling, you have to have bridges and culverts and grooming and signs,

> and they are very conscientious and put a ton of love, time, energy, and money into maintaining and stewarding their trail systems (Greg interview 2011).

For Al, stewardship is about relationships, not just with the land but with people, specifically the landowners. He conflated his response to questions about stewardship with examples of snowmobilers' close ties with the property owners,

> Well, the snowmobilers really, we go out and work on our trails, we clean 'em up at the end of the season, we take our signs down, we try to keep a good image. We do, like I say, have some cowboys out there that hurt us somewhat. But I think we have a pretty good rapport with the companies around. When we build a trail we don't cut any big trees. We won't cut anything that's over four or five inches in diameter. And then once a year we have a landowners dinner at our clubhouse and invite all the landowners for a free meal that allow us to use their land and present them with a certificate and just try to keep a good relationship (interview 2011).

Riders also stressed the activity's low impacts on several fronts—from the relatively minimal environmental damage caused by snowmobiling and snowmobile trails to the actual benefits they believe trails provide. Most of the wide, road-like snowmobile trails follow preexisting corridors—usually logging roads, rail trails, and even power lines—while the narrower trails follow hiking paths or require fairly minimal tree cutting when new trails are created (Tom interview 2011). John, who was initially reluctant to delve into the snowmobile business considering his personal affinity for non-motorized recreational activities, acknowledged that "snowmobiling is our Achilles heel when it comes to sustainability […] and periodically I get called

out onto the carpet for it" because of people's concerns about the gas and oil burned by his trail groomers. But he maintains that,

> Short of emissions, I'm comfortable that snowmobiling's impact on the terrain around us is pretty low, and the landowners definitely feel that way as well. We don't have people riding off through plantations. For the most part people stay where they're supposed to and behave themselves (John interview 2011).

Sarah agreed,

> I think that if there's a good base [of snow], then there is very little [environmental impact]. Those trails are maintained, and you can see them in the summer, and they definitely have some plants and things growing up in the middle. But I don't see it having a huge impact, and [the local snowmobile club] mark[s] it off if there's been a hole or something; they'll put a flag up so that you're not going over it and making that hole bigger (interview 2010).

George expressed confusion surrounding recent trail closures, "I don't know why they wanna close access 'cause snowmobiles don't hurt nothing. We have a trail through, and when the snow goes you can't even tell the snowmobile went through there" (2010). Sam, meanwhile, immediately went on the defensive when asked if he considers himself a steward of the land, responding "If you think we're up to blister Mother Nature—No!" He continued,

> Snowmobiles are extremely low impact. If I show you a snowmobile trail in February, can you come back and show it to me in August? It's not there. It goes away. [Except for the wide, road-like trails]—we didn't make that. That was either a logging trail or a road. We don't leave any impact, we don't run over trees, we don't break bushes; it's very low impact (interview 2011).

Richard added, "You can't make a trail anywhere near a deer yard or anything else. That's been for years and years and that's nothing new. The concern for wildlife

and the wilderness has been from day one. […] The snowmobile industry has policed itself very well." And Sam concurred, "We had to! We had no choice if we wanted to exist but to take care of things. You have to have a green side." When I commented how that sounded like a conservation ethic, Richard retorted, "Of course it is."

However, this ethic, which accepts the snowmobile trail as natural, is markedly different from the dominant discourse of conservation. The latter was forged in a vastly different context of human-nature relations and maintains fairly limited views of what counts as conservation. For example Jason, of AMC, remarked on how "the snowmobile community has done *some*, a little bit of support of conservation. There have been some trails that have gotten conserved, like rail trails and things like that. I think they're trying to figure it out in some ways" (Jason interview 2011). This presents a standard, limited view of conservation that consists primarily of identifying a valuable parcel of land, drawing a line around it, and declaring it preserved and therefore subject to a different, more restrictive set of land use rules. The multitude of stewardship activities that snowmobilers have been practicing for decades and which, to them, reflect their respect for the land and express a clear ethic of conservation, do not fit within this framing. In his work studying rural Hispanic residents fighting for rights to forest resources in New Mexico's northern mountains, Henry Carey (2002) argues that "The concept of environmental quality varies from culture to culture. In fact, the term *environmental protection* may only be relevant in an urban Anglo-American context and not to

describe a reverence for the earth and a desire to care for its landscapes, vegetation, and creatures as expressed by rural people and other cultures" (219; emphasis in original). Similar to rural Mainers, New Mexico's Hispanic communities support some restrictions on timber harvesting, but their "appreciation of natural values [is found] in the context of the working landscape. [Their] environmental sensitivities are rooted in rural culture and are distinct from the values expressed by urban activists in their search for a static state in the forest" (Carey 2002, 219). Similarly, Paige West describes how the Gimi peoples of Papua New Guinea do not view "the environment as a 'vista,' 'backdrop,' or as biological diversity" (West 2006, 218). The environment exists for them "in their engagement with it. It is valuable and meaningful to them because they have a social relationship with it—one that is incredibly active" (218).

Such fundamental differences in beliefs about human relationships with nature and forms of conservation or degradation are exemplified by the snowmobile trail. As a human-made and maintained feature, it perfectly reflects dissimilar environmental values, preferences, and perceptions of impact. For example, snowmobilers pointed to the preferential use of their packed trails by wildlife to illustrate the close correlation between snowmobiling and stewardship,

> We're already making all kinds of moose and deer trails half the year. First place a moose or deer's gonna go is down a snowmobile trail. [Conservation and snowmobiling] work together (Richard interview 2011).

Tom even referred to research that indicates, to him at least, a minimal environmental impact.

> There's been some studies done [out West] on the impact of snowmobiling on deer populations. […] They monitored the hearts of the animals. And you know the heart rate went up when they could hear a snowmobile coming, but the study showed that man on foot created a lot more harm, if you will, to the animal, because their heart rate went up a lot more, they fled a lot further when they ran. They're more afraid of people than they are of machines, as long as you're not chasing them. And we see that on the snowmobile trails. They use the snowmobile trails all the time, all the deer populations, moose and stuff. […] Snowmobiles going by deer yards doesn't seem to bother them too much. In fact they use the trails because they're packed and easy to walk on. But if you walked through there or skied through there, the deer would freak out because they're afraid of people; they're not afraid of equipment so much (interview 2011).

Closer to home, he referenced a three-year trail impact study conducted for Maine's Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry by Unity College,

> Is there an impact on wildlife? Sure. We know that. But is it measurable? No. [Unity researchers] could see the same animals were there that were there before. They may have moved a little bit. But actually they found that the hoofed animals, you know the deer and the moose and stuff, transitioned and started walking on the trails more than they would have wandered through the woods. Is that good or bad? Who knows (interview 2011).

Roxanne Quimby evidently believes it is bad. Barring fairly recently negotiated exceptions that allow some snowmobile trails to cross her sanctuary land, EPI generally prohibits the use of motorized equipment and vehicles including motorboats, aircraft, and other forms of mechanical transport (EPI no date a). While several snowmobilers independently pointed to the use of trails by wildlife to highlight the machine's minimal impact and even its environmental benefits,

Quimby's spokesperson used this same phenomenon to underscore her aversion to snowmobiling and its disturbance of the forest's "naturalness,"

> [It's] fairly practical. It's the impact of snowmobile trails—and there are some—especially in a very remote area like this, when you have a packed trail… [Wildlife] stay on the trails, which makes it artificially easier for them, so it adds that impact. And of course the proponents [of snowmobiling] would say, "Well Roxanne doesn't understand that that makes it easier for the deer." Well, she does, but […] she views it as an impact. Not negative, it just alters the natural [order] (Bill interview 2011).

The lines drawn between natural and unnatural, and the elevated position of natural in the minds of Quimby and others, evokes the contrasting interpretations of the selective, regular burning of forest undergrowth historically practiced extensively by Native Americans in southern New England (Cronon 1983). This practice had substantial ecological effects and benefits for Indian subsistence, which went largely unnoticed by English observers during colonial times who largely assumed that Indians were passively reaping the forest's natural bounty. The fires recycled nutrients into the soil at an increased rate, created more favorable conditions for gatherable foods like berries, produced an abundance of grasses, and created ideal habitats for numerous wildlife species that utterly impressed English colonists (Cronon 1983). But was this conscious alteration of the environment for human purposes an ecological "disturbance" or one of infinite examples of people living in tandem with nature, of ecologies intertwined? As Cronon wrote, "The choice is not between two landscapes, one with and one without a human influence; it is between

two human ways of living, two ways of belonging to a landscape" (1983, 12). Good and bad human-nature relationships (or impacts) are clearly in the eye of the beholder, particularly when the supposedly hard, immutable facts of science are available to both sides of a debate. This is why Tom believes that such land management decisions are ultimately based on cultural preference and aesthetics, concluding that "I think sometimes the facts get confused with the social issues." He explained,

> We used to ride [to a vista of Baker Mountain, now on AMC's property] once a year, twice a year, and now we can't go there. But *they* go there with motorized equipment to pack the trails and groom the trails for their own people to ski on, but publicly they'll say what we're doing is a bad thing. When they set up these eco reserves[13] and [said snowmobiles] can't go there anymore because it's ecological, I pinned them down. I asked them, "What was the ecological reserve for?" And it was supposedly to protect the headwaters of the native brook trout. And I said, "So how does snowmobiling have a negative effect on that?" And they won't answer me. They just don't

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[13] When questioned about this accusation leveled against AMC, Jason felt that unfortunate misunderstandings resulted from AMC's misguided use of the term "ecological reserve," which mirrors the designation of state lands managed as special protection areas (and the restriction of snowmobiles on AMC's reserve land was particularly controversial because state grant money was used to assist with AMC's purchase of the land). The former deputy director of DPPL provided this clarification, "The justification for the designation of an ecological reserve, whoever designates it—private or public landowner—is framed all in terms of science: a scientific analysis to be able to take a parcel of land and study it over time in terms of its ecology and how the ecology changes through time. We have decided in Maine, essentially, that non-motorized recreation is allowed in an ecological reserve and motorized recreation is not. And there is not any ecological science to back up that decision. Instead it's more of a recreational value judgment rather than an ecological value judgment" (Dan 2011).

For the record, Jason acknowledged that snowmobiles are indeed used by AMC to groom cross-country ski trails and haul goods and supplies in and out of their backwoods facilities, but are not for recreational purposes except on a few primary connector trails that AMC has allowed to remain open on its land (interview 2011).

> want us there, so they use the trout as an ecological argument for us not to be there. […] It's a social aesthetic issue, and that's not right. I have a big problem with that. Call it like it is. If you don't like us, I understand (interview 2011).

Interestingly, while each interview subject considered him or herself a steward of the land, several made sure to contrast their care for nature with the beliefs and actions of "environmentalists" who "go to the extreme" or "just go overboard" (Dave interview 2011). Distinctions and lines are drawn between stewardship and conservation, stewards and environmentalists, that serve to maintain a cultural distance between "us" up here in the woods and "them" down south in the cities and along the coast—a divide that runs deep despite a shared concern for Maine's nature. For example, Sarah responded waveringly when I asked if she considers herself a conservationist, "I'd like to say yes, but it's not necessarily a consciousness place and it's not really an activist place—it's very much I love and feel connected and would do something to protect the land if I needed to" (2010). Al, meanwhile, paused when I asked if he considers himself an environmentalist, eventually replying, "Ooooh, I don't think so" (2011). When pressed on the difference between a steward of the land and an environmentalist, he explained, "Well I think an environmentalist is extreme, you know. I don't know if they've figured out the trees regrow yet or not! *[Laughs]* They say they don't want you cutting trees but it's a renewable resource, you know? Give me a break!"

Not only do snowmobilers and other north woods residents possess views of forest stewardship that broaden the umbrella of conservation, but in defending the rootedness and necessity of their own practices, local users actively deconstruct wilderness myths and critique the exclusionist conservation approaches that may follow. Words are taken seriously in the Maine woods. For example, at a hearing to gather public comments on revisions to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan drafted by the Land Use Planning Commission[14], many of the comments pertained to the plan's language and possible implications for future land management decisions. As the former deputy director of DPPL explained, "By the time you enter a political forum, like the LURC [Comprehensive Land Use Plan] debates, people's messages are deliberate and refined and structured in terms of the language, and fears are framed in terms of language, and values are framed in terms of language" (Dan interview 2011). Public hearing attendees expressed concern about the plethora of "natural character" statements and frequent use of words like "primitive," "wildlands," "vast undeveloped" areas, and favoring of "non-intensive" uses over multiple uses. One commenter representing a timber management company even protested that five of

[14] In May 2012, the Land Use Regulation Committee (LURC) Reform Bill (LD 1798) was signed into law following an effort spearheaded by the republican governor to restructure if not entirely dissolve the committee. The bill replaced the Land Use Regulation Committee, which has overseen zoning, planning, and permitting in Maine's 10.4 million acres of unorganized territories since 1971, with the Land Use Planning Commission. The Planning Commission refocused its mission and has declared a new goal of encouraging economic development as well as conservation.

the cover's eight photographs were scenic and free of humans, which appeared to be yet another indication of LURC's "preservationist" values and bias.

Locally-based organizations purposefully employ language that depicts the woods as a multiple-use, lived-on landscape supporting working families, and therefore an inauthentic and suboptimal setting for restrictive conservation initiatives (see Mackenzie 2006a, 2006b). By drawing attention to the historical and existing human presence on the land, words can be used to shatter the wilderness aesthetic and discourse. For example, to perhaps counter the channeling of Thoreau's spirit by conservation interests, North Maine Woods, a coalition of landowners, corporations, state agencies, families, and individuals, describes on their website a different spirit embodied by the woods,

> Past and present; people and nature meet here. Men and women who make their living from the woods and those who relax here love this area. And through North Maine Woods, they work together to see that while they take forest products, fish, wildlife, and pleasure from this great region, they take nothing that will make it any less in the future than it is today. WHAT NMW IS NOT: The region is not a wilderness. There are over 3,000 miles of permanently maintained roads and several thousand miles of temporary, unmaintained roads. In most areas two generations of timber have been cut and the current harvesting operations you may see mark the third time the trees in this giant tree farm have been cropped (North Maine Woods no date a).

Likely in response to the AMC Maine chapter's quarterly newsletter called *Wilderness Matters*, an ardently anti-environmentalist and pro-private property rights monthly newsletter started in the 1990s in Sullivan, Maine was christened *All*

Maine Matters (Rolde 2001). And the former head of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine wrote an op-ed piece that challenged blanket, uncritical uses of weighty words that ultimately hold completely subjective meanings. It began,

> Wilderness is in the eye of the beholder. And that, my friends, is the problem. Mainers have fought pitched battles to establish their respective wilderness visions in the Allagash [Wilderness Waterway area] and elsewhere. But it is simply not possible to reach consensus on the issue because the concept of wilderness is so specific to each individual's experiences and desires (Smith 2007).

This was decidedly the case during interviews, which yielded fascinating responses that revealed the great diversity and flexibility that exists outside of the public-political forum. Questions asking whether interview subjects considered the woods a wilderness netted a wide range of responses that reflected individual beliefs yet acknowledged the power and sensitivity of the word itself and its complex history on this landscape. Interestingly, many snowmobilers had no problem describing the woods as a "wilderness" based on the following personal definitions,

> Anything that's not developed, I consider wilderness. You go up a road and there's a building every fifty feet and you're not in wilderness. I consider wilderness a *good* word. You wanna go up and you wanna recreate, you wanna hunt, fish, trap, whatever you wanna do—we've always been allowed to do that (Al interview 2011)!

> I do consider it wilderness. For me, wilderness is going somewhere where you could potentially not run into another person, and be out with nature. And I absolutely think the north woods and Moosehead is very much like that. Even though we've got two half-million dollar houses on either side of our camp and we've got this little teeny hunting camp, it still feels like we're in the middle of the woods. I mean, you look out on the lake and you may not see a boat all day so it's definitely wilderness to me. It's different—I've been out west and so I've seen the Rocky Mountains and I spent a month camping out

> in Wyoming and, you know, there's no structure anywhere, and no town, or no little hunting camp. But this is as close as we can get to it (Sarah interview 2010).
>
> Some woods [are]. Where they haven't even cut a log or any trees, it's beautiful. Untouched (Dave interview 2011).
>
> Definitely. But, I know what you're trying to get me to say. I definitely think it's a wilderness, but it's also, like anything else, it can be harvested. And if you don't harvest it properly it's gonna go to nothin' (Richard interview 2011).
>
> To me it's *all* wilderness, and *none* of it's wilderness (John interview 2011).

Figure 4. Snowmobiles on Mount Kineo, looking south across Moosehead Lake, March 2011

This last definition encapsulates the trickiness of characterizing the "naturalness" of the north woods. I had expected the snowmobilers to completely reject the word wilderness because the federal designation under the 1964 Wilderness Act prohibits certain uses including motorized recreation based on its poetic

definition of wilderness as "as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."[15] But even outside the federal definition, wilderness is often assumed to imply minimal to no human presence on the land. The term so vehemently rebuffed during public exchanges concerning north woods land use and conservation was nevertheless used by each snowmobiler to symbolize what they consider special about the woods—what attracts them and others to Maine's rugged and remote landscape. In their eyes, wilderness can coexist with all sorts of human uses, including snowmobiling; it neither indicates nor necessitates limited or primitive human contact. However, while every snowmobiler was open to personally describing at least some of the woods as a wilderness, those who worked in a public arena, for example with environmental agencies, businesses, or conservation groups, were substantially more guarded. Many have learned that presenting a narrative of the woods that in any way downplays or ignores the landscape's human (European, not necessarily Native[16])

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[15] There are three federally designated wilderness areas in Maine, which comprise a tiny fraction of total forestland: the Caribou-Speckled Mountain Wilderness (11,233 acres), the Moosehorn (Baring Unit) Wilderness (4,680 acres), and the Moosehorn Wilderness (2,712 acres). In addition, there is the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, a state designated 92-mile stretch of protected lake, shore, and river corridor, around which controversy often swirls in the fight between retaining access and restoring the river's wild character.

[16] Romanticized visions of pristine wilderness are often accompanied by romantic visions of indigeneity and "traditional" human societies. Within this discourse, human impact is unnatural and damaging unless the humans and/or their practices are considered sufficiently traditional (e.g., culturally authentic, primitive) and therefore closer to or even part of nature.

history raises hackles and can quickly spawn opponents to one's land management or conservation plans.

> People get caught up in the definition. Our first pass at a [business] mission statement I think said something like "Responsible, shared use of Maine's wilderness," and we were like "*BZZZ*, thought police! We'll get crucified for saying that." So we changed it to "vast northern forest." It's stupid, but you gotta do it (John interview 2011).

> When I use the term wilderness, I usually refer to the legislative, federal wilderness, and I'm very careful about how I use that term. You'll never ever see me speak or write about the north woods as a wilderness unless you are in the Caribou Speckled Wilderness in Mason Township […]. Otherwise, I refer to the north woods as remote, as scenic, as having backcountry areas, even roadless areas—I'm happy to use any of that other terminology, but I will not use the term wilderness to describe the north woods. And that's just because it's a recipe for trouble and to be misunderstood (Greg interview 2011).

> Maine people don't like the word wilderness so much because it connotates [sic] "federal"—most people go back to "Well, that's federal, that's on federal land, wilderness is a federal definition, and it should not be a state definition." And the truth of the matter is, we (the Division of Parks and Public Lands) don't have that in our management of our own land—it's not called wilderness. Partly for the same reasons—it immediately infuriates a lot of people. What our closest definition would be is "backcountry." You'll see some of the talk in [DPPL's] management plan, we're trying to *create* these remote areas on our own land—there's no question about that, but to call it wilderness? No, no. Wilderness to me is something where you don't boat, you might canoe to it, but you're clearly on foot. You don't drive in and just walk for the day into wilderness. No. [The woods are] remote, sure, but not wilderness (Tom interview 2011).

As for people like Roxanne Quimby or groups like AMC, they are in the unenviable position of asserting the mystique and value of a quiet, magical natural space for those seeking peaceful solitude, while somehow acknowledging local cultural heritage and footprints on the land—a human history closely tied to the

state's identity that refuses to be ignored. Feathers have been ruffled through the years as both Quimby and AMC have attempted to navigate this delicate balance with each land deal they have signed.

When she began acquiring land in the north woods in 2000, Quimby was closely associated with RESTORE: The North Woods as a member of their board and outspoken proponent of reestablishing Maine's wilderness heritage. Her land management policies reflected this vision; she erected gates across logging roads and snowmobile trails along the boundaries of her properties in an effort to restore native habitat, and canceled numerous leases of generations-old family and sportsmen camps dotting her land to "reduce human-related disturbance and allow forest regeneration" (EPI no date b). Meetings weren't held with local communities and land users to obtain their input and ideas, which was a clear indication to them that she was unconcerned with the interests and needs of area residents. The woods and their ecological processes were Quimby's focus and priority, and both her language and policies ignored or dismissed the land's complex and multidimensional significance to local users. The backlash and open hostility she faced was severe, to the point where she avowed to cease her land purchases in the north woods in 2005, stating "After every dart that has been thrown at me, I've lost my appetite to save [northern Maine lands beyond] what I've saved already" (Austin 2005).

Interestingly, the first person who served as Quimby's spokesperson was a botanist focused on conducting ecological studies of the woods. He had no expertise

in and did not enjoy, to say the least, the more political, public relations side of things such as responding to impassioned interrogations about the lease cancellations (Bill interview 2011). Quimby took note and eventually shifted her approach; she attempted to distance herself from RESTORE, hired a new spokesperson who advised her on the importance of good community relations, and brought representatives of various interests to the table including the executive director of the Maine Snowmobile Association, Millinocket's town manager, and the former executive director of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine, with whom she managed to build close working relationships. Sam surmised,

> I don't honestly believe she had any idea [her land purchases and policies] would have this kind of newsworthiness, that it would have this big an impact when she started it. I don't think she thought that many people cared what really happened up in the great north woods, and she knows differently now (interview 2011).

New negotiations have allowed some snowmobile trails to remain open across her land, at least for the time being, and she has acknowledged her naiveté at the start of her conservation philanthropy. She has more recently figured out, "OK, this is what people want, this is what they feel like they're losing, and how can we address that and address the immediate concerns for what she believes is a long-term good" (Bill interview 2011). To offset her national park proposal and the restrictions that would result, Quimby offered to potentially set aside 40,000 acres south and just east of the national park to be managed like a state park that will forever permit uses such

as logging, hunting, and snowmobiling (see dark green areas in figure 2). However, her ultimate vision of the woods remains the same. Nature is best untended, wilderness left to unfold uninhibited by human uses that disrupt the natural order of things. Quimby's spokesperson tried to explain how her perceptions of wilderness are more enlightened than one might think,

> My understanding of Roxanne… oftentimes there's a criticism that she has some illusions about the wilderness. Roxanne has an acceptance that things are dynamic and things change. I don't *think* there are illusions that […] it's [not] ever changing. There could be a forest fire or an insect outbreak in a wilderness area and that's all part of it. She understands that. She's not naive to the fact that a wilderness area is not just a pretty park, big trees, aesthetically pleasing (Bill interview 2011).

In other words, Quimby understands that forests are not static entities, that there is no precise and perfect ecological state to which land managers can realistically aspire. However, the types of impacts considered acceptable on her sanctuaries are those resulting from natural perturbations like forest fires or ostensibly low-impact human activities such as hiking and cross-country skiing (EPI no date a). Following years of butting heads with local communities and wrangling over the meanings of words like "wilderness" or "traditional uses" Quimby has adapted her approach and "stopped splitting hairs" (Bill interview 2011). She now speaks primarily in management terms of restoring or reestablishing the forest's wilderness character, saying "OK, this is how we're gonna *manage* it (like a wilderness). I don't care what you call it" (Bill interview 2011). But regardless of this

slight shift in diction, many roads and trails remain closed and tree harvesting halted in an effort to allow nature to run its course.

Meanwhile, AMC, through its Maine Woods Initiative, expected to minimize conflict and resistance from local communities, among other interests, by implementing multiple-use management strategies on its land holdings. In addition to establishing an ecological reserve and constructing and renovating infrastructure to support lodge-to-lodge skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking adventures, the group is also practicing sustainable timber harvesting on some of its parcels and negotiated some limited snowmobile access through its properties. That being said, it ultimately answers and caters to its membership. Although AMC staff try to avoid talking about the woods as a wilderness area during local meetings and dealings, wilderness is used as "a marketing term" to describe the woods to their members and "convey the type of experience or what people can expect in terms of amenities" (Jason interview 2011). However, Jason recognizes that it is "problematic in the Maine woods" one, because "that term, as you know, is completely loaded, and people have all sorts of opinions about it, whether it's the federal designation or what have you;" and two, because AMC doesn't want to mislead people who may be expecting a true wilderness experience but then "come up and see a clear-cut and they're like, 'Whoa, that's not wilderness!'" (2011). AMC must therefore adopt land management strategies that present a landscape to its members who, in response to its marketing and long-

established reputation, are expressly seeking a wilderness experience in the Maine woods.[17] As Greg explained,

> Most of AMC's members are not from Maine. They're from more urban and suburban areas and they come to Maine to recreate and they are interested in a certain kind of recreation if they join AMC, which is certainly non-motorized, and they want to cross-country ski and not snowmobile. And so how AMC navigates the fact that they have bought a whole lot of land in a region that the locals care intensely about snowmobiling with a membership and users who come from a lot of other places other than Maine and would much rather have the woods be quiet and full of non-motorized recreation. That just sets AMC up to be kind of caught in a squeeze (Greg interview 2011).

And therein lays another problem: different sets of users seeking different kinds of experiences in what are ultimately different woods—one forest is filled with markers and memories of a valued human presence and another is necessarily absent of signs of human civilization and is therefore the perfect space for escape.

Enjoyment of Nature

Working in tandem with differing beliefs about which *forms* of stewardship and nature—improved or untouched land—hold the greatest value, are critically dissimilar ideologies and *ways* of knowing nature (e.g., social or spiritual goals) that lead one to seek vastly different personal experiences in nature. Quimby and AMC share a goal to diversify the Maine woods' consumer base by attracting new users—"people who would never have thought of coming here" (Jason interview 2011). AMC

[17] In the winter, roughly half of visitors to the Maine woods utilizing AMC's facilities and guides are from southern and central Maine, while most of the other half hails from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Hampshire, and some from Vermont. In the summer, the contingency from Maine drops to about thirty percent (Jason interview 2011).

consequently eliminated a number of snowmobile trails on their land because they were not compatible with the experience AMC was trying to create. "We're saying 'Come enjoy the Maine woods and the quiet of the woods,' and it didn't make any sense having snowmobiles coming right up the valley" (Jason interview 2011). Dan explained,

> They now have an ownership block, and their customers—completely understandable—want an exclusive and pristine experience. Why would anyone pay a premium to slog through the woods if, once they slogged through the woods, they then met people who were flying through for a completely different experience? It's no different from a resort in the Caribbean—you pay for some level of exclusivity and/or cultural this, that, or the other (interview 2011).

Despite presenting more nuanced understandings of Maine's nature, and specifically wilderness, Quimby and groups like AMC continue to rely on a dualism that perceives certain human uses as incompatible with a natural area of special significance either because they personally consider it offensive or unnatural (Quimby) or their membership does (AMC). When carving out spaces for protection, this dualism prescribes specific land uses and aesthetics, which often necessitate the elimination or reduction of so-called "consumptive" uses that interfere with a forest's natural being *and* particular ways of being in nature. This is evidenced by a primary goal of EPI's sanctuary management and use plan, which is to "provide outstanding opportunities for solitude" and "low-impact activities, such as hiking, camping,

fishing, canoeing and kayaking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing" (EPI no date a).

People "from away," that is, visitors from more urban areas, often escape to nature in search of a quiet getaway where one can connect with oneself through relatively primitive relations with nature. For many people envisaging such elemental encounters, snowmobiles as an embodiment of modern technology unsurprisingly represent an ecological and aesthetic menace that undermines the wilderness experience of the riders themselves, as well as others around them. U.S. Senator Angus King (Governor of Maine from 1995 to 2003) explained, "It's really a philosophical question. There are those who worship the wilderness and want *no* human uses—it's crazy. I had one guy tell me, 'I can't always hear the snowmobiles, but it hurts me just to know they're there'" (King interview 2010). Referring to Quimby's national park proposal, Al predicted that the park "would ban hunting, fishing, trapping, snowmobiling," mockingly adding, "you might be able to walk through there barefoot. That'd be about it" (interview 2011).

Figure 5. Snowmobiler in the woods, 2008

The words "compatible" and "proper" are used to describe those activities that fall in line with how nature is supposed to be experienced, and snowmobiling is usually situated outside of this characterization. For if, as Rolston (1998) argues, the "appropriate aesthetic enjoyment" of forests requires a multisensory, immersive experience that engages one's hearing, smell, and sight, than nothing could be more offensive than the noisy, stinky, and speedy snowmobile. In other words, simply being in or viewing nature does not automatically produce a connection; rather it's *how* one engages with nature and the purifying (or perhaps toxic) effects of various modes of engagement. An appropriate or adequate means of knowing the forest rests on a certain physical encounter with the landscape; forests cannot be thought of as scenery that is viewed—they must be entered on foot because viewing the landscape through a car window or on the back of a snowmobile inhibits the "kinesthetic sense of bodily presence, being incarnate in place," and consequently "prevents the reality" (Rolston 1998, 162).[18]

Such accounts of recreational and sensory experience harken back to earlier discussions of wilderness where journeys into nature are equated with journeys into

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[18]Paradoxically, this seems to only apply to one's experience *within* the forest, for cars and paved roads have become the universally accepted means of accessing the nation's natural areas. Most Americans have come to know and appreciate nature through the technology of the car (Louter 2006), and a Maine Woods National Park would continue this tradition. Our American cultural history of automotive technology and carefully designed roads winding through national parks and other natural landscapes has made cars feel completely familiar and acceptable in an otherwise primitive and wild landscape (Louter 2006). Where (and which) machines are and are not allowed in nature is clearly a cultural construction that appears to afford greater privilege to car users.

one's soul. Self is rediscovered and the human spirit is renewed, bringing "the individual in touch with that *primal* self that has been lost in humanity's 'descent' into modernity" (Braun 2003, 194). While considering connections between Quimby's spiritual relationship with the forest and her land management strategies, Bill explained,

> These things are becoming more and more rare, where you have that quietness. And when you do sit at your campsite, and I believe this is the allure of, like, Appalachian Trail hiking. That you get there and you just have the bare minimum, and after a few days you say, "I don't need… all I need is this pack on my back and a few staples and I'm fine." And it really changes your life 'cause you're thinking "I don't need all these material things that I have on the outside" (interview 2011).

When I then asked whether Quimby believes that a similar kind of life changing experience is possible on the back of a snowmobile, that one might even be able to describe his or her sledding as a spiritual experience into nature, Bill responded, following a lengthy thoughtful pause,

> I don't believe it's the same and I don't think Roxanne thinks it's the same. I don't think it's the same going to Lookout Point, a scenic place, definitely the most coveted place in the [area].[19] And you snowmobile up this hill till you get to the top. There's a ledge outcropping and you pull out the snowmobile and it's just spectacular, breathtaking, and you do get that feeling. And the snowmobiler will tell you, "When you shut off your snowmobile, it's so quiet." So they're getting that little piece of it, they're getting part of it. *But*, it's not the same as cross-country skiing up there and getting there and having that

[19] Lookout Point is at the western edge of a key strip of land that Quimby finally purchased in December 2012 to complete her unbroken tract of proposed park land. A popular snowmobile trail crosses east-west across the parcel, culminating on a hilltop with spectacular views of Mount Katahdin. As part of the deal, a state easement was negotiated that would continue to allow snowmobiles on the trail for two or three years (Sambides, Jr. 2012b).

> experience of the journey up.[…] I mean, snowmobiling's tiring, when you snowmobile you're tired and feel like you've earned something. But it's not the same.

Expectedly, such assertions about the differing value of and worth gleaned through various experiences in the natural environment can become a means of creating different classes of recreationists and users of nature, some more refined and privileged than others. Bruce Braun (2003) has examined "risk culture" as a site of cultural politics, exploring how environmental discourses and practices not only reflect cultural difference but work to constitute it. Through a discourse analysis of articles and advertisements inside adventure magazines such as *Outside* and *National Geographic Adventure* Braun concludes that the adventure travel industry presents a specific way of encountering nature that is very different from routine interactions such as gardening work. These media portray encounters with a rugged nature that are often individualized and primal, that demand daring physical exertion, and are in a sufficiently wild and remote location that unleashes unpredictable and untamed natural forces. "It is a moment where one's mettle is tested; it is about character, about stepping off the beaten path in order to struggle against, experience, and overcome nature's raw forces" (2003, 186). Wilderness and wildness are central to this adventure discourse, as well as Frederick Jackson Turner-like understandings of frontier, which contend that the moral character of American culture grew out of our immersion in nature and foray into the nation's frontier wilds. Braun explains:

> Adventure turns on crossing a great divide between culture and wild nature; it is about physical and moral tests that the encounter with *unmediated* nature provides (hence, adventure travel's emphasis on self-propelled transportation is not only a nostalgia for earlier modes of travel, it is also about stripping away the most obvious source of alienation from nature—modern technology) (2003, 194).

Modern technology is deemed an affront to humans' primitive relations with nature. Although snowmobiling is clearly an adventurous recreation largely targeted to today's thrill-seekers, it provides a very different type of encounter with nature that offends established models of outdoor adventure. But in addition to perhaps preventing one's own true connection with nature and self, the machines can disrupt the wilderness experience of others in numerous ways, hence the restrictions levied by groups and landowners like AMC. When asked what influences AMC's decisions concerning which uses are allowed and where on their lands, Jason replied that ecological impacts are less of an issue than recreation conflicts, "It's the landscape, it's what are our goals in terms of what experiences do we want to provide guests" (interview 2011). The smell of exhaust is one common concern. The increasing popularity of snowmobiling as a sport has led to the development of faster, more powerful machines that environmentalists say "dominate the trail network. When you have a number of sleds, the stench is such that the backcountry atmosphere is lost" (Foderaro 2007). Opponents also often object to the use of snowcats (large, tracked vehicles broader than snowmobiles) to groom trails because it results in the widening and flattening of trails, making paths feel "less wild." The executive director

of a local nonprofit fighting to protect New York's Adirondack Mountains explains, "The foot trail experience is greatly diminished when you're walking on a dirt road in the sun as opposed to walking on a trail under a canopy" (Foderaro 2007).

Photo courtesy of Scott Ramsay

Figure 6. A Gilbert brand snow groomer in Fort Fairfield, Maine

And then, of course, there's the noise, which is probably responsible for the loudest protests against the use of snowmobiles in the north woods; after all, what can be more offensive to one's attempt to escape the ills of modernity than an engine's annoying whine? Quiet and solitude are considered central to the spiritually transcendent experiences one seeks in the non-human, prehistoric wilderness. As one reader wrote in response to a New York Times article on proposed changes to snowmobile legislation concerning Yellowstone National Park,

> Allowing noisy snowmobiles in [the park] is similar to what would occur if Jet Skis were allowed in Biscayne National Park here in South Florida. Some of the attraction of these parks include the quiet beauty of nature and the animals

> residing there, which can live unmolested by humans and the noise they produce (Coppola 2004).[20]

Jason explained that today, AMC's members especially value quiet and solitude, "things that they can't get in their everyday lives. Just to be disconnected from the rest of the world, from the wired world, and just to be in a place where you're not hearing everyday sounds of civilization" (interview 2011). As Sigurd Olson expressed in *Reflections from the North Country*,

> The great silences mean more than stillness. They are the ancient overpowering silences this planet knew before the advent of modern man […] natural in origin and always present. The silence itself […] dealt with distance, timelessness, and perception, a sense of being engulfed by something greater where minor sounds were only a part, a hush embedded in our consciousness (1976).

The value of quiet is amplified in the winter when dark, forested landscapes tend to feel more peaceful, vast, foreign or unfamiliar, and even sacred. A winter wilderness, in particular, creates the perfect conditions for a meditative, cleansing moment during which one becomes deeply conscious of self. Both the cold temperatures and the snow slow things down, forcing one to walk less hurriedly and more deliberately, allowing more time to thoughtfully take in surroundings. And there is profound quiet. Sound is acutely muffled following a snowfall, which strips

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[20] It just so happens that jet skis were banned on 245 lakes and ponds in Maine in 1997. The Great Ponds Act (LD 1730), which took effect in July 1998, placed noise limits on personal watercraft and prohibited their use on most lakes and ponds in the Land Use Planning Commission's jurisdiction (most of which is in the UT), as well as five ponds in Acadia National Park. Lawmakers opposing the bill argued that the ban represented yet another "North-South, Two Maines issue" (Rolde 2001, 56).

acoustic waves of energy during their passage across and through the porous snow. But the din of snowmobiling negates this value and sensory experience, not only for other recreationists seeking tranquility but also for the snowmobilers themselves. As Jason explained when describing why he prefers navigating the winter landscape by foot or on skis, "The [snowmobile] helmet really insulates you; you don't get to hear what's happening. There's just a lot that I feel you miss" (Jason interview 2011). After all, the silence that is central to such spiritual experiences outdoors is not simply about hearing *nothing* as much as the little things the stillness and quiet enable one to notice and focus on—sounds like the satisfying crunch of snow underfoot, the creaking and knocking together of trees, or the sound (and sight) of one's own breath. When cross-country skiing can be considered by some to be too noisy, snowmobiles don't have a chance,

> Quiet is a word snowshoers use over and over. Snowshoeing offers a meditative alternative to the noise of the snowmobile. Even cross-country skiing makes a certain audible swish, and it tends to be a more aerobic activity, causing the body to make an internal racket of pulsing and panting that can drown the silence of the woods. But snowshoers can stop and hear that silence, taking in the gentlest call of a far-off black-capped chickadee (Samuels 2007).

The roar of machinery propelled Roxanne Quimby's first purchase of conservation land in Maine's woods more than a decade ago. As Bill explained,

> Her value for owning land was to have a wilderness, quiet. One of the things that got her started was her two children hiked the Appalachian Trail and they got to the '100 Mile Wilderness' section [in Maine], which they were excited

> about, and […] her kids could hear skidders[21] and stuff; [it was] not what they expected. And so she purchased 10,000 acres and that started the idea of… and the idea was noise and other wilderness attributes. So then the snowmobilers were like, "Well snowmobiles don't cause any problems." It's like, "Well, they make noise" (Bill interview 2011).

AMC, in trying to create spaces that offer peace and solitude, has expressed similar motivations. In neighboring New Hampshire, where AMC's White Mountain hut network is "steeped in 125 years of tradition," the organization sued the state upon hearing of its plans to build a snowmobile trail across its property and within 300 feet of one of its lodges. In its 2004 petition filed against the state, AMC argued, "The snowmobile trail will encircle the AMC's new Highland Center lodging and conference facilities, which will become a virtual center of a snowmobile 'merry-go-round' with accompanying day and night noise and lights, causing damage to its reputation, programs and property" (Tracy 2004). Such objections are familiar to AMC staff working on projects in the north woods,

> From the beginning we were like, "We didn't want to have snowmobiles because of the recreation resource conflict, to have them going by Little Lyford where people are gonna be just out enjoying the peace… One of the coolest things you can do at Little Lyford in the winter is go out onto the ponds at night and it's totally quiet. The stars are out, you see a million stars. And if this [pointing to a closed trail on a map] was an active snowmobile trail, you would pretty consistently hear snowmobiles (Jason interview 2011).

It may be easy to see how the snowmobile can be viewed as an abomination of all that is sacred to the arctic wilderness experience for hikers, snowshoers, cross-

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[21] Skidders are large tractors used to haul logs over rough terrain.

country skiers, and other non-motorized winter recreationists, but perhaps less clear is how snowmobilers manage to commune with nature while riding a machine. For example, a reader responded to a newspaper article supporting the Bush administration's lifting of the ban against snowmobiles, writing

> The problem with snowmobiles in Yellowstone is only partly their noise and pollution. There should be a few places in America where the wildlife is more important than a person's pleasure. Snowmobilers often go off roads or trails; they often damage the habitat or chase or otherwise harass the wildlife. This needs to stop. After all, which are endangered, wildlife or human beings? I predict, with a little effort and time, [snowmobilers] would be pleased with a quieter and healthier experience than snowmobiles can give you (Vant Hull 2004).

For those who understand non-human nature as oppositional to humans, as a space in which we are interlopers who must therefore tread lightly, humbly, and respectfully (e.g., "leave no trace"), snowmobiles are simply destructive agents that necessarily detach one from nature. But for those who view humans and nature as active co-participants in nature's unfolding, who allow a place in wilderness for machines, it is easy to understand not only the ethic of stewardship that permeates the activity, but also the ways in which motorized recreation and respect for nature can coexist.

> I think you can connect with nature on a snowmobile. The fact that you can cover a lot of ground means that you can see a whole lot of stuff in a day, and especially if you're in a really remote part of the world like you get in northern Maine, yeah, going fifty to one-hundred miles on a snowmobile in a day and seeing basically no towns, no buildings other than a few little cabins. That gives you sense of scale of how big the woods are and that's really powerful, and it's tough to get that on snowshoes. I think it's loud, it's fast,

> you're not gonna notice some of the intimate details of nature the way you do when you're on skis or snowshoes, but I don't view it as an unnatural experience. I think people who do it have their own reverence for nature (Greg interview 2011).

Snowmobilers and their supporters argue that the activity doesn't produce detachment from or dominion over nature but rather helps to forge ties with nature,

> [I] absolutely [feel] connected to [the land]. It's home. It really is. I mean, it's a great getaway. You can forget about everything else—work, any kind of strife up there. [Snowmobiling] just keeps us outdoors. [We] love watching all the wildlife, we keep track of how many moose we see every weekend—we're really into that. There was this one weekend that we saw a bear every single day that we went out. […] We have our maps and then we have a journal that we keep on an everyday basis. We'll sum it up and say, you know today we saw twenty-six moose… We saw fifty-three in one weekend, and I think twenty-six is our day high. We have a notebook right next to us and you know, we just love that land, and we've even gotten a scat book so we can look up when we see any kind of fecal matter—we're looking down and we're like, "Oh, that was a coyote!"—and being able to figure that stuff out (Sarah interview 2010).

George and his wife Joan are no longer able to ride, but they spent hours with me looking through hundreds of old photographs and reminiscing about past trips. Joan recalled, "Oh I used to love going through the woods and pretty scenery, used to see moose and deer on the trails—used to *love* that" (2011). She was overwhelmed by a particularly vivid memory of riding through the woods after a storm, "The trees were *all* ice. Oh my god, it was like… it was *so* beautiful!"

Figure 7. Joan's ice storm ride

Meanwhile Al, who is in his fourth decade of riding, is still discovering new places,

> When you snowmobile on top of some of these mountains, the view is just phenomenal, the wildlife, you know. We took a seventy-five mile ride about three weeks ago down into Moxie and the Forks. We saw twenty-something deer that day. It's just great. […] And when we come [sic] back, we took a different route, went up over Ball Mountain, and boy that was beautiful up through there. That was my first time I'd been on that mountain (2011).

A number of studies have revealed that the primary motivations of snowmobilers visiting national park lands include experiencing and being close to nature, enjoying scenery, participating in recreational activities, having fun, escaping the demands of life, spending time with friends and family, and viewing diverse wildlife species in their natural habitats (Davenport and Borrie 2005).

> Non-snowmobilers do not realize that we enjoy the peace and quiet we find in the middle of nowhere, when all you hear is the sounds of nature. We are often painted to be speed demons, snowmobiling anywhere and everywhere. It is sometimes shocking when they realize some of the reasons we snowmobiling are for the beauty, the serenity, and for quality time with our families (Jourdain 2007).

Davenport and Borrie (2005) found that snowmobilers in Yellowstone viewed their sleds as a form of transportation that could provide them with the kinds of experiences mentioned above, "Snowmobiling gave them the *freedom*, *access*, and certain *closeness to* or *intimacy with nature* that many believed they would not have had otherwise" (156; emphasis in original). As Sarah admitted, "You know, I'm not the most fit woman and so climbing Katahdin is not gonna be on my next week plans, but I still wanna be able to enjoy the outdoors" (2010). Understanding snowmobiling as a "mode of experience rather than the experience in and of itself" suggests that motorized recreationists value nature more than one might suspect (Davenport and Borrie 2005, 157). That is why many snowmobilers believe that opposition to snowmobiling is "all about green bigotry. You have a group of people who look upon the working class who ride snowmobiles as people who are not capable of enjoying the forest preserve in the proper manner" (Foderaro 2007). Sarah, who comes from a middle-upper class "snooty" (in her words) upbringing in Connecticut, has faced such judgment from her own family,

> My family hates it, mine can't stand that I own [a snowmobile], but they also have their own preconceived notions; they feel that it makes me a redneck that I have one, and that's not OK [to them]. My sister is probably the most

> vocal [critic] about me riding it, and you know, she hikes every weekend, and *that's* being one with the world, and *that's* being one with the earth, and how could I even remotely think that I'm an outdoors person if I'm riding a machine around it. [She] adamantly cannot even understand why I consider myself as somebody who loves the outdoors (2010).

Dan, who grew up near the University of Maine Orono, just north of Bangor, experienced firsthand the cultural rift between different forms of recreation in the Maine woods,

> My parents were professors, [but] we had less money than the millworkers. So I was a snotty little brat but it wasn't a money issue. My peers growing up could afford and did use snowmobiles, and me and my family would go on backcountry trips. Nothing to do with money, everything to do with culture. And the tensions… In my childhood, Baxter [State Park] was the battle over snowmobiling and my parents were very opposed to snowmobiling in Baxter. It was a very political fight and broke down along political lines. And everybody would say rednecks versus snotty professors, but in fact it's a cultural divide, not anything else (interview 2011).

Greg, with the Trust for Public Land, believes that class issues, the privileging of some users over others, and differing perceptions of what kinds of human activities belong in nature are very much a part of current conservation struggles in the woods,

> There are threads of that throughout any of these dialogues. In general, people who snowmobile tend to be either working class people or people who have some sort of an identity with working class. They may have an office job, but it's not unusual for them to feel like… they're not aspiring to go do things that are generally considered yuppie or urban. There's definitely some cultural issues that you have to negotiate, and a lot of it is sort of oriented towards class and money, but a lot of it is just sort of identity and culture. [Is there] conflict? Absolutely. A lot of people want to see motorized recreation of all types kept out of public lands or out of conservation lands—they're viewed as incompatible. And there's a lot of people who think it's a traditional use, or it's essential to the local economy, or it's essential to their way of life. And yeah, they generally don't see the world the same way" (interview 2011).

The cultural and ideological distinction and privileging of certain experiences over others has not been lost on snowmobilers. In fact, it fits perfectly within the discourse of the wealthy, snobby environmentalists from the city (in this case, urban areas to the south and out-of-state) who try to impose allegedly superior standards on local users. Meanwhile, ideological and cultural differences are also used by north woods residents to draw lines that determine rightful uses and users, which do not include "outsiders" touting strict preservationist values. As Coffin (2012) wrote, "There's an innate tension in the condition of Mainerhood between the local, the quaint, the pastoral, and the global, the cosmopolitan, and the complex" (63).

The current effort to establish a national park epitomizes this ongoing cultural struggle. The north woods town of Millinocket, "where the ratio of snowmobiling to human beings is completely out of kilter" (Dan interview 2011), represents the fiery center of intense conservation battles between locals and outsiders (each category can include both community residents and non-residents, depending upon who is defining the terms) and has hosted numerous national park open forums and meetings. As a mill town and gateway to Baxter State Park (and the most likely major access point for the proposed national park), Millinocket has for years been the scene of clashing cultures as thousands of visitors drive past closed mills and shuttered storefronts on their way to experiencing Katahdin's magnificence. This town understandably harbors Quimby's most fervent opponents who have first-hand experience of EPI's restrictive land management policies and trail closures.

Questioned about the regional divide among Maine's populace on north woods conservation, a former Green Party state legislator representing Portland admitted that his constituents are interested in preserving the "woodsy north" because "We like to think we'll drive north and see this vast, untouched wilderness. This is the soul and spirit of Maine" (Hampson 2006). Meanwhile, Millinocket's town manager expressed a sentiment common throughout the north woods, "We don't interfere in the business of the people of Cape Elizabeth or South Portland or Portland. They think [they] can impose their view on us for our own good. Well, it is not for our own good" (Sambides, Jr. 2011a).[22]

Although these conflicts are often primarily depicted as turf battles between local users and other Mainers who also stake claims to the area's special natural resources, the cultural divergences ultimately reflect contrasting environmental ethics and beliefs about ideal uses and ways of enjoying the land. As the owner of Kakadjo Camps, situated on Roach Pond in between Moosehead Lake and AMC's conservation

[22] This belief among rural Mainers that those in the southern part of the state are trying to assert their environmental values on northern Maine is reflected by polls that found that of the sixty percent of Mainers in favor of a national park feasibility study, "support was most likely to be observed among college educated, younger (18–34 years of age), residents of the Southern or Central regions and registered Democrats [while] opposition is most prominent among Northern or Coastal residents and registered Republicans" (Sambides Jr. 2011a). A Millinocket town councilor expressed little surprise that a national park garnered more support among southern Mainers, explaining, "There is no loss for [southern Mainers], so to them it looks like a good thing," but "to those who are directly impacted, I doubt if any polls would show sixty percent approval" (Sambides Jr. 2011a).

lands, reflected in an interview for a documentary about a large and exceedingly contentious development project planned in the north woods,

> We were the first environmentalists because we were willing to come up here and live here, irregardless [sic] of pay scale because we love the area. But when you're in Boston making millions and you're saying "I want to conserve that," what are you really doing? You're conserving it for your own private little escapade to run off on the weekend? What about the people who live in the area? (Katz 2010)

Conclusion

In the end, meanings are constructed to serve specific purposes. The way people create and separate the categories of nature and culture based on their subjectivities determines their beliefs about nature's appropriate uses and acceptable potential users. By fetishizing nature, mainstream conservationist discourses conceal and even disparage the "social relations that have gone into its production (discursive and material)" (West 2006, 30). Nature in turn becomes normalized either as a space necessarily empty of people, *or* one inhabited by destructive or unenlightened people, each of which authorizes certain actors and actions while prohibiting others. Thus the drawing of strict boundaries between multiple categories of people and space (urban and rural, wilderness and "improved land") paves the way for various interests with economic or political power to create a landscape that conforms to these exclusionary classifications. DuPuis and Vandergeest (1996) explain,

> They do so by setting boundaries in ways that fit their own understanding of the landscape and by specifying which kinds of activities will be permitted in the resultant land use zone. The result is the marginalization of many rural people who do not fit into the categories, who are deemed inefficient in their

> use of rural resources or destructive toward nature. [But] because the policies often fail to come to terms with the real complexities of rural life, rural people frequently try to undermine these efforts either by ignoring restrictions and/or constructing alternative meanings and narratives that challenge exclusive dualisms (4).

Bringing to light the diversity of rural stewardship practices and ways of experiencing the splendor of the north woods helps characterize the state's forested region as a space "laboriously constructed through the daily cultural and economic practices of the communities" (Escobar 2001, 161). This construction of nature gives weight to local interests attempting to problematize conservationist discourses of national wilderness heritage by asserting claims of tradition and community subsistence. These claims stem from a local utilitarian land ethic that exposes the long history of humans shaping and working the land, highlighting multiple and specific practices, activities, and relations that provide an alternate conception of living in harmony with nature. Stories such as these not only disrupt the notion of wilderness as "original state," but they also fracture the nature/culture dualism that positions nature apart from everyday social practices (Mackenzie 2006a, 389). Specific local practices in the Maine woods, including snowmobiling, consequently signify a *re*constitution of nature. By calling attention to these and other activities, the forests become entwined with a diversity of human traditions that stretch back in time (Mackenzie 2006a). The next chapter further delves into this socio-cultural history by examining the machine's utilitarian roots and connection to the working forest, as

well as how snowmobiling grew out of and sustains the economic and social particularities of rural life in the snowbelt.

Chapter 3. Maine's Snowmobiling Heritage

Introduction

This chapter presents the history and culture of snowmobiling in Maine, focusing attention on the connections between the development of the technology and activity and Maine's rural spaces and people. From the beginning, snowmobiling has largely been a social activity that facilitated a physical linkage among people across the vast snowscape. Unlike the more individualized, quietly inward interactions with nature often pursued by urbanites seeking a peaceful escape from their hectic lives, residents of rural areas generally sought more connectedness with others during the winter. What started as a utilitarian solution to rural isolation and challenging environmental conditions eventually became the basis for a new type of recreation that swiftly penetrated north woods communities. The machine provided movement through and travel to places previously unreachable in the winter, enabling people to explore a frozen frontier that had once felt oppressive.

However, in the process, as the recreational activity grew in popularity and spread throughout rural Maine, so too did its connections with north woods communities. Snowmobilers founded local clubs whose members reached out to landowners and worked together to create and maintain a network of trails across the

state. And through these clubs and the greater community of riders, people have forged lasting and vital physical, social, and economic connections with one another.

A Winter Tool

Long, frigid Maine winters are inherently isolating, even in densely populated areas. The short days and freezing temperatures compel one to stay indoors; extra energy is required to get bundled up and shovel the walk or driveway, and darkness falls at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Simply getting together with neighbors and friends who may have entered into a similar hibernation mode can be an arduous task. But such inconveniences pale in comparison with the serious challenges winter conditions historically posed to mobility and connection with the outside world in remote rural areas. Before snow machines, most rural residents' only means of transport in the dead of winter was snowshoes, horses, or dog sleds. In her acclaimed account of life in the Maine woods in the 1930s and 40s, *We Took to the Woods* (2007 [1942]), Louise Dickinson Rich recalled the moment each year when the accumulation of snow finally rendered their car unusable,

> We were on foot now until spring. We might as well accept it… on foot for the rest of winter! That's where we always end. Sometimes we're on foot in December, and again we manage to keep the [car] wheels rolling until February, but sooner or later we have to get down the snowshoes from their pegs on the porch and start walking (88).
>
> We thought at one time it would be a good idea to have a dog team. In this country the cars go out of use after the deep snows come, there being no possible way of keeping the road open, and that means every pound of mail

> and food and material must either be carried on someone's back, or dragged on a hand sled, […] two long, hilly miles […] And that's no fun (174).

Snow severely hindered mobility and was a major obstacle to reliable transport in rural areas for several months of the year. As a result, handy garage inventors across the snowbelt—from Minnesota to Maine to Quebec—pieced together old engines, wooden ski runners, and crude bodies to create vehicles that could carry them across snow covered land. There will never be agreement on precisely when and by whom the first snowmobile was invented, but all early models were utilitarian in purpose and can be traced to the basic wintertime needs of rural dwellers and industries for dependable over-the-snow transportation.[23]

The most basic machines are known to date back to the late 1800s, with the first patent for a "power sled" awarded to the Runnoe family in Colorado in 1896 (Pierce 2005). Other originators of various snow vehicles sprung up throughout the early twentieth century, with a total of thirteen patents granted to inventors of various snow machines throughout North America between 1927 and 1962 (Musée J. Armand Bombardier 2008a). These include Frank and Howard Sawyer's "snomo-cycle" built in 1914 and Carl Eliason's well-known "motor toboggan" built in 1924, which was basically a wooden toboggan with a motorcycle engine fastened to the rear (Reich 1999). Virgil White, a car dealer and garage owner in southern New

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[23] See Reich (1999) for a comprehensive account of the snowmobile's emergence and ascendance in North America.

Hampshire designed an attachment that converted and adapted the Model 'T' Ford for snow travel and also patented the name "snowmobile." He first put it on the market in 1922 and sold approximately 25,000 snowmobiles over the course of ten years, primarily to doctors, farmers, mail carriers, loggers, grocers, and utility companies (Reich 1999). Rich mentioned this device in her book, "After the lake is frozen [the mail carrier] can use his snowboat—an ingenious device that looks like Black Maria, with skis in place of the front wheels and caterpillar treads behind to furnish the driving power" (2007, 89).

Photo courtesy of Scott Ramsay

Figure 8. A restored Virgil White Model 'T' Ford snowmobile

The state of Maine, meanwhile, is recognized as one of the machine's birthplaces and a key center of growth and development. For example, Charles Young of Norway, Maine received one of the earliest patents for his motor-driven sled back

in 1925 (Pierce 2005). But well before the time of the "power sled" and "snomo cycle," the very first vehicle built for snow travel was the "Lombard log hauler," designed and produced in Waterville, Maine and used throughout the Maine woods. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, the types of harvested wood began to vary and the needs of the lumbering industry were shifting, as detailed in the previous chapter. Timber companies were venturing deeper into the woods, far from rivers and rail lines, and therefore needed a way to transport logs across the land in snow, through mud, or over dry ground (Maine Division of Parks and Public Lands 2004). Engineer and inventor Alvin Lombard learned of this during a train ride home to Waterville, and he designed a track-driven locomotive that required no rails and was thus able to traverse Maine's forested expanses while hauling up to 50 tons of wood (Maine Division of Parks and Public Lands 2004). Lombard log haulers featured the first-ever useable patent (issued in 1901) on a track-driven vehicle. Today every continuous tread, track-driven vehicle in the world, including snowmobiles and army tanks, stem from Lombard's original design and invention. This includes Caterpillar trucks and machinery, which in 1903 paid Lombard $60,000 for the rights to produce vehicles under his patent (Maine Division of Parks and Public Lands 2004). Though the original hauler was powered by steam, Lombard continued to adapt it to the times and eventually produced a gasoline-powered hauler. The subsequent arrival of gas-powered lumber trucks finally rendered the log hauler obsolete, but other iterations

of the snowmobile continued to be used by Maine's forest products industry as a means of off-road navigation through the rugged backcountry.

Photo courtesy of the Patten Lumberman's Museum

Figure 9. The Lombard log hauler (ca. 1905)

A central figure in the machine's history, Joseph Armand-Bombardier, built his first snow machine in 1922 at the age of fifteen when he was already harboring concerns about the wintertime isolation of Quebec villages that prevented motorized travel. Fourteen years later, and two years after losing his son to peritonitis in the dead of winter when the family was unable to get him to the hospital, his garage-turned-production plant unveiled its first series of multi-passenger snowmobiles (Musée J. Armand Bombardier 2008b). Similar to the log hauler, this was an industrial machine: "They were big machines and they were workhorses—they weren't for pleasure" (Al interview). Bombardier's large "troop-carrying" snow vehicles were

quickly in high demand and used for a variety of purposes including mail delivery, mass transit, ambulance service, busing school children, military transport, and for the delivery of food and supplies to isolated areas (Reich 1999, Tuite 1969). One such vehicle, on display in the Northern Timber Cruisers Snowmobile Club Antique Museum in Millinocket, is the Bombardier R-12 Muskeg multi-passenger snowmobile. This particular snow machine was used by the Great Northern Paper Company for the upkeep and winter maintenance of their telephone line system in the Debsconeag and Rainbow Lake region of the north woods in the early 1950–60s (Lane 1993). These series of machines were constructed with all steel bodies and skis that were interchangeable with rubber tires to facilitate passage across soft or rough terrain. But their lack of market success convinced Bombardier that the days of the large snowmobile were over, and these became the last large snowmobiles he built for mass transport (Lane 1993).

Meanwhile, another early snowmobile manufacturer, Polaris Industries based in Roseau, Minnesota, developed close ties with two men in Maine that ended up greatly influencing the machine's design and likely the company's ultimate success. Brothers Edgar and Alan Hetteen and brother-in-law David Johnson, had owned and operated an agricultural machinery company, Hetteen Hoist and Derrick, since 1948 when in 1955 Johnson began tinkering with machine and car parts in an effort to construct something that could carry him through the snow (Hetteen and Lemke 1998). His ingenuity was driven by a desire to more effectively get around in the

winter landscape that he loved; it was not a business-minded endeavor. Johnson basically inverted a grain elevator track and attached it to an engine, fashioned skis out of a car bumper, and built a front end (Hetteen and Lemke 1998). Although Edgar and Alan ridiculed his contraption, named "Number 1," it was sold within one week to a man who owned a lumber yard across the street and envisioned a use for the machine in his business. Soon thereafter, another acquaintance wanted to buy one to take him the three or four miles off his lake island to cut wood pulp each day (Hetteen and Lemke 1998). Hence began the company's small-scale production of "Sno-Travelers" (earlier names progressed from Johnson's Motor Toboggan to Sno-Cats, Pol-Cats, and finally Sno-Travelers), which was driven by a continued marketing focus on farmers, trappers, forestry workers, and backcountry inhabitants (Reich 1999, 487).

A few years later in 1957, Polaris decided to set up a dealer network and selected Bob Morrill of Yarmouth, Maine to be the eastern distributor (Campbell 2006). He connected with Earlan B. Campbell of Millinocket, who became one of the nation's first sellers of Polaris Sno-Travelers (Campbell 2006). One of his sons, Sam, recalled,

> Our dad, Earlan Campbell, saw an ad in a Popular Science or a Popular Mechanics magazine at the time and thought it might be a winter product for him. He was an automobile mechanic and he sold outboard motors and boats. So a gentleman showed up at our shop in the winter, the February of '58, and he had one on a boat trailer […]. It kind of looked like a potato digger turned upside down with a Plexiglas windshield on it [*laughs*]. It wasn't much and it wasn't streamlined. And it would go pretty good in the snow as long as you

> snowshoed ahead of it. It really wasn't much. But for an unknown reason, my father ordered three of them. They came the next fall and he sold them, and he ordered more and he sold them (interview 2011).

Campbell's interest in selling the machines was propelled by the need to extend his business into the winter off-season, and his vision of their potential utility stemmed from his time spent in the woods hunting, trapping, and as a bush pilot. The snowmobiles were expensive—at a couple thousand dollars they were equivalent in price to a nice, new car—and thus early sales, again, were to people who desired snowmobiles for more practical purposes such as accessing fishing holes and hunting grounds, or maintaining ski resort facilities and trails; they also replaced horses and snowshoes as a means of transporting goods and people to Maine's network of traditional, backcountry sporting camps. Thus, the snowmobile's strong ties to the economic wellbeing of communities in the north woods were established upon the sale of the first machine.

Despite his early success with snowmobile sales, Campbell noticed during his own excursions that the machines had a number of mechanical problems. He expressed concerns directly to the Hetteens and Johnson that the Sno-Travelers, while able to traverse the flat, windswept cornfields of Minnesota, were not equipped to handle his state's hilly, rugged terrain and variable snow conditions. He eventually convinced them to do some of their testing in Maine.

> And that's where the Katahdin region came in; [Campbell] in talking with [Morrill] thought maybe an exploratory trip to test them in the Allagash might

> be an idea. And we all know that that trip was a success. They did find out that their machines really weren't capable of going in the sugary snow of Maine (Sam interview 2011).

In February 1961, Edgar Hetteen, David Johnson, Bob Morrill, Earl Campbell, and several others, undertook "a week of survival in the Allagash wilderness of Maine with lots of snow, slush and breakdowns" (Campbell no date a), with Campbell acting as guide and mechanic. They traveled 150 miles through the Katahdin region from Millinocket to Eagle Lake and back on the machines. Polaris subsequently decided to make Maine a proving ground for future models, and added Campbell to their design and testing team where he helped Polaris improve subsequent models and work out other bugs (Boston Globe 2005). Alan Hetteen continued to haul prototype Sno-Travelers from Minnesota to Maine for testing expeditions in the Allagash through 1967. Many consider Campbell to be one of the fathers of the industry, and in November 2005 he became the first Mainer to be inducted (posthumously) into the national Snowmobile Hall of Fame and Museum in St. Germain, Wisconsin. Thus, the evolution of the machine was intricately tied to the rugged north woods landscape as well as the people, like Campbell, who envisioned its utility in the region and worked hard to ensure its success.

Photo courtesy of Scott Ramsay

Figure 10. Early model Polaris Sno-Traveler, being ridden at the 2011 Katahdin Area Winterfest in Millinocket celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first Sno-Traveler test ride through the Allagash wilderness

On January 24, 1963, a B-52 plane tragically crashed on Elephant Mountain near Greenville, Maine (in the Moosehead Lake region), instantly alerting people to the usefulness of snowmobiles.[24] The pilot and navigator managed to survive, but seven U.S. Air Force crewmembers were killed in the crash. Earl Campbell and his son, Sam, arrived early to the scene with two Sno-Travelers:

> We went in and we were mobile 'cause we had these old iron dogs. […] And they snowshoed the trail up that mountain (we couldn't climb that snow; it was six feet deep and sugar). They snowshoed the trail and then we could go up and down and up and down. And we went back and forth up there for two days ferrying people in and out of there. It was in a very isolated area and it would have taken them weeks to do what we did in just a couple days. That's when they realized, "Hey these things work, they're good for something. They

[24] Interestingly, the crash site and memorial, listed on the Maine Historic Archaeological Sites inventory and located on land owned by Plum Creek Timber Company, has become a common stop for snowmobilers exploring the region today.

> will do something." I don't know that totin' body bags down off a mountain was really what we wanted to do, but it had a purpose. It showed that maybe there was an economic value, a practical value to them. Before, […] you told most people you had a snow machine back then, they'd look and wonder where the snow came out, they thought it must *make* snow—they didn't know what it did. They didn't know what a snow machine was (Sam interview 2011).

Earl Campbell went from selling three machines the first year, to fifteen or twenty the next year, followed by several years when he never sold fewer than fifty, despite their mechanical troubles (he passed away in 1971 just as ridership was taking off). Meanwhile, Bombardier had started mass-producing smaller snowmobiles in 1959 that were lighter and more maneuverable at the behest of religious missionaries seeking an "economical and reliable means of winter travel" (Reich 1999, 484). He first named it the "Ski-Dog," since it would replace traditional sled dogs, but it later became renamed the "Ski-Doo." By the mid- to late-1960s, snowmobiles were commonly used in Maine's rural areas.

> We loved to hunt and fish—we always had a cabin up in Jackman area—and we got a snowmobile [in 1968] 'cause people had snowmobiles. But then a snowmobile just facilitated the traditional uses… ice fishing, we loved to ice fish and now we didn't have to drag a toboggan on snowshoes. You could go out ice fishing with family and just get your gear out there. We used snowmobiles to go beaver trapping in the winter, and this is what these guys are doing. This is not a sport. It facilitated our traditional uses. And in the fall if you had a foot of snow in the deer season, you could use a snowmobile to drag a deer out, which was a huge benefit to facilitate those traditional uses. So I grew up with them, keeping 'em going, knowing how to… getting stuck and everything. Then I went to work at Sugarloaf Mountain and we had snowmobiles on the mountain to work. And then I became a forester and we used snowmobiles to facilitate doing the forestry work (Bill interview 2011).

Although his invention and early sales, like others, were driven by utilitarian needs, Bombardier was the first to recognize the enormous potential of the recreational and winter sports market. The Ski-Doo was affordable, which made it economical for non-utilitarian users,

> Even [the] bigger Polarises were sold to trappers and hunters and things who were making money to pay for the vehicle. Until you could buy a $400 or $500 Ski-Doo, you didn't go play with it; you used it 'cause you had to (Richard interview 2011).
>
> They had a way to turn a dollar with it, to put it to work. It wasn't a toy to them. […] If you used [snowmobiles] every weekend in Maine and you had a really good winter, you could use it twelve weekends out of the whole year! The rest of the year it just sat. It was hard to justify. But when it became $500… Yeah, I can do that! (Sam interview 2011).

Bombardier eventually began advertising the machine's "thrilling glides" while continuing to target the original customer base seeking more practical uses (Reich 1999). Years later in 1997 Edgar Hetteen attended a Minnesota Snowmobile Advisory Committee meeting to defend the activity following a string of snowmobile deaths. He asserted, "I am bothered by calling it 'the sport of snowmobiling.' Sport, to me, is competitive. I race to be first, I race to win. It conjures up images of racing to the finish line. What I'm trying to encourage is to get beyond snowmobiling as a sport to the idea of it as transportation" (Hetteen and Lemke 1998, 281). He argued that the first machines were intended as utility machines, not speed sleds. But people then decided that they were also fun,

> It likely would be easier to devolve man than take the sport out of the heart of the snowmobiler. We had no plan to turn snowmobiling into a recreational

> society. Actually, we were just building it because we were too lazy to use snowshoes. But in the process of doing that, we found that it was fun. We said, "Hey, this is a great thing" (1998, 282).

By the late-1960s–early-1970s, snowmobiling manufacturing and sales were in the midst of a boom, with 650,000 snowmobiles in use across North America (Tuite 1969). Mass-produced recreational snowmobiles quickly cultivated a bloc of devoted enthusiasts, and an industry of manufacturers, distributors, and dealers sprung up in response to growing demand (Reich 1999). The four brands of snowmobiles available in 1964 ballooned to 127 brands by 1971, including the only Maine-manufactured sled, the Whippet (Richard interview 2011). In 1970, ninety-six percent of snowmobile owners surveyed used their sleds almost exclusively for "pleasure cruising" (Whittaker and Wentworth 1972). The same survey revealed that more than two-thirds of registered Maine snowmobile owners had purchased their first sled between 1967 and 1971, and while most owners had driven a snowmobile before buying, around twenty percent committed to this significant purchase without ever having driven one (Whittaker and Wentworth 1972). After all, sleds were relatively affordable and available during a time when manufacturing and natural-resource based industries that largely buttressed Maine's rural economy remained strong (see chapter 5). These secure and decent paying jobs enabled the machine's expansive penetration of north woods communities.

Sled Stories

For two brothers, Dave and George, raised on a dairy farm in Bangor, Maine, snowmobiling was the perfect form of recreation to fit their lifestyles and interests. For one, summers on the farm were too busy to permit extended periods of time spent away. While many people may think of summer months as the most logical vacation time, those working in many rural-based industries like agriculture simply cannot afford to take long summer breaks. Winter, on the other hand, is the off-season, and snowmobiling presented an opportunity to escape on short day trips or even longer multi-state treks. In addition, George drilled test borings in Maine's backcountry for companies including Great Northern Paper, which required the use of a snowmobile to access job sites. The machine's utility was clear and one year even enabled him to return home on Christmas morning following a big snowstorm that had closed all area roads. But such functionality aside, each brother purchased his first personal snowmobile in 1967 for purely recreational purposes. The cost was $735, which is just under $5,000 by today's standards. The following year, George traded in his initial purchase for a $1,000 Arctic Cat ($6,000 today, adjusted for inflation), a brand to which both have since remained faithful. They bought these first machines together with a group of friends, which was the case with every snowmobiler with whom I spoke—the decision to get a snowmobile was a communal act; it was envisioned as something to do *with other people*.

Figure 11. George on his 1969 Arctic Cat

When asked what compelled him start this new activity, Al, a retiree who began snowmobiling in the early 1960s, responded, "Oh, just a bunch of guys here in town, we just all bought snowmobiles and started riding" (2011 interview). George had a similar story,

> We knew a lot of people [south of Bangor who] had snowmobiles, and so we're the only few that got snowmobiles and we started out as a group. They started some of the [snowmobile] clubs right around then [in 1968–69], but we didn't know too much about it. We used to get together and get on the snowmobile and go up to Pushaw Lake (it's about five miles away) and we'd come back, and it's cold and everything else—*rumpty, rump*, trails are rough—so we'd come in here and get all warmed up and talk about our big trip up to Pushaw [*laughs*] (2010)!

Thus, in addition to serving utilitarian purposes, the new machines brought people together, encouraging them to collectively enjoy the outdoors and tightening the social fabric of communities that were previously more isolated during the long

winter months. Besides connecting people and communities by facilitating a physical linkage between one another across vast, sometimes harsh landscapes, recreational snowmobiling began as and remains a social activity. For safety reasons, it is less common for riders to venture out alone in the event of a breakdown or other accident, particularly in the early days when machines regularly suffered mechanical difficulties mid-ride. It was also a family activity, with wives often starting out riding on the back of their husbands' sleds and many eventually getting their own machine to drive.[25] Children were also squeezed onto the seats and group trips were taken through the woods.

> When we started out, [my wife] used to ride with me most of the time. I had a long seat. Then a few years later she bought her own and we snowmobiled together quite a few years until she got to a point when she couldn't do it anymore because her shoulder was so bad. […] The kids would go with us when they were three years old. We'd dress them up real warm, take them on a day trip somewhere (Dave interview 2011).

> When we first started riding we didn't have much money and everything, you know, and me and my wife used to ride on the same machine, and then later in years she got her own machine and she rode (George interview 2010).

> George's wife, Joan, chimed in,

> It was fun going to these places like [these camps]. Sometimes we'd have a meal there. It was fun! See that's a group of us [pointing to a photo]: George, my sister-and-law, and his brother… a whole bunch of us. Us girls were there with them on that trip (2010)!

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[25] This was the case with all of the older snowmobilers (approximate ages 65–78) I interviewed. The men decided to purchase machines with a group of friends, and their wives would then join them.

Photo courtesy of Northeast Historic Film

Figure 12. A movie still from a 1970 promotional film about snowmobiling in Maine, depicting Maine Governor Kenneth Curtis with his wife and two daughters (produced by the Maine Department of Economic Development)

Forty years later, Dave was excitedly sharing with me his next day plans to go riding with his son to visit his daughter,

> I'm going to meet up with my son from Winterport and go up to East Corinth, and from there we're gonna ride, I don't know, just wherever. I'm gonna meet my son in Herman and go up to East Corinth and meet my daughter there. [Snowmobiling] keeps the family together. Even today… like tomorrow when I meet up with my son and we go together (2011).

Many Maine families had, and still have, camps or cabins on land they inexpensively leased from paper companies and other large landowners. These rustic camps are commonly found in the middle of the woods, inaccessible by car in the winter. Several interview subjects reminisced about weekend trips to camp via snowmobile as children with their family or groups of family friends,

> Getting outdoors, doing outdoor activities, are completely traditional. It's a long winter. […] I probably have pictures somewhere when I was a child and preteen—11, 12, 13, 14 years old—very fond memories. [The local rod and gun club would] have a winter outing and all the families would go. And somebody had this cabin in the woods, a good sized hunting camp or something in the woods, and we had this fantastic cookout. And there were kids I went to school with; the parents drank hot toddies or whatever and us kids had our hot chocolate and had our social event, and it was really… well, I remember it forty years later—it's a treasured memory. […] It does get families together (Bill interview 2011).

Beyond one's immediate family, snowmobiles were integrated into community gatherings reminiscent of pre-snowmobile social activities enjoyed by north woods residents, such as winter cookouts on frozen lakes, which were mentioned by Louise Dickinson Rich in her 1942 book. Even today, Al described how, "We'll take a ride sometimes out to a pond and we'll build a big bonfire and cook hotdogs on a stick. That type of thing" (Al interview 2011). Snowmobiles also helped create new connections among people meeting for the first time along a trail or at a restaurant or motel stop, creating extended families of sledders across town, county, state, and even national borders. When asked the things they love most about snowmobiling, every interview subject shared stories about people they had met and gotten to know through the activity.

> I just love to get out and go. And of course we meet a lot of people. I just enjoy the people we meet. We get talking to people and their interests. We meet people on long trips. […] A lot of time these day trips we'd plan to go to some restaurant in the area and enjoy some meal [sic], meet some people (Dave interview 2011).

> It's an interesting culture. You go, and at the end of the day, everyone's down at the bar and you'll see the mixtures of people, whether it's having a three-

> year old who's sittin' right in front of you on a "two-up" or they have their mini one with them. And then, you know the guys who are up with their buddies just ice fishing, or the people that came from Lewiston and found trails that came all the way up to Moosehead and they're on their way to Millinocket. It's this tight camaraderie (Sarah interview 2010).

Figure 13. Pre-ride gathering, 1989

In addition to planned or unplanned post-ride get togethers and making new acquaintances along the trail, meetings sponsored by the Antique Snowmobile Club of America and the International Snowmobile Congress provide organized venues for dedicated snowmobilers from around the world to interact, talk shop, and swap ideas.

> All the state and all the associations in the snowbelt, all the way across Canada, all the way across the United States—we'd meet once a year, you know we'd meet up here in Canada, Vermont, Winnipeg, or up in British Columbia, down in Wyoming—wherever they have snow. And we'd get together—you'd be surprised how many got together. And they'd talk about trails, funding, machinery, and safety, and all kinds of things (George interview 2010).

> We'd go to meetings, and we had vests… and it was fun, it was fun! We'd exchange pins (Joan interview 2010).

> See there's South Dakota [finding pin in his collection], and all the associations… Nova Scotia, Quebec… We used to get all the Maine pins, and we'd go to them Congresses there and you'd see somebody from Vancouver or something like that, ya know, and you'd swap a pin with them. And oh we used to love to do that. Everybody did. And that way you had vests that had so many pins on them, they'd weigh a ton (George interview 2010).

Figure 14. George, Joan, and friends at an International Snowmobile Congress donning vests laden with pins, 1988

Yet, while snowmobiles may have brought friends and family together and helped forge and strengthen connections among people, it was and is the simple, unmediated freedom to escape and explore that seems to define many snowmobilers' experiences. In fact, the word "freedom" was uttered in nearly every interview with sledders when asked what got them started or what they enjoyed most about the activity. The machine provided unparalleled access to the once foreboding and restrictive winter landscape, unlocking large swaths of land for wide-ranging exploration, and ultimately transforming people's relationships with winter.

> [Snowmobiling] opened up new country that you couldn't see any other way. Unless you were affluent enough to have an airplane on skis, you couldn't get back in that woods. And now with a $500 purchase, a snowmobile and a little clothing, you could visit those places which were open to you only in the summer. And in fact there were places you could go in the winter with a snowmobile that the average person really can't get to in the summer. So it opened up whole new boundaries for people that wanted to see the outdoors (Sam interview 2011).

Astride a sled, the snow became a means of long distance travel and discovery of new places. One Maine sledder described, "Last weekend we rode from North Anson to Coburn Gore—it's incredible. You get to see places you just couldn't get to otherwise—snowmobiles are a wonderful way to access it" (Sherwood 2005). His friend concurred, "You can drive past these beautiful places in your car all summer and not even know they're there. But in the winter, on snowmobiles, we can get out and experience it. There's nothing like it" (Sherwood 2005).

This elemental sense of adventure and exhilaration permeated every interview. When asked about how the snowmobile changed his outlook on winter, Richard, another son of Earl Campbell, replied,

> I think the biggest part was […] just plain being able to get out and do something in the middle of the winter or go someplace—fishing—where you obviously didn't want to go skiing or snowshoe that far… Comes the weekend, you had something to do. Even if you had to have a pocket full of spark plugs. We used to go from here to Nahmakanta Lake in a day (2011).

His brother Sam added,

> I think there was a freedom associated with it. Exhilaration. Even at fifteen miles an hour, it was so far ahead of a pair of snowshoes.[…] There's really nothing that you can purchase with your checkbook that will give you the

> exhilaration that a snowmobile gives you. The thrill of speed, sitting that close to the snow and the wind in your face, the sounds. The sound of the sled. It's an exhilaration; it's an excitement (2011).

Susie Scholwin, who launched *Sno Goer*, the first magazine devoted to snowmobiling, testified at a 1971 Senate Parks and Recreation Subcommittee hearing on the effects of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) on public lands that, "[Before snowmobiles] winters were something just 'to be lived through.' Nights were long and lonely. As were the weekends as a whole. Ice fishing on the lake was good, but the best spot was over a mile away…" Her family bought a snowmobile in 1964, which is when

> winter took on a different tone… [It] was not the gloomy thing it had been—but each day was an adventure of its own… The little snowmobile had become a funmobile—one that made winter something to look forward to! Everyone in the area looked forward to weekends with their picnics, trail-riding, exploring, scavenger hunts, and social gatherings (Reich 1999, 493).

Looking back on his early days of riding, Dave concurred,

> It makes winter seem so short! Before [snowmobiling], you know, you'd just sit in the house and wait for winter to be over with! Now you can't wait for the first snowfall (2011).

A middle-aged couple from Maine explained to a New York Times reporter in 1972 that "Before we had snowmobiles we used to just die each winter. Sometimes we'd go to Florida. Usually we did nothing. Now we go out and ride together every weekend. It's a whole new way of life" (from Rice 1972, quoted in Reich 1999, 496). Correspondingly, a 1970 University of Maine study asked survey respondents to

indicate changes in other leisure activities since they had started snowmobiling, and found that wintertime television watching had decreased by sixty-four percent (Whittaker and Wentworth 1972).

This sense of adventure is epitomized by the long rides, hundreds and even thousands of miles, many snowmobilers enjoy taking. Although most of Dave and George's rides were fairly local, to nearby lakes and restaurant stops, they have also planned numerous long rides through the years to Canada and were even part of an eight person group that rode 2,100 miles to Eagle River, Wisconsin in eighteen days. While the 14-mile round trip outing around Pushaw Lake seemed like a big deal when they began riding in 1967, the development of better machines and gear like insulated, full body snowmobile suits and helmets enabled trips to significantly grow in length to 150 or 160 miles in one day. By the early 1980s, they were attempting 2,000-mile rides to Ontario and Sault Ste. Marie. More than twenty years later, George still vividly recalled the details of the Wisconsin adventure. The group averaged 120 miles per day navigating groomed trails and "ditch riding" 425 miles on no trails, ferrying across the St. Lawrence River and a shipping channel to Michigan, trailering across the Ottawa River, and crossing numerous frozen lakes by sledding island to island, including the windy, snow-swept Lake Huron. They met up with people along the way—friendships formed years earlier on Maine's trails—who helped guide them across rivers or through unmarked territory. Although George stopped snowmobiling in 2008 due to arthritis in his shoulders, Dave, who is in his

seventies, still embarks on one big trip each season, usually taking a week or so to cover anywhere from 1,550 to 1,800 miles.

Figure 15. George and his Maine–Wisconsin ride group

As the previous chapter revealed, although one is traversing miles of snow-covered earth riding on the back of a loud, gas-powered machine, many snowmobilers express not so much a feeling of conquering or overcoming the landscape as connecting with the environment. In the same breath as sensations of freedom are expressed, sledders reminisce about their favorite lake destinations and mountain views, or the wildlife they see and carefully track in trail logs,

> [Snowmobiling] is freedom, and when you snowmobile on top of some of these mountains, the view is just phenomenal, the wildlife, you know. We took a 75-mile ride about three weeks ago down into Moxie and the Forks. We saw twenty-something deer that day. It's just great (Al interview 2011).

Sarah, a relative newcomer to the activity who rented snowmobiles for several years before buying her own with her partner three years ago, explained what hooked her,

> I think it was just the thrill of it. I think it was just the freedom of it. […] Just to spend the entire day and cover 100 miles in eight hours and stop and, you know, you stop in the middle of the woods and there's no road to it, but there's a building that has lunch for you and gas—and just deer *everywhere*—and you can't get there by car. It's just kind of an amazing process. I just like being outside. It's a way to see the country … in a different time of year when you can't do it by car, you can't really do it… you can cross-country ski but that'd be a long way out. […] And I think it's just the knowledge that you can turn that key off and just be in the middle of nowhere (interview 2010).

There is broad consensus that sledding has "improved the quality of winter life for tens of thousands of individuals and families [in Maine], dispelling cabin fever and enabling them to enjoy the outdoors year-round" (Vail 2002, 131). Remarking on the snowmobile's meteoric rise in popularity, one observer at the time declared that "Except for those places where no one ever lives or goes, the great white silence is broken forever" (Edwin Hall quoted in Reich 1999, 485). This shattering of peaceful northern winters and the sacred space of nature lies at the crux of much resistance to the machines. However, for many residents of winter communities, the "great white silence" was often stifling, and snowmobiles represented a welcome means of liberation.

The Riding Community

As one might expect, in the early days snowmobiling was a fairly unorganized and disjointed activity; snowmobilers usually got together with friends or family and rode in fairly close proximity to home—"right out the back door" in the case of many. However even then, before hundred-mile trips were pieced together across a network of trails, sledders relied upon the goodwill of private landowners (at the time, predominantly forest products and logging companies) to allow the machines on their property. During snowmobiling's rapid growth and widespread popularity in the mid- to late-1960s, snowmobilers gained a reputation for lawlessness and recklessness (Vail 2002). Landowners grew increasingly frustrated with "rogue" sledders veering off trails, drunk riding and vandalism, and dangerous riding on logging roads that were also sometimes in use by trucks (Vail 2002). These negative behaviors threatened the longstanding tradition in Maine of the public's use of private land (explored in detail in the next chapter), and concerned riders began forming local snowmobile clubs largely in response. The prevalent creation of and active participation in local snowmobiling clubs was a natural outgrowth of enthusiastic and dedicated groups of riders across the state. Clubs worked to turn around the bad reputation by reaching out to the general public as well as landowners to gain permission to use their roads and fields. The Maine Snowmobile Association (MSA) was subsequently founded in 1968 to help coordinate club activities, build good relations with landowners, and provide a voice for snowmobilers in the legislature and other statewide forums. And

thus began the snowmobile clubs' function as community-based institutions that facilitate the regulated shared use of the land and careful management by users, ensuring the continued access to private lands upon which snowmobiling in Maine critically depended.

In addition to working to improve their public relations, the clubs also took the first steps to create a more organized, better maintained, and connected trail system. Old logging tote roads were cleared and new trails were cut to establish linkages, marking the beginning of a trail system (Presque Isle Snowmobile Club 2009). Neighboring clubs reached out to each other and often worked together to map trails, create new trails, and link routes.

> I've seen it over thirty years, it's gone from the good ol' boys, good old fun thing in the backyard to, "Oh let's connect these together so we can ride to the next town." And then, "Oh geez, why don't we fix this up so we can go from Kittery to Fort Kent if somebody is daring enough and got [sic] the time" (Tom interview 2011).

In the 1980s the Interconnected Trail System (ITS) was created, which transformed the state's makeshift, locally-constructed and maintained snowmobile trail system into a network of well-groomed, wider, road-like trails that facilitated long distance riding across the state and into neighboring states and Canada. The establishment of the ITS represented a joint effort between the MSA and the Maine Division of Parks and Public Lands, which assumed management responsibilities for the ITS. Meanwhile, these new trails with highway-like names, such as ITS 82 and

ITS 87, were linked up with the regional and local trail systems that continued to be managed by the clubs.

Maintaining the trails and making them safe and comfortable for snowmobilers proved to be a big challenge early on. Al explained, "Back in the sixties when I first started snowmobiling, we didn't have any trails. What we were doing was riding the old logging roads that weren't plowed and we were dragging them with bedsprings" (2011). It didn't take too many trips on bumpy "rumpty rump" trails following abandoned railroad beds and unplowed roads to convince snowmobilers of the value of creating smooth, groomed trails. Much like the early snowmobile prototypes, riders improvised various grooming devices and crafted handmade "drags," such as old bedspring mattresses, tires, or wood contraptions pulled behind a snowmobile.

Photo courtesy of Scott Ramsay

Figure 16. A wooden drag on a Millinocket trail, 1984

Individuals generally took on personal responsibility for grooming trails that they liked riding. George began riding his machine eleven miles round trip every few nights to drag a trail he and his friends frequently used. This willingness to spend a few hours to ride trails at night[26] following a long day at work illustrates the volunteerism and civic spirit that came to define one's involvement in snowmobile clubs. Riders and club members tend to agree with the generalization that, "Snowmobilers as a rule are very generous people" (Sherwood 2005). George's affinity for using his hands and altruistic spirit initiated his involvement in the local club in the 1970s, several years after buying his first sled and riding with friends and family on area trails. He explained,

> I didn't join right away. But [the Greater Bangor Area Snowmobile Club] had to make a bridge up in the old railroad bed and they brought up the big telephone poles and all that stuff, and we helped build it, and we hauled it up with our tractor and stuff. And that's when I got started going with the snowmobile club (2010).

The clubs both emerged from and created community, not only bringing people together locally as members of their town's club, but fostering connections across the state through regular meetings, joint efforts to work on an issue like a closed trail or bridge in need of repair, and updates via *The Maine Snowmobiler*, the MSA's official newsletter delivered monthly to members, which devotes several pages

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[26] During the night, there are fewer riders on the trails to interfere with grooming. This, combined with colder temperatures, allows the newly smoothed trails to freeze and "set" for the next day's riding.

of each issue to news submitted by clubs including upcoming events such as suppers and fundraisers. Thumbing through a stack of old issues of the *Snowmobiler*, George found an article mentioning an old friend of his, a fellow rider on the trip to Wisconsin. He recalls, "He's the one got me going [to the club meetings]. You come to the meeting, you know you're welcomed in, you talk with everyone, you don't feel like you was lost" (2010). Richard spoke of his club's (the Northern Timber Cruisers) establishment and membership numbers with pride, joking about inter-club competition for attracting the most members and earning a reputation for the having state's best trails,

> When you get one club started and you get other clubs started, they're gonna compete against each other for memberships, for money drives, for charities […]. This club here had somewhere around, at its peak [in the mid-1990s] was something like 440 families—not members—*families*. And they did a lot of good. [The club] brings people together for suppers; I mean this place we *built* over suppers. And it brings people together for club rides, family rides, and the connections that we have [span the state…]. People come here from out of town to do family rides. There's a lot of camaraderie among individuals that work in the club, the trail groomers… Competition is something that's human nature and usually it builds a strong relationship among people and clubs. Yes, I think they've created a lot of camaraderie across this great state. I've gone to MSA meetings and it's a pretty tight bunch of people (2011).

It also wasn't unusual for snowmobilers to become members of multiple clubs to support others' efforts. George and Dave joined a club in Canada where they enjoyed riding every year, and George also paid membership dues to a club east of Baxter State Park and helped them build a bridge across the East Branch of the Penobscot River, "I joined some clubs way off. I joined that club way up there

because they didn't have many members and they're way out in the middle of nowhere, and [I tried] to help them. I joined two or three clubs up there" (2010).

> Membership in [the Northern Timber Cruisers], as I would expect in any club across New England, isn't just limited to this town. There are paying club members here, *active* club members, from all over New England and beyond that come here and snowmobile and like the trails, so they pay a membership. And then you have those funds available to support your club and grow it (Sam interview 2011).

Another Maine rider explained, "Every weekend there's something going on—pig roasts, pancake breakfasts, craft fairs. If we can stop somewhere and support the community, and local clubs, we will" (Sherwood 2005). Moreover, the sense of community extends beyond snowmobilers; it is not uncommon for non-motorized recreationists who utilize the trails to join a club in support of their efforts. This is the case with Greg who, in addition to doing conservation work in the north woods, is an avid cross-country skier:

> Most winters I join my local snowmobile club just because I go and ski on the groomed trails, and I write the $30 check every year and that keeps their groomers going, and signs up, and landowner permission and everything like that. I take advantage of the fact that there's this incredible trail system right in my hometown (Greg interview 2011).

On top of membership dues, clubs were formed and sustained using proceeds from a creative hodgepodge of events, from monthly suppers and raffles that attracted large crowds, to dances and festivals, from hot dog sales at local canoe races, to "egg ride" fundraisers, which recruited well-known people to race along bumpy trails wearing a suit full of eggs. In his history of snowmobiling, Reich noted that these

activities and group outings organized by locally-based clubs created a subculture that "espoused independence, egalitarianism, camaraderie, and a sense of exploration" (1999, 496).

In addition to generating funds to support club activities, clubs and members have used snowmobiling as a means of raising money to donate to charities and local causes, extending their community roots even deeper. For example, George and Dave's Wisconsin ride was used to raise money for the Pine Tree Society for Crippled Children. They secured sponsors before the trip, and upon returning George visited twenty-two other clubs, plus churches and Shriners chapters, soliciting donations to the Society. When their local club disbanded, all the club's savings were also donated. Dave believes that this intertwining of community and club fortifies both, "It really does. It really helps—a community can really get behind us, and we work with the community" (2011).

For nearly fifty years, small armies of volunteers throughout the state have worked to maintain and promote the trails on their own time. MSA executive director Bob Meyers makes sure to emphasize how "the infrastructure of the snowmobile industry is built on the backs of its volunteers" (Sherwood 2005). Much of the club members' time goes toward communicating with landowners to gain permission to use their land, discuss the need to relocate trails, and so forth. Most of the clubs' money is spent on snowmobile trail maintenance, which entails regular grooming, bridge building, signing, and trail clearing. One club member, Kevin Ward, explained,

"Most people don't realize this whole thing is a volunteer game. I work full-time at the paper mill. I gave up hunting season this year. All my days off I spent maintaining trail, and now grooming" (Sherwood 2005).

By the 1980s, George was serving a three-year term as president of his club, which involved everything from personally maintaining trails (grooming in the winter, trimming back trees in the springtime, building bridges over rough or muddy spots, and updating signage) to attending monthly MSA meetings. He kept in regular touch with all of his area's landowners and organized meetings with other clubs to discuss strategies for dealing with ATVs on the trails, an emerging issue at the time. He also spent five years on the MSA's Executive Board as a member of the Trails Committee. Once a year, every fall, the MSA organized big meetings with the landowners to prepare for the season ahead,

> We'd get together with paper companies where they were doing all their operations, and they'd tell us, "Well we're gonna be changing our operation over here, we're gonna be cuttin' here, we're gonna be using these roads, so you can use this trail over here and these roads." They'd tell us where we could go, and we can't go over here anymore but you can go over this way. And that really worked out good. […] They didn't want to be going down the road with [logging] trucks and here come snowmobilers, you know? This way we took down our old signs, put up the new signs. […] We always got along (2010).

This may sound like a tedious annual ritual, but George described it as a great working relationship and remarked on the landowners' openness to snowmobilers' use of their land. Meanwhile, long volunteer hours continued once the season began,

> I had my trail coordinators and stuff, we used to go out and inspect the trails and send a report into the state about the safety and how they clean the trails. […] We worked with the state and everything else 'cause they give us money, you know? They fund all these trails and we had to write a report every year, how many miles of trails you got and everything else (George interview 2010).

George wasn't the only snowmobiler I interviewed who has devoted numerous hours of his time to supporting and strengthening snowmobiling in his town and throughout Maine. Around the same time that George's involvement in club and MSA activities was at its peak, Al was serving a two year elected term as president of the MSA, spanning the 1982–'83, 1983–'84 seasons.

> Back then it was very time consuming and very expensive—I had to pay most of my own expenses, you know traveling. I traveled all over the state speaking to different clubs and what not, so it was a trying two years. I had to run the monthly meetings. There's over 300 snowmobile clubs in the state of Maine, and there's always a club that wanted the president there for something, you know? (interview 2011)

At the time, clubs were mainly seeking the president's assistance around negotiations with area landowners, particularly because his tenure preceded a significant change in state policy and law regarding landowner liability in 1995.[27] He also represented snowmobile interests in meetings with other groups, such as local rotary or Kiwanis clubs. In his retirement Al still snowmobiles regularly and is active in his club, the Moosehead Riders. This was the case with all of the older

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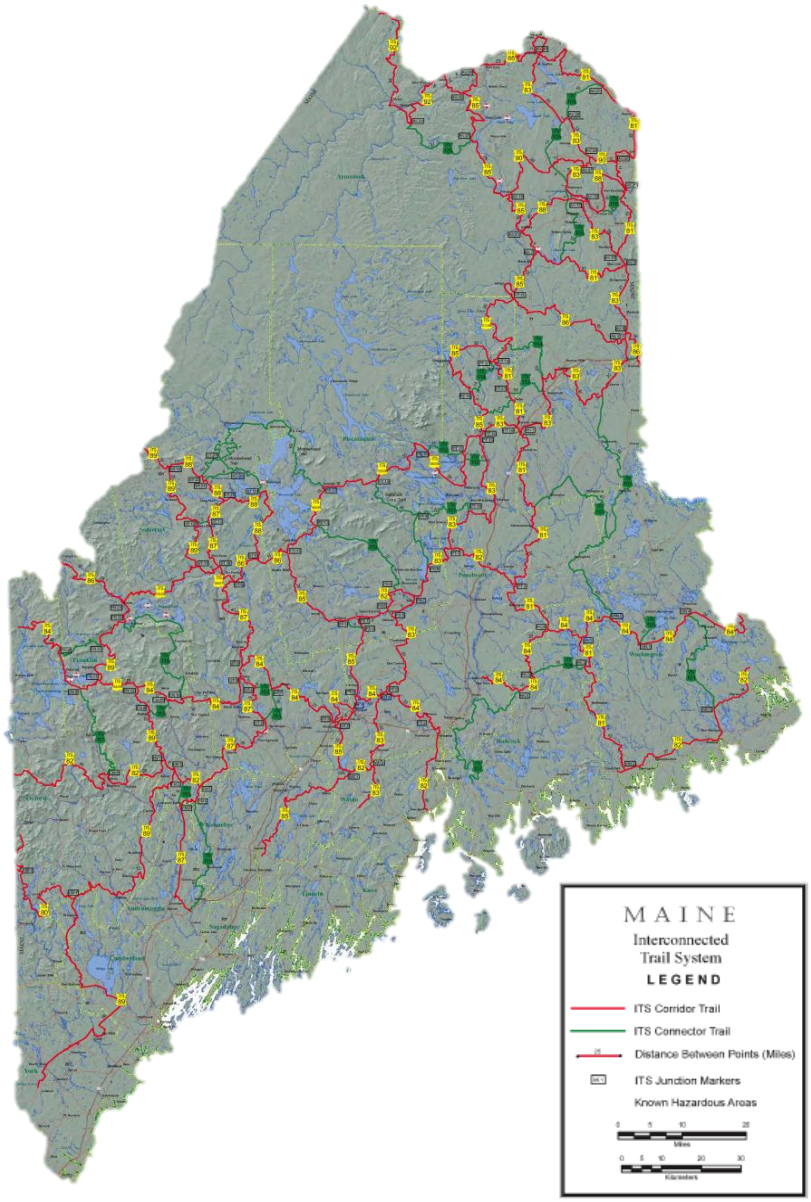
[27] While Al was president, landowners often restricted access to snowmobilers because they were worried about being held liable if an accident or injury occurred on their property. But the Division of Parks and Public Land worked to change the law (Title 14, section 159-A, *Limited liability for recreational or harvesting activities*) to hold the state liable for any snowmobile and other recreational or timber harvest accidents on public and private lands.

snowmobilers I interviewed, who began sledding in the 1960s and participated in the development of their local clubs through the years, with the lone exception of George whose health problems prevent him from riding. Now in his mid-seventies, Dave characterizes himself as "semi-active;" he remains connected to his local club and sits on the MSA's Board of Directors, which requires his attendance at monthly meetings to work primarily on various legislative efforts. Sam and Richard each spend considerable time snowmobiling every winter, on both their new and antique sleds, and do quite a bit of traveling throughout New England to various antique snowmobile shows and gatherings.

The product of these and countless others' dedicated efforts is an extensive snowmobile club membership base and continuous, well-marked and maintained trail network considered by many to be the best in the nation. Most clubs are extremely well-organized with elected officers, committees, and even websites and self-published newsletters and newspapers. Sportsmen's organizations (e.g., hunting, fishing, and ATV clubs) hold considerable political clout in Maine, and the MSA is by far the state's largest with approximately 32,000 individual members, 2,200 business members, and close to 300 affiliated local clubs. More than 14,000 miles of trails, including the nearly 3,100-mile ITS, crisscross millions of acres of land, much like a

road system. In fact, this exceeds by a considerable margin the 8,617 miles of highways and major roads in the state (Maine Department of Transportation 2013).[28]



Source: Maine Snowmobile Association and the Division of Parks and Public Lands

Figure 17. Maine's Interconnected Trail System, 2010

[28] "Major roads" include interstate, intrastate, and intracounty roads. There are an additional 13,619 miles of strictly local roads in the state.

And as snowmobiling has evolved and grown, so too as an entire infrastructure of not only trails, but supporting local businesses including snowmobile sales and rental companies, gas stations, various types of lodging and accommodations, and restaurants along the trails, creating even deeper community roots. During the long winter months that were once the dreariest most isolating time of the year, one can hop on a snowmobile and spend days, even weeks, riding uninterrupted trails throughout the state and beyond, connecting with nature as well as an enthusiastic community of fellow riders.

It is not surprising that snowmobilers in Maine are a committed group, dedicated to preserving this activity that has become an essential part of their lives and livelihoods. At the same time, they seem to hold fast to the personal and shared histories upon which the present has been built. In 1985, Richard and his brothers assisted the efforts of an old friend from Millinocket to honor the early sledders with a reunion and reenactment of the testing expeditions embarked on by Earl Campbell and folks from Polaris that began in 1961. The trip was covered by *Snowmobile Magazine*,

> Many years have passed since the historic first expedition through the Katahdin Region to Eagle Lake in 1961, but the memories of those adventuring days live on the hearts of those who were there and those who knew the tough minded snowmobiling pioneers who made the runs that opened winter for all of us to follow. In February, the memory was relived when several of the original riders and even one of the original machines from the dawn of snowmobiling in Maine gathered in Millinocket to create the experience of that first daring Allagash snowmobile run (Ramstead 1985).

Since that first "Allagash '85, E.B. Campbell Memorial Expedition" was organized, Richard has planned numerous more memorial runs, which are now integrated with the Katahdin area's annual Winterfest. A 1987 ride served as the official opening of the Northern Timber Cruisers Antique Snowmobile Museum, the second in the country and home to one of the best collections of fully restored and operational antique snow machines. Sam explains that this museum has "always claimed its heritage to be the early sleds… all the little 'put-puts' from the beginning" (2011). Nearly every year now, snowmobilers congregate in Millinocket, riding painstakingly restored antique sleds, to remember and honor the past by retracing the tracks (the full 93 miles) of those before them,

> To describe these trips it would be very hard. Every trip is special. You do live the past. The '99 trip was an honor having two of the founding fathers of snowmobiling [Edgar Hetteen and David Johnson] with us. Its [sic] even more than that. These machines rattle along at the great pace of eight or nine miles per hour. Its [sic] nostalgic. Every time I ride today's snowmobile its [sic] fun. Every time we head out on the antiques its [sic] an adventure. […] It stirred a little something in all of us. They say you can't go back in time, but we did (Campbell no date b).

Recent changes in land ownership and regional economies may be threatening to reroute the future of sledding in Maine's north woods, but the past remains a vivid and vital source of pride and enjoyment, as well as a reminder of all that's on the line.

Conclusion

Snowmobiling clearly holds deep significance for tens of thousands of north woods residents, many of whom have been riding through Maine's forest for more

than half a century. What began as an essential form of transportation and tool for work in the winter hinterlands evolved into a popular form of recreation that brought people together to explore the snowscape and fostered familial and community connections. But because snowmobilers were riding almost entirely on privately-owned land, it also created a need for building trustful and close working relationships with the landowners, as well as developing intricate maintenance regimes through a network of snowmobile clubs, the statewide Maine Snowmobile Association, landowners, and the state. However, the creation and strengthening of connections within and among rural communities and landowners are not unrelated outgrowths of snowmobiling; in fact they are closely integrated, for snowmobiling played a significant role in formally organizing and coordinating the public's use of private land—a forest commons. And given that a primary feature of communities is the making and maintaining of their commons, the time and effort expended on managing the commons is considered an investment in the community since it reinforces social, political, and economic ties with other community members (Ratner and Rivera-Gutiérrez 2004, Gudeman and Rivera-Gutiérrez 2002). This makes evident how sudden shifts in land use in a place like the north woods, such as restrictions on snowmobiling, are often "major events that interrupt relationships to place [and can cause] significant unrest, or alter institutional and social-ecological practices that define community" (Hutchins and Stormer 2013, 25). The next chapter examines Maine's open land tradition and recent changes in land tenure that are threatening

the snowmobile commons, revealing how the machine's historical roots in and strong ties to Maine's rural landscapes and people sets the stage for and intensifies present-day conflicts over snowmobilers' access to the woods.

Chapter 4. Common Property, Private Land, and the "Public" Good

Introduction

Throughout nearly two centuries of private ownership and continual changes in landscapes and populations the north woods have remained open to the public and served as the region's economic and cultural underpinning. For most of the state's history, millions of acres were owned by a handful of large companies, which maintained the land as a private commons of working forests that sustained multiple human and non-human uses. However, fairly recent shifts in land tenure that have introduced new types of owners at a very large scale are appearing to weaken Maine's time-honored open land tradition. Massive land sales in the north, accompanied by subdivision, second-home construction, tourism resort development, and practices such as liquidation forestry, are posing challenges to the endurance of public access rights and the diverse environmental services—from timber to tourism, housing to habitat, recreation to sustenance—historically provided by the forest. With more than ninety percent of snowmobilers in Maine riding on private land, the snowmobile commons is in particularly serious danger (Rubin et al. 2001). After all, the closure of one trail can create a domino effect of lost access and severed connectivity, deeply affecting north woods communities and local economies. Unsurprisingly, some of the new conservation owners have expressed visions for the future of the forest and perceptions of equitable access that conflict with local values

and restrict some uses such as motorized vehicle travel. In addition, by dismantling some of the community-based institutional arrangements that govern common property regimes and associated land management practices, they have reduced north woods residents' involvement in maintaining the commons, thereby undermining declarations of conservation's democratic tradition.

The Private Commons

> The public has never clearly perceived the Maine Woods as private property. The phrase "our forest" is repeatedly heard in the rhetoric of hunters, canoeists, and snowmobilers as well as citizens concerned about broader values (Irland 1991, 74).
>
> Henry David Thoreau didn't get the landowners' permission before he tromped all around. […] We do not have a feudal tradition [in Maine], we have a tradition of public commons (Dan interview 2011).

The history of the north woods commons is long and complex, revealing multiple legal and cultural claims that sometimes conflict yet have proven to be amazingly resilient through the years. The hallmark of its complexity is the fact that the property used in common by the public is privately owned. This is what is meant by Maine's unique *open land tradition*, the customary right of the public to permissively access, use, and in some cases help manage private lands. Landowners in Maine may possess legal title to their property—they reap any economic profits derived from activities on the land, pay taxes on the land, they can sell it or hand it down to their heirs—yet the public uses much of Maine's private forestlands as though it were a common-pool resource (Acheson and Acheson 2010). It is generally

accepted that unless land is posted[29] people as claimants have a *right* to use it under the doctrine of implied access (they can hunt and trap wildlife, ride snowmobiles and ATVs, hike and snowshoe, and collect non-timber forest products and dead trees for firewood and other personal uses) (Acheson 2006). This customary right, however, is taken quite seriously and not easily relinquished given that generations of permissive access, coupled with landowner benevolence, has produced the sense that the land in many ways belongs to north woods residents living in and near the woods. Furthermore, these public access and use rights are facilitated by Maine law, encouraged by state policies and programs, and largely regulated and coordinated by the users themselves. And with nearly all of Maine's snowmobilers riding on private property other than their own, it becomes plainly evident how heavily snowmobilers rely on the goodwill of landowners to continue to abide by this tradition.

To fully comprehend the north woods commons, one must understand the meaning of property, and particularly common property. Property is not a simple relationship between an individual (owner) and thing (personal property), but rather an exceedingly complicated social institution that varies among cultures. And so, "to define property is thus to represent boundaries between people; equally, it is to articulate at least one set of conscious ecological boundaries between people and

[29] "Posting" is the most commonly used term referring to landowners notifying the public that trespassing (or the practice of certain activities) on the land is not legally permitted. Usually land is posted through the use of signs erected around the perimeter of the property.

things" (Cronon 1983, 58). Given that different individuals and groups can authorize different bundles of rights over the same object, property is more accurately understood as a fluid set of relationships among interested parties. In Maine, the forests are "used and claimed by different groups who have different bundles of rights" creating an "incredibly complicated matrix of claims" asserted by various categories of people and social units (Acheson and Acheson 2010, 553). Some of these rights are *de jure*, legally recognized and authorized by the state, others are *de facto*, yet both are frequently contested.

These characteristics of flexibility, complexity, and cultural variation likewise apply to common property regimes. Unlike open access regimes under which there is no property owner and no resource management systems, common property regimes are "institutional arrangements for the cooperative (shared, joint, collective) use, management, and sometimes ownership of natural resources" (McKean 2000, 27).[30] Thus the snowmobile commons is not the north woods, per se, but rather the governance regime that facilitates and dictates the use of the resource(s)—the forest, trails, wildlife, and so forth. Commons are therefore best understood as dynamic

[30] Scholarly work on common property regimes emerged in the early 1980s and has evolved considerably and expanded over the past few decades, producing an extensive body of work (Berge 2011). Much of this research was in direct response to Garrett Hardin's (1968) powerful "tragedy of the commons" theory, which avows the inherent unsustainability of common property, which as he describes it is actually more akin to an open access regime. Common property theorists have countered with descriptions of the possibilities of community, arguing in favor of self-organized and locally-based resource management regimes (Ostrom 1990, McCay and Acheson 1987).

social institutions or relationships that are in constant flux. Rather than a fixed, bounded piece of land shared by an essentialized and established community, common property regimes shift as uses and users change (Richards 2002, Macpherson 1978). While the community scale tends to be emphasized during investigations of commons, community institutions are only one of many levels; thus the governance of a commons requires a network of interactions at various levels and institutions that can link the local with regional, state, and other scales of social and political organization (Berkes 2008).

Arrangements of communal rights to resource access and use can consequently take complex and unexpected forms. For example, private and common property are often envisioned as opposites, with privatization usually heralded as the solution to common property problems. However, there is no unidirectional, inevitable progression for the replacement of common property by private property, and these two constructs are not necessarily mutually exclusive. McKean (2000) points out that separating the two is misleading for it fails to recognize the fuzziness of the boundaries between and the overlap that can exist. People also tend to confuse the publicness and privateness of goods, rights, and owners of rights, which often results in a conceptual grouping of all things public, all things private, and the goods associated with each (McKean 2000). The association of rights with the *owners* of those rights leads to the assumption that private entities hold exclusive, private rights and public entities hold public rights. This confusion is exemplified by Maine's north

woods where the public possesses differing rights of access to and use of most of the state's privately held forestland. Furthermore, Maine's forests produce private goods (e.g., timber), common-pool goods (e.g., fishing and hunting rights), toll goods (e.g., camp leases), and public goods (e.g., snowmobile trails) across a mix of private and public lands (Acheson and Acheson 2010). As a result, the diversity of private ownership types, the implications of economic ties between the land and north woods communities, and the wide variety of uses permitted and restricted on these lands have required elaborate networks of collaboration on land use decisions between user and owner, state and corporate interest, community and company, locality and state, conservation trust and industrial owner, and numerous other configurations. The enormity of the woods—nearly eighteen million acres—coupled with the diversity of interests engaging in a multitude of practices within the forest, guarantees complex land tenure configurations and management and use regimes.

Not surprisingly, the legacy of collective management and even joint ownership and shared use that has come to constitute the north woods commons has various entangled roots. For example, prior to the initiation of corporate control of the woods beginning in 1903, lumbermen operating in the vast northern forest recognized the practicality of pooling their resources to build dams, cooperatively managing the driving of logs downriver to improve navigation, and creating other vital shared infrastructure (Rolde 2001). And in the midst of large single-owner tracts of forestland remain patches of private individual ownership that date back to

colonial times. During the selling frenzy that saw huge chunks of land seized by industrial landowners following Maine's split from Massachusetts in the early 1800s, groups of individuals spread the risk associated with ownership by jointly purchasing townships as common, undivided areas (i.e., an individual may have owned fifteen percent of a township's every tree, road, and so forth) (Judd 1997). Marshes, forests, pastures, and other lands were owned by the town and managed for shared use by community members. However, residents typically used more than their own private holdings and town-owned lands for sustenance, regularly venturing into surrounding woods and unenclosed fields that were owned by others to meet their daily needs (Freyfogle 2003, Judd 1997). Starting around the turn of the century when families increasingly began to sell their holdings to corporate interests, each succeeding generation of heirs divided remaining ownerships into even smaller shares, creating an intricate tenure configuration that fostered a tradition of collective management by settler communities (North Maine Woods no date b). Across this forested landscape that is ninety-five percent privately owned, approximately 132,000 individuals own less than ten acres of forestland, while another 57,000 own between ten and forty-nine acres (Jin and Sader 2006, Maine Forest Service 2005). Thus the current ownership of much of the state's forestland actually consists of an extremely diverse combination of private individual, corporate industrial, family industrial, and public ownership and interests.

A history of property ownership and the social regimes that have dictated human uses of the forest's resources must consider the Native communities that inhabited Maine's woods for thousands of years before the arrival of European settlers. In fact, there are clear parallels between Native American values and philosophies and the open land traditions upheld to this day in Maine's forests. Historically, Native populations in New England expressed territorial rights over their villages, which were not rights of individual ownership but rather rights of sovereignty that defined a village's political or ecological territory (Cronon 1983, 60). Cronon (1983) explained that when it came to land, there were no permanently set boundaries around fields or village territories because these spaces and structures were abandoned and moved every few months. Instead, families or different groups of people possessed *usufruct* rights to their working fields and villages (i.e., their *use* of the land), which did not permit the exclusion of other community members. Definitions of land tenure for *un*improved land (i.e., land in its "natural" state), such as clam banks, fishing ponds, or hunting grounds, were even more flexible and also characterized by usufruct rights, with different groups possessing diverse claims on the same tract of land, which allowed different patterns of use. Even though the land might lie within a single village's territory, all community members were recognized as having a mutual right to use a particular site for a specific purpose.

This view of property and land is vastly different than the English government and settlers' conception of property, and confusion and conflict understandably

ensued when the colonists tried to purchase land from the Indians beginning in the seventeenth century. The English assumed that with their purchase of land from the Wabanakis in northern New England including most of Maine, they had obtained exclusive possession and the Wabanaki people had relinquished their claims to occupy or use the land in any way (Belmessous 2012). By contrast, the Wabanakis had agreed to *shared* use with the English, maintaining that both groups could hunt and fish and farm the same lands. A 1636 deed (one of the earliest Indian deeds in American history) marking a land purchase between an English fur trader and an Agawam village in central Massachusetts makes this exchange of usufruct rights clear, as the village members who signed the deed decreed,

> they shal have and enjoy all that cottinackeesh [planted ground], or ground that is now planted; And have liberty to take Fish and Deer, ground nutes, walnuts akornes and sasachiminesh or a kind of pease (Cronon 1983, 67).

Thus, for the Indians, the sale applied to very specific uses of the land and ultimately represented a particular social relationship entered into by both parties. For in the Wabanakis' view, "land was a sacred, social world. It had a life in which one could participate, but one could not transfer exclusive title to it" (Scully 1995, 3). Under Indian principles of land tenure, the north woods (and other New England lands) were common property, wherein various users occupied and/or used the land jointly. Interestingly, the similarities between this indigenous common property system and Maine's present-day open land tradition were even acknowledged by

Roxanne Quimby's spokesperson, who has some Native American ancestry and stumbled upon such connections mid-thought,

> You can't really generalize because there are many different [Indian] tribes, but the concept of land use and land ownership… it's interesting that it almost seems to be a little analogous to the concept of traditional land use that Mainers have—that [Mainers] did have the use of this land even though they didn't own it. They had these relatively non-consumptive uses—hunting, fishing, snowmobiling—[or] use of the vast land without actually having title to it. I never really thought about any relationship between that and Native Americans' concept of land use where you can go hunt deer there and take game on property, that it's not something that somebody owns (Bill interview 2011).

Despite the stark differences between Native American and English settlers' ownership claims (and the succeeding unjust seizure of Indian lands and exclusion of Indian people), Maine's present-day open land tradition has a centuries-old Anglo origin that actually coincides with the start of settlers' acquisition of Indian lands (Acheson and Acheson 2010, Acheson 2006). The public's right to use private land and the rootedness of this tradition in state law and policy can be traced back to early colonial times when it was first encoded in the "Great Pond Law," which was derived from a Massachusetts law of 1641 and accepted as part of Maine common law following its separation from Massachusetts to become a state in 1820 (Acheson 2006). This Colonial Ordinance assured free and equal foot access, even across and on private property, to tidelands as well as ponds greater than ten acres in size for the purposes of subsistence fishing, fowling (hunting waterbirds), navigation, and cutting ice, as well as swimming. Great Pond ordinances, which existed throughout colonial New

England, were founded upon the notion that certain natural areas "are so particularly the gifts of nature's bounty that they ought to be reserved for the whole of the populace" (Sax 1969, 484) (which was interestingly, the same principle that guided the creation of natural parks for the benefit of the American citizenry).[31]

By the turn of the twentieth century, various interests began laying claims to the north woods as a commons that was intricately connected to other vital industries and rural ways of life, even though by that time the vast majority of land was privately owned by the forest products industry (Judd 2007). Farmers opposed aggressive cutting practices based on their intimate awareness of the crucial role trees played in the earth's mineral and water cycles, for example moderating climate and stream flow and preventing flooding of their fields. The woods were valuable as a tourist landscape for resort and sportsman camp owners who depended upon the

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[31] The purpose of the Great Pond Law was to state "a great principle of public right, to abolish the forest laws, the game laws… and to make them all free" (see Smith 1950 and Waite 1965). The public trust doctrine, presently upheld in courts of law across the country, holds that certain natural resources must be preserved and maintained by the government for the public's reasonable use (Sax 1969). The doctrine dates back to ancient Roman law and changes made to the English Crown's ownership of tidelands after the Magna Carta. At that time, the Crown's interest in tidelands was divided into a property interest (*jus privatum*), which could be conveyed to private parties, and a public interest (*jus publicum*), which was to be held by the Crown in trust for the benefit of the entire public and could not be conveyed (Lahey et al. 1990). Early English colonists brought this to Massachusetts in the form of English common law. The 1641 Colonial Ordinance enacted by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which guaranteed public access to great ponds and tidelands (i.e., the intertidal zone, which is the shoreline between the mean low and mean high tide lines), represented the first codification of the public trust doctrine in America (Lahey et al. 1990). The Supreme Court has since ruled that each state must define how the public trust doctrine applies to its waters (University of Maine 1994). In Maine, special statutory regulations also apply to lands adjacent to great ponds for the purposes of shoreland protection and timber harvesting.

forests' natural resources and aesthetic beauty to draw hunters, hikers, and other tourists north. Mill owners recognized that the streams powering their turbines required forested watersheds for stabilization, and local fish and game organizations defined the north woods as habitat for publicly owned wildlife (Judd 2007). Numerous editorials and petitions in the early part of the twentieth century reveal these local concerns and claims. For example, a 1905 opinion piece in the Lewiston Saturday Journal considered the complex land tenure of Maine's "wild lands," their various uses and users, and argued for state-directed forest conservation initiatives to preserve its usefulness to rural communities. The author quoted a Maine Supreme Judicial Court justice who asserted, "The water powers of Maine and the forests are quasi-public utilities and both should be properly conserved" (Lewiston Saturday Journal 1905, 11).

These various public claims to the Maine woods as a commons led to an insistence that the state intervene by purchasing forestland and regulating timber harvesting. In 1907, Maine lawmakers posed a question to the Maine Supreme Court asking if the legislature had constitutional powers "to regulate or restrict the cutting or destruction of trees growing on wild or uncultivated land by the owners thereof without compensation therefor to such owner" (Freyfogle 2003, 25). Despite intense pressure from timber interests, the Court ruled in 1908 that the legislature indeed possessed the authority to curtail private rights when the public's interest was served (Freyfogle 2003, Judd 1997). Forestland owners managed to avoid regulation by

formally approving the various ways Mainers had long used the private forests for hunting and fishing, guide services, and other activities. Multiple uses were allowed to continue on a *de facto* basis in exchange for the landowners' rights to freely cut timber and manage their forests as they deemed fit. Landowners subsequently requested public funding to assist with forest-fire protection, and in 1909 the legislature passed a compromise: the state charged forestland owners with a surtax that funded a state run forest-fire protection program, but they had to officially pledge to continue allowing recreational access to the forests, "a concession that underwrote an elaborate system of sporting camps, guide services, and hotels" (Judd 2007, 9). Governor William T. Haines weighed in on the issue in his 1913 inaugural address, declaring it:

> …much better to leave all our wild lands as they are today, in the hands of private owners, with the right reserved…to everybody to go upon them for hunting and fishing, recreation and pleasure, which makes of them a great natural park, in which all of the people have great benefits and great interests (Haines 1913, 24).

Thus even at that time, when subsistence uses of the forest were still prevalent, the state acknowledged the economic and personal benefits of recreation. One-hundred years later the state still actively supports the public's right to access private lands for a range of uses, including the numerous activities that undergird the state's tourism industry and rely upon access to private forests. Businesses that cater to

people traveling to the north woods to hunt, fish, snowmobile, hike, and camp would suffer substantial losses if this access was severed.

As such, the state continues to effectively ration private landowners' bundle of rights to "their" land, and the Great Pond Law remains on the books in the form of a statute last revised by the Maine State Legislature in 1973 (Acheson and Acheson 2010). Penalties can therefore, in theory, be levied on landowners who "deny access or egress over unimproved land to a great pond" (Acheson 2006, 22). The ordinance (Maine Revised Statute Title 17 Chapter 127 § 3860) has been modified, clarified, and upheld by a number of Maine courts through the years, including a 1950 case that limited public access to such ponds through unimproved land, restricting rights of entry via improved agricultural lands or backyards (Supreme Judicial Court of Maine 1950). The last time the law was revisited in the Maine Supreme Judicial Court, it was confirmed that the state essentially holds all ponds larger than ten acres in trust for the people of Maine (Supreme Judicial Court of Maine 1952). As a result of this long history of permissive access and numerous supporting legal precedents, large forest landowners (virtually all of whom have great ponds on their land) do not possess a clear right to completely restrict the public from their property if it somehow involves cutting off access to a great pond (Acheson and Acheson 2010).[32]

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[32] Acheson and Acheson (2010) point out that a form of legal pluralism exists given the conflicts between Maine law and common law (e.g., the law of trespass) regarding public access to private lands. While the Great Pond Law and the open land tradition work to keep privately-owned lands open to the public, a well-developed body of common law permits

Wildlife laws and hunting restrictions are another instance of Maine state policy limiting the rights of private property owners by obligating them to obey all laws governing hunting when taking animals on their own land. The state's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIF&W) is officially charged with preserving, protecting, and managing the stocks of Maine's inland fisheries and wildlife resources. Although an animal that is shot is the private property of the hunter, Maine's wildlife is a public resource that is held in trust for all the people of Maine—alive, wildlife cannot be claimed by the landowner as personal property.

However, the state, recognizing that the open land tradition completely relies upon ongoing landowner buy-in, plays the role of mediator and enforcer as part of a systematic effort to encourage and maintain trustful and respectful relationships between landowners and users. Maine has an exceptionally strong landowner liability law (Maine Revised Statute Title 14 Chapter 7 § 159-A), which encourages private landowners to allow public access by releasing them from nearly all responsibility and liability for injuries sustained by people on their land, even when permission to enter was *not* given (Acheson 2006). In fact, not a single court case has been won against a landowner under the law. Originally enacted in 1979 and last revised in 2007, the

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landowners to prohibit access. Landowners can post their land (if it meets the standards laid out in the more than 100 Maine state trespass laws) and have trespassers prosecuted. However, navigating the law can be confusing for landowners and enforcement is costly and time-consuming, which means that the rights of the Maine public to use private property have yet to be adequately tested in court. In the meantime, large landowners usually continue to do "what is expected" by adhering to the open land tradition.

landowner liability law is particularly important for snowmobiling due to the higher rate of injury among motorized recreationists and justifiable fears that the landowner will be sued under such circumstances. Concern about liability remains a major reason that landowners restrict access, so robust legal protection is vital (LeVert 2010).

Maine government has also established various task forces and committees through the years and continues to enact laws that aim to preserve the public's right to access the state's forests. To name a few, in 2000 a Committee to Study Access to Private and Public Lands was created by the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee in response to concerns raised by citizens and business owners during testimony on bills proposing that fees be charged to access public and private lands (State of Maine 2001). In the fall of 2004, then Governor Baldacci created a task force on "Traditional Uses and Public Access to Land in Maine" that was charged with determining how to address new land restrictions stemming from the recent dramatic changes in land ownership (Baldacci 2004). More recently, the Act to Strengthen the Relationship between Land Users and Landowners (Public Law Chapter 576) took effect in January 2013. Its goal is to improve the state's Landowner Relations Program by more effectively encouraging landowners to permit public access to their land (e.g., by publicizing and clarifying the protections offered by the liability law), fostering stronger relationships between landowners and users (e.g., devoting more resources to organize volunteers who can assist with problems landowners may have),

and promoting courtesy, respect, and responsibility among outdoor recreationists and other users. For example, through this program MDIF&W supplies landowners with a variety of signs, most free of charge, that designate specific rules of access and use (e.g., a sign limiting access to a great pond via foot traffic only).

However, this surfeit of state laws and regulations did not impose and independently uphold the open land tradition and administer landowner and user relations. In line with understandings of common property, the framework at the state level developed in concert with efforts that were coordinated on the ground in north woods communities, between land user and landowner. Through the years, users have played a critical role in actively developing and organizing common property regimes and associated land management practices. In other words, rather than perceiving the more formalized institutional arrangements (e.g., state laws and regulations) and their effects as the driving force that provides community incentives and guides individual choices, institutional arrangements should be viewed as *indicators* of social practices and relations[33] (Ratner and Rivera-Gutiérrez 2004, McCay and Jentoft 1998).

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[33] One can also draw parallels between snowmobilers' participation in upholding the commons and Arun Agrawal's concept of "environmentality" (2005). This theory, drawing from Michel Foucault's insights on subject formation and based on field work in northern India, holds that people's concern about the environment is not necessarily dictated or imposed via state or institutional power (e.g., via coercion) but rather through their involvement in different forms of social practice (e.g., via self-formation and the creation of "environmental subjects"). My research did not study differences in care for the environment between those actively engaged in social practices versus less or uninvolved individuals or

As with other commons, north woods communities have helped create and enforce rules regarding the use of the lands despite, and perhaps because of, their lack of formal legal rights (see McKean 2000). They entered into a range of agreements with the private property owners that granted *usufruct*, permitting hunting, fishing, motorized recreation, and other activities as long as they steered clear of actively harvested timber areas and otherwise respected the landowners' wishes. The Maine Snowmobile Association and its member clubs typify how institutional arrangements under common property regimes can facilitate the collective use and management of forest resources. As detailed in chapter 3, snowmobilers dedicated countless volunteer hours through the years to build a network of community-based clubs that act as intermediaries among the local and tourist communities, landowners, and state agencies. It is through these clubs, which materialized out of a dedicated local membership base, that snowmobilers have made agreements ranging from informal understandings between users and owners (e.g., "timber trucks always have the right of way"), to the state's systematic dispersal of public funds to local clubs whose members work to maintain infrastructure such as trails and bridges. Snowmobilers set up and attend regular meetings with landowners to discuss pertinent issues, keep communication lines open, and attempt to reach decisions that will appease both

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groups, yet Agrawal's focus on environmental subjects' agency within structures of power, as well as more intimate forms of government, are nonetheless interesting to think about in the case of the snowmobile commons.

landowner and rider. They also organize numerous events that foster close community connections, and they are well-organized at the legislative level, advocating for and against the passage of laws that are relevant to Maine snowmobilers and help ensure the continuation of their access to private lands.

Furthermore, years of living in and interacting with the forest in a multitude of ways has expectedly cultivated deep connections between local users and the landscape (see chapter 2). Snowmobilers have favorite trails and vantage points, customary hunting and fishing grounds, and treasured family memories that are tied to specific spaces and places. They bear witness to minute natural variations and more significant landscape changes across the seasons and years, tracking weather patterns, for example, or monitoring the movement of wildlife and patterns of tree growth. Their intimate relationships with nature, both through work and recreational activities, have produced narratives of local stewardship that help define Maine's forested region as a lived in and working space. As such, the forest is revealed as bound up in human activities that stretch back in time, and nature and community are co-produced through locals' historical and ongoing maintenance and use of the private commons (see Mackenzie 2006a, 2006b).

Understandably, established rights of access and use are not easily relinquished; the belief that Mainers' possess a tenuous set of privileges has been transformed by generations of *de facto* access into a perception that locals retain firm rights to access and use private lands as their own. In his position with AMC, Jason

has grappled with understanding and navigating this landscape and balancing overlapping sets of rights and claims to the woods. When asked how the club weighs national heritage and interest in Maine's landscape against local heritage, tradition, and rights to the land, he replied,

> On one hand you can say, "What rights? It's private." A lot of people make this argument, [but] it's private property. You have the right to have people on it or not. And especially in the motorized community and the hunting and fishing community, people are very careful to say, "It's our privilege that these private landowners allow us to have [access]." Culturally, it's a little different story that people really do feel, [they] have for generations said, "This is where I go. What do you mean I can't go there?" They don't even think about who owns the land (2011).

As one might expect, abuses of public rights under the open land tradition occur, especially considering the relatively unfettered access and use enjoyed for many years under paper company ownership. As Tom (with the Division of Parks and Public Lands' Off-Road Recreational Vehicle Office), explains,

> There are people who just think they have the right to [access private lands]. Because they've been doing it for as long as they can remember, they have the *right* to do it, in their minds, which is somewhat odd when you really think about it! They don't pay the taxes, they don't pay the insurance, but they think they have the right to be there. It's still very common. And what we hear all the time is "Well, I didn't see any posted signs—what harm am I doing?"

Sometimes hunters, snowmobilers, and other people using the land ask the landowners' permission, but often they do not. John, a landowner in Millinocket, described a scenario that is not uncommon in the north woods,

> I was out driving after I'd acquired 1,400 acres of land here and I see a four-wheeler, which wasn't supposed to be on this land anyway, driving along

> pulling a spruce tree that's about thirty feet long, down the road. I'm like, "I bet that was cut on my land." And the four-wheeler drives up the driveway of a friend of mine's house. […] I called him up and he said, "I'm so sorry I cut that tree on your land. I never should have done it. It's just that we're so used to doing whatever we want on Great Northern [Paper]'s land that I thought of it as theirs." […] The tradition of doing whatever you want on Great Northern's land, or any landowner's land up here, is *so* strong that people can't, they don't even… I mean, he felt *horrible* once he realized, "Geez, I cut one of John's trees and I didn't ask him. If I'd asked him he would have said to go do it, but I didn't ask."

And when land is posted, many feel that something that has always been and therefore should remain theirs has unjustly been taken from them (Acheson and Acheson 2010). Members of the public often tear down "No Trespassing" signs and sometimes even break or bypass gates and use the land anyway. Landowners may not be completely content with the arrangement, but they have generally acquiesced through the years and continued to allow the public to use their land.

Partly in response to such transgressions, arrangements between land users and owners have sometimes been formalized through the establishment of management organizations. One such group is the forest recreation management company, North Maine Woods (described in chapter 2). This group originated in the 1960s as a landowner committee formed to resolve conflicts between logging contractors, and eventually developed into an association, partnership, and finally a non-profit corporation in 1981. As land was added to the now 3.5 million-acre managed area encompassing 155 townships, interior gates were removed and access became controlled by a uniform set of fees and regulations for all users of the

management area. Agreements like these among landowners, agencies, and users have enabled consistently regulated use and moderately restricted travel throughout the entire area, unhampered by private gates.

When asked his thoughts about the forest being a private commons, Jason expressed interest in exploring "why it's really viewed as everybody's land, because that's not the case in other parts of the country. There's something inherent in Maine culture and it had to start somewhere" (2011). The theory he favored was that,

> It's basically the paper companies had all the people that worked in the mill and basically said "Do whatever you want on our land and just don't burn the forest down." And that's kind of what it was like. You'd go camp—that's where leases started, "Oh you want a cabin on a lake somewhere? Go ahead. We're not gonna sell you the land but you can have a cabin there, $50 a year. Sure. We don't care." And that's how that tradition started" (2011).

Beliefs that the open land tradition arose fairly arbitrarily, with the forestlands consequently open to haphazard, unregulated, and perhaps even destructive uses, produce a representation of local land use that buttresses conservationists' calls for the proper management and protection of an ecologically valuable area. These depictions of the open land tradition as a fairly unregulated open access regime, reminiscent of Hardin's tragedy of the commons, can overshadow the numerous enduring and ever-evolving connections and arrangements between users and owners and users and the land itself. But situating the tradition in particular northern forest histories, like the Great Pond Law and decades-old snowmobile clubs, illuminates the practices, social relationships, and formal as well as informal institutional arrangements that

effectively govern the use of these multifunctional and productive spaces. Thus characterizing the woods as a commons can insert responsible, involved, even conservation-minded humans into the picture; the effective partnerships community members have built with a range of private owners and state natural resource agencies over the course of decades brings this to light. However, the ground beneath these longstanding relationships has become unstable with the relatively recent, widespread shifts in north woods ownership, igniting contentious debates over Maine's open land tradition and attempts to balance the rights of private landowners to manage their lands as they please with the public's rights to access and use the land how *they* please.

Large-Scale Land Swaps

A growing sense of crisis about the future of the woods has emerged alongside significant changes in land ownership, which appear to be fracturing connections between landowners and users and, not coincidentally, people's rights to access and use the woods. The magnitude and speed of such shifts may be startling, but changes in the economic and cultural values of the woods have ushered in different kinds of landowners, many of whom are increasingly distant (and detached) from Maine's rural communities. The new and assorted land management objectives that result have uncertain implications for the people of Maine, and north woods residents in

particular. Jym St. Pierre, Maine Director of RESTORE: The North Woods, described the current state of affairs,

> For a long time we had this big place, over ten million acres, as big as the whole rest of New England, that people just forgot about. It was a big blank spot on the map, and now everybody's scrapping for it.[…] It's the last big place. Look around the country. I don't know of any other place that's in play like this.[…] We're all trying to figure out what the brave new world will be up there (Clark 2008, 126).

While immense focus has been placed on the present-day fallout and local concerns erupting from the massive turnover in land ownership, extensive wholesale land deals are not new to the region. Bangor experienced a similar land rush in the early 1800s when lumber was the driving economic engine. During this time "the wildest speculation that has ever prevailed in any part of the United States was in the timberlands of Maine" (Rolde 2001, 232) where there were great land transactions when "neither buyer nor seller ever saw, or really knew much about, the property involved" (234). About half of Maine's land area was in private hands when it achieved statehood in 1820, but the expansive interior remained almost entirely uninhabited after decades of largely unsuccessful incentives targeting homesteaders and other potential settlers to northern and central Maine (Dobbs and Ober 1996). As a result in the 1840s the state started auctioning 500-acre lots to logging companies and wealthy families from throughout the Northeast who accumulated millions of acres of north woods forestland, thus beginning the age of Maine's "timber barons" (several of these original families remain large landowners in the north woods today).

In addition, after buying Massachusetts' share of the state's unincorporated townships in 1853, Maine transferred these public lands to lumber operators and land speculators over the next twenty years. Since this time, "huge chunks of North Woods real estate have been sold and re-sold in national and global markets" (Judd 2007, 8).

The potential effects of these changes on local communities have always been of great concern. As discussed in chapter 2, following a century of substantial land sales and increasingly intensive industrial cutting in the late 1800s, public apprehension about the fate of the forests and its inhabitants was on the rise (Judd 2007). Rural Mainers expressed worry about the small woodworking mills threatened by the paper industry, the changes in forest ecology and impacts to their own land, and the greater implications of commercial ownership on local uses and needs (Judd 2007, Rolde 2001). However, many of these fears were allayed or overshadowed by the seeming benevolence of the new property owners. Alongside the corporate takeover of land and questionable harvest practices, the paper companies provided good jobs to thousands of rural residents. And of critical importance to north woods communities, the companies maintained traditional public access to the private forest, sustaining and in many ways cultivating people's connections to the woods. Essentially, the treasured public values that presently exist in Maine's forests have evolved within a working forest that has been harvested for hundreds of years. Whilst managing their lands primarily as a resource (albeit, tolerating varying degrees of resource exploitation including clear cut practices), the forest products industry's

stewardship of immense tracts of north woods forestland prevented subdivision of the lands, provided quality habitat for fish and wildlife, and maintained public access for outdoor recreation and other uses (Keeping Maine's Forests 2010, Clark and Howell 2007). Furthermore, the industrial landowners of the past were based in the woods—geographically rooted in the towns and townships—which facilitated more open communication and collaboration between the owners (and their land managers, foresters, and other public figures) and the local people using the forest.

Nearly 100 years later, following decades of relationship building between private landowners and users, significant changes in north woods real estate have generated fears about the continuation of Maine's open land tradition. New landowners reflect shifting economic values of the land, land use patterns, and demographics, whereby the forests' worth as a woodlot is being superseded by its worth as a site of future development (see chapter 5). Once a mostly rural state, more than sixty-five percent of Maine's population now resides in Maine's urban and "micropolitan" areas[34], and suburban style development has become the dominant settlement pattern (Brookings Institution 2006). Rural Maine is the newest frontier of the kinds of intensified residential development that other parts of the state (i.e.,

[34] "Micropolitan" refers to a statistical and geographic area delineated by the federal Office of Management and Budget. A micro area is defined as containing an urban core between 10,000 and 49,000 people, and a metropolitan (metro) area contains a core urban area of 50,000 or more. Geographically, each metro or micro area consists of the county or counties containing the core urban area plus any neighboring counties with a high level of social and economic integration with the urban core (as measured by work commutes) (U.S. Census 2013a).

coastal areas, suburban areas in southern counties, and the Bangor metropolitan region) have historically experienced (Bell 2007, Judd and Beach 2003).

The most substantial land sales and shifts in the type and scale of ownership began sweeping the state and greater region in the late 1980s, though the big hits started coming in the late 1990s when a perfect storm of events fundamentally changed longstanding ownership patterns and north woods economies: cumulative changes to tax and investment laws suddenly heavily favored real estate investment trusts and timber investment management organizations over forest products companies[35]; Maine's industry was outcompeted by the increasing globalization of the paper industry and massive increases in pulp and paper production in countries such as Brazil, Finland, and China (Colgan and Barringer 2007); and development pressures were increasing the land's value and attracting interested buyers (Lilieholm 2007). Hagan et al. (2005) documented more than 250 timberland transactions in the greater northern forest region between 1980 and 2005 that involved at least 5,000 acres or more. These transactions encompassed nearly 24 million acres, though much of the area was sold repeatedly. And the vast majority of the acres bought and sold—84 percent—were in Maine. Since 1998 more than forty percent, or just less than nine

[35] More specifically, changes to the federal tax code benefited LLCs and investments that produced capital gains, rather than traditional corporations that paid out shareholder dividends (Keeping Maine's Forests 2009). Corporations faced double taxation of company *and* shareholder income, while real estate investment trusts only faced shareholder income taxation. Finally, Wall Street changed its rating practices to emphasize "pure play" investments, "effectively penalizing companies that owned both manufacturing plants and timberland" (Keeping Maine's Forests 2009, 7).

million acres, of north woods land has changed hands (Natural Resources Council of Maine 2011).

Most of Maine's big industrial forest landowners separately sold their mills and millions of acres of timberland in the 1990s and 2000s and have been replaced by "investor-owners." Consequently, the woods very quickly shifted from the landowners' source of lumber and pulp to a landscape of speculation and investment. For example, within just a few short months of each other, the state's largest and second largest pulp and paper companies unloaded 2.5 million acres of north woods forestland. In 1998, four years after acquiring all of Scott Paper's forestland and paper making facilities—including two mills—South African Pulp and Paper Industries (SAPPI), Ltd. announced the sale of all of its land (nearly 400,000 acres) to Plum Creek Timber Company, a real estate investment trust (REIT) based in Seattle, Washington and one of the largest landowners in the nation (Rolde 2001). A few months later in March 1999, Bowater Great Northern Paper sold a total of more than 1.6 million acres, some to J.D. Irving Ltd. (a Canadian family-owned industrial owner) and the rest to an investment company located in Alabama.[36] Other massive sales followed, and within the span of one year more than three million acres of north woods land had been swapped, often severing the connection between the working

[36] In a prepared statement released when the sale was announced, Bowater's chief executive office explained, "This transaction is part of the company's continuing effort to optimize its rich asset base through redeployment for greater shareholder value" (Lagasse 1998).

forests and nearby mills. Dan (formerly with Maine's Division of Parks and Public Lands) summarized the transition and its implications for the open land tradition,

> People have called it the compact between the paper companies and the people of Maine: there were company towns—vertically-integrated companies, horizontally integrated companies—[with] Great Northern being the most extreme; [a] massive landowner, massive employer, and somewhat benevolent in the compact with the workers. In exchange for employment, everybody benefited from open public access to the lands, and camp lots, and snowmobiling, and all of that. And as the economy has been disaggregated, or the companies have become less vertically-integrated, you now deal with the fact that the mill owner doesn't even own the land, so the employers don't even own the land. And it all falls apart that suddenly you have people with self-interest, or companies with a fiduciary responsibility or a selfish expectation to do things differently. The various cultural shifts in Maine closely follow these shifts in land ownership and worker/employer relations (interview 2011).

During this time, industrial titles to Maine's north woods have rapidly declined while REIT and timber investment management organization (TIMO) ownership has risen markedly.[37] In 1994 the forest industry owned approximately sixty percent of large tracts of timberland (defined as expanses greater than five thousand acres) dwarfing the three percent owned by financial investors (Hagan et al. 2005). A decade later, the tables had turned, with financial investors' ownership of large forest tracts reaching thirty-three percent in 2005 compared with less than

[37] The difference between TIMOs and REITs is clarified by Stein (2011), "TIMOs manage timberland investments for private institutional investors and high-net-worth individual investors through separate accounts or private comingled funds, as well as public timber real estate investment trusts, known as REITs, a publicly traded version of TIMOs. The primary goal of TIMOs and REITs is to maximize returns to their investors through management of timberland assets" (83).

sixteen percent in the hands of the forest industry (Hagan et al. 2005). The number of owners has increased, parcel sizes have decreased, and landowners (and their land managers) are harder if not impossible to pin down; one can imagine the subsequent challenge of managing the state's intricate snowmobile trail network under such conditions.

Clearly, these changing forestland ownership patterns matter greatly. Maine has become entangled in the global market of land speculation and swift transactions that render companies, which are no longer locally-based, beholden to their investors and financial analysts, tactically expanding or slashing their operations and divesting holdings (Rolde 2001). As Plum Creek explains, "Our primary business is to actively manage our timberlands to capture the most value from every acre we own" (Plum Creek Timber Company, Inc. 2012). TIMOs are considered liquidators, "rational economic men [who] cut everything [and then] cut the land up into lots and sell to out-of-staters" (Rolde 2001, 354). Acting on promises of "returns to their investors that [are] greater than the biological possibility of the land," they are under pressure to overcut the land in order to satisfy investors or pay off debt (Roger Milliken, Jr. quoted in Rolde 2001, 353).

In addition to practicing unsustainable harvesting, another market-driven option for TIMOs and REITs is to sell their "front lots"—the more developable and therefore valuable plots of lake-, pond-, or riverfront land—to individual buyers such as seasonal home purchasers or longtime camp owners fortunate enough to have

leased waterfront land. Or they can develop some of the land themselves, which is the case with Plum Creek whose highly contested 2005 proposal to build housing and large-scale resorts on the shores of Moosehead Lake—the largest development proposal in the state's history—received final approval from the Maine Supreme Judicial Court in 2012 after working its way through regulatory committees and the courts for seven years. The fear is that since TIMOs and REITs are driven by Wall Street's requirement to dispense with land that can't be made "productive," their land management objectives are more immediate and less likely to maintain a long-term ethic of stewardship or adhere to local traditions of relatively open use and access.

Given the sheer increase in the number of landowners as well as the fact that most of the industrial and financial investor-owners are not locally based, the erstwhile, more intimate method of doing business with landowners is largely disrupted. Sam, who lives in Millinocket, recalls, "At one time, Great Northern owned everything from here north and west within the boundaries of Maine" (2011), and his brother Richard chimed in,

> We had very few landowners to deal with. […] Permission was great when we started. I was chairman of the [Maine Snowmobile Association] trail committee in '90–'95, I think. At that particular time we had five landowners that we dealt with, and now I think it's up around seventy-some landowners that they have to get permission [from] to cross their land (2011).

Tom described the present day challenges of managing the state's Snowmobile Program and how much it has changed since he began working with the Division of Parks and Public Lands in 1978,

> Early on it was building trails, getting enough opportunity to keep people happy, and now it's more landowner negotiations and the balancing act, and trying to keep things in place. The big owners up in [the north woods] are Irving, which is the biggest in Maine, then you've got Seven Islands [which] manages all the Pingree land, and O'Ryan manages somebody else's land—I don't even know *who* they manage for. And that's one of the things that's a little hard to figure out [today] is: *Who owns the land?* You can't figure it out! It's an LLC and they may not want you to know who they are, so you have to go through these forester manager groups, and you don't even know who the owners are. One of those [companies that] manages a lot of land [is] probably one of the most difficult ones we have to work with. To find out who the owner is is very hard. We ultimately tracked down the owner, and it's a forestland group down south. And we actually intercepted the owner at the Bangor Airport when he flew in once and sat down and talked to him about [a] trail (2011).

There are serious implications for the social and economic compact between the landowner and Maine citizenry when the new owners are financial companies that require a means of profiting from lands that have historically provided a multitude of *free* public goods. Tom explains that the companies' "investors are down south, or out west, or in Europe, or wherever it is they are, where people *pay* to use the land. And so they don't understand Maine at all" (2011). As a result, many are currently trying to figure it out, wondering,

> "How do I make money off my land! I want guaranteed money. I'm not making so much off wood, or the paper industry is kind of declining," and so they invest multimillions of dollars in the land and their profit margin is, "We wanna make a certain percentage off that every year, and how are we gonna

> do that?" And in Maine, the one block that they're *not* is recreation. And it's on all their ledger sheets: recreational income. And so there's a whole bunch of landowners now that don't understand the tradition of free access when what they've been managing [elsewhere] for years, you pay (Tom interview 2011).

One of the solutions recently proposed by landowners, policy-makers, and others, is a public funding mechanism that would compensate landowners for the myriad benefits the public derives from their lands (Keeping Maine's Forests 2010). But this raises concerns and questions for Dan given the wide variety of landowners and their diverse interests, namely,

> Who are these landowners? If the landowner is Bob and Mary next door, then the social contract or the expectation of subsidy may be different than if the landowner is a publicly traded corporation in Tokyo or New York or Toronto. Defining the "social contract," or the limits of the social contract, immediately turns into expectations of shareholder return—can a commodity be capitalized, or can a revenue stream be projected for shareholder benefit—and it just gets pretty frightening pretty fast when you distinguish [these] two types of landowners and how they will negotiate if there is revenue potential (2011).

Expectedly, the cascading effect of major changes in north woods land tenure has created unease and uncertainty among local communities, to say the least. While previous land sales had maintained a working forest, which could continue to support mill and timber harvest jobs as well as traditional public recreation access to the private forest, anxieties have erupted over the new owners' lesser known land management objectives (Phillips 1993). Prior to SAPPI's deal with Plum Creek, an owner of rental cabins and a trading post just east of Moosehead Lake boasted, "Right

now with SAPPI, we have the best land-use deal in the world" (Cushman, Jr. 1998). But when miles of the company's prime Moosehead Lake and nearby tributaries waterfront were placed on the auction block, fears among local communities surfaced,

> Just when we all thought that continued public access for recreation was in the bag, we face the prospects of a new owner's potential property access rules. In Maine we fight for individual property rights—embracing large corporate landowners with the definition of individuals—so long as we can continue to have unfettered access (Jeff Gibbs quoted in Rolde 2001, 38).

The reference to "large corporate landowners" is noteworthy because despite the insecurity sparked by vague REIT and TIMO land management objectives, their future land plans, and their decidedly *non*-localness, they remain corporate landowners and, to that extent at least, they are an apparently known entity. Under their ownership, the woods have technically remained a working forest, and for now their presence in the woods has been largely silent as they lay in wait for development values to rise or for other means of profiting from the land to become apparent. Also deflecting attention from the potential threats of new corporate ownership are the changes initiated by environmental interests with whom local communities perceive a greater cultural and political disconnect. For in tandem with the increase in north woods land held by TIMOs and REITs, there has also been a surge in the amount of conserved forestland as individual and incorporated environmental interests have worked to protect and preserve the woods piece by piece.

> It would be incorrect to suggest that all of the land in the Maine Woods is subject to the financial plans of REITs and TIMOs alone. For there has also been an explosion in the amount of land held in strictly conservation use at the same time that more activity on the part of developers has taken place. The two are intimately related and, to some extent, play off one another (Lapping 2007, 102).

Environmental interests have jumped into Maine's land game motivated by their concerns about the new landowners' questionable land ethics as well as encroaching suburbs and the loss of rural land to housing development (Jin and Sader 2006, Clark and Howell 2007). In 1998, concurrent with the paper companies' sale of three million acres of forestland to Plum Creek and other financial investment firms, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) spent $35 million buying 125,000 acres on the upper St. John River from International Paper in its largest purchase to date.[38] One year later, the Pingree family's timberland management company, whose north woods holdings date back to the early 1800s, sold the development rights on more than 762,000 acres of land to the New England Forestry Foundation for $30 million to create what remains the nation's largest conservation easement project. Their pitch boasted that "The easement removes forever the ability to develop these lands, and assures that future generations of owners will practice sustainable forestry, much as the Pingree family has since 1840" (Rolde 2001, 355). Thus, landowners like TNC and the New England Forestry Foundation expressed an ethic of care for the woods that

[38] TNC has protected more than one million acres in Maine, including seventy-five preserves that comprise approximately 300,000 acres, of which the St. John Forest is the largest.

differed markedly from REITs and TIMOs; they "would manage their lands for value, would cut them, but [keep] them as close to wild as possible yet with their heads above water financially" (Rolde 2001, 355).

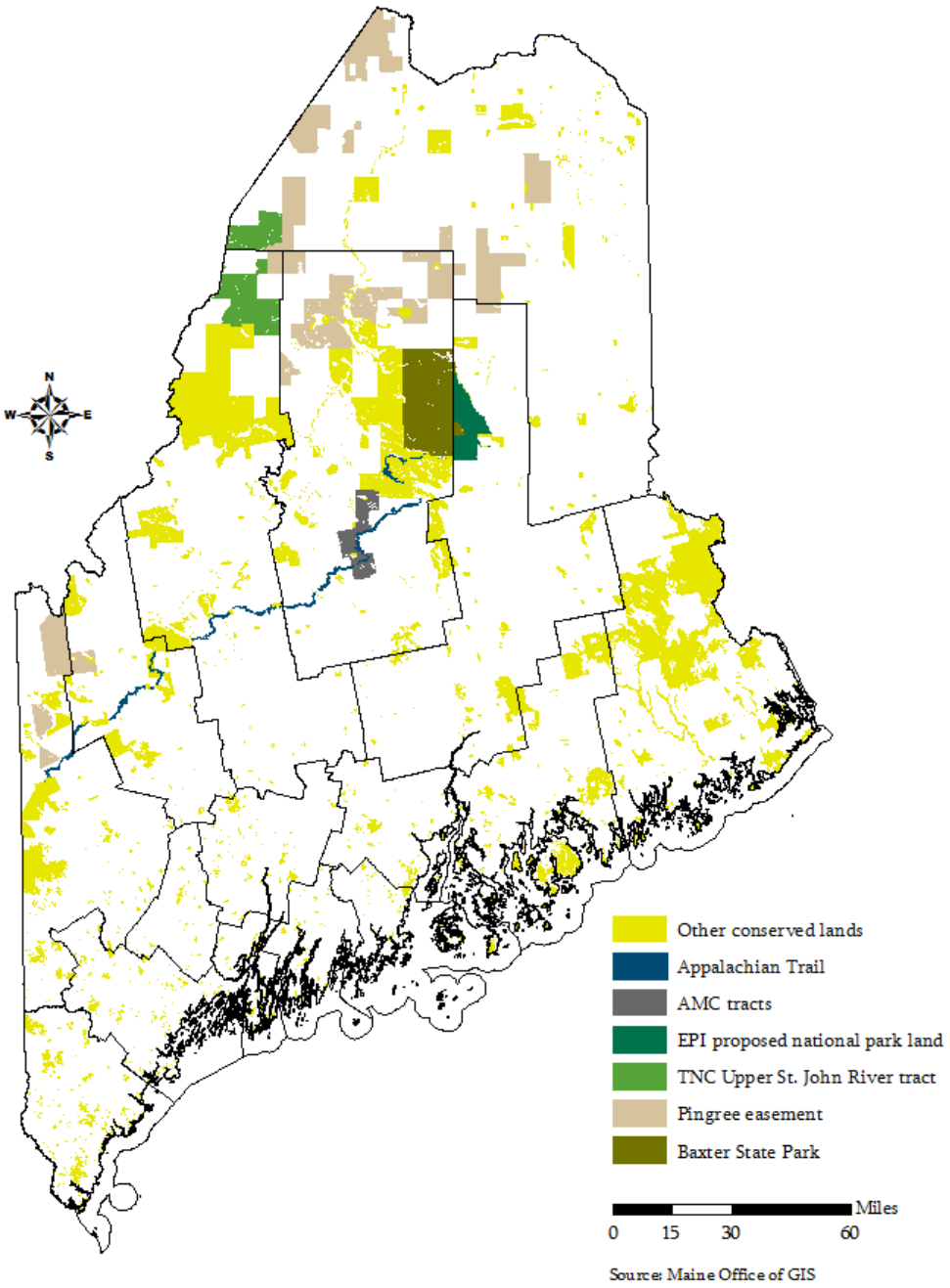

Figure 18. Public and private conserved lands in Maine, 2013

Another land tenure pattern that has emerged alongside the disappearance of big forest products companies, the endurance of family timberland ownerships (such as the Pingrees and Irvings), and interest in the woods by conservation groups, is the gobbling up of large tracts of Maine forestland by wealthy individuals. Taking advantage of land prices that are comparatively low on the national market, these "kingdom buyers" are claiming their own piece of the northern forest. According to a land broker whose company sponsors *The Land Report's* annual list of the top 100 U.S. landowners, "modern investors understand that agriculture, healthy ecosystems, and recreation all interconnect when it comes to a property's value" (Greg Fay quoted in Trotter 2012; see also The Land Report 2012). The magazine editor concurred, explaining that a consistent and significant factor in the country's recent economic recovery has been land and land-based assets, "Look at farmland prices. Look at energy assets. Look at the rise in minerals and commodity prices. Each of these elements is tied to the land, which is why so many savvy investors are anchoring their portfolios with this asset" (Eric O'Keefe quoted in Trotter 2012). A 2011 acquisition of almost one million acres of forestland in western Maine by billionaire media mogul John Malone made him the largest private landowner in the United States (nearly all of his 1.2 million acres are in Maine). Lloyd Irland, former Maine state economist and past director of the Division of Parks and Public Lands explained, "What we are seeing is 'new wealth'—people who made their money in new, emerging industries—putting money into the timber industry alongside the old

wealth, the old timberland families" (Miller 2011a). Bill described how, for now at least, these changes are raising more questions than they are answering:

> Very unique, probably in the world, ownership changes [have happened] in Maine in the past year. And it's like OK, what's going on with these values? And I have one of the foremost appraisal firms in the world here, and it's like wait a minute, this isn't all just timber here, timber investment. There's other interests here that are throwing around some money, that are buying property. What's driving that? How big of an impact is that having on the value of property? It's not just timber value anymore. There's other values that are hard to put your arms around. What motivates [John Malone]? What motivates Roxanne? (interview 2011)

Inevitably, local skepticism of the new landowners' true objectives has surfaced following each large acquisition. Kingdom buyers have drawn the ire of "folks from one end to the other… muttering how there ought to be a law against rich jerks turning Maine wilderness into their private fiefdoms" (Rolde 2001, 358). And anti-environmentalist activists were initially unconvinced by TNC's commitment to continue logging their land. There were suggestions that they would be practicing "wine and cheese logging," or were not being "true to the reality of people earning a living in the woods," and claims that "the neighborhood is changing [and] more pretty people are owning land" (Mary Adams quoted in Rolde 2001, 44–45). Such reactions reflect the cultural conflicts and social divisions, touched upon in chapter 2, that have been central to many struggles over nature in Maine's woods. Nevertheless, TNC, the New England Forestry Foundation, and Malone, among others, continue to supply timber to local paper mills and allow public use of their Maine landholdings,

leaving open snowmobile trails and permitting hunting. They have managed to tread lightly thus far, inserting themselves into existing landowner/user relations and leaving communication lines open when facing mounting public resistance. TNC, for example, was very intentional and careful with its public relations leading up to the big St. John River purchase, "taking great pains to connect with all the stakeholders in the region: assuring leaseholders they would still have their leases, hunters and fishermen they would still have access, and recreation businesses that there would still be camping and canoeing" (Rolde 2001, 359). That approach has certainly paid off as several key informants described TNC as a group that listens to local users and is easy to work with. For example, although TNC does not generally permit the construction of new snowmobile trails on their land, they have a policy of honoring existing trails and established uses (John interview 2011). Tom explained,

> The Nature Conservancy is certainly willing to [compromise]. They understand what we [the Off-Road Recreational Vehicle Office] do, they certainly have their own objectives on their land but they recognize what we do, they recognize the importance of it, and we're allowed to negotiate certain things (2011).

As a result of their support for (or at least tolerance of) Maine's open land tradition and willingness to listen to north woods community members and other interested parties, local distrust and criticisms of these new owners have been eclipsed by the public spotlight on and animosity toward the land purchases and policies of Roxanne Quimby and AMC. For while other groups and individuals have largely

maintained public access, conveying their "sense of legacy" and long-term commitment to the forest and local communities (Rolde 2001, 353), Quimby and AMC have challenged the widespread attitude held by many residents of the woods that *this is our land—even if we don't own it*, and conflict has erupted as a result. In his effort to keep tabs on and help broker land deals in Maine, Dan explained,

> The two areas that are intensely on my plate for wintertime conflict are not forestland owners, they're new "wilderness" landowners. Roxanne Quimby *[Dan makes the sound of a bomb exploding]* and the Appalachian Mountain Club carving out big lots. They're not kingdom owners, they're not fractured owners, they're not small owners—they are a very real dynamic (2011).

As examined in chapter 2, these two conservation actors possess perceptions of ideal forms of nature, stewardship, and human uses of the woods that contrast markedly with local values and traditional uses. Not surprisingly, their land management objectives and strategies have most visibly excluded traditional user groups, including snowmobilers, and threatened to break up the *de facto* commons. However, the disintegration of the commons is not simply the result of a gate installed across a popular trail; also of critical importance is the new owners' failure to uphold and respect established landowner-user ties. It is these relationships that have facilitated the management of such vast tracts of forest, maintained goodwill between user and owner, and given local users a voice in environmental and economic matters that greatly affect their daily lives (and future) in the north woods.

Exclusion from the Trails and Table

> I own it now. Buying the land also means I am buying the right to call the shots (Roxanne Quimby quoted in Clark 2008).

> Unless the people I live with recognize that I own something and so give me certain unique claims over it, I do not possess it in any meaningful sense (Cronon 1983, 58).

In recent years, Maine landowners have increasingly contested the open land tradition and belief that the public possesses inherent rights to access their lands. Posting is consequently on the rise. When conflicts between recreational users and landowners were increasing in the early 1990s, MDIF&W's projection that a greater number of landowners would begin posting their land proved true (MDIF&W 1992, 48). The Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine, which supports the interests of the state's 120,000 owners of small forested parcels (ranging in size from 10 to 1,000 acres), has conducted several studies and surveys that show such an increase. In 1982 just eight percent of undeveloped land was posted against trespassing (Irland 1996). By 1991, nearly fifteen percent of small forestland owners were posting their land (sometimes with caveats allowing certain activities), compared with nearly forty percent of small forest landowners surveyed in 2005 (LeVert 2010, Acheson 2006). This number is higher than the twenty-nine percent of landowners who admitted to

posting land as part of a 2009 University of Maine study, though an additional twenty-nine percent indicated that they were considering restricting access.[39]

However, these studies pertain to relatively small landowners, whereas far different expectations to preserve public access are placed on large landowners. In surveys from that same 2005 study, many small woodlot owners reiterated the rights of the public to access *large* parcels of privately owned land for recreational purposes, but none of the respondents transferred these rights of use to smaller land parcels, particularly those in more settled areas of the state (Acheson 2006). Posting by large landowners holds far greater consequences, for it is the great swaths of forest—tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, even millions of acres—dotted with great ponds, covered with thousands of miles of snowmobile trails and logging roads, occupied by family camps, and enveloping towns and the unorganized territories, through which access feels especially meaningful and critical to local livelihoods and culture.

This was proven by the initial (and ongoing) backlash Roxanne Quimby has faced from north woods residents since the start of her land acquisitions in 2000. Unlike groups like TNC or kingdom buyers like John Malone, Quimby's stated intent during the first few years she spent purchasing lands was to restore Maine's wilderness heritage by establishing nature sanctuaries that would eventually comprise

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[39] The Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine was a big proponent of the 2012 Act to Strengthen the Relationship between Land Users and Landowners as part of a concerted effort to increase the public's appreciation for and respect of landowners, the responsible use of private land, and to encourage landowners to continue to allow public access to their lands.

a national park. She technically continued to allow public access on the tens of thousands of acres she owned, but only by foot—motorized recreation and consumptive uses like hunting, trapping, and timber harvesting were no longer permitted. She posted signs signifying the new regulations, erected gates across roads, and canceled camp leases. Dan, pointing to a map depicting land ownership around Baxter State Park explained,

> You can see that Roxanne, who owns the pink, has discontinued various snowmobile trails that used to cross here. So the conflict is that in a very scenic location or where there were trails, they were discontinued. And change creates emotions and people are emotionally invested, whether it's their business or just their soul. If the Christmas trip snowmobiling was always up this river or up that river, then if you tell somebody, "Find a different fishing hole and a different snowmobiling trip and ice fish [on] different land," then that just has emotional conflict built into it (interview 2011).

In his fifteen years working with communities and brokering land deals in the woods, Greg, with the Trust for Public Land, is also well aware of what most angers communities,

> It's when you say, you *were* able to snowmobile here, or hunt, or do whatever here, [but] we're gonna buy this land and you're no longer gonna be able to hunt this 10,000 acres, or this one snowmobile trail is gonna be closed cause it's gonna become a wilderness area, or something like that. Those are the things that get people pretty upset pretty quick. I've certainly worked on projects where shutting down some sort of motorized trail was part of the project goals, but more often than not, to be successful in the state of Maine, that's not a good starting point (2011).

Although no Maine state authorities challenged her right to post her land, Quimby had violated the open land tradition and was vilified in the process. Some

local users bypassed or destroyed gates, wrote scathing letters to the editor, and denigrated her name on bumper stickers and websites. She effectively reduced the areas where hunting and logging were permitted, prohibited logging trucks from crossing her land in transit to other plots being harvested by forest products companies, cut off direct access to sportsmen's and family camps, and closed trails and isolated businesses that relied on snowmobilers passing through. In doing so, she was perceived as threatening local economies and ways of life and challenging locals' longstanding rights to practice traditional and recreational activities on lands they had been using for decades. Pointing to a map of her holdings, she explained her strategy not only for eliminating logging truck traffic on her own land, but also for restraining their movements in general,

> These two pieces of land here effectively stop all east-west traffic. This bridge here, it's one of the very significant nails in the coffin because it's the only way to get across the river for something like thirty miles. Okay, you can go over the bridge, but you can't go across my land with a car. So you can have your bridge, but it ain't doin' you any good. I'm closing it. Yes, it's a private road, but it's been in such permissive use for so many years, people forget that the state doesn't own that road (Clark 2008).

Quimby clearly did not start off on the right foot. She was deliberate in her moves and vocal about her intentions, proclaiming, "Now that the ownership is changing, it's becoming quite clear that this is private property. And as a private property owner I don't have to let anybody on it" (Barringer 2006). Before she began purchasing large pieces of the woods and crafting her land management strategy of

managing the forest like a wilderness area, Quimby did not consult with north woods communities, clubs, or associations, which was a major deviation from established institutional arrangements. Not only were local communities unaccustomed to totally losing motorized recreation and hunting rights on large swaths of forestland, but they were also unaccustomed to being largely ignored. Access was simply cut-off, not redirected due to logging activities or other more familiar reasons. During our interview, it was evident that Quimby's spokesperson, Bill, was well aware of how much her approach deviated from the norm,

> The perception is that […] with the landowners, that they can get a hold of the forester and talk common sense with them. And if the forester says, "No, we're logging here." That's common sense, so they lose their trail, and that's OK because they gotta log. [It used to be] just making a phone call to the local forester and saying, "Sure you can make your trail there this year. Or hand-draw some stuff on a map and I'll sign off—sure that's fine for this year." And that's the way it's gone (interview 2011).

Though not her spokesperson at the time, Bill partly justified her approach by arguing that "every landowner in the state does that, close the snowmobile trails. They *all* do." Mainers can never have permanent snowmobile trails under the current system because "all landowners close snowmobile trails temporarily" (Bill interview 2011). As for why residents' reactions were so severe if that is indeed the case, one of his theories is that "for Roxanne, it was reasons that people didn't grasp. A different set of values, and it wasn't because of logging. It was a different set of values" (Bill interview 2011).

And while that may be true, Quimby initially made little attempt to communicate those values to local communities. Showing a negligible understanding of local economies and displaying little willingness to compromise her principles and agenda, there were no analogous phone calls between Quimby and snowmobile clubs discussing trail closures. Instead, she moved forward with her predetermined plans while aligning herself with the most despised group in the region at that time, RESTORE, which was established to advocate for the creation of a much maligned 3.2 million-acre Maine Woods National Park. After facing considerable resistance during the first few years of her land purchases, she eventually reached out to the Maine Snowmobile Association because "they respect property rights [unlike other] chaotic, wild, untamed groups" (Austin 2006).

As a business owner and landowner who lives and works in Millinocket and therefore has great financial interest in north woods land use decisions, John has earned the reputation of working well and often aligning with conservation interests. When asked about how Quimby attempted to talk to locals at the start of her acquisitions in the region, John simply replied, "She didn't" (2011). He had even worked with Quimby on an earlier effort to develop a Thoreau–Wabanaki canoe trail through the area. So when he caught wind that she was likely on the verge of purchasing some lands abutting Baxter State Park with key snowmobile trails, John decided to contact her directly to explain local traditions and the importance of uses like snowmobiling:

> I wrote what I thought was a fairly thoughtful letter that basically said "I wanna try to share with you some of the local values as it relates to recreational activity on this land, [which] is a higher value piece that's heavily utilized by local people. There's motorized recreation and a lot of hunting. […] I hope you'd focus your energies on the land up around Katahdin Lake, the valley lands; there's limited snowmobiling activity up there, none of it is on groomed trails." I said, "The Staceyville Road," which was on the lands she had, "is absolutely vital to snowmobiling. Its loss would be devastating, but we could survive without the snowmobiling activity that takes [place] in the valley lands." Roxanne wrote me back and said "Thanks for the information. I appreciate your dissertation on the local values, and I understand it, but it's really not what I'm all about." And then she bought the land (John interview 2011).

Returning to the chapter's earlier discussion of common property, it becomes clear that Quimby failed to view and treat property as a social institution. Describing Quimby's belief in the vulnerability of the open land tradition (and the consequent need for public land), her spokesperson explained,

> All it takes is one landowner—Roxanne or somebody else—to say "We're not gonna have it." […] "No, we don't want them on our land." *Boom!* And there's no more snowmobile trails. And right, wrong, or different, that's all it takes is *BOOM* (Bill interview 2011).

But clearly, in her case at least, it wasn't that straightforward. By simply declaring the land hers—*I own it; I can do what I want with it*—she underestimated the power of the open land tradition in Maine's forests and the community resistance she would face, which proved able to fundamentally challenge her position and ultimately thwart her national park plans. In a 2001 interview, shortly after she commenced her land acquisitions in the north woods, Quimby wrongfully assumed that,

> Maine's strong property rights ethic—which is sometimes raised as an objection to the [national] park—actually works to her favor because people accept the notion that she can do whatever she wants with a piece of land after she has bought it. Waging her battle with money, she said, means she doesn't have to argue with people about her philosophy of protecting the land (Young 2011).

But, "saying that A owns B is in fact meaningless until the society in which A lives agrees to allow A a certain bundle of rights over B and to impose sanctions against the violations of those rights by anyone else" (Cronon 1983, 58). Quimby's legal rights were negated by her violation of the public's traditional rights to access and practice certain uses on her land. Given that national park proposals do not get approved without the support of State congressional delegates, and Maine's congressional delegates pledged to base their endorsement on local community support, Quimby eventually figured out that a shift in approach was needed.

Similar missteps tainted AMC's entry into the business of north woods land ownership, though the organization did initially make more of an attempt to sit down with community members and consider their interests. Jason described AMC's effort to balance their objective to diversify north woods recreation by attracting "new users" with the recognition of snowmobiling's importance to local economies,

> It's different in that the previous landowners pretty much said, "Snowmobile wherever you want. We don't care." And we're managing for multiple uses and we're saying, "We recognize snowmobiling's important; tell us what the strategic important connectors are between communities, and we'll work with you on that." But there are some places we're gonna say, "Could you not snowmobile here and go here instead?" So we're trying to balance those uses (2011).

Jason tends to favor one-on-one meetings over more public meetings to share and glean information, where "It's literally me calling somebody up and saying 'Let's sit down. Let me show you what we're thinking, you show me where your trails are, you show me your maps'" (interview 2011). These types of conversations helped inform AMC's decision to leave open a few main ITS snowmobile connector trails that crossed their land, while discontinuing the network of smaller club trails in an effort to minimize noise and encounters between skiers and snowmobilers. As a result, "Folks locally who just wanna bump around in the woods and explore and check out this place and that place—those are the type of people who I think felt a loss of not being able to snowmobile here anymore" (Jason interview 2011).

But AMC's closure of a handful of mostly smaller snowmobile trails fails to explain the local animosity they have attracted, especially considering the concessions the group did make. In addition to being "from away," an instantaneous mark against anyone in the north woods, both Quimby and AMC did something to invite especially negative attention. Quimby attracted distrust through her association with RESTORE, her stated objective to establish a national park (i.e., federal control) in the region, as well as her love for untamed wilderness. Unfortunately for AMC, it entered the picture soon after Quimby started ruffling local feathers, and to some people in the region the names are synonymous.[40] However, AMC has also made moves of its

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[40] For example, Al (who lives in Greenville, which is now largely hedged in by AMC and Plum Creek lands) mixed up Quimby and AMC during our interview, "[Snowmobiling's]

own that have drawn considerable public ire. One was utilizing public funds to demarcate a 10,000-acre ecological reserve that prohibited snowmobiling. Jason described his perception of the organization's evolving conflict with snowmobilers and other local interests following the announcement that a number of trails would be closed on lands they had purchased through the state's Land for Maine's Future[41] Program,

> How I saw things [was] local [snowmobile] clubs said, "Fine, you guys are the landowner, we'll help you sign it," and I think they offered to provide the signage saying trail closed. But then when the Maine Snowmobile Association got wind of it they were like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, this is a big policy issue. That's public money and they're shutting down snowmobile trails, No, no, no, no, no." So it became a fight (2011).

An additional mark against AMC, as discussed in chapter 2, is its use of snowmobiles on trails it has demarcated as non-motorized in order to maintain services for winter clientele and infrastructure. Tom protested that,

> [AMC] want[s] equipment there to do what *they* wanna do, but they don't want *us* there because they don't want to hear us and they want quiet recreation. I have a harder time with that because they're just basically kicking us out because they wanna do what they wanna do, which includes motorized

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been going on for forty, fifty years and then we have people like Roxanne Quimby who buys up land and closes it all off. She took a bunch of trails away from our local club a few years ago. Oh no, *she* didn't. AMC—*they* took a bunch of our trails away after they had told us that they would not do it, and they did it. So it's frustrating" (2011).

[41] Since the program was established in 1987, in excess of 40 million Maine taxpayer dollars have been spent conserving more than 445,000 acres (including more than 250,000 acres of working forestland), several working farms, and hundreds of miles of waterfront land and recreational trails (Curtis 2013). Maine voters have overwhelmingly approved the public money used to purchase or protect what are often privately-owned parcels of land. In most cases, the existing public uses, including hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling, are preserved (The Nature Conservancy 2012).

> access to get to the camps, motorized maintenance so they can cross-country ski, and I guess they're gonna have mountain biking there. All [of this] requires maintenance and requires equipment to do it, so it's a harder one to swallow (2011).

However, another vital common thread between AMC and Quimby, aside from being "outsider" landowners with different ethics that restrict motorized uses, is the perception that they do not make a concerted effort to listen to local users and legitimately include them in decision-making. When Al was asked if AMC meets with the local snowmobile club or Greenville/Rockwood community, he replied, "They're doing their own thing; they don't want anything to do with us" (2011). I pressed, asking if there was any sort of established regular meeting schedule, and again the answer was, "Oh no." To be fair, these conversations can be difficult given the sense of entitlement many local users possess after years of permissive access. Although snowmobilers and the Maine Snowmobile Association have gained the reputation of being easy to work with, appreciating the access they have, and respecting landowner wishes and concerns, conflict resulting from landowners unceremoniously restricting access can get ugly. In an attempt to rationalize why a group like AMC, which has positioned itself as caring about community, has done a fairly poor job organizing regular, open conversations with local residents and businesses, John explained that there are reasons "why you bail out and stop dealing with people where dealing with them might help" and "run out of energy to even try" (2011). He told a personal story that he described as,

> …analogous to the landowner that provides roads and does all these things for years and feels like "I'm doing all this stuff for people and all they do is crap on me." And you get to a point where you say "I'm not gonna do it anymore," or "I'm not gonna engage in conversations with [local users] that are unfair, unrealistic and ridiculous." […] You get so tired of being abused. […] You get worn down, and I think that's what's happened with a lot of landowners. They've just gotten worn down by constantly being poked at, picked on, pushed, "Do more, do more, do more—we're not gonna pay for it, but do more, do more, do more" (2011).

Jason expressed similar feelings, believing that AMC has been deliberately set up in meetings where its representatives have been strategically blind-sided or unwittingly outnumbered by meeting organizers: "There's definitely a trust issue. I've never tried to pull one over on anyone; I'm just trying to be straight" (Jason interview 2011). However, he admitted that he hasn't personally met with the local snowmobile club. AMC's Maine Woods Operations Manager holds annual meetings with the club to talk about the trail network, and AMC works with a few local businesses to coordinate the grooming and maintenance of snowmobile trails on their land, but Jason acknowledged that "Yeah, we probably could do a better job of sitting down with the clubs" (2011). At the same time he claimed,

> I've made real effort to reach out to clubs and particularly businesses that are snowmobile-centric and say, "Hey, this is what we're doing. Talk to me about your views." I've [asked] "Where are the important trails? Where are the important connections? We haven't made any decisions about management." And sometimes it works and sometimes people, they… in the end, you're still a conservation group and [they] don't trust you, so there's not much I can do at that point (interview 2011).

This concept of trust (or the lack thereof) and the (in)ability to work together is critical, as evidenced by the frequent use of the word by Quimby's opponents, who do not trust her objectives, motives, or tactics. After all, one of the variables identified by Ostrom (2000) that ensures the success of common property regimes is a group of participants that "share generalized norms of reciprocity and trust that can be used as initial social capital," which in turn helps provide "arenas in which participants can engage in discovery and conflict-resolution processes" (Ostrom 2000, 347). The mutual lack of trust (*they don't trust us; we don't trust them*) fundamentally inhibits effective collaboration among various local interests and conservation actors like AMC and Quimby.

Meanwhile, Plum Creek, the more familiar and seemingly trustworthy corporate landowner, enjoyed good relations with local communities from the start. Despite initial fears that Plum Creek would dismantle its Maine holdings by breaking up and selling off parcels, it has retained nearly all of its land and made compromises and deals with some area conservation groups as well as surrounding communities. The final land use plan, announced in May 2012, concentrates development in just four percent (16,000 acres) of Plum Creek's total holdings in the Moosehead region, leaving large tracts of land open for recreation, wildlife, and continued timber management. The town manager of Greenville touted the plan, stating, "The biggest thing in my mind is the permanent public access. Some people when they buy property put up tight gates" (Miller and Koenig 2012). The company agreed to a

363,000-acre easement deal (the second largest in the nation, behind the Pingree easement in northern and western Maine) specifically designed to guarantee public access and benefit the region's tourism and forestry industries. Jason believes that the Maine Snowmobile Association supported Plum Creek from the outset "'cause they have so many [snowmobile] trails. [MSA was] like, 'Tell us what you want us to say. We'll support you'" (2011). But regardless of the reasons for the snowmobile community's initial support for Plum Creek's development plan, the fact remains that the company has upheld the open land tradition not only by preserving access, but by building a relationship with the surrounding community and maintaining established landowner-user ties. Al, who admits that the company has probably spent considerable time and energy working with the Greenville community for "good PR," described how Plum Creek has "gone out of their way to help us," even working with the clubs to lay out a key snowmobile trail that would be established by the land deed as forever permanent.

> We've been pretty fortunate in this area with Plum Creek. If they go into an area and they're gonna cut, they let us know and we can build a trail around it and they'll help us—you know, they'll supply culverts and gravel. They've been excellent to work with. It's a pain in the butt, of course you gotta keep changing trails, but at least it's something we can live with in this part of the state (Al interview 2011).

Especially compared to AMC, Al claims that Plum Creek has had a lot of interaction with snowmobilers, "all positive" (2011). In return, they have garnered a great deal of community support for their controversial development. Quimby,

meanwhile, eventually recognized that a shift in tactics was critical to achieving her long-term goals and vision to establish a national park. Answering a reporter's questions in September 2006, just after one of her acquisitions was made public, Quimby reiterated that she intended to manage her land as a "nature sanctuary," signifying no hunting, trapping, timber harvesting, or snowmobiles (Austin 2006). But shortly thereafter, Quimby agreed to explore conservation alternatives and sat down with her opponents, namely groups like the MSA and Sportsman's Alliance of Maine (Austin 2006, Barringer 2006). She has since struck a number of deals that permit limited snowmobiling to continue on some of her lands, at least in the short term. Her spokesperson put it bluntly,

> A piece of why she came together with the stakeholders… Well, it was a lot of negative press. *Huge* amount of negative press and personal attacks. And I believe that she wanted to reach out at a personal level: "This is who I am, this is why I'm doing this, what do you folks really want? Let's talk." And she reached out [to Millinocket's town manager and the executive directors of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine and MSA]. And it's been beneficial to have that communication, and the more that gets out… *[trails off]* (Bill interview 2011).

While most north woods communities and businesses opposed her park plan to the end, there were a few snowmobile clubs, town committees, regional businesses, and even the Katahdin Area Chamber of Commerce, that voiced their support for a national park feasibility study (Sambides, Jr. 2011b). One of these was Shin Pond Village, a family operated recreational facility just north of Quimby's proposed park, with cottages, campgrounds, and hundreds of miles of snowmobile trails, some of

which traverse Quimby's holdings. Though initially outraged by her restrictions, they started to feel differently about Quimby after a year of one-on-one meetings, "She's listening. She's extended our rights for the snowmobile trails for another year. She's working hard to be a better neighbor" (Clark 2008). John concurs, portraying her new approach as "totally different" from the person who previously expressed no interest in his "dissertation" about local values. After revealing her national park proposal in early 2011, she traveled to Millinocket—the belly of the beast—for several public meetings because of "the reality that to have this happen you need local support. You can't just give it to the federal government" (Bill interview 2011). John reflected on her turn around:

> When she came to town and did a presentation I asked myself this question, "Is she doing this because she's sincere about caring now, because she's learned more about the local people? Or is she doing it because as she stated openly, 'I can't have the thing I want most without your help.'" I'm curious to know the answer to that, but it doesn't matter because she's doing the right thing now. She's become more sensitive (2011).

Quimby's intentions may not matter to John, but questions about her sincerity and whether she can be trusted are indeed relevant, for it appears as though the lack of trustful communication between groups like AMC or Quimby and local interests like snowmobile clubs is often a greater issue than the loss of a trail here or there. Framing the open land tradition in terms of its inextricable links to the social spaces of the north woods commons reveals the significance of the arrangements that govern the uses of the forest. Snowmobilers, hunters, and the like are accustomed to sitting

down with landowners, state agencies, legislators, local businesses, community groups, and other interested parties, to discuss various needs and interests and decide on a set of solutions and way forward. The claim that users are simply focused on lands remaining open is missing a related expectation, which is having their voices heard, especially during such uncertain times. Richard and Sam expressed their fears about a national park in the Millinocket area and their major concern of losing access to the north and west. When I asked if they thought the park would shut down the major arteries that have stayed open on Quimby's land up until now, Richard replied that "the possibility exists…" but Sam cut in, "Education is ongoing." Whose education? "Everybody's. Both sides. 'Cause *everybody's* got to come to the table" (2011).

Decades of cooperative use and collective management have produced the expectation among local users that they have a say in their environmental (and cultural and economic) futures; animosity towards certain conservation groups has clearly been fueled by feelings of being shut out from decision-making, disregarded and ignored. Considering that democratic environmental outcomes require not simply distributive justice (e.g., public land for everybody) but also procedural justice (e.g., decision-making power, stakeholder participation), then a community's lack of say in local environmental management can be considered a form of environmental injustice and fundamentally undemocratic (Getches and Pellow 2002, Lake 1996). Indeed, a 2011 study by the National Rural Assembly found that "rights, access, and a voice at

the decision-making table" were key rural environmental justice issues identified by key informants and survey respondents from New England (National Rural Assembly 2011, 18). This fear of being excluded from the table, and democratic versus undemocratic outcomes, relates to a final set of issues raised by present-day changes in land tenure and access in Maine's forests, namely the stark divergences over which form of ownership is truly "for the people." Complicating matters are the contradictory traditions of private property rights and common property rights in the north woods, fundamental disparities in how private and public lands are perceived and the proper role of the federal government in such matters, and opposing interpretations of America's democratic tradition.

Property Rights and Public Land

Given the recent instability of the open land tradition and threats facing continued public access to private lands, one might expect local communities to embrace the certainty that accompanies public land ownership. Roxanne Quimby certainly expected as much when she decided to donate thousands of acres of her recently acquired land to the National Park Service. Her spokesperson recalls, "She told us, 'When I started this, I thought, sure, who doesn't want a park? Why wouldn't I be able to give my land to people, to this government, to have it be a park?'" (Bill interview 2011). The answer to these questions is embedded within another age old tradition in Maine's woods: opposition to federal land ownership, which has more

recently become engulfed by the property rights movement. However, there is an unmistakable, inherent contradiction between the promotion of private property rights in general, and the fight to uphold Maine's open land tradition by essentially limiting north woods landowners' private property rights. Quimby's case exemplifies the challenge of navigating property rights on Maine's private commons and also reveals the conservation conflicts that exist among all groups—the advocates of private property rights, open land traditionalists, and public conservation land proponents, each of which claims roots in the American democratic tradition.

Once again, one can turn to the past to identify numerous markers throughout Maine's conservation history that reveal a well-established tradition of keeping the federal government out of the state's land management efforts. The Weeks Act, passed in 1911, which authorized and initiated the federal acquisition of forestlands for conservation in the eastern U.S., faced great resistance in northern Maine (Rolde 2001). In 1931 there was a proposal in Congress to create a national forest through the purchase of tax-delinquent timberlands in Maine, which was occurring elsewhere in the eastern U.S.; the proposal proved to be so unpopular that no state legislator stepped forward to sponsor an enabling bill (Judd and Beach 2003). The Allagash Wilderness Waterway managed to shirk federal designation following resistance from industry landowners and conservation groups alike and instead, in 1970, became the first state-managed unit of the National Wild and Scenic River System (Judd and Beach 2003). In 1998, the Northern Forest Stewardship Act failed to pass. It had

aimed to federally protect 26 million acres of forest extending from Maine through upstate New York, but it failed to garner unanimous support in the Senate, and Maine's U.S. senators pulled their support ostensibly due to the lack of public field hearings promised to property rights activists (Kane 1998). And Quimby's proposal to create a national park in northern Maine is one of several likeminded yet failed attempts. As early as 1936, a proposal for a Katahdin National Park failed to rally Congressional support, and there were also concerns that a national park designation would bring too many people to the area, impinging on its character (Irland 1999). Instead, former governor Percival Baxter had already started developing his own plans for the region in 1919 (and thus vehemently opposed the national park), eventually buying and deeding a total of more than 200,000 acres to the state of Maine. The 1931 establishment of Baxter State Park continued the tradition of turning federal conservation initiatives into state-managed projects. It is evident that Mainers like to do things their own way.

In this country, federal land ownership is concentrated in the great forests of the western United States; a total of sixty-two percent of Alaska is federally owned, as is forty-seven percent of the eleven coterminous western states (Gorte et al. 2012). Maine sits at the opposite end of the spectrum. As a result of widespread private land sales starting in the early 1800s spurred on by the forest products industry, as well as the resistance to federal land threaded throughout Maine's history, the vast majority of the north woods has been and remains privately owned. A miniscule seven percent

(approximately 1.3 million acres) of Maine's forests is public land, and most of this is state and locally owned (1.1 million acres) (Maine Forest Products Council 2013). Even during the recent decades of sweeping forestland sales previously detailed, these numbers scarcely changed. Only 1.7 percent of Maine's lands were federally owned in 1994, and a decade later after millions of acres had exchanged hands including 1.5 million acres of newly protected land, that percentage had barely inched upward to reach only 1.8 percent (Hagan et al. 2005). Meanwhile, a report produced in 2013 listed only one percent (186,000 acres) of Maine's forestland under federal ownership (Maine Forest Products Council 2013). Due to a general suspicion of public ownership and specifically federal ownership, recent land-protection strategies in Maine have predominantly focused on keeping conserved land in private hands, often through the use of conservation easements that largely evade controversy by sustaining the open land tradition and permitting traditional uses (Clark and Howell 2007).

Although distrust in the federal government among Maine's citizenry and efforts to hinder federal ownership of the woods stretch back more than a century, the modern, nationwide private property rights movement (also known as the land rights movement or Wise Use movement[42]), which originated in the late 1980s, has fortified opposition to the federal protection of Maine's woods. Many in the

[42] Within the field of political ecology James McCarthy (1998, 2002) has written about environmentalism and the Wise Use movement in the American West. For definitive histories of the movement, see also Brick and Cawley (1996) and Yandle (1995).

movement believe that conservation (i.e., "greenlining") is a front for federalizing land and eliminating private property. The movement is particularly strong in rural areas where residents bear the brunt of environmental regulations as their economic needs and interests are eclipsed by ecological imperatives that favor wilderness protection over human use. The movement's conflation of environmentalism and federal involvement in land management is not surprising given that most major environmental laws are federal. This is a reflection of the preferred strategy of the modern, mainstream environmental movement in the U.S., which has traditionally focused on the passage of federal laws, often minimizing the role of local or regional authorities and actors (McCarthy 2002). The mainstream environmental movement also tends to target corporations and attempts to hold them accountable to the public good, portraying big business as unscrupulously running roughshod over the environment in search of profits (see Karlinger 1997). This produces the suspicion that environmentalists are anti-business and seek to entirely eliminate corporations (and the jobs they produce), leading to accusations of communism and anti-private property (Rolde 2001). To be clear, the property rights movement positions itself as anti-environmenta*list*, not anti-environment. In fact, since its emergence the movement has been one of the most significant and influential land use and environmental movements in the United States, arguing for a form of locally-driven, "common sense" stewardship (i.e., conservationist rather than preservationist) based upon the land's recreational, traditional, and economic use by people and industry

(e.g., forestry, mining, farming, ranching) (Robbins 2006, Jacobs 2003, McCarthy 2002 and 1998).

Though the Wise Use social movement grew out of efforts to retain local access to and control over the vast tracts of federal lands in the American West, the confluence of historical, cultural, and economic elements in Maine's north woods have produced a fervent and vocal property rights crowd in the state's more politically conservative rural regions. One need only look back to the north woods' "squatter" communities: white settlers of Maine's forestlands throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century who fought for rights to land they had unlawfully colonized and laboriously worked, spawning a move to secede from Massachusetts (Rolde 2001). These settlers along with evicted Native Americans were the state's first property rightists. The broad extent of private lands in Maine and local claims to access and use those lands reinforce ties to the property rights agenda. Furthermore, the parochial *leave us alone* sentiment common in the woods, which draws a line between the rural "us" up north and the urban "them" down south, strengthens the cultural schism.

Perhaps most significantly, the north woods has in recent decades undergone regional restructuring akin to the types of changes that fomented the grassroots Wise Use movement in the West—dramatic downturns in the forest products industry and the loss of other jobs such as manufacturing (covered in the next chapter), rapidly growing environmental interest and conservation activity in the area, and out-

migration and other demographic shifts (McCarthy 2002). Such changes amplified deep-seated cultural clashes between the wilderness ethic and land ethic and fortified resistance to conservation efforts that locals feared were aimed at replacing the working (private) forest with primeval (public) wilderness. Worries surrounding federal ownership, combined with distrust of conservation interests, raised serious concerns that north woods residents would no longer be able to work and recreate in the forest.

Property rights proponents used the phenomenon of globalization to illustrate how local ways of life in the north woods were under threat,

> It is that individuality, woven into a sense of parochial togetherness, that the local folks in northern Maine felt slipping away, afraid that forces greater than themselves, statewide and planetwide, were conspiring to obliterate their comfy, if tough, insular world. They saw no understanding nor sympathy for their way of life (Rolde 2001, 45).

There are numerous factions of the property rights movement, all of which situate themselves as local, self-determining communities fighting for their livelihoods in opposition to environmental interests and regulations, as well as federal agencies that own land or govern its uses. In addition to grassroots groups like the Wise Users that are more embedded in regional cultures, McCarthy (2002) describes two national-scale wings of the property rights movement, both of which have also played a role in conflicts over the ownership and use of Maine's forestland. One resists federal land ownership and regulation of private property, while another draws

attention to and challenges national and international environmental laws and treaties. Popular within this group are elaborate conspiracy theories, which suggest that federalizing (or protecting) land is part of a globally-hatched strategy by urban elitists to depopulate (or "cleanse") rural America and eliminate private property rights. This may appear trivial, yet these beliefs circulate widely in the public discourse and some have even been officially adopted into the GOP platform (see Kaufman 2012), further buttressing the property rights movement. They are also present in the politics of north woods land use and management. In the Katahdin region, John had to directly answer to what he describes as "paranoid conspiracy theorists" when he was a Millinocket town councilor. Following the closure of the paper mill he voiced support for the local technical college's shift toward training courses for job skills that were in high demand job areas, and was subsequently accused of being "part of the Agenda 21 effort to depopulate Millinocket by only teaching people skills for jobs that weren't available in Millinocket" (John interview 2011).[43] In property rights books, weblog posts, online articles, and gatherings and

[43] Agenda 21 is arguably the most prevalent conspiracy theory within the property rights movement. It is a nonbinding action plan created during the United Nations 1992 Earth Summit, which reflected the international consensus that environmental protection and sustainable development strategies should include cross-boundary collaboration (UN Chronicle 2012). Property rights groups contend that the resolution is part of a UN socialist plot to erode American sovereignty and deprive individuals of property rights. As part of their opposition to any government interference in land rights, property rights groups are anti-environmental regulation and anti-smart growth, which includes fighting attempts to place restrictions on new development in rural areas.

meeting proceedings, cross-scale connections are zealously made that suggest an elaborate scheme between the federal government and/or global governance regimes and environmental interests to preserve and restore large chunks of wilderness while squeezing out the people who live in them.

For her part, Roxanne Quimby personifies everything that property rightists in the north woods oppose. She is a conservationist who bought industrial lands that were previously open to traditional practices, then unilaterally placed restrictions on many public uses in the name of wilderness preservation. In 2010 she was appointed to the National Park Foundation's Board of Directors and just a few months later revealed her intent to hand the land over to the federal government for the establishment of a public national park. Her initial failure to consider local livelihoods and diverse uses of the forest, her cancellation of camp leases that effectively evicted families and businesses from the land, and the consequent closures of adjacent

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Another property rights versus conservation conspiracy that hits close to the north woods targets the UN-financed Commission on Global Governance, which produced a report suggesting various ways the international community can improve cooperation on global issues (e.g., strengthening global governance institutions) (Commission on Global Governance 1995). However, an editorial in the March 1998 issue of *All Maine Matters* called attention to the threat of "international treaties that ignore American property rights and commerce." For in addition to "UN plans for global governance [and] UN taxation," the report contains a proposal for a parliamentary body of nonelected private organizations "like the Sierra Club and the Nature Conservancy, called NGOs," which adhere to international agreements like the Biodiversity Treaty, Agenda 21, and the Rio Declaration (DeWeese 1998). This is then directly related to endless efforts by "radical enviros" to "put the Maine forests in public ownership and to shut down the [wood] industry [and] return the forest to primeval wilderness," which just happens to be outlined in the "United Nations protocol to the Biodiversity Treaty" (Voight 1998).

businesses that had relied upon uses like snowmobiling and hunting, epitomized rural marginalization in the name of preservation. Endless newspaper articles tracing Quimby's every move have produced hundreds of reader comments that amount to a virtual online debate over property rights and the conservation and use of the north woods, echoing many of the ideas articulated by the property rights movement. One string of comments began with a reader lamenting Quimby's "selfishness,"

> It just makes me uncomfortable that she has control over 100,000 plus acres of Maine land, and it bothers me that she is using her money and power to tell the state of Maine what it should do with all that land. Yes she bought the land so technically it's hers, but its [sic] just too much and it takes the opportunity away from us as a state to collectively decide what should be done with the land (BlaqkPhoenix777 2011).

A fellow reader retorted, "Technically? She bought it. She owns it. She can donate it. The state of Maine can take it or not. The Federal Government can take it or not" (Hassenpheffer 2011), to which an avid poster of online comments countered,

> [Quimby] can do whatever she wants on her own land whether anyone else likes it or not, but owning land does not giver [sic] the right to unilaterally make public policy by 'giving' it to the Federal government in order to change the form of government. She wants Federal control over parts of Maine in order to eliminate local government, private property and a private economy. She has no right to do that (ewv 2011a).

Posting comments in response to another article written a couple weeks later, the same reader continued,

> We do not own land 'in common". Federal lands are completely controlled by Federal agencies for the political interests with the most influence, currently progressively imposed preservationism at the expense of the economy and human beings. […] Without private property our rights and freedoms,

> including privacy, are not possible. […] The National Park System [sic] has a long record of seizing other people's property in the name of 'The Good of All' and anyone can see the destruction and trampling of human rights that has caused. […] The National Park Service, heavily influenced by its national pressure groups, controls land for its own preservationist purposes under what it claims to be the 'nationally significant", which inherently means that local people don't count on principle. It makes no sense for the state to surrender jurisdiction over land within the state to Federal control. It only brings serious problems of destruction of property rights, loss of representational government and expansionary powers. That is why Quimby, Restore, NPCA [National Parks Conservation Association], NPS, the Wilderness Society, etc. want it – they want top-down government control in their own interests (ewv 2011b).

However, the irony is that even though Quimby has adopted land management strategies and protection goals that outrage and disenfranchise many local users, she remains a private property owner and therefore claimant of the right to do what she pleases with her land (at least according to the property rights crowd). Quimby herself has called out the contradictory stance of those who oppose her land use policies yet also assert their fundamental belief in property rights (Clark 2008). After all, Maine may appear to provide the perfect conditions for a strong property rights movement, *but* most of the private land to which local users claim rights is ultimately someone *else's* property. This produces a clash between property rightists who hold tight to Maine's open land (common property) tradition and those who possess more hardline property rights beliefs. For example, when private land is deemed of national significance and consequently "federalized" or made public, readers like "ewv" perceive this to be "an expression of the ideology of collectivism" in that local interests (access and use rights, economic benefits) are superseded by

those of the greater "public" good (ewv 2011b). Another similarly aligned reader argued that Quimby's park proposal has a "detrimental effect on the [ATV and snowmobile] industry" and does "not see why people should deny people access if the trail is already there" (Coburn 2011). In response, a divergent view of individual versus collective rights emerged:

> Mr. Coburn doesn't appear to understand individual rights. From my point of view, his thinking is rather socialistic. It sounds as if he believes Ms. Quimby should be forced to open her land to help other businesses. The snowmobile trail is not state or federally owned, it does not matter if it is all ready [sic] in existence. Land seizure from the rich for the supposed benefit of the less wealthy is what the communist [sic] did in Russia and China. This is not a socialist or communist country, this is America! Everyone has the right to private property and to say who is and who is not allowed on your land. You'd think that many of these snowmobilers (ATVers too) believe that they are subject to a different set of rules (Lepageman 2011).

Traditional party lines are fractured when conservative/libertarian, anti-environmentalist property rightists arguing against Quimby's plan to federalize private lands butt heads with conservative property rightists defending her basic rights as a property owner and shrewd, self-made businessperson:

> I agree with other posters. I am a republican and feel that [Quimby] can do whatever she wishes with her property. She worked hard for the money to pay for it. "She has taken away land", really? Another way to put that would be, "She purchased land." It was for sale when she got it, why didn't you purchase it and do with it what you wish? I bet you would get really angry if you did own it and others attempted to dictate how/what you did with it, I know I would! Just because I belong to a political party does not put me in lockstep with someone's idea of how I should think. As stated, your ideas lean towards socialist doctrine (StuckinNorthCarolinaMainer 2012).

In response, another Mainer summarized the conundrum:

> As republicans (true republicans, not GW [George W. Bush] neo-cons) we should be the vanguard for personal freedom. Damn straight it is her land. She paid for it and can choose to do what she wants with it. Including limiting or outright forbidding public use. However, as a central maine [sic] resident it is disappointing to see people who arent [sic] using their own land and are from away closing it to people who have used it for many years. […] Also, as soon as Quimby starts in with the politics of a national park, interfering with public policy then we as republicans must be the vanguard against intrusive government policy! Which is the catch 22 of Quimby's my way or the highway thinking (Brown III 2012).

After spending more than three decades living and building successful nature tourism businesses in a couple popular north woods vacation towns, John has become quite familiar with this paradox,

> One of the things that I always find sort of a humorous irony is the people that cry the loudest about loss of access, traditionally, are conservative republicans who have a hard core property rights value set, and they don't reconcile the two at *all* when it comes to large tracts of public land. They don't. It cracks me up. If you sat down with [a certain Millinocket town councilor] who would cry the loudest about Roxanne and the national park and you asked him how he felt about personal property rights, he'd bite his tongue off because he couldn't reconcile the conflict in his own vision. He'd try to come up with some reason why large landowners have some different responsibility, or why what Roxanne's doing is wrong, but on the other hand […] these guys don't understand why we have zoning because if it's your land why can't you do whatever you want with it?[44] But Roxanne shouldn't be able to what *she* wants with hers because it's taking away something from them (interview 2011).

The seeming incompatibility of asserting the public's rights to another's private land while emphasizing the private property owner's rights is indicative of the

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[44] John is referring to the Land Use Planning Commission, which is generally disliked, to put it mildly, by property rights and anti-environmental regulation/pro-business and development crowds.

challenges inherent in navigating the complex terrain of common property in Maine's private forestlands. After all, property rightists touting the efficiency and equity of private property ownership utilize language that is reminiscent of the tragedy of the commons narrative by asserting that common property regimes are ineffective and less sustainable, and presenting land privatization as the best solution. For example, articles posted on pro-property rights websites make familiar arguments,

> Property rights are also important to individuals and their liberty because the owner of private property has something which he or she controls, where the owner has dominion, and where the owner can be free from outside intrusions (Burling 1998).
>
> If President Obama really wants to promote outdoor conservation, he should create more opportunities for private ownership and respect individual property rights. People who have a vested interest in something, whether it's land or an iPod, are more likely to take care of it. Land ownership naturally creates incentives to protect the property. Private citizens would do a better job of protecting land than the government could ever hope to (Lizan 2010).

Yet in the north woods, residents who do *not* own the land endorse the property rights of others under the condition that they are granted continued access to the forest. This is not considered an "outside intrusion" but rather a tradition of local use. A vested, collective interest in the land stems from personal and communal histories and connections to the woods, not individual ownership. Thus a unique and fundamentally contradictory form of private property rights has taken form in the Maine woods.

While it may appear impossible for property rights and private commons to coexist within these discourses, they managed to do so for more than a century when

the woods were under corporate ownership and the values of the users and the owners aligned; conflict has arisen because the private property owners' ideologies, including the responsibility of federal government, differ markedly from the common property users. In the north woods, neoliberal property rightists and localist common property rightists may disagree about whose rights are superior, but they both ultimately favor private working land over public preserved land and hold particular disdain for federal ownership. As Al replied when asked whether he prefers private or public ownership, "Private! You ever see the government do anything right? The private sector is the way to go" (interview 2011). In addition, for economic and cultural reasons, the use of these lands by resident communities is generally deemed of greater importance than any greater (i.e., "from away") interest. As such, local public interests trump statewide, national, or any global public interest in Maine's north woods.

By attempting to donate land to the National Park Service, an exceedingly distrusted federal entity, Quimby put herself at odds with both property rights factions, and the restrictions she placed on her private property served as a preview, for many, of the kinds of constraints a national park would usher in and make permanent. She has expressed that her primary concern is ecological restoration and preservation, not multiple human uses of the forest, and she believed that federal protection in the form of a national park was the most effective way to achieve her land protection goals. Furthermore, by seeking national park status, she was heralding

the region's value to different set of potential users—the greater American public. This vision is reflective of a discourse centered on the belief that conservation endeavors are for the common good of all humanity. West (2006) explains that those who support such myths "see what they do as a moral imperative that perhaps transcends local rights" (179). Despite the attention increasingly paid to local populations and community participation (e.g., community-based environmental protection), West argues that "the urgency of the global environmental crisis has given conservation activists and practitioners a sort of moral high ground to stand on when making decisions about local peoples and the global environment" (2006, 32). Substantiating such justifications, a reader responding to an article about another Quimby land purchase rallied behind her, declaring, "We live in a global age where the planet and the environment must be protected and conserved… There is no honor in stalking and killing and needlessly destroying things. The people of Maine should be grateful to Roxanne" (Bangor Daily News 2006).

As for her motivation and insistence on establishing a national park despite a history of strong local opposition to federalization in the Maine woods, Quimby's spokesperson explained how she derived inspiration from the Ken Burns PBS series on the history of America's national parks. [45]

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[45] This is in reference to the six part PBS series directed by Ken Burns, "The National Parks: America's Best Idea" (2009), which was a story of "people who were willing to devote themselves to saving some precious portion of the land they loved, and in doing so reminded their fellow citizens of the full meaning of democracy" (PBS 2009).

> This is uniquely American—the national park system, the idea that the federal government owns land that's open to the public. When she bought her first piece of land she really didn't [have a plan]. As she continued, her focus became more refined and she [began] thinking that it should be a national park in some way federalized. The federal level was the most secure. […] It's more permanent. [T]he Department of the Interior is the safest entity for her goals [which are] long-term preservation for recreation and ecology. National forests come under the Department of Agriculture and are established to provide a cushion for jobs and timber supply, you know, economic benefit. The timber supply, the mineral extraction, isn't really in Roxanne's vision for this property (Bill interview 2011).

He then told a story about a presentation Quimby once gave to the National Park Service describing her family's emigration from Russia (via China) and how "the United States of America took her family in and accepted them, gave them a chance, and she was the first person in her family born in the United States." She went on to describe her creation of a highly successful business, which she was able to sell for millions, and how now that "she has that money, she'd like to give something back to the United States of America and she'd like to give something back in the form of a national park. So that's her inspiration" (Bill interview 2011). As Bill remarked, she "does a very good job wrapping herself up in the flag" (2011).

This gets at a final site of struggle in the woods—fundamental divergences in the meaning of "public" and democratic principles that represent the bedrock of American society. Quimby is drawn to the notion of public land, and particularly America's national parks, as a pure and noble expression of *land for the people*. Her love for Maine's wilderness and its regenerative spirit, coupled with her conviction

that its preservation will continue America's great democratic tradition, evokes the connections Frederick Jackson Turner made between wilderness and American virtues at the turn of the nineteenth century (see Nash 1982). As Quimby once pronounced,

> To me, ownership and private property were the beginning of the end in this country. Once the Europeans came in, drawing lines and dividing things up, things started getting exploited and over-consumed. But a park takes away the whole issue of ownership. It's off the table; we all own it and we all share it. It's so democratic (Clark 2008).

Even after withdrawing the original national park proposal in late 2012, Quimby's son continued to reiterate the importance of a national park to Elliotsville Plantation's long-term goals for the land, explaining, "We feel like there is so much equity in a national park" (Sambides, Jr. 2012a).

However, private property rightists make the opposite claim that oftentimes public land is not for the entire public, per se, but rather a specific (privileged) class of users. This allegation aligns with prevalent critiques of conservation in the U.S. and across the world, particularly the protectionist "fortress conservation" model that upholds the wilderness ideal of nature and prohibits and sometimes removes undesirable users (see Brockington et al. 2008, Brockington 2002). Eminent environmental historian Roderick Nash wrote that "The concept of a national park reflects some of the central values and experiences in American culture" (1970, 726). But this begs the fundamental questions of exactly *whose* values, experiences, and

culture? In both the global south and north, indigenous peoples have been evicted from lands, and their hunting and other practices prohibited or closely regulated during efforts that allegedly best protect biodiversity, natural wonders, and valuable wildlife resources (see Brockington and Igoe 2006, Jacoby 2006, Igoe 2003, Burnham 2000, Ranger 1999, Spence 1999, Neumann 1998, Catton 1997). More recently, local communities in the global north have reacted vociferously against preservationist policies that aim to restrict practices such as hunting, motorized recreation, and timber harvesting on lands where they have lived, worked, and played for generations (Robbins 2006, McCarthy 2002 and 1998). In this sense, conservation as practiced around the world for more than a century has largely been a decidedly undemocratic phenomenon. And in her effort to amass enough lands to create the space for a park, Quimby herself has become that dreaded private property owner who she described as the "beginning of the end," coming in, "drawing lines, and dividing things up." Holding tight to the authority and exclusionary power her property rights bought her, she initially shunned local traditions and participation in decision-making while touting the myriad benefits and egalitarianism of public land for all people.

Property rightists in Maine's north woods and beyond stress this populist assertion that public land is, quite simply, not public:

> One of the keystones of justifying the creation of public land has always been the assurance that the "public" would be able to use the land, to have access for recreation, for hunting. After all, the name says it all, "public land". It is

> certainly for the public, right? Wrong! The current Clinton Administration declaration to deny access to the public to five million acres of public land seems to be surprising many people. It is raising all sorts of hackles as if this is a new and startling concept. […] All human use of the land will be banned, including recreation, except for some limited walking or meditation (spiritual involvement). This is not a new concept and has always been the real purpose hidden behind the "public land" charade by the enviros and the Clinton Administration. […]. The denial of public access on public land is the ultimate goal in the end game of the environmental movement. They are out to "preserve" Nature and this is their number one priority! The basic human needs, desires, or uses of our natural resources on this planet, and specifically in the United States, have no place in their ultimate scheme (Voight 1999).

Similarly, during a 2005 conference co-hosted by the American Land Rights Association in response to the failed Northern Forest Stewardship Act mentioned earlier, the president of the Alliance for America (an umbrella organization for national Wise Use and property rights groups) addressed the crowd,

> Whether it be Wilderness proposals for federal lands in the west, or land grabs that threaten recreationist/landowner relations in the east, the environmental conflict industry is up to mischief everywhere. Their agenda is different, but their objective is always the same. PREVENT ANY HUMAN USE OR ENJOYMENT OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES. Recreationists must stand with our natural resource industries and private property rights interests to defend our mutual objective of 'Preserving our natural resources FOR the public instead of FROM the public' (Blue Ribbon Coalition 1998).

These conflicting views of public land are rooted in divergent philosophies of the democratic tradition and different rankings of various scales of rights. Public land proponents, like Quimby, approach the concept of democracy from a common good, society-wide standpoint, wherein the government plays an active and much-needed role safeguarding citizens' interests and protecting resources for the greater public.

Hence the push for a national park. Conversely, property rightists align with a (neo)liberal, market-based tradition that views democracy as the means of better securing individual rights, free from the unwanted interference of other individuals and the state. This perspective fears governmental abuses of power that are perceived as threatening one's freedom and regards private property rights as the cornerstone of America's free and democratic society—an inalienable right foundational to our civil liberties (Terchek and Conte 2001). This is evidenced by frequent quoting of the nation's founding fathers, whether it is George Washington *("Freedom and property rights are inseparable. You cannot have one without the other")*; Thomas Jefferson *("The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen, in his person and property, and in their management)*; or John Adams *("Property must be secured, or liberty cannot exist").* An individual's property rights hold supreme *unless* that individual ultimately aims to transfer private land to public ownership, particularly federal ownership and management. As the author of a popular property rights website proclaimed,

> [Quimby] came back to Maine to spend tens of millions of dollars buying and accumulating about 100,000 acres of Maine timberland with the intent to stop logging and most traditional recreation in rural Maine by turning millions of acres of land into primitive wilderness. She intends to flip the land to the National Park Service, thereby eliminating private property and local government in favor of Federal control for forced wilderness – as if any person has a right to change the form of government itself, replacing civilization with primitivism, as she uses her (dubiously acquired) wealth to buy an imposed eco-socialism (Veyhl 2010).

However, this diatribe touches upon another democratic tradition in the north woods, which is that of fair and equal access to the forest, its resources, and even its management despite one's lack of personal wealth to acquire formal legal rights to the land. This open land tradition is more populist, from its origins in the Great Pond Law to present day, always stressing the economic benefits the land brings to those who live in surrounding, often marginalized, communities. This also explains why descriptions of Quimby as an elitist outsider with "dubiously acquired" millions are fundamental to a narrative that rejects her individual private property rights. To draw on a useful parallel, in studying the relationship between environmental knowledge, policy, and power in questions of land management in Northern Yellowstone, Robbins (2006) explains that local hunters possess

> deeply held notion[s] of wilderness *equity*, expressed in the constant call for 'access', which links hunting and nature (if not 'wilderness' per se) to democracy. Hunters see coalitions formed against access not simply as assaults on instrumental interests ('our' resources) but more profoundly as attacks on populist democratic values and an abuse of economic power: class war (197; emphasis in original).

While Quimby equates the best of American democratic principles with federally protected public land, many local users' fights for access and against exclusion are ultimately about the retention of rights to nature as a long held common property resource that sustains them culturally and economically. Thus, for many north woods residents, keeping the federal government out of their affairs, keeping

private lands private, and having their needs and interests represented and understood, best exemplifies democracy in the woods.

Conclusion

Following two decades of sweeping, at times frenzied, selling and buying of huge tracts of forestland, the people of Maine are facing a monumental challenge—how to balance public and private rights; wilderness and working land values; and local, state, and national interests across a landscape dominated by private ownership and a state divided in two. As Judd (2007) wrote, "The future of the Maine North Woods depends on acknowledging the commons and the many claims upon it, on recognizing the priceless ecological heritage that so impressed [wilderness advocate William O.] Douglas as well as the legacy of change that makes these woods such a fascinating historical artifact" (10).

Just as the northern forest's ecology is dynamic and continually transforming in response to various small and large perturbations, so too will the forest's social landscape continue to shift beneath recent economic, political, and cultural pressures. However, given the massive scale of changes in the number and type of landowners and ensuing fragmentation, it is understandable why many fear that the open land tradition is particularly vulnerable. As new owners move in, age-old connections between titleholder and user are easily severed, no trespassing signs are nailed to

trees, and the private commons becomes simply private. Ostrom (2000) warned of the tenuousness of common property often caused by the arrival of new folks,

> Heterogeneity in the knowledge and acceptance of local common property regimes is likely to lead to their undoing. In frontier regions, new migrants […] are unlikely to recognize the legitimacy of extant, *de facto*, property-rights systems. Thus, the common agreement necessary for the sustenance of any property-rights system may rapidly disappear if settlement patterns undergo a rapid change (348–9).

Interestingly, although Quimby has been perceived as a, if not *the*, primary threat to the open land tradition, the scale and publicness of her acquisitions and goals for her land provided opponents with a clear target around which they could organize while diverting attention from financial investor-owners with ambiguous intentions. While the posting of land has increased across the board, often among small landowners, Quimby (and lesser so, AMC), received the brunt of the open land defense. Years of well-publicized resistance to her conservation plans eventually resulted in a shift in strategy; not only did Quimby put on hold her national park dreams but she also recognized the importance of more effectively involving the local community in land use decisions. In this case, the institutional arrangements governing communal rights to the woods managed to endure.

However, other changes may also be afoot. Despite a strong pro-private land sentiment in north woods communities, some sense that support for public lands is growing.

> By and large, what I've seen in the last twenty years is that people are starting to get that there's a new breed of owner, and they are much more open to public land because they view it as the best way to maintain public access. But that's something that's sort of evolving over time and when I go into a small town talking for the first time about a conservation project, usually public access is the number one concern. They care a little bit about, "Are you still gonna cut timber, are there gonna be jobs?" But they care a lot about, "Is it gonna be posted CLOSED, will the snowmobile trails close, can I still hunt, fish, hike?" If we can achieve those public access goals through some sort of public ownership structure, that is generally going to be very well received (Greg interview 2011).

When asked his preference for private versus public ownership in the north woods, George seemed to align with Greg's prediction, "I don't care, private land, big woods companies, what have you, as long as the people can use it, go across it" (interview 2011). Ultimately, whatever configuration of land ownership, protection, and management is proposed, short- and long-term success will likely rely on acknowledging and somehow working within the framework of an open land tradition that encompasses public access and use rights as well as the inclusion of local communities as respected voices helping to govern the north woods commons. The failure to do so will likely further marginalize surrounding rural communities that are connected to and depend on the land in numerous ways. The next chapter explores the ties between Maine's rural communities, the forest, and local economies, and how snowmobiling connects and strengthens these linkages.

Chapter 5. An Economic Machine

Introduction

Maine's forests have historically been and remain to this day the foundation of the state's economy, particularly within the north woods communities that have long relied upon rural-based industries and nature-based recreation and tourism to support their livelihoods. In a sense, the forest economy has changed relatively little; the harvesting and supply of wood to paper mills, sawmills, and more recently biomass generators remains the leading commercial use. Yet widespread job losses within the forest products industry and associated shifts in land ownership (and sometimes land use) have introduced instability to traditional ways of making a living in rural Maine. This chapter uses the story of snowmobiling in the north woods over the last half century to trace these economic changes, as well as contrasting understandings of rural economies that are connected to differing perceptions of nature, rurality, and economic development. Not only do existing snowmobile economies, critical both at the community and state level, make clear the enormous economic implications of the closing of the commons. As an activity that has created a physical, social, and economic infrastructure across a vast seemingly empty space, snowmobiling has also proven essential to local opposition of restrictions on access and the struggle to maintain Maine's open land tradition.

Formal Forest Economies

Maine's economy and natural landscape have been linked for centuries. The north woods have been a working forest since the arrival of Native Americans 10,000–11,000 years ago, their settlements and movements tied to the seasons and resources provided by the regions' diverse and changing ecologies. Beginning in the early seventeenth century, the state's earliest workforce (of European descent) of trappers, hunters, fishermen, and loggers, sold what they cut and caught. Settlers cleared land for agriculture and built sawmills along the rivers. Corporate forestland owners constructed pulp (paper) mills and sawmills throughout Maine to process their harvested timber, and towns came into being and were sustained by a flourishing forest products industry. Stone quarries were excavated and factories sprung up in rural areas to process the food and fish harvested from the land and water. Thus from the very beginning, Maine has "been a place where natural resources matter. Land, water, trees, and fish stocks are the firmament on which Maine was founded and grew" (Colgan and Barringer 2007, 3).

This network of rural, natural resource-based industries and community economies provided a stable foundation for Maine's rural residents and played a significant role in the state's economy for more than one hundred years. In 1960 rural-based industries accounted for more than one in every three jobs (Colgan 2004). Nearly one third of all jobs in the late 1960s were in manufacturing, natural resource-based industries (i.e., farming, forest products, and food products such as maple syrup)

accounted for sixteen percent of all jobs in the state, and the textile, apparel, and shoe industries provided just under nine percent of all jobs (Colgan and Barringer 2007). Almost one-fourth of all earnings in rural areas came from farming, fishing, or the manufacture of food, wood products, or paper (Lawton 2005). And these jobs paid well—wages and salary earnings per employee in rural Maine were ninety-four percent of the state's average earnings per employee in urban areas in 1970, and manufacturing earnings per worker were ninety-five percent of the urban average (Lawton 2005).

In addition to these well-paying and secure jobs in the forest products and manufacturing industries, rural Mainers supported themselves through another local, traditional, natural resource-based industry—tourism. In the 1800s, as trees were chopped down for lumber throughout the north woods, tourists from nearby populous east coast cities sought an escape from modern urban afflictions. The tradition of urban recreationists' northerly migrations to Maine's rustic camps and elegant resorts offered a new and important source of income for north woods communities. And just like the perception of nature as a refuge and counterpoint to industrialism influenced the beginning of mainstream preservation efforts in America, the wilderness ethic also shaped tourism targeted to out-of-staters. Cognizant of the expectations of this well-heeled clientele, "promoters tuned this rustic landscape to the sensitivities of America's traveling elite" (Judd 1997, 202). By the mid-1850s, parts of the north woods were major tourist destinations. For example, in the early 1900s

the region around Moosehead Lake (the present-day site of Plum Creek's proposed development project) was a popular resort destination serviced by four railway lines (Lilieholm 2007). The Mt. Kineo House, situated at the base of scenic Mount Kineo and surrounded by Moosehead Lake, was at one point the largest inland water hotel in the country, with accommodations for 600 guests and a dining hall that seated 400 (Fling 2012).

In the period from 1879 to 1909, investments in Maine summer resorts grew from $500,000 to $138 million, and annual income from the tourist industry increased dramatically from $250,000 to $20 million (Judd 1997). Throughout the twentieth century, state campaigns and investments in infrastructure—from railroads to roads to trails—continued to encourage tourism in the state's interior where fresh mountain air was said to cleanse lungs choked by urban industrialism. The network of businesses that became the foundation of Maine's rural tourism and recreation sector included sportsman camps and guiding and outfitting services; restaurants; and hotels, cottages, and wilderness resorts, all of which initially catered to an elite, urban aristocracy who were most definitely "from away." Ryden (2011) argues that Northern New England, settled largely from southern New England states, became akin to a colony of these more metropolitan southern neighbors, such as Massachusetts and Connecticut, "providing resources both material and scenic" (45). Tourism was a powerful expression of this dynamic,

> with state economies becoming more and more dependent on the dollars left behind by visitors and vacationers. Even if visitors did not buy second homes, they were increasingly enticed by more specialized sorts of outdoor recreation, activities that also tended to be expensive and exclusive (Ryden 2011, 45).

This history of recreational tourism in Maine, wherein promoters spent millions trying to attract wealthy city dwellers, differs vastly from the emergence and ascendance of snowmobiling as a popular and profitable activity in north woods communities. Unlike lake and ski resorts and hunting camps that were tailored to recreationists with land-use needs that often conflicted with industrial and agrarian traditions, snowmobiling was homegrown. As detailed in earlier chapters, snowmobiling represented a relationship with nature that aligned with, if not relied upon, the working forest. The technology that enabled mechanized, over-snow travel was developed by people working in Maine's forest-products industry, its roots were utilitarian for rural dwellers, and recreational prototypes of the machine were even tested across the state's rugged, forested landscape. As detailed in chapter 3, the activity seemed perfectly tailored to people living in small, north woods towns, as the new machines provided a welcomed respite from long, cold, isolating Maine winters and a new means of exploring local environs. But also critically snowmobiling "opened up *seasons*—for the restaurant and the service station owner, the motel owner—that we'd never heard of before" (Sam interview 2011). His brother added, "Even in '61 these guys had to have a place to stay" (Richard interview 2011. The activity filled a critical economic void in the recreational off-season, when a tourist

economy that had been founded upon attending to summer visitors practically screeched to a halt during Maine's long winters. The immediate popularity of the activity translated into an economic shot in the arm for rural Maine's wintertime service industry.

In the early years, when most snowmobilers explored unplowed woods roads close to home, the primary economic benefit to communities came in the form of registration fees and retail dollars spent on the machines, gear, and at gas stations. But as the activity grew in popularity and riders expanded their range, the economic impact of snowmobiling became much more significant. Previously depressed winter economies were transformed as people descended upon the woods from all sides, from instate and out, to ride the trails. Al explained that before snowmobiling, winters were tough in Greenville (Moosehead Lake region), which didn't have much industry. But things began to look different as early as the late 1960s,

> I worked up there [at a restaurant] tending bar part-time and that place was really booming. There were buses coming from Bangor, Canada, people were coming in on the train. It was really a driving business (Al interview 2011).

Summer accommodations turned into four season destinations as they added groomed trail systems, snowmobile rentals, and special winter packages to their list of amenities. Owners of a family-run motel in Houlton stressed that this economic impact could not be overestimated, explaining that it was previously the case that "once December and January came around, we would do nothing. We would have

only two or three rooms occupied on Saturday and Sunday nights," while now those rooms are often booked from January through March (Associated Press 1996). Sam concurred, "We all know that [snowmobiling] took off and became an economic boom, where motels that [once] closed down at the end of November now make more money in the winter than they did in the summer" (interview 2011). An elaborate trailside infrastructure of local gas stations, general stores, and restaurants also reaped the benefits of an adventurous and hungry winter clientele. Signs were placed along the trails alerting riders to nearby facilities, and snowmobilers began planning their days around the best rendezvous points to fill up their gas tanks and bellies.

Figure 19. Snowmobile trail signage, 1970s

Many of the dollars giving rural communities a significant boost were from Mainers' pockets. Even though word quickly spread about the state's extensive trails and beautiful scenery, pulling in tourists from all directions, the number of out-of-

state tourists on the trails has always been eclipsed by the number of residents (Snowmobile Program 2013). When asked during a 1996 interview how many of a small Maine town's 956 residents snowmobiled, the town manager laughed with a response of "probably 900 of them" (Associated Press 1996). Economic context is therefore critical to this story. Quite simply, strong rural economies fueled the meteoric rise of recreational snowmobiling in Maine and other snowbelt states. After all, the period starting in the late-1950s, when snowmobile companies successfully developed and began to mass-market personal recreational snowmobiles, through to the 1980s, coincided with a period of economic growth and security in Maine's north woods. Lumber and paper mill employment levels grew through these years, peaking in the early-1980s (Keeping Maine's Forests 2009). According to a 1970 survey, snowmobilers had higher incomes on average than the general Maine population (Whittaker and Wentworth 1972) (spending $500 on a snowmobile in 1961 was equal to a $3,850 purchase by today's standards—a significant investment, especially for a leisure activity). The same survey found that a proportionately lower share of snowmobile owners had annual incomes less than $5,000 (twelve percent compared to twenty-eight percent of Maine's total population) and a higher share had incomes greater than $10,000 (forty-seven percent compared to twenty-nine percent of Mainers) (Whittaker and Wentworth 1972). The well-paying jobs and economic security provided by the forest products and manufacturing industries not only supplied a ready market for snowmobile manufacturing and sales, but also a horde of

eager volunteers with both the interest and time to commit to the development of local clubs, trail infrastructure, and relationships with landowners, area businesses, and state agencies and legislators.

Figure 20. New snowmobile bridge over the East Branch of the Penobscot River, 1990

Meanwhile, in response to an increasing desire among riders to travel farther and for longer periods, these legions of enthusiastic snowmobilers helped build and maintain an extensive network of trails throughout the state. As Richard recalled, "All of a sudden a lot of people wanted to go a lot of miles" (interview 2011). And it was Maine's open land tradition that made these hundred- and even thousand-mile rides

possible. Snowmobiling's first thirty years coincided with industrial ownership of the majority of Maine's forestland. In the early seventies, roughly fifteen large landowners—predominantly paper corporations—outright owned 7.5 million acres, or thirty-seven percent, of all of Maine's land (this was up from twenty-seven percent in 1959) (Rolde 2001). In line with agreements established decades earlier, these companies continued to allow free recreational use of their land including thousands of miles of snowmobile trails on logging roads; if trails did interfere with operations, they were simply rerouted. In addition to granting snowmobilers the usage of unused logging roads in the winter, paper companies such as Great Northern Paper based in Millinocket, offered critical backing to local clubs. Sam explained that Great Northern Paper provided direct financial support to the Northern Timber Cruisers, Millinocket's local club, primarily as a means of upholding strong community relations. These monies helped build the clubhouse, create and maintain trails, and recruit members. In fact, Sam and Richard don't think the club has ever paid a lease for the land upon which the Timber Cruisers clubhouse and Antique Snowmobile Museum sit. The land is currently owned by Katahdin Timberlands LLC, and the lease remains free to this day.

> I don't honestly believe with today's [closed mills and economic uncertainties] in this town that if we tried to start the club now that it would have anywhere near what we have for facilities that we built twenty years ago. There was a direct relationship between the Great Northern Paper Company and Millinocket being the bunk house of the Great Northern Paper Company, and they wanted to take care of their people. […] They were the great white father. They may have stolen it from the Indians—I don't know where they

> got it—but they really owned a big chunk of land. And they were very good to us. Their land was our land to hunt, and fish, and do whatever (interview 2011).

One key reason why landowners at the time didn't object to machines traversing their property was the snow. Winter conditions minimized the machines' environmental impact, assuming good snow cover, and chance encounters between riders and industrial operations or riders and non-motorized recreationists were less likely during winter months (ATVs, on the other hand, have faced far greater resistance from both landowners and other recreationists).

> Snowmobiling is always less intrusive for any landowner. Snowmobiles can cross a lake or leave less trace because of the snow cover. Snowmobile trails can move twenty miles in any direction if there's active harvest—just say, "Hey, go north!"—and snowmobilers are happy to because change is good. And you can have very marginal bridges because snow and ice help. And there's not a lot of people in the woods in the winter who care one way or another, so you can have motorized recreation in the winter that is not much noticed by non-motorized enthusiasts because most non-motorized in the winter is a very small piece of geography. So the conflicts are less frequent from a human-to-human, motorized-to-non-motorized experience in the winter than they are in the summer (Dan interview 2011).

Furthermore, the north woods were imprinted with an industrial past and present—thousands of miles of roads snaking throughout the forest; active harvesting by large, loud machinery; and clear cuts, stumps, and other ecological evidence of an extractive industry. In this working forest, the snowmobile felt compatible with existing uses and its presence was less disruptive than it would have been in a more pristine, seemingly unaltered natural environment.

All of these factors—rural industries supplying good jobs, the wintertime recreational void, the open land tradition and corporate landowner benevolence, and an established history of machines in the forest—combined to swiftly boost the snowmobile's popularity in rural Maine communities. In the decades since its genesis, snowmobiling has become an integral part of north woods culture and economies, the impact immediately visible to anyone who spends time in these communities in the winter. As the 2012 recipient of the Maine Snowmobiling Association's "Supporting Business of the Year" award declared, "There are two seasons in Northern Maine. Snowmobiling season and summer" (Fiddlehead Focus 2012). During his sit-downs with rural business owners as part of efforts to drum up support for Quimby's conservation objectives, Bill has been told time and again,

> The impact [of open land restrictions] is mostly about snowmobiling. There's questions about the wood basket, there's questions about hunting, but not so much, in reality not so much. I ask people, "Am I right, my perception that it's all about snowmobiling?" And they go, "It's *all* about snowmobiling" (Bill interview 2011).

And Sarah is among the majority of northern Mainers who believe a big part of its importance to rural communities stems from its connection to tradition and culture in the north woods,

> It's such a way of life up there, I mean it really is. You hunt, you fish, and you snowmobile. That's what you do. There's really not one driveway you go by that doesn't have sleds parked in the driveway. Everything up there has "Welcome hunters. Welcome fisherman. Welcome snowmobilers." I mean, they hang huge signs out. It's one of their biggest attractions up there (interview 2010).

With a season that usually runs from early December through mid-April, snowmobiling significantly boosts the state's winter economy and brings jobs to the northern regions where winter unemployment far exceeds the statewide rate (Vail 2002). While the economic impact of snowmobiling ripples out to all areas of the state, rural economies are the principal beneficiaries of snowmobile income. The most recent study of snowmobiling's economic impact in Maine (Reiling 1999) was for the 1997–1998 season, which served as an update to a previous study of the 1995–1996 season (Reiling et al. 1996).[46] In just two years, snowmobile registrations grew from 76,477 to 83,797, a nearly ten percent increase. Broken down, resident registrations increased by just under four percent while non-resident registrations increased by more than seventy percent. Snowmobiling accounted for more than $261 million ($176 million in direct expenditures[47]) of total economic impact during the 1997–98 season (Reiling 1999), though a more recent source placed the number even higher at $350 million (Sherwood 2005). This represents an increase of $36 million in the two

[46] The 1995–96 study (Reiling et al. 1996) was based on data collected from surveys of snowmobilers, the Snowmobile Program Office (under the Division of Parks and Public Lands), the Licensing Division of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association. The 1997–98 study (Reiling 1999) used all of these same sources with the exception of the snowmobiler surveys.

[47] The direct economic impact was determined by measuring things like the purchase of new or used snowmobiles (which accounted for nearly half of total expenditures); the purchase of snowmobile trailers; snowmobile rentals; trip-related spending (e.g., accommodations, restaurants, gas); maintenance, repair, and accessory expenditures; clothing and specialty items; insurance costs (residents only); snowmobile registrations; and municipal spending (e.g., contributions to trail maintenance and marketing and promotion).

years between studies and a 500 percent increase since 1988 (Vail and Heldt 2004).[48] In addition, the economic activity associated with snowmobiling during the '97–'98 season provided the equivalent of 3,100 full-time jobs for Mainers (Reiling 1999). A University of Maine survey of resident and nonresident registered snowmobile owners found that snowmobilers purchased on average more than 87 gallons of gasoline in Maine over the course of one year (Rubin et al. 2001). Given the 95,000 registered snowmobiles at the time, this was equal to 8,336,275 total gallons of fuel in one season, plus an estimated 44,800 additional gallons consumed by groomers (Rubin et al. 2001). These are no small figures for area gas stations, many of which are connected to small town general stores, trading posts, and other locally-owned businesses.

Another indicator of the industry's enormous growth is the ballooning income and expenditures of the Off-Road Recreational Vehicle Office[49] within the Division of Parks and Public Lands. Most of the Snowmobile Program's funding comes directly

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[48] The procedures used to estimate the direct and total impact of snowmobiling on Maine's economy for both studies were much more conservative than those used in other states' studies. For example, the analysis in Maine did *not* include the purchase of second homes and vehicles used for snowmobiling. A fairly conservative multiplier (1.48) was also used to capture the indirect effect associated with the direct expenditures. This is in contrast with methods used for an economic impact study of snowmobiling in New Hampshire for the 2002–03 season, which estimated a total economic impact of almost $1.2 billion for only 68,969 total snowmobile registrations (Okrant and Goss 2003). This study counted the economic impact of second home ownership (given that sixteen percent of overnight travelers stay in second homes/condominiums or time shares) and used a 2.61 multiplier.

[49] Although ATVs are included under the umbrella of the Off-Road Recreational Vehicle Office, the Snowmobile Program accounts for roughly eighty percent of its funding (Tom interview 2011).

from the user group via gas tax monies and snowmobile registrations, and the majority of this gets redistributed back to the communities through snowmobile club and municipal grants that help pay for trail maintenance including grooming, and other related costs. In the 1986–'87 season, the program paid out slightly more than $100,000 through 172 club grants, which went toward the maintenance of the smaller club trails (Snowmobile Program 2013). By 2012–2013, this had increased to just under $1.4 million in grant monies distributed to 262 clubs, which still only covered sixty percent of total club expenditures. Municipal grants, which pay for maintenance of the bigger trails within the Interconnected Trail System, also climbed sharply from 54 grants totaling $180,000 in '86–'87, to 114 grants totaling $2.2 million in 2012–'13, which again still fell short of their total expenditures by more than $1.3 million (Snowmobile Program 2013).

Snowmobiling's economic effects are plainly evident across the landscape. Unlike other kinds of popular north woods recreation—hiking the Appalachian Trail, climbing Katahdin, canoeing the Allagash Wilderness Waterway—snowmobiling draws large numbers of relatively high-spending "marketable overnight" visitors to Maine's world-class trail network (Vail 2005, 2007). For example, more than half of surveyed snowmobilers in 2001 took weekend or longer snowmobiling trips, nearly two-thirds of whom stayed in commercial lodging (Rubin et al. 2001). Given that average stays were longer than six nights, researchers estimated that approximately 201,744 nights of motel and hotel stays were attributable to snowmobiling in just one

season (Rubin et al. 2001). These benefits are especially acute in regions with special natural features, such as the Moosehead Lake region, which encompasses the towns of Greenville and Rockwood:

> Some of the very small towns in Maine have *enormous* volumes of snowmobile traffic, so it's a very real economic development. If you're in Rockwood on the weekend you'll see that [its] entire economy in the winter is ice fishing and snowmobiling. Any business that's open is only focused on resort customers, but the "resort" is 100 miles in every direction (Dan interview 2011).

> The money they spend is just phenomenal. That Bretton Store at Greenville Junction, I bet he sold a quarter million dollars of gasoline this winter. Every time you go by there, there'd be eight or ten machines lined up at his pumps. And of course a lot of 'em rent motels and they buy a lot of accessories. Like at Indian Hill they'll buy snowmobile helmets and boots—it's a big economy. […] In Greenville, in the winter, the Black Frog Restaurant… about any day of the week you can see about 100 snowmobiles parked out there on the ice. Without the snowmobile business in this little town, this town would die. See right now [in late-April], the snowmobiling's over, the ice fishing's over, there's nothing going on—it's just like a little ghost town (Al interview 2011).

Pittston Farm, an old logging camp located north of Moosehead Lake and twenty miles from the nearest populated area, is a popular hangout for snowmobilers. Barely accessible by car in the winter, the owners have adapted their business to serve snowmobilers.

> You have these businesses like Pittston Farm, which is the jumping off point of no man's land, and hundreds of people go there. I mean in the peak of their season they're putting [parking] posts out, parking spaces, there's so many people there. So that's a huge impact on their business. What they're trying to do is survive, because it used to be a logging camp where you know thirty or forty or fifty loggers went there. [But] they're gone, so they converted to hunting and fishing for the most part, and [now] that's declining. These traditional sporting groups are trying to survive (Tom interview 2011).

> During the summer you go up [to Pittston Farm] and there's maybe one car out there, people staying very rarely. You pull up in the winter and literally there's probably 250 sleds parked on the outside of it. It's just amazing to see (Sarah interview 2010).

Figure 21. The lunch hour at Pittston Farm, March 2011

The same is true in the Katahdin region. In the mid-1990s John and his wife were trying to figure out how to make some newly purchased cabins in the Millinocket area economically viable, when a former owner of the business pulled John aside,

> and he really pitched me on snowmobiling. He said "You gotta have snowmobiling; not only do you have to cater to snowmobilers but you need to get into maintaining trails and you need to rent snowmobiles." And part of our corporate mantra to that point had been human powered recreation, non-motorized, [but] we got into snowmobiling because it was a winter economic

> engine. […] The market for cross-country skiers wasn't going to spend money the way snowmobilers were. We already had this built in market that required what we thought was limited investment on our part. We'd like to do cross-country skiing but why try to displace an existing market to create a new one? So we started catering to snowmobilers. […] If it weren't for snowmobiling, we wouldn't be open (interview 2011).

Homemade "drags" used for backyard grooming no longer cut it. In the 1980s clubs started investing significant dollars in large trail grooming equipment and coordinating grooming regimens among their volunteers to meet the new demands and expectations of snowmobilers.

> This club here, and me and two or three other guys, went out [to Minnesota] and bought two Tucker Sno-Cats [trail groomers] in '89 and that was when we first really got it. (Richard interview 2011).

> See, we went from back in the sixties, when I first started snowmobiling, we didn't have any trails. What we were doing was riding the old logging roads that weren't plowed and we were dragging them with bedsprings. And now you see a $180,000 [grooming] machine going on that trail. […] [People will] call ahead and ask for trail conditions and everything because they don't want to come up here for a week, or even a long weekend, and just be beating them [sic] machines half to death (Al interview 2011).

Photos courtesy of Scott Ramsay

Figure 22. A 1980s-era tire drag and, twenty years later, a New Holland groomer

Although riders from Maine contribute to local economies, purchasing new snowmobiles, buying gas and food, and staying overnight during snowmobile trips, out-of-state tourists also bring in major dollars. These snowmobilers (who numbered 19,405 registrations in 2013, compared to 58,244 in-state [Tom personal communication; August 30, 2013]) tend to vacation for longer periods of time and spend more money. Most visitors hail from other New England and Northeast states, but some tourists travel far to ride Maine's trails. For example, a survey found that while sixty-one percent of randomly selected nonresident snowmobiles registered in Maine were from Massachusetts, twenty-eight other states and Canada were also represented (Rubin et al. 2001). John explained that year round, roughly seventy percent of his business comes from out-of-state. Even though "the shift is back to Maine in the winter" with about half of his clientele hailing from in-state, "fifty percent or more of our longer stay guests, more of our [snowmobile] renters, are out-of-staters" (interview 2011).

> It's over millions of dollars that they bring in, the out-of-staters. Used to be a bunch from Pennsylvania would come up here every year, and they'd rent a trailer truck and pile in thirty-three sleds and come up here and spend two weeks. Those people spend a lot of money! (Dave interview 2010)

> Snowmobiling is very good for the economy. They brought a lot of money in, and they come from out of state. You'd be surprised. The big groups come from New York, down New Jersey, and Delaware... They go up to Aroostook County and they go to all the motels and all the hotels and the gas and buy supplies (George interview 2010).

These remarks were in line with those expressed by all of my interview subjects who, usually unsolicited, underscored the economic importance of snowmobiling to north woods communities.

> It kind of started as a mom and pop industry, and it has blossomed into a huge economic boom in the snowbelt of this country and north of us in Canada. It's meant a livelihood to a lot of people for forty years. I hope you can measure the impact of that somehow, but we *know* it has been a positive impact (Sam interview 2011).

Sam and his brother, who have been riding in the shadow of Mt. Katahdin since the early sixties, were disappointed that my research wasn't a quantitative economic impact study of snowmobiling. They repeatedly brought the conversation back to its significance to north woods communities, particularly their hometown of Millinocket, "the town that paper made." For Millinocket is a different town now than in the early 1900s, or even thirty years ago when Great Northern Paper still owned the 1.6 million acres of timberland that was feeding its Millinocket and East Millinocket mills. Nowadays, with industry jobs in decline, communities are working hard to ensure that the vital role snowmobiling plays in supporting local livelihoods can be maintained.

Rural Decline and Change in the Woods

> That historic change is underway today in the Maine economy is no longer secret to anyone. That this change has its most severe effects in rural Maine is apparent to anyone who lives in, works in, or visits rural Maine today (Colgan and Barringer 2007, 2).

At a national and state scale, Maine's forest products industry is thriving. As it was 100 years ago, the sector remains the largest of rural Maine's traditional economic pillars, and the industry can boast countless superlatives. More than 17 million of the state's nearly 18 million acres of forestland are still classified as timberland by the U.S. Forest Service (NEFA 2007).[50] The industry ranks first in the nation in terms of its contribution to Maine's economy and second in its contribution to state employment (Keeping Maine's Forests 2010, Lilieholm et al. 2010).[51] The pulp and paper industry is the largest segment of manufacturing in the state, has more certified sustainably harvested forestland than any other state (more than ten million acres), and Maine produces more paper than every state except Wisconsin (Maine Forest Products Council 2013, Lilieholm et al. 2010). Finally, more than 200 forest products facilities in Maine continue to produce traditional paper and lumber products as well as more innovative outputs like biomass chips and wood pellets. Measured by volume, output at paper mills and sawmills is close to record levels, with lumber production increasing more than 100 percent over the last three decades and forest product shipments remaining stable in recent years (Keeping Maine's Forests 2010).

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[50] Timberland is defined as land that is both fertile and accessible enough to produce wood as a crop, and which is not excluded from timber harvesting by statute or regulation (NEFA 2001).

[51] The forest products industry contributes $8 billion annually to Maine's economy and supports more than 17,000 direct and 22,000 indirect jobs (one out of every twenty jobs remains associated with the forest products sector) (Maine Forest Products Council 2013).

But there's a different story to be told at the regional and community scale with rural industry job numbers way down in recent decades. Mill employment has dropped sharply since the 1990s when a smaller workforce was already producing twice the amount of paper as twenty years previous (Colgan and Barringer 2007). Companies have mechanized labor-intensive operations and increased productivity—both in the woods and the mills—so that substantially fewer people are now needed to get the same work done (Lawton 2005). From 1990 to 2000, the sector shed more than 9,000 jobs, and an additional 9,000 jobs were lost between 2001 and 2011; on the whole, employment connected to paper and allied products declined by twenty-four percent from 1969 to 1999 (Maine Forest Products Council 2013, Northern Forest Alliance 2002).

The structure of Maine's economy started to fundamentally change in the 1960s, beginning a shift toward non-manufacturing sectors based in urban and suburban areas (Colgan 2004). Between 1960 and 2000, while nearly 45,000 jobs were lost in natural resource extraction and manufacturing, 346,000 jobs were created in other job sectors. The service sector enjoyed the largest gain, accounting for forty percent of the net jobs created (Colgan 2004). Manufacturing jobs have shrunk in half, down to only one job in ten, natural resource-based industries (not including tourism) now account for fewer than six percent of jobs in Maine, and the textile, apparel, and shoe industries have declined nearly ninety percent. As of 2004, these industries together provided jobs for only one out of every nineteen Maine workers, a

big change from the one out of every three jobs these industries once accounted for (Colgan and Barringer 2007).

Considering that these industries were (and still are) located primarily in rural Maine, their decline has hit rural communities particularly hard. Beyond the expected rise in unemployment and decrease in wages, the closing of a locally-based factory or mill has far-reaching effects in rural areas. For example, almost a third of the nearly $900,000,000 that Maine's pulp and paper companies spend on goods and services in the state is spent within sixty miles of each mill (Verso Paper Corp. 2009). The companies contribute significantly to the local tax base and property values, subsidizing schools and other municipal improvements, and support economic prosperity in general by providing an anchor that helps keep an area populated and stable. One need only look to Millinocket for an example of the dire effect the industry's boom and bust cycle can have. In 1901, the town was built from almost nothing to serve as the hub for Great Northern Paper, at that time the largest paper company in the world. Five years later, a second mill was added next door in East Millinocket. At their peak in the 1980s, the two mills employed more than 4,400 people—nearly half of Millinocket and East Millinocket's population. But after the mills were closed in 2003 unemployment levels in the area rose to more than twenty percent (Baker 2013). Great Northern Paper eventually declared bankruptcy, the mills were sold, reopened, closed, and resold in an ongoing cycle of attempted revival. Today Millinocket's population has declined to 4,500, barely more people than were

once employed by the mills. Since reopening in 2011 the East Millinocket mill employs about 250 people, while great hopes are being pinned to a development project being spearheaded at the Millinocket mill site by the latest owner. Colgan and Barringer (2007) explain,

> The result was widespread "downward mobility" for thousands of laid-off manufacturing workers, and the special problems of limited occupational and geographic mobility among middle-aged workers who had spent their whole working lives in one town and one factory (6).

In Maine and across the U.S. working class families today now "confront a labor market vastly different from that of the 1960s. Probably the most striking characteristic of the contemporary labor markets is the replacement of good jobs by jobs that fail to offer decent wages, permanent work, and secure benefits" (Nelson and Smith 1999, 14). This shift is exemplified by the recent expansion in service sector jobs, though industrial wages have also seen decreases. After the East Millinocket mill reopened two years ago, starting wages were $11/hour, the rate enjoyed by workers decades ago, and some workers took thirty percent pay cuts upon their return (Smith 2011). Nationally, average hourly wages—in terms of what people can buy with their money—have been dropping steadily across the board since the early 1970s, while at the same time an increase in (involuntary) part-time work and temporary workers has taken place within every industrial sector (Nelson and Smith 1999).

Meanwhile, out-migration is a serious and ongoing concern in Maine's rim counties as residents move elsewhere in search of better economic opportunities.

Since 1990, the decade in which rural industries took an especially big hit, the total population of the six rim counties has declined 3.5 percent, led by Aroostook County's 17 percent population loss between 1990 and 2010 (U.S. Census 2013b).[52] All four metropolitan counties experienced increases during the same time period, led by York County (20 percent) and Cumberland County (16 percent). Left behind is an aging populace. According to a 2012 U.S. Census Bureau estimate, Maine's median age of 43.5 years makes it the oldest state in the country and behind only Florida in its proportion of people age 65 and older (Bell 2013). Northern Maine's population, in particular, is quickly growing older; the number of its young adults decreased by nearly 14,000 in the 1990s, representing a *thirty-three percent* decline (Brookings Institution 2006).

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[52] Maine's rim counties form the state's western, northern, and eastern borders. They include Aroostook, Franklin, Oxford, Somerset, and Washington counties, plus the interior Piscataquis County. The counties being counted as metropolitan for this section's comparative analysis are those that include the state's major metropolitan areas as defined by the federal Office of Management and Budget and measured by the U.S. Census Bureau: Androscoggin (Lewiston-Auburn metro area), Cumberland (home to the state's largest metro area of Portland-South Portland-Biddeford), Kennebec (Augusta-Waterville metro area), and York (also part of the Portland-South Portland-Biddeford metro area as well as New Hampshire's Portsmouth-Dover-Rochester metro area). More than half of Maine's population resides in these four counties. Penobscot County has been excluded from both categories due to major differences in employment, poverty, and other measures within the county. Penobscot County stretches more than one-hundred miles north to south, so while it comprises large portions of the north woods, including the Katahdin region, its southern extent contains the Bangor-Brewer metro area. Another failing of using county-level data, particularly in Maine where some counties cover exceedingly large areas, is the fact that the aggregate data can hide significant intra-county differences. For example, while York County generally appears to be quite prosperous, major pockets of rural poverty can be found outside of immediate coastal areas (Acheson 2005).

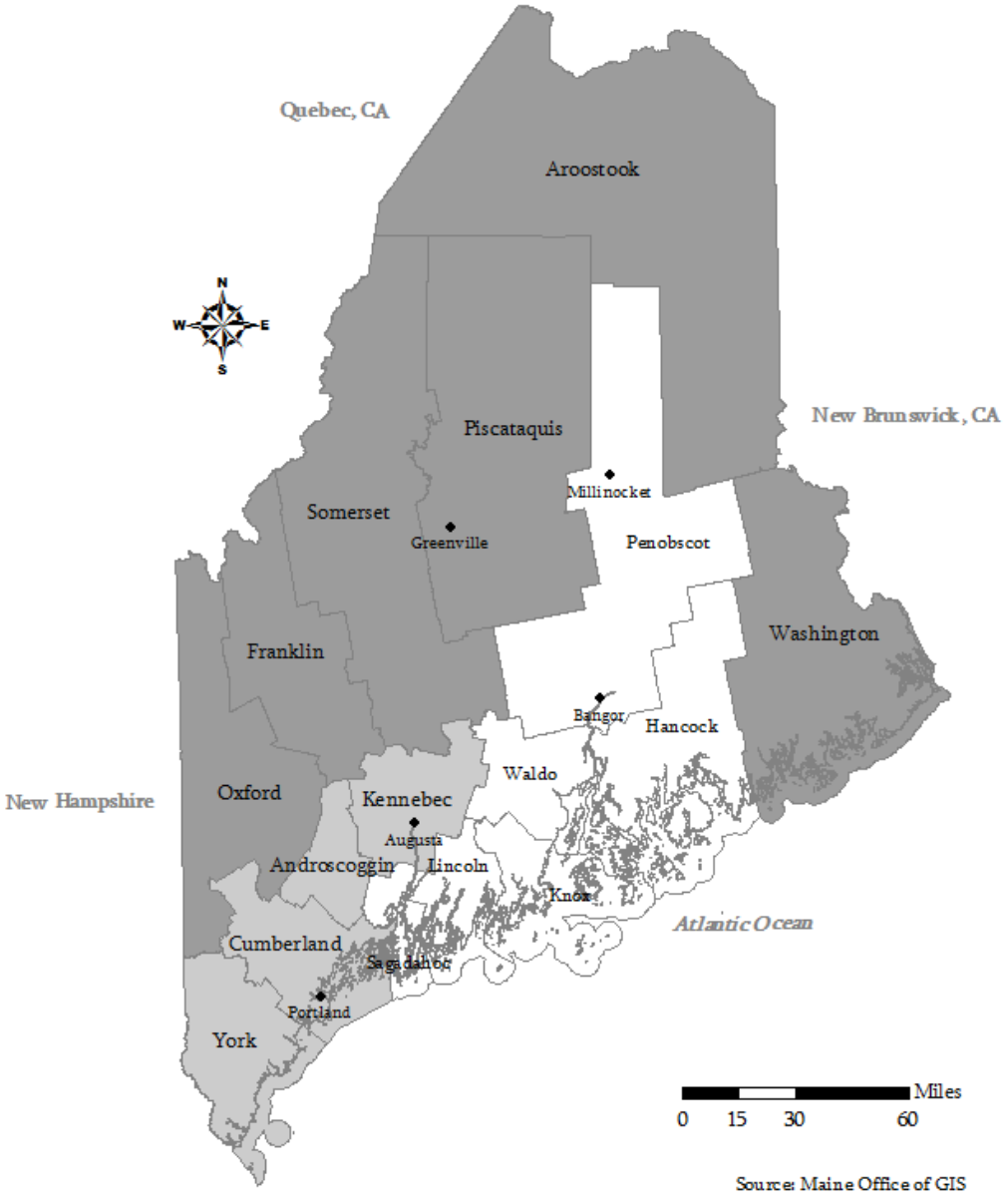

Figure 23. Political map of Maine (rim counties in dark gray; metro counties in light gray)

Many of northern Maine's younger residents are moving to Maine's urban counties where they can get a post-secondary education and take advantage of greater employment opportunities and higher incomes. As rural economies in Maine have been weakening, urban and suburban areas have been growing in population, area, and economic importance to the state. These demographic shifts and job losses within

the traditional employment sectors have produced substantial economic disparities between Maine's rim counties and metropolitan counties as evidenced by growing differences in poverty levels, household and per capita incomes, employment rates, and government benefit levels (Acheson 2005). In 1969, the average median household income in rim counties was only $1,128 less than the four metropolitan counties (U.S. Census 1990). By 2010, the difference in real dollars had grown to nearly $12,000. The median household income in Maine's rim counties is $36,000, nearly $10,000 less than the state average, while the median household income in urban/suburban counties is more than $2,000 above the state average (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The annual unemployment rate in rim counties has been higher than the rest of Maine, New England, and the nation since the early 1990s (Cervone 2005). Expectedly, lower incomes and high unemployment have contributed to higher poverty rates across the rim counties—seventeen percent compared with just less than nine percent in Maine's metropolitan counties (U.S. Census 2010). Cervone (2005) explains,

> Maine's rural rim counties have not shared in the benefits experienced by metropolitan and coastal populations. Geographic isolation and a changing economy have resulted in lower incomes, fewer job opportunities, and a higher percentage of Maine's rural population lacking the financial resources to meet basic needs (16).

These changes in rural economics and demographics are directly connected to the recent instability in land ownership, which has ushered in new kinds of owners

and land management interests, greater development pressures and subsequent land fragmentation, and has increased uncertainty about local economic futures. Maine's mill shutdowns and job and population losses mirror the economic restructuring experienced throughout most of rural America, much of which began or picked up speed in the 1960s. For example, during the 1970s and 1980s downturns in textile, apparel, and shoe industries in rural Maine and across the U.S. were primarily the result of rising labor costs and international competitive pressures (Colgan and Barringer 2007). And in the 1980s Maine's lumber industry faced decades-long price stagnation and mounting competition from southern plantation forests and Canadian mills, particularly those being built along the northwest border of Maine (Klyza 1994). However, Maine's paper industry managed to remain strong until the 1990s when the large, vertically-integrated forest product companies that had controlled nearly all of Maine's forestland for a century began their exodus and were replaced by investor-owners (see the previous chapter). Such changes are not unique to Maine, as Sayre (2011) explains,

> Rural landscapes around the world have been subject to international capital flows for hundreds of years. What is new in recent decades […] are the goals of these investments: no longer limited to raw materials, cheap labor and agricultural commodities, global capital now seeks out rural sites for tourism, residential development, luxury homes, environmental conservation, and speculation in all of these. These phenomena pose serious challenges not only to the residents and landscapes of rural areas, but also to conventional notions of development, capital, and "the rural" as a category (437).

The influx of unfamiliar faces and unknown land use objectives raised questions about the fate of the private commons and its trails, camps, and various allowable uses enjoyed by the public. These shifts in land market dynamics that have seen things like development, industrial-scale wind farms, and other still unknown values exceed timber values are related to both the decline of rural-based industries and urban/suburban sprawl (Bell 2007, Lilieholm 2007).

Development represents the most consequential change in forestland values and the greatest impact to date on the forest-based economy. While development pressures in rural areas are far from unique in this country, they are particularly intense in Maine given the prevalence of private land, relatively low land prices, numerous natural amenities, and the close proximity of major population centers in the Northeast (Lilieholm 2007). Over the last two decades development activities, including encroaching suburbs, seasonal-home construction, and the purchase of land for resorts and other development related to nature-based tourism, have started to shape Maine's new rural economies (Bell 2007, Lapping 2007). Southern Maine's metro areas have been steadily expanding outward to more distant areas encompassing a significant portion of what was just recently considered rural Maine (Colgan and Barringer 2007). Thus, not only have northern Mainers been migrating south, but southern Maine's urban areas have been spreading north. Hundreds of thousands of acres of forest and agricultural land have been converted to housing and commercial development, making low-density suburban land the fastest growing and

largest category of land use in the state[53] (Brookings Institution 2006, Richert 2004). In the 1990s, every region in Maine consumed rural territory, totaling a loss of seventeen percent (650,000 acres) of developable rural land.[54] In 1970 there were just two metropolitan areas in Maine (Portland and Lewiston-Auburn), which encompassed only two counties and a total of twelve cities and towns.[55] Today there are three metro areas and one micropolitan area in Maine that together encompass six Maine counties and more than 150 cities and towns.

A number of rim county communities within commuting distance of these urban areas have been boosted economically by the encroachment; they may still look and feel rural but they are increasingly connected to nearby job centers (Colgan and Barringer 2007). Although most of the geography of rim counties is far too remote for commuting and has thus remained untouched by the state's

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[53] In the two decades from 1980 to 2000, the extent of Maine's rural land converted to residential uses was roughly equal in size to the state of Rhode Island—more than 869,000 acres (Brookings Institution 2006). A U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service report entitled *Forests on the Edge* (Stein et al. 2005) ranked three Maine watersheds—the Lower Penobscot, Lower Androscoggin, and the Lower Kennebec—near the top out of more than 1,000 watersheds nationwide based on the number of acres of private forestland that are expected to experience increased residential housing densities by 2030. Maine's watersheds also contained the most forest area at risk to development, with the Lower Penobscot ranked number one (Lilieholm 2007).

[54] Interestingly, this overlapped with the construction of only 65,000 new housing units; in other words, more than ten acres of rural land were converted for every one new housing unit built (Brookings Institution 2006). The affordability of land and housing in rural Maine relative to comparable areas in nearby states and nationwide suggest that these growth pressures are likely to continue in Maine's forests even with the economic recession and instabilities in financial markets (Bell 2007).

[55] As defined by the federal Office of Management and Budget and measured by the U.S. Census Bureau.

urban/suburban sprawl, even communities in far northern Maine, particularly at the edges of the unorganized territory, have seen significant growth in second home development.[56] New subdivisions scattered across the landscape and deeper into the forest land base are contributing to the fragmentation of commercial timberland (Keeping Maine's Forests 2009).

This profound transformation of land ownership and land values over the past couple of decades raises long-term challenges for other forest-based economies, including recreation and tourism. Private lands that for more than a century served as wide open recreational spaces are being bought and sold, developed and parcelized, and protected and restricted in ways that threaten outdoor activities and various means of making a living on the land in northern Maine. For example, the conversion of the working forest to a landscape of leisure homes introduces new landowners who are likely less familiar with Maine's open land tradition and therefore less tolerant of snowmobilers crossing their land (Vail 2002). Indeed, in their research studying landownership changes in ranching communities in Montana, Yung and Belsky (2007) found that "The 'private' nature of newcomer property may limit opportunities for collaboration across boundaries, because new landowners do not necessarily see

[56] Due to the vast scale of the north woods and long distance from major east coast population centers, I do not refer to this phenomenon of second home development as "exurbanization," as seen and studied in many parts of the American West (Sayre 2002, Walker 2003, Walker and Fortmann 2003, Robbins et al. 2011). Greenville and Millinocket, which are considered "southern" gateway communities to the north woods, are a 4.5 hour drive from Boston. Therefore, most north woods communities are not attracting exurban commuters or even companies that would then stimulate the relocation of urbanites.

their property as connected to a broader social landscape" (701). As the previous chapter made clear, the number of landowners posting their land is increasing.

Communication with these small landowners and negotiations around the closure and relocation of trails is also far more complicated and challenging for snowmobile clubs to keep up with (Vail 2002).

> Certainly, the ability of government agencies and citizen groups to understand the status and future fate of forest values is facilitated when there are a relatively small number of large forestland owners. In addition, landowners of some types are perceived to be more socially engaged (and responsive) than some of the newer landowner types, so both ownership size and landowner type figure prominently in the minds of forest stakeholders (Hagan et al. 2005, 5).

The large corporate and family owners that previously held majority ownership were more accessible and thus more accountable for their land management strategies compared with many of the new, more anonymous and seemingly disengaged landowners. Furthermore, many second home buyers aren't purchasing property in the woods to become part of the local community. They are absentee owners who leave their homes empty for most of the year, and when they do come north their interest in "getting away" likely reduces their desire to join civic associations and other local community institutions (see Salamon 2003a and 2003b). As a consequence, while Quimby's land acquisitions are closely tracked and debated in the public sphere, small private landowners are harder to pin down and establish a

dialogue with, making it far more difficult if not impossible to challenge any new land restrictions.

It is clear that the closing of the commons has enormous economic implications, and the increasing tenuousness of the open land tradition has the potential to be particularly devastating to snowmobiling. Not only do snowmobilers ride almost exclusively on private land, but numerous businesses have come to rely on the thousands of sledders who descend upon the woods each year to explore the private commons. A significant cutback in access that would dramatically reduce the area available to snowmobiling would most certainly diminish the number of snowmobile tourists, from both in-state and out-of-state.

The Market Value of Wilderness

Another facet of these recent changes in Maine's ownership landscape, one which also has enormous implications for the snowmobile commons, has arguably attracted the most attention from resident communities. As discussed in the previous chapter, wholesale shifts in land ownership and development pressures have also increased the land's conservation value and intensified the call for greater environmental protection of remaining tracts of forestland. Several million acres have been conserved in recent decades by a variety of interests including national conservation groups like The Nature Conservancy and the Appalachian Mountain Club, the voter-approved state-funded Land for Maine's Future program, private land

trust partnerships, timberland owners setting up conservation easements, and of course concerned and self-motivated wealthy individuals like Roxanne Quimby and John Malone.

With land and economy so intimately intertwined in the north woods, the conservation of large tracts of land unsurprisingly reintroduced the familiar "jobs versus environment" conflict. While the long-term objectives of new financial investor-owners remain unknown, and in many ways under the radar, the vast acreage recently protected has sparked fears of an end to forestry and other means of making a living in the woods including snowmobiling. Groups that maintained existing uses on newly acquired lands faded from the public eye relatively quickly. But others like Quimby and AMC rocked the boat during their attempts to introduce new models of public access, recreation, and environmental protection. Many in the woods perceive these imposed changes as flying in the face of the longstanding open land tradition and directly threatening rural livelihoods. And the restrictions levied on snowmobiling (as well as the termination of harvesting in the case of Quimby) could not have come at a more critical time given the mill closures and regional job losses.

Recreation and tourism are considered by many to be the best development opportunity for communities in northern Maine; after all everyone agrees that the north woods have something special to offer. However, due to dissimilarities in environmental ethics and the perceived place for humans in nature, there are

fundamental disagreements about what that something special actually is and should be. These cultural and philosophical clashes have economic significance in that they prescribe different kinds of appropriate activities that are then declared to be the answer to the area's economic recovery. Quimby's big announcement in 2011 that she intended to donate a much of her land to establish a national park provides a useful entry point for exploring these ideological divergences. After years of conjecture about Quimby's intentions and big-picture plans for her acquired lands, this pronouncement solidified pro-park and anti-park camps, which helped expose two conflicting threads that reflect different constructions of nature, property, and rural economies.

From the beginning, Roxanne Quimby has framed her decision to acquire and preserve land in the north woods in terms of positive and much-needed change, beginning with her goal to help shift the north woods from what she perceives as a destructive and archaic landscape of production to a protected landscape of aesthetic consumption. Her spokesperson explained,

> Things are changing and land ownership patterns are changing, the *value* of the land is changing. And when the only value to the land was a wood basket, then as long as the wood basket wasn't interfered with, other uses were not an issue.[…] Roxanne [came] on the scene and her values are different. Her value for owning land was to have a wilderness, quiet. […] People have different reasons they buy land, different values they see in the land, and she was one of the earlier people to see this wilderness value (Bill interview 2011).

Quimby, AMC, and others view this shift in values as both ecologically and economically beneficial to the area. By valuing the inherent qualities of nature, the land can be restored and nature allowed "to proceed at her pace" (Roxanne Quimby quoted in Tobias 2011). This, in turn, will attract new user groups to the woods—people seeking an experience in nature that does not include the whine of engines (excluding cars) and blast of shotgun rounds—which will expand the existing recreational tourism market and bring new sources of income to local communities. The call for diversifying economies is typical in the wake of rural restructuring and is often accompanied by a depiction of rural communities in dire economic straits. Characterizations of regional job losses and downward mobility as "core features of rim county under-development" (Colgan and Barringer 2007, 6) are part of the discourse of development, so familiar across the global south, that is vital to the project of modernization and helping those deemed in need (see Escobar 1995). By reiterating northern Maine's job losses, unemployment numbers, and poverty rates, environmental interests are portraying the region as an area in desperate need of economic intervention, particularly something "new" to take the place of regressive modes of production.

But these statistics don't simply describe a region's economy—they also serve as cultural representations of rural *people*. Much like early nature writing and tourism marketing materials portrayed the region's natural landscape as pre-modern and simple, those who live and work in northern Maine—the producers in these

degenerating economies—are commonly imagined as impoverished, out of touch, and remnants of a bygone era. McCarthy (2002) found that environmentalists held these corresponding views of rural economies and ranchers on federal lands in the American West, expressing during interviews that "it's the stupid ones who can't deal with change that stay on the ranch" (1286). Quimby's remarks during a particularly controversial interview with Forbes magazine got her into big trouble in the media and cemented locals' perceptions of her as an elitist environmentalist with no empathy for residents of the north woods. She described Mainers, presumably rural Mainers, as such:

> We have the most aged population in the country… I believe we have one of the highest adult obesity rates in New England. We have… oxycontin abuse… [and] Maine's the largest net receiver of Federal funds, even though we supposedly hate the Feds…it's a welfare state. […] They're tone-deaf when it comes to the environment. But what is very urgent and pressing there is the economy. [The Millinocket area is] a total economic disaster (Tobias 2011).

Thus residents of the north woods, many of whom rejected Quimby's national park proposal, are often portrayed by park advocates to be in a downward spiral due at least in part to their own shortsightedness and personal deficiencies. As one newspaper commenter wrote,

> yes I live in the southern part of the state. I grew up in Millinocket, but knew it was a lost cause and moved to the south where I have a job. Those that stay where the jobs aren't deserve what they get. Quimby is trying to inject some life up there, but some seem bent on staying on food stamps and collecting welfare (Jay C 2011).

These representations align with stereotypical constructions of rural spaces as poor, backward, and underdeveloped and of rural poverty as a lifestyle choice (Lapping 2007, Jarosz and Lawson 2002, Cloke and Little 1997), thereby widening the door for outside economic intervention. In addition, because of a history of working in an extractive industry, people living in the north woods are considered less able to recognize the value of environmental protection, further justifying the need for conservationists wielding new economic and cultural visions. Providing additional leverage is the economic polarization between northern and southern Maine, with marked and increasing disparities in household income, poverty rates, and government benefits received—differences that are reflected in a state budget that includes a substantial net subsidy of the rim counties through the funding of public services that range from Medicaid to education (Pohlmann and Vail 2005). The insinuation is that an incredibly downtrodden region that is being propped up by state and federal handouts is in no position to refuse help in any form, let alone assert that southern Mainers and the federal government should keep out of their business. For example, an article reporting on a public meeting in Millinocket to discuss and gather feedback on the national park proposal described park supporters as asserting "that with the area's unemployment rate hovering at 21.8 percent and the East Millinocket and Millinocket mills shuttered, Quimby's gift was priceless and should

be seized as an economic lifeline" (Sambides, Jr. 2011c).[57] Quimby's spokesperson recalled,

> I went to a meeting Tuesday up where they wanna make a scenic byway […] and I turned around to talk with this other gentleman that was there, and he was a county commissioner but his full time job was at the mill. He got laid off two days ago. And he was interested. I don't know if he was before, but he was interested that day to see what Roxanne had in mind. […] It seems like a no brainer. How can you turn down any economic opportunities when you're in that fragile economic situation? (Bill interview 2011).

It is not unusual for conservation practitioners interested in protecting a particular area to cast rural primary production as inefficient, marginal, and obsolete (McCarthy 2002, DuPuis and Vandergeest 1996). For example, Quimby opened the same Forbes magazine interview by talking about Maine's industrial landowners who,

> aggressively harvested those forests for the last hundred years to the point where the mills in the area have been unable to stay competitive. […] A hundred years later, there isn't enough to make a living. They've all fragmented…sold off rights and easements…just to stay alive. But they still have not accepted that the old paradigm isn't working. They're in complete denial (Tobias 2011).

Newspaper comments in response to numerous articles on the subject of the proposed national park echo these sentiments.

> It's a Mainer born n bred here. I work in the magazine business, and we work to ensure our paper comes from a Maine mill. My dad worked in the newspaper business, and before that he wrangled pulp logs out of Chesuncook. […] So I'm not unsympathetic to what's happening up Millinocket way, OK? But like it or not, the forest products business is changing, and changing big. The longer people remain in denial about this fact, the longer it'll be until the

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[57] Both mills were closed when Quimby announced her national park proposal in March 2011. The East Millinocket mill reopened several months later in October.

> next Good Thing helps pull Maine back up out of the hole left by those changes (megunticook 2011).
>
> Change is difficult for everyone but the writing is on the wall. Millinocket has not had a manufacturing economy for some time. The local businesses are struggling to keep thier [sic] doors open and the retired community cannot take on the tax burden all alone. This has spiraled so far out of control and reasonable solutions to turn things around should be considered (nopunintended 2011).

RESTORE: The North Woods has also stressed the potential of a national park to revive and diversify a dying regional economy (Kellett and St. Pierre 1996). Maintaining that an "over-reliance on the forest products industry for jobs has weakened the Moosehead Region's economy" and citing drops in forest products industry jobs and increasing unemployment, the organization argues that an additional source of economic activity must be found to save the region (Kellett and St. Pierre 1996, 2; Power 2001). To that end, RESTORE sponsored a trip for four residents of the Greenville–Moosehead Lake region to meet with community and business leaders in Ely, Minnesota. Formerly an iron mining and logging center, the town is now a gateway to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, a federally designated wilderness area that attracts 200,000 visitors a year. However, Rolde writes,

> The national park, in the grandeur of its vision and the single-mindedness of its champions, […] is portrayed, even subliminally when not explicitly, as the answer to what happens when the present major industry—pulp and paper—dies. Trips to Minnesota, to see the Boundary Park and its economic revival—well intentioned as they are—simply reinforce the impression the present way of life is doomed. […] Instead of instilling hope, the national park idea subtly says, "The game is over. You must try something else. And this is it" (2001, 359).

In other words, the implication by RESTORE, Quimby, and others is that the region's "transition away from a resource-based economy is not only well underway, but also *inevitable* and *progressive*" (McCarthy 2002, 1286; emphasis in original). Interestingly, as an example of this kind of environmental and economic narrative McCarthy cites the book, *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search for a Value of Place* (Power 1996). This happens to be written by the same person contracted by RESTORE to research and prepare the organization's economic impact study of their proposed Maine Woods National Park and Preserve, which unsurprisingly concluded that, "for northern Maine to reverse its economic decline and loss of population, its economy has to change. 'More of the same' is neither possible nor desirable. […] This is the context in which the proposed Maine Woods National Park should be viewed" (Power 2001, 90).

This tendency for park proponents to use market logic to justify conservation initiatives is not new to the field of environmental protection. Environmentalists may be critical of the market economy (e.g., its exploitation of natural resources and its incapability of recognizing inherent limits to growth), yet they oftentimes present their arguments using the very same language of economic rationality (Burns 1975). McCarthy (2002) points out,

> For a group concerned on the whole to protect nature from the market, environmentalists have sometimes been extremely quick to evaluate rural land uses in terms of economic efficiency and comparative advantage when it fits their agenda: […] rural communities should remake their economies around whatever commodifications of the local environments are most lucrative; and

> no old-fashioned attachments to place, community, or way of life should confer any privileged claims to land or decisionmaking arenas (1285).

This marketization reflects a longstanding alliance between capitalism and conservation, which has more recently been the focus of a substantial and growing body of literature on the "neoliberalization of nature" (see Castree 2008, Heynen et al. 2007, St. Martin 2007, McCarthy and Prudham 2004). One of the many facets of this critique of modern-day environmental problem solving is the relentlessly positive rhetoric of the conservation movement, which presents market solutions that are supposedly win-win for practitioners and local communities—communities undergo economic revitalization while, or even better *because*, nature is saved (Brockington and Duffy 2010). As the Maine director of RESTORE summed up with his piece of advice to northern Mainers, "Capitalize on the concept of wilderness" (Rolde 2001, 30).

Invisible Forest Economies

Critical to market-based arguments for conservation is the construction of a single north woods economy: the old economy (forest products) is dying, therefore a new one is needed to take its place. This economic oneness, in turn, relies on an environmental singleness: the industrial forest. Thus, Quimby's effort to fill what she perceives as an economic void is directly connected to her hopes for a new and better nature. However, this attempt to replace corporate values with wilderness values is hardly "economic diversification" since it actually overlooks the immense diversity of

lived experiences in the forest and the different natures that have always existed (Lapping 2007). Such a one-dimensional interpretation of regional economies and people, and the rural development strategies that necessarily follow, disregards the multiple non-industrial uses, alternative and community economies, and non-economic values of the forest. This erasure is facilitated by the wilderness ethic, which by excluding or strictly regulating human presence in the forest renders it a landscape of (a particular kind of) leisure above that of work and other human uses (chapter 2).

In his national park economic impact study for RESTORE, Power asserted that northern Mainers are already adjusting to the region's sweeping economic changes, proclaiming that "Most people living in Maine's unorganized territories do not make their living in those woodlands" (2001, 20). Such a statement ignores the countless uses of the forest that contribute to local livelihoods and benefit the region both socially and economically. For example, the collection of non-timber forest products (e.g., wild foods, medicinal plants, residential fuelwood, and materials such as birch bark) contributes substantially to both the "economic viability and cultural vitality" of north woods communities (Baumflek et al. 2010, 1; Shifley et al. 2012). Research conducted in the St. John River watershed in Maine's northernmost counties found that while many gatherers harvest strictly for personal and family consumption, non-timber forest products are vital subsistence resources and provide supplemental income for rural populations (Baumflek et al. 2001). Established commodities, such as

maple syrup and conifer wreathes, annually contribute $50 million to the northern forest economy (a region that also includes New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York). In addition to these economic benefits, non-timber forest products hold special cultural value for north woods residents, and gathering also "provides numerous human health and well-being benefits by promoting outdoor exercise, providing foods that are dense with micronutrients, and reinforcing familial relationships" (Baumflek at al. 2001, 1). In a 2001 interview, Quimby downplayed the scale and importance of these and other activities (her comments, made more than a decade ago, are still cited within anti-park/anti-Quimby circles),

> The most frequently given reason for opposition is that the park would shut down logging operations and harm the area's economy. Quimby said such arguments are bunk. In fact, she said, very few people derive a living from the woods. She says most people do as she did before she became a wealthy businesswoman: They cut some wood, farm some vegetables, make some crafts to sell at fairs. "I lived there for a long time. I ran a business there. The economy there is in shambles and it has been for 100 years," she said. "There's not a lot to damage up there. I don't see how a park can hurt" (Young 2001).

This excerpt shows that there is a need to not only understand the multiple values of the north woods to local communities, but to broaden perceptions of economic wellbeing. One can start by deconstructing this chapter's earlier use of household income, poverty levels, and unemployment numbers to paint a picture of rural Maine's economic condition—statistics that are ultimately devoid of cultural and political meaning and biased in terms of the kinds of work (and *whose* work is) made visible and valued. For one, these statistical accounts fail to include informal

economies such as the household as a site of production and consumption. Omitting the household economy (i.e., the non-monetized sum of all goods and services produced within households) is a glaring oversight that makes invisible as much as one third of the nation's total economic output (much of which is dominated by women) (Burns 1975). But more specifically, these statistics critically lack context by failing to locate measures of economic wellbeing in rural spaces and to shift "the notion of viability from one focusing only on viable economic activities, to one concerned with livelihood and place, and the ways in which people struggle to keep rural localities alive by somehow generating incomes that will allow the material reproduction of these places" (Bebbington 2000, 500). For example, combinations of very different economic activities—both formal and informal—are often integral parts of rural households' survival strategies (Ratner 2000, Nelson and Smith 1999, Pahl 1985). Indeed, McCarthy (2006) draws attention to the fact that,

> Many of the characteristics often cited as making economies and commodities 'alternative' overlap with those frequently cited as defining 'rural' places and products: more face-to-face interactions, less physical and social distance between production and consumption, a thorough embedding of the economic in a social context (804).

Specific activities and strategies include employment in the labor market, unrecorded work such as daycare and elder care, the collection of social welfare benefits (often on a seasonal basis), multiple job-holding, bartering and other forms of nonmonetary exchange, and self-provisioning activities such as hunting and

collecting forest products (Nelson and Smith 1999). When productive activity is viewed as necessarily social, alternative or informal rural economic strategies come to light, such as depending upon friends for support and access to various goods and services (Nelson and Smith 1999). These volunteer and cooperative economies vitally contribute to the maintenance of relationships and community-building, and confer a community-based identity (Ratner 2000).

Within the hegemonic project of neoliberal economic development rural communities are often situated on the "underdeveloped" end of a continuum, and the work performed and various survival strategies within rural spaces is then perceived through this discriminatory lens as marginal activities of the poor and excluded (Ratner 2000). For example, the widespread use of forest resources in rural communities is often viewed as evidence of rural poverty in need of remediation and development interventions rather than as a sustainable and valuable form of economic (and cultural) activity (Pierce and Emery 2005). Multiple job-holding is another common means of making a living and enhancing one's income in rural areas that doesn't necessarily fit along the path to "modernization." People living in the north woods may perform forest work part of the year, secure temporary employment in a resort, do some farming and fishing, and collect unemployment during periods with no formal employment. This method of patching together a number of sources of income—many of which are tied to the land—to make ends meet is not only commonplace, but it has always existed alongside mill employment and other "real"

jobs, and it cuts across all income levels (Ratner 2000). However, it tends to have negative connotations among rural policy makers who view it as a kind of safety-net or transitional process, and less ideal than the "norm" of full-time paid employment (Ahearn and Lee 1991). Meanwhile Nelson and Smith found that "in addition to providing income, this combination of economic activities is often a source of pride, comfort, and security" (1999, 3), providing social satisfaction and cultural connections. This is definitely the case in the north woods where it can be tough for many to make ends meet, but such difficult conditions have forged a spirit of resilience, built community, and shaped cultural identities. As Sarah said, "People are proud of being able to survive up there" (interview 2010).

A poststructuralist and Marxist perspective can also help disassemble hegemonic narratives of economy by fracturing the classic dichotomy between structure and agency (Nelson and Smith 1999, Gibson-Graham 1996). See, for example, the introduction to a 1974 report published by the Ralph Nader Study Group, which began,

> Maine is poor. Maine is a corporate country—a land of seven giant pulp and paper companies imposing a one crop economy with a one crop politics, which exploits the water, air, soil, and people of a beautiful state.[…] The political and economic control of Maine by a handful of absentee corporations has turned the state into a paper plantation (quoted in Rolde 2001, 23–24).

This description of a forest products industry with the supremacy to "impose" one economy serving corporate objectives and profits onto the people of Maine

completely silences local actors, histories, cultures, and other economies. Another piece of the disempowerment that results from ignoring local agency is the portrayal of rural economies as beholden to powerful and unstoppable global economic forces. Existing and sometimes thriving diverse economies are consequently buried, leaving communities with little choice in the kind of development that is then needed to fill the huge vacancy left behind by rural industries (Gibson-Graham 1996). While a particular region may contain a dominant economy (i.e., one that provides a vast majority of the area's jobs) and may certainly be influenced by a global economy, these forces "are always worked out in conjunction with the unique characteristics of specific locales," including strategies and practices that provide local actors with agency and a say in the creation of their own economic futures (Nelson and Smith 1999, 4).

The invisibility of the diversity of work that takes place in northern Maine communities, and the strong connections that often exist between this work and the land, is why snowmobiling is such an essential part of conversations about the future of the woods. It is a community-based economic engine with the power to underscore how critically important the open land tradition is to north woods livelihoods. Even though a big part of that importance is cultural, the snowmobile community has found that touting the activity's mainstream economic benefits gives them incredible clout among lawmakers and policymakers and works to their political advantage, particularly in an arena where urban/suburban representatives and voters outnumber

their rural counterparts. The economic impact analyses conducted in the mid- and late-1990s were sponsored by the Maine Snowmobile Association in an effort to quantify the range of benefits snowmobiling was bringing to rural areas as well as the entire state. Before such analyses were performed, these effects, manifest across the rural winter landscape, had been difficult if not impossible to fully comprehend without a wintertime visit to the north woods. Greg recalled how snowmobilers used to appear in front of the legislature and say,

> "Oh we need money for grooming, or money for trail bridges, or we just want access to the land," or whatever, and it was kind of like "Oh yeah, yeah. Those guys. Sure. Whatever." They started going to the legislature with studies that said, "We bring 900 million dollars in economic activity," or a billion dollars—I don't even know what the stats are, but they're insanely large. Much more than the hikers or the cross-country skiers or other forms of recreation. And that changed *everything* (interview 2011).

With statistics in hand, snowmobilers have very successfully framed assaults on snowmobiling and continued access to the woods to be attacks against local economies and the economic health of an entire region.

> If you're in the legislature in Maine, or New Hampshire, or Vermont and you have a snowmobile club come to you asking for something, they have very successfully organized themselves, they do great grassroots letter writing campaigns, they do legislative visits, everything, but they also have this thing that says, "We're jobs, we're money, we're economy," in a way that's *incredibly* persuasive and powerful, and without that I don't think they'd have nearly the influence they have. But they have built that influence in a very savvy way with some really compelling economic arguments more than anything else (Greg interview 2011).

The advocacy work snowmobilers have done on their own behalf—a powerful assertion of agency—is not new given the amount of work through the decades that has gone into building and sustaining the snowmobile commons. This has required physical engagement with the landscape as well as coordination and relationship-building with other riders, lawmakers, land managers and owners, and decision-makers. Their grassroots letter writing and organized campaigns grew out of this existing social infrastructure, which is ultimately very empowering. After spending more than four decades maintaining the commons, snowmobilers have become accustomed to having a seat at the table and being active participants in various decisions that affect their economic lives.

Not surprisingly, as told in their voices the region's painful decline is very real and concerning, but the way they describe rural economic realities is usually quite different from Quimby's or RESTORE's interpretations. The north woods are not an economic "wasteland" defenseless against unstoppable forces and therefore in desperate need of assistance. Rather, in interviews and online newspaper comments, many who live there describe a place where people are working hard to make do. RESTORE, Quimby, and even AMC have declared an essential need for new economic strategies, specifically the attraction of new kinds of tourists (who will practice less disruptive uses). One newspaper commenter posted a synopsis of recent research findings that "communities who embrace and work with both forest

products and tourism perform better economically than single industry towns" (Roger Merchant 2011). Another responded,

> Maine has always had both tourism and a forest industry and it traditionally worked very well together. The preservationists have done everything they could to destroy both. They want the land for wilderness. They oppose logging and motorized recreation and want to use the Federal government to prevent them. Their idea of tourism is a handful of backpackers in roadless areas (ewv 2011a).

Despite agreements among disparate groups that recreational tourism should play a critical role in north woods economic development, there are wide disagreements over which recreational activities and users should be privileged. Many north woods residents reject exclusive development strategies underpinned by wilderness values and instead call attention to existing recreational tourism economies, which are directly threatened by the restriction of access.

> Now [Quimby] has become all worried about the economy of Maine and telling us how this will be such a benifit [sic]. Where is that same concern when it comes to those who make a living off the snowmobile industry? Do people realize how many 'tourists' already come from southern maine [sic] and out of state to snowmobile these trails in the winter? Where is that same concern when she shuts off land to hunting and access roads for fishing? Where do you suppose those 'tourists' go? They choose other parts of the state that have more access. That has already affected hunting camps, campgrounds and local business.

Quimby's restrictions on snowmobiling and hunting and her cancellation of camp leases when she began buying land may have stemmed in part from simple unawareness of the various ways in which people worked, lived, and recreated in the woods. For example, Tom recalled a conversation with Quimby as he tried to explain

the repercussions a sportsman camp would suffer if she blocked a snowmobile trail crossing her land. Her subsequent offer, which was "so out of touch," was to buy them a sleigh for taking people out on sleigh rides as an alternative to serving snowmobilers, "but you're talking about ten people in a day versus a hundred people coming in for lunch and spending a lot of money and/or staying there for a weekend or something" (interview 2011). However, her vision for the woods also reflects a division in her mind between local economies, culture, and the environment—a lack of understanding of common property, land, and rural livelihoods as interconnected, and of traditions and customary practices rooted to place and identity. Thus, addressing the consequences of changes in the open land tradition is therefore far more complicated than simply substituting new and seemingly better uses for outdated or undesired activities.

Conclusion

After two decades of instability, changes in forestland tenure and use are now considered more routine, if not inevitable. But given the vast network of snowmobile trails crossing millions of acres of land, the substantial economic benefits of snowmobiling and linkages among places, and the socio-ecological relationships that comprise the snowmobile commons, relatively substantial alterations to the ownership landscape cannot go unnoticed. The snowmobile commons serve as an active layer of economic and cultural activity with roots stretching down through an

ever shifting foundation, holding it all together. A blocked trail does more than simply obstruct the riders trying to get somewhere—it often sends ripples across the landscape, effects that large landowners like Quimby can then be held accountable for. Thus, snowmobiling has proven to be an invaluable tool in efforts to sustain Maine's open land tradition amidst extensive ruptures in ownership and land use.

However, snowmobiling does more than make visible existing rural economies and offer a counternarrative to mainstream economic (and environmental) discourses of rural decline. It also provides a new way of analyzing and understanding rural restructuring and competing capitalisms. Research on economic change in rural landscapes that introduces or intensifies conflicts between contrasting environmental ideologies tends to frame change in terms of a shift from productive uses of the land to consumptive patterns of development. In other words, the economic value of the forest as a space for retreat and escape into nature is outcompeting the value of land that is worked and turned into fiber and materials (Walker 2003). Under this model, the old extractive uses represent an active relationship with nature versus the relatively passive consumption of nature (Richert 2004). Thus, the cultural and ideological clash between utilitarian and wilderness ethics reflect tensions between competing rural capitalisms that commodify nature in very different, often incompatible, ways. Usually positioned on one side are local communities holding tight to an old landscape of natural resource production, and situated opposite them are tourists, developers, and even conservation interests seeking and creating the new

landscape of aesthetic consumption (Walker 2003). But snowmobiling fractures this binary. Although snowmobiling is a recreational activity and therefore technically part of the newer amenity-based consumption economy, it is closely tied to the productive landscape having evolved in tandem with rural natural resource-based economies. It has a utilitarian past (and present) and continues to rely on logging roads and other manifestations of the working forest. Also, many snowmobilers have an active, not passive, relationship with the land, participating in the maintenance of a traditional common property regime. Snowmobiling may technically be part of the tourism service sector, but unlike other forms of recreational tourism in the woods that are considered more elitist and engaged in by outsiders, it is a local traditional use connected to the history and culture of woods.[58] Its growth and endurance through the years, even when threatened by new land use restrictions, therefore provides evidence of the sustainability of nature-based tourism strategies that are rooted in local cultures and environmental values.

[58] Even though tourist snowmobilers are technically "from away," they are more culturally aligned with north woods residents. At the same time, a person can be from down the road and still be considered an outsider.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

While north woods ecologies, cultures, and economies have never been static, it is evident that significant changes unfolding in recent decades have been particularly destabilizing for local communities. The once immense, wide open landscape is contracting under the pressures of new development and new land use restrictions, and the effects of these changes are clearly felt by a rural populace already contending with job losses and other consequences of economic restructuring. In the north woods, where rural livelihoods and cultures are intricately connected to the forest, there is concern about the impact shifts in land ownership and management are having, and will continue to have, on Maine's longstanding open land tradition.

Using snowmobiling as an entry point, this research has grounded these fairly large-scale transformations and ensuing conflicts over forest resources within the north woods communities being affected. Snowmobiling helps to make visible various practices of stewardship, local histories and heritages, collective involvement in land management, and the diverse economies that exist in Maine's forests. However I contend that snowmobiling doesn't simply reflect cultural difference but in fact works to constitute different beliefs about the appropriate place for humans within nature. I show how struggles over Maine's forest resources rest upon disputes over meanings, particularly clashing ideologies and ethics of nature and stewardship. In

Maine, each of the different parties to the multi-sided dispute over the north woods can claim a rich, cultural legacy rooted in north woods histories and places, heightening present-day divisions. It was during his ascent of Mount Katahdin, for example, that Thoreau experienced "inhuman nature" in its purest form, seemingly unmodified by people and profoundly sacred. It is this legacy and ethic of nature that has inspired and guided Roxanne Quimby on her quest to preserve the north woods and restore its rightful wilderness heritage.

Yet in the same woods, in the very shadow of the same great mountain, is the story of the emergence of a machine that embodied a startlingly disparate perception of, and way of being in, nature. The snowmobile effectively shattered popular notions and aesthetics of the forested wilderness as necessarily primitive and tranquil. For snowmobilers, the north woods are a *social* wilderness wherein the land is an intricate part of people's lives and people are, in turn, part of nature. A form of conservation, championed by Quimby, that aspires to protect nature from human impact leaves no rightful place for loud, gas-guzzling machines. Her efforts have been vehemently rejected by many north woods residents in part because her ideology, which ultimately creates different classes of users, feels culturally exclusive and dismissive of local histories and traditions. This dissertation shows, in contrast, how snowmobilers practice a form of stewardship that aims to protect a *working* landscape, a space that comprises the forest as well as rural livelihoods and traditional patterns of land use.

A machine has a place in this nature, and this place is made even more evident by the history of snowmobiling in the north woods. Severed from culture, from rural Maine's people and distinctive landscapes and locales, the snowmobile is simply a relatively recent technology and motorized form of recreation. This construction of the machine within a cultural and historical vacuum presents it as an intrusion in the north woods, thereby authorizing its restriction. By documenting the development and growth of snowmobiling in Maine, and insisting on the value of applying political ecological insights to the snowbelt, I have demonstrated how the activity is interwoven with Maine communities, landscapes, rural histories, and traditions, exposing its vital importance to rural Mainers. The story of the technology's genesis with the Lombard log hauler and its development in the Katahdin region and Allagash wilderness inextricably link the snowmobile to the Maine woods. This connection is strengthened by the memories and stories shared by snowmobilers who began riding and building a snowmobile community more than a half century ago. This dissertation reveals how the machine, from its utilitarian beginnings, enabled people to overcome what had been, until that point, an oppressive nature. My research in the snowbelt region and season exposes how the winter landscape intensifies contrasting beliefs about human-nature relations, particularly across rural–urban lines, thereby broadening research on natural resource conflicts. Snow constrained rural dwellers' mobility and ability to do work and connect with other people across a vast, forested landscape. Thus, the snowmobile provided freedom to

north woods inhabitants, fostering new relationships with winter, the landscape, and each other.

At the heart of these physical connections is the development of intricate social and economic networks that have proven fundamental to the maintenance of Maine's distinctive "private commons" and, ultimately, the continuation of snowmobiling across most of the state. Although public access to private lands has long been formally backed by the state, extensive shifts in land tenure and land use generated fears that this customary practice would come to an end. But I have argued that snowmobiling effectively codified Maine's centuries-old open land tradition. Snowmobile clubs and their tens of thousands of members and volunteers worked closely with private landowners and state agencies through the years to build and maintain a complex physical and social infrastructure. Thus, not only is the loss of access to and use of certain pieces of land of great concern to local communities, but I contend that also significant is the dissolution of longstanding ties between landowner and user. Severing these connections, particularly in times of upheaval and uncertainty in rural Maine communities, further marginalizes north woods residents and hardens the sense that changes in land use policies are unjust. In the north woods property rights are championed as central to personal liberty, yet a unique private commons has been sustained for more than a century through a complex configuration of public–state–corporate cooperation, providing new insights into the diversity and viability of common property regimes. In comparison, the private

property rights of Quimby, who espouses the equity of public land, have been challenged by local users fighting to uphold a form of private commons that includes them. Quimby thought that erecting gates at trails and roads crossing her land was a simple first step in restoring the forest and ushering in a new age of democratic, public access to the woods. But what she failed to understand (and woefully underestimated), and what this dissertation details, is everything that the trails and the tradition of public access to private land represent and provide to rural Mainers, and how hard they will fight to preserve that.

From the moment the first recreational snowmobile was sold in Maine in the late 1950s, snowmobiling has distributed economic benefits across the rural landscape, supporting local businesses and livelihoods in the woods during the long winter months. According to the economic narrative proffered by the likes of Roxanne Quimby and RESTORE, the disappearance of forest industry jobs created an economic vacuum that they have argued is best filled by conservation values and uses of the land. When processes of deindustrialization and rural restructuring are framed in terms of the convergence of old and new values, the modernization trajectory and dichotomy between the past and future is largely upheld. However, my research shows how snowmobiling has challenged this discourse of rural development in new ways. Not only does it reveal existing uses of the woods that have great economic and cultural importance to local communities. But through its historical link with industrial landowners, the productive landscape, and local rural cultures and

livelihoods, it represents a form of recreational tourism that is not necessarily part of the new (i.e., outsider) consumption economy. In addition, unlike the more individualized and fairly invisible impact a blocked trail may have on hunters, or a canceled camp lease may have on a family, snowmobiling makes visible in very concrete economic terms the dire consequences of restrictions on access. Drawing attention to these tangible beneficial effects has proved essential to rural communities' opposition to the kind of change that Quimby assumed was ideal and inevitable for the north woods, and has helped preserve a tradition of fair and equal access to the forest and its resources. This research ultimately reveals that change in the north woods may be inevitable, but what form these changes take and who these changes benefit is not.

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The final conclusion to be drawn from this research is that the future of the north woods and snowmobile cultures and economies is highly uncertain. Not just because of the 'threat' posed by Quimby and other conservation interests, but because of a host of factors that are seemingly beyond snowmobilers' control. My research has uncovered some recent developments and issues that raise important questions about the future of snowmobiling and the snowmobile commons and present some potential new areas of focus. To begin with, I have documented some changes within Maine's snowmobile community related to regional economic changes, generational shifts and

associated cultural changes, and the increasing industrialization of snowmobiling. Each of these could have an impact on the culture and community of Maine snowmobilers and the importance and future role of snowmobile clubs in maintaining the commons.

Firstly, the number of snowmobilers in rural Maine may be in decline as a result of the rural economic downturns discussed in chapter 5 and the recent economic recession more generally. Snowmobiling is an expensive activity, and many north woods residents, feeling the effects of rural industry job losses, simply can no longer afford to participate in the activity. Numerous interview subjects brought this to my attention, "If you go out and you buy two new machines, and you buy a trailer, and you buy your suits and your helmets and everything, you're looking at over $20,000. And the younger people today, most of them can't afford that" (Al interview 2011). It is difficult to trace declines using statistics like annual snowmobile registration numbers because various factors including snowfall and gas prices affect whether or not people decide to register their snowmobile (Tom personal communication; August 30, 2013), but anecdotally, people who live in the woods have observed a drop-off that they attribute to the weakened economy.

Another consequence of regional economic instability is that people have less free time and flexibility to dedicate to their local clubs: "Volunteerism isn't there. With a bad economy, anything you do pretty much has to make money" (Richard interview 2011). The strength of community institutions, including churches, daycare

centers, and snowmobile clubs, "have been predicated on the existence of stable, long-term work histories in jobs" that pay a good wage over a full lifetime and facilitated access to these institutions and the various services they provided (Nelson and Smith 1999, 16). As these jobs have declined in the region, it is not surprising that involvement in club activities has also diminished. Snowmobile club membership in Maine has been steadily falling, with only fifteen percent of riders currently affiliated with a local club—a problem apparently common throughout the snowbelt region (Burakowski and Magnusson 2012; Tom personal communication; August 30, 2013). Sam explained, "Until our recession begins to turn around, playing and toys have to take a back seat to making a living, and it's hard to find volunteers when people are working two and three jobs" (interview 2011). As a result, club demographics seem to be mirroring region-wide trends; rim county populations are dropping and the average age of residents is rising. Dave described typical club membership: "Most times it's older people. Fifty or on. I guess 'cause they got the money and can afford to do it. Younger folks gotta work hard trying to provide for the family, what not" (interview 2011). Al elaborated further, "I'm retired. I can go out anytime and groom trails, and the younger people, of course they're working. […] I don't think we've got anybody under sixty in our club that goes out and does any grooming. And we're not gonna last much longer, [so] then what's gonna happen? There's nobody coming behind us" (interview 2011).

The aging club membership and lack of new recruits is reflective of larger cultural and generational shifts not necessarily related to economics. Putnam (2013) described today's younger generation as "distancing itself from community institutions and from institutions in general. They're the same people who are also not joining the Elks Club or the Rotary Club. [They are] much less involved in many of the main institutions of our society than previous younger generations were" (Robert Putnam quoted in Glenn 2013). Al lamented, "We're having a real problem getting the younger people involved. They wanna go out and ride the trails, but they don't want to help maintain them and do the work that's necessary to keep them up. It's a problem" (interview 2011). In keeping with this logic, many newer riders also seem less interested in the social club aspect of the activity, at least in its current form and membership make-up. Sarah, who in her late-thirties was the youngest snowmobiler I interviewed, is not a member of any clubs: "We know people that are part of the Blue Ridge Riders and we've looked into that. You get discounts on insurance and things like that, but we really wanna find a club that we can stand behind and that we'd do more than just kinda pay dues to, and I think we just haven't found that club yet" (interview 2010). John has similarly observed that in recent years, less common are "club rides where you'd go somewhere, light a fire, cook hot dogs. Now it's more the $15,000 snowmobile, high speed trip to a place where you go in a restaurant, eat a meal, high speed trip back.[…] More and more of the people

riding are more destination snowmobilers. They're not just the close-knit club community. […] It's a different culture" (interview 2011).

Finally, the growth and increasing commercialization of the snowmobile industry have overwhelmed some of the local clubs' managerial, financial, and volunteer labor capabilities (Vail 2002), particularly in communities that attract large numbers of tourists from both in- and out-of-state. As Tom made clear, it's not that the grooming responsibilities, once a central piece of local volunteerism, are being taken away from the clubs, "They're giving up! They can't do it anymore!'" (Tom interview 2011). He and others stressed how snowmobiling has grown into a big business, which in turn affects existing community-based management systems, "That is one of the hard transitions that we're having right now, as we speak. It's the transition from the good old boys, family, traditional, local groups taking care of business to: this is now business. The challenge is: how do you manage that with what was all volunteers" (Tom interview 2011)?

For now, Maine's 285 clubs remain a central part of the snowmobile community. However, an aging and decreasing membership and declining volunteerism raise questions about their future. If these trends persist, can and will snowmobile clubs continue to play a central role in managing relations with landowners and other interests? Or, as snowmobiling becomes "increasingly systematized and mechanized and institutionalized" (Dan interview 2011), are the

kinds of ties and relations that uphold the commons becoming weaker? How might these changes affect efforts to preserve Maine's open land tradition?

The increasing scale and changing needs of Maine's snowmobile industry are related to another potential direction for future research, which is on the topic of permanence. Several key informants suggested that given the size and importance of the snowmobile industry to rural Maine economies, as well as the instabilities in ownership and increase in posting and other new land restrictions, there is a growing need for permanent trails, which in turn requires permanently protected access. Both Quimby and the Appalachian Mountain Club contend that today's snowmobile industry necessitates stability, which they think is best achieved via conservation and the creation of permanently protected areas. Despite the loss of some snowmobile trails across AMC's land, Jason believes in the fundamental value of being able to say, "'Hey, I know my grandkids can always hunt here and fish here,' where you can't say that about other places in Maine" (interview 2011). He continues, "That's where conservation comes in as being really important 'cause if you're […] trying to build a business plan and you're not sure you have access to certain land from year to year, it's really hard to find investment in that" (Jason interview 2011).

Quimby, meanwhile, basically tried to offer northern Mainers a 40,000-acre parcel that she would forever leave open to multiple uses in exchange for their support of her 74,000-acre national park proposal. Her spokesperson said she was motivated by her belief that the snowmobile industry "in that part of Maine needs

permanent snowmobile trails, they need it. And to have a viable economy, because any given year the trail can shift and they're done for that year. And how do you run a business like that? She's a business woman; it's about predictability, right?" (Bill interview 2011). Dan, the former deputy director of the Division of Parks and Public Lands, seems to agree based on changes to the physical snowmobile infrastructure that have been driven by snowmobiling's growth in economic importance. Million-dollar snowmobile bridges represent "a massive investment with very real stakes. So I think a lot of snowmobile trails are becoming more fixed on the landscape," which raises the question, "How can you have a dependable market? Because it's just not an ad-hoc experience anymore in any way. From a tourism perspective, [reliability] is what people demand" (interview 2011).

If these predictions prove true, what form will this permanence take? In order to preserve public access in perpetuity, will public land, conservation easements, or another new pattern of ownership serve industrial-scale snowmobiling better than private land? Will the local rejection of public land and preference for private land prove disastrous for snowmobiling in the long term as new landowners continue to enter the picture? How will this affect the relationship between snowmobilers and the mainstream conservation community?

An interrelated topic to keep an eye on is the challenge of staking regional economic development on nature-based tourism, including snowmobiling. Given its total reliance on something so completely uncontrollable as weather, snowmobiling is

already a fickle industry. This has become even more the case in this modern age of instant weather updates and last-minute vacation planning. And with the kind of growth that requires a dependable market comes an increase in vulnerability; the larger the investment in infrastructure, the greater the potential for losses. While the intricate network of businesses scattered throughout the north woods has become an integral part of community economies, this arrangement relies on a delicate balance of supply and demand and is vulnerable when there are breaks in the chain. John explained, "In a weaker business climate, loss of critical trail infrastructure has been an issue. Areas where a critical gas station closes because snow conditions are bad, riding drops off, and someone says 'I can't afford to stay open,' and so all of a sudden your linkages in terms of food and gas start to weaken" (interview 2011). The variety of factors that cause variability in annual snowmobile registrations is another indicator of the inherent instability of a larger-scale snowmobile economy dependent upon tourists. Factors including gas prices, the timing and consistency of snowfalls (for example, snow around Christmas "gets riders in the mood"), and the economy all contribute to the number of snowmobilers who register their machines each season (Tom personal communication; August 30, 2013).

And finally, for an industry that requires cold weather and snow, one must also consider the long-term effects of global climate change. If winter temperatures continue to rise and snow cover declines at the present rate, climate change scientists predict that global warming will profoundly affect winter recreation and tourism in

the northeastern U.S. (Burakowski and Magnusson 2012, Frumhoff et al. 2007). And snowmobiling is the most vulnerable winter recreation activity because it cannot depend on machine-made snow. John believes that of all the challenges he discussed, "global warming is the biggest threat to snowmobiling" (interview 2011), and Dan went into some detail on the subject, "The snowpack—that could be your most epic challenge to discuss what the future holds for snow in Maine. On a year to year basis, you just never know. It's far too early to even speculate on what that's gonna be" (interview 2011).

The multiple challenges faced by the snowmobile community as the industry continues to grow are clear; the question is how effectively the industry and community of riders will adapt to minor and major disruptions in the short term and well into the future.

Appendix A. Research Methodology

I used a combination of methods during my research including interviews with key informants, participant observation, and analysis of both formal (e.g., books, journal articles, agency reports, newspaper articles) and informal documents (e.g., online discussion comments posted in reaction to newspaper articles, web logs, websites).

My original research design included the use of archival research methods to help construct a history of snowmobiling in Maine. However, phone conversations with staff at the Maine State Archives in Augusta (a bureau within the Department of Secretary of State) indicated that the state archives did not contain historical accounts of the development and culture of snowmobiling. I also spent time at the Maine Historical Society's Brown Research Library in Portland. Preliminary research and discussions with staff and the Maine Historical Society Museum Curator again revealed a lack of primary source archival data detailing the genesis and growth of snowmobiling in the state.

Ethnographic data were collected during a series of in-depth interviews conducted between 2010 and 2011 with fourteen individuals throughout Maine. This method yielded enormously rich socio-political commentary and historical accounts and produced the bulk of my research data. Each subject was interviewed once, with the exception of one informant who visited his brother's house during my interview

and contributed to the conversation prior to a more extensive one-on-one interview at a later date. Thirteen interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes or offices, and one was conducted over the phone. The interviews lasted anywhere between 1 and 2.5 hours; all were digitally audio-recorded from start to finish, and the tapes were fully transcribed verbatim in order to facilitate subsequent qualitative analysis. In addition, I conducted a brief phone interview lasting roughly fifteen minutes with Senator Angus King, former governor of Maine, in October 2009. This conversation was not recorded; interview notes were hand-written during the call.

Driven by my interest in the cultural history of snowmobiling in Maine and the lack of archival data on the subject, I was specifically interested in speaking with older snowmobilers who had engaged in the activity since the 1960s. As a result, all but one of the snowmobilers I interviewed were in their sixties and seventies. I also interviewed two state agency employees in Maine's Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, one nature-based tourism business owner, and three individuals representing conservation interests in various capacities. Pseudonyms were assigned to my informants for confidentiality purposes.

Interview subjects were found and contacted through snowball sampling, starting with acquaintances' family members and coworkers and extending out to some of their friends, colleagues, and associates. In addition, I expressly pursued the following interviews: the director of the Snowmobile Program within Maine's Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Division of Parks and Public

Lands; Roxanne Quimby's spokesperson; and a contact within the Maine office of the Appalachian Mountain Club, given that my research would focus some attention on Quimby and AMC's recent land acquisitions and management decisions.

Although Roxanne Quimby was a key character in the story of conservation conflicts in the north woods prior to the initiation of my field work, her 2011 pronouncement of her plan to donate land to the Park Service to form a national park made her even more central in this dissertation. Her public revelation occurred as I was conducting interviews—in fact just three days prior to my sit-down with her spokesperson. During subsequent interviews, informants expressed strong opinions about a Maine Woods National Park as well as about Quimby the person and her past land management actions. As I analyzed interview text and other data and began the writing process, the story continued to unfold with continual updates in the news cycle. Because she has been such a provocative person in north woods conservation and due to the timing of my field work, Roxanne Quimby became a "diagnostic case" to which I repeatedly returned to situate my research and analyze the changes underway. The history of her involvement in north woods conservation over the last thirteen years, her shifts in approach and management policies in response to the extensive criticism and opposition she faced, and the public chronicle of her attempts at protecting a large swath of forestland have shed especially useful light on the questions at hand.

All of the interviews followed a semi-structured format as part of a grounded theory approach. This is an iterative process rooted in observation and guided by ongoing data assessment and subsequent, continual adjustment of research questions and protocols (see Glaser and Strauss 1967). A general set of questions was developed, but interviews jumped around based on the informants' penchant for storytelling and areas of interest and expertise. As such, the questions were modified for each interview subject and throughout the course of my research. The transcribed interviews produced 230 total pages of text. Each interview was hand-coded using a system that qualitatively linked various concepts and themes to the data, revealing patterns, commonalities, and differences among interview responses. However, the unevenness of interview questions and answers, absence of a random sample, diversity of interview subjects, and small sample size prevent quantification of the data, at least in such a way that would generate results with statistical significance.

My interviews with snowmobilers aimed to learn their history and connection to the activity; various specifics of the activity such as club involvement and interactions with landowners; the connections they perceive between snowmobiling and rural economies and livelihoods; how snowmobiling shapes their experience in nature; the meaning of stewardship and conservation and how that relates to snowmobiling; and their thoughts and feelings on recent shifts such as changes in land ownership, increases in conservation land, and restrictions on access to the woods. I always started my interviews with snowmobilers by asking them to share

stories about their personal snowmobiling history—when they got started and why, what they love about it, and so forth. This set a fairly informal tone that was intended to minimize any anxiety they might be feeling about being interviewed (particularly with a tape recorder nearby) and to encourage openness. Establishing a level of comfort proved critical for subsequent questions that asked their opinions on more contentious topics.

Interviews with people who work in the conservation community covered some similar ground. I began by inquiring about the organization or agency's work in the north woods, particularly as it related to snowmobiling and snowmobilers; various land management policy questions; connections between ecological and economic vitality; how north woods nature is imagined and experienced (e.g., wilderness); and questions about private and public property and the commons.

Additional ethnographic data were collected during participant observation at a public hearing held in Augusta on September 28, 2009 for the purposes of gathering public comments on proposed revisions to the Land Use Planning Commission's ten-year Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The planning document, which was developed over the course of more than four years, guides the agency's policy decisions on the ten million acres of unorganized territory land. Hearing attendees included unaffiliated individuals, representatives from sportsmen and recreation organizations, economic development councils and interests, timber management companies, conservation organizations, state agencies, and real estate/land development interests.

I hand-recorded notes detailing the affiliation of public commenters and the content of their remarks during the hearing.

Finally, I relied on various formal and informal documents to provide historical, cultural, and theoretical context and to keep tabs on current events that unfolded throughout my research. Numerous articles were written on the future of the north woods, particularly on conservation efforts and the latest developments surrounding Quimby's national park proposal. Most were written in local Maine newspapers, and many of these yielded more than 100 online comments submitted by readers. These thoughts posted in reaction to newspaper articles (and each other) provided an additional window into the social dynamics among Mainers representing and asserting different cultural and political positions. Several days or weeks after an article's publication I would either print the entirety of the comments or copy the comment record into a Microsoft Word document for subsequent qualitative content analysis. Analysis consisted of locating and determining recurring themes (e.g., related to a commenter's position on an issue or his or her general tone) and hand-coding comments accordingly.

The utility of this data is understandably limited in several ways including the researcher's inability to distinguish helpful personal context for each commenter, as well as the restriction of dialogue to participants who are able to and enjoy engaging in online discussions. This tends to attract opinionated people, some of whom use the newspaper comments section as a stage for repeatedly expressing their strong

opinions and issue platforms. Nevertheless, this interchange of ideas proves useful because it captures communication as it unfolds outside of public participation structures like public meetings, and is "directly plugged into the social-ecological system as contexts that people live in" (Hutchins and Stormer 2013, 26).

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Dan. Personal Interview. 18 January 2011.
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Dave. Personal Interview. 5 November 2010 and 18 January 2011
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