

# Blue Ribbon Commission on Land Conservation 2010 REPORT TO THE GOVERNORS



New England Governors'  
Conference, Inc.

July 2010

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# Blue Ribbon Commission on Land Conservation

## 2010 Report to the Governors

*Massachusetts:* Hon. Deval Patrick (Chair)

*Connecticut:* Hon. M. Jodi Rell

*Maine:* Hon. John E. Baldacci

*New Hampshire:* Hon. John Lynch

*Rhode Island:* Hon. Donald L. Carcieri

*Vermont:* Hon. James H. Douglas

### Commission Members

*Massachusetts:* Dorrie Pizzella and Lynn Lyford

*Connecticut:* Matthew Fritz and Terry Jones

*Maine:* Eliza Townsend and Richard Barringer (Chair)

*New Hampshire:* Susan Francher and Jane Difley

*Rhode Island:* W. Michael Sullivan and Janet Coit

*Vermont:* Jonathan Wood and Edward O'Leary

NEGC Staff: John Shea

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# Executive Summary

On September 15, 2009, in Saint John NB, the New England Governors called on their responsible Chief State Officers, in collaboration with appropriate partners and the Commission on Land Conservation (CLC), to develop five integrated initiatives to:

- Keep Farmlands in Farming,
- Keep Forests as Forests,
- Connect People to the Outdoors,
- Protect Wildlife Habitat, and
- Safeguard Coastal and Estuarine Lands.

The CLC then established five Working Groups to develop these initiatives, consisting of state and federal officials and private partners, each chaired by a senior state official. In each case, the responsible Chief State Officer responded to the opportunity presented by Governors in the belief that effective regional action will add value and substantially advance their state's related agendas and goals, especially in a time of severe state budget stringency.



*Local produce at market. (Federation of Massachusetts Farmers Markets photo)*

This is an auspicious time to undertake these initiatives in light of the federal government's expressed interest in addressing the nation's resource management issues

at landscape and regional scales, especially through demonstration projects that link the public, private, and philanthropic sectors, and honor the nation's heritage of private land ownership. There is, further, strong federal interest today in rural development matters, local agriculture, livable communities, environmental justice, access to the outdoors, and wildlife habitat and coastal protection.

Finally, there is growing evidence of the wisdom of the Governors' Resolution of September 2009, and understanding within professional circles and the general public of the



*Loading logs. (Maine Forest Service photo)*

need for continuing action in all five, related areas.

The initiatives developed by the Working Groups and described below share a number of important, cross-cutting themes that underlie all. These include a shared determination to:

1. *Strengthen the connections in their daily lives between our people and the land that supports them and they steward, to the benefit of each;*
2. *Make the working lands of New England more profitable and financially viable, by strengthening markets for their products and converting their public benefits from liabilities to assets;*
3. *Encourage the public to see themselves as part of, and not apart from our natural heritage; educate them to its many values and public benefits and wise uses; and cultivate a conservation ethic as an active duty of citizenship;*
4. *Mindful of global economic and climate change, enhance economic, environmental, and social resilience across the region, to create more prosperous and sustainable industries and communities throughout;*
5. *Serve the interests of environmental justice, making the landscape and all its benefits more accessible to underserved populations; and our settled places, more livable and healthy, to discourage sprawling development patterns;*
6. *Assure coordination and collaboration across the five initiatives, to realize their full complement of benefits;*
7. *Respect the freedom of each state to choose among the individual elements of each initiative, to meet its own challenges and needs as it sees fit; and*
8. *Accomplish all this only with the substantial and continuing financial commitment of the federal, state, local,*



*The working waterfront of Stonington, Maine. (Jennifer Hutchins photo)*

*private, and philanthropic partners with a stake in the outcome, at a cost of some \$270 million over three years for the five demonstration projects.*

In light of these findings and the progress made by each of the five Working Groups, the CLC recommends that the New England Governors' Conference:

- Authorize the Chief State Officers to continue developing the proposals below as a collaborative regional approach, to pursue them on a priority basis in collaboration with partnering agencies, organizations, and the CLC;
- Call upon the Congressional delegations of the several states to support the development and implementation of these proposals; and upon the Obama Administration to apply related federal programs, staffing, and funding across departmental lines in new and creative ways to achieve the goals cited; and
- Authorize the CLC to seek funding from philanthropic sources to support its work on behalf of the NEGC, sufficient to continue its necessary coordination and integration role, and to secure the support of interested federal agencies and the region's Congressional delegation and philanthropic community.