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Letter from the Editor

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Dear Readers,

Over one year ago, in response to the initial concept plan put forward by Plum Creek, we entered into a partnership with the New York-based Open Space Institute to develop this issue. Our mutual goal has been to elevate the increasingly polarized debate over whether LURC should approve or turn down Plum Creek's application. We wanted instead to weigh in on a set of longer-term, larger issues at play in the region.

We asked questions such as, what types of conservation and rural development models strike an optimal balance between ecological protection and community and economic opportunities for the region's residents? What has the last 20 years of conservation in Maine accomplished? Does Maine have the planning tools it needs to manage conservation and development in a region facing unprecedented transitions in ownership, investment, and uses? How do we establish world-class tourism experiences and markets? And, to what degree will tourism in the Northern Forest be shaped by eco-resort development?

We responded to these types of questions by asking experts from within and outside Maine to contribute on a broad range of topics spelled out in the table of contents. Our hope is that you—our readers—not only will take the time to read these articles for personal insight, but also that groups of people and organizations will use these articles as a basis for building constructive dialogue about the future of the region. The importance of the Northern Forest as a place of wilderness and wild habitat, as a source of livelihood and rural lifestyles, and as an area of unparalleled beauty demands nothing less than thoughtful, consensus-derived responses to the pressures and changes facing the people, communities, and lands of this region today.

On a personal note, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to Peter Howell and his team at the Open Space Institute. Through the process of conceptualization, research, pulling together experts and a stellar group of contributors, and finally, in production we have enjoyed a wonderful collaborative partnership, the results of which we hope are evident to you. Finally, as editor for close to 12 years, this is also my goodbye. I am moving on to new challenges and a new position in the private sector. I leave the journal in the very able hands of its editorial board and my colleague, Ann Acheson, who for the last five years has served as managing editor. Their commitment to bringing to you in-depth, timely analysis of key issues affecting the region remains strong and unchanged—a tiny marker of stability amidst unprecedented changes afoot in Maine.

Best,

