

Maine's Rivers and Lakes: 430 Towns and 30 Plantations

Lloyd C. Irland
The Irland Group 174 Lord Rd
Wayne ME 04284
lcirland@gmail.com

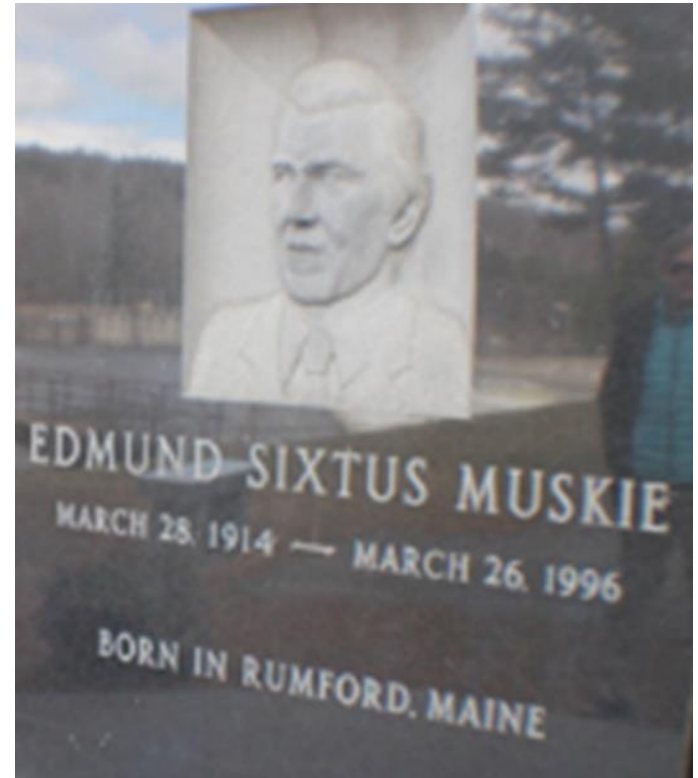


1

7/2/2024

Objectives

- Thematic, Historical Overview
- How and Why did we Get Here?
- Outline some Dismal Realities
- Is Governance Capable of dealing with the Challenges?



1600: Subsistence & Exploration

- The Great Dying
- Governance: Glooskap's Lessons
 - Imperial regulations on trade
- Paradigms: TEK; Use rights vs. English farming patterns, Crown grants and monopolies

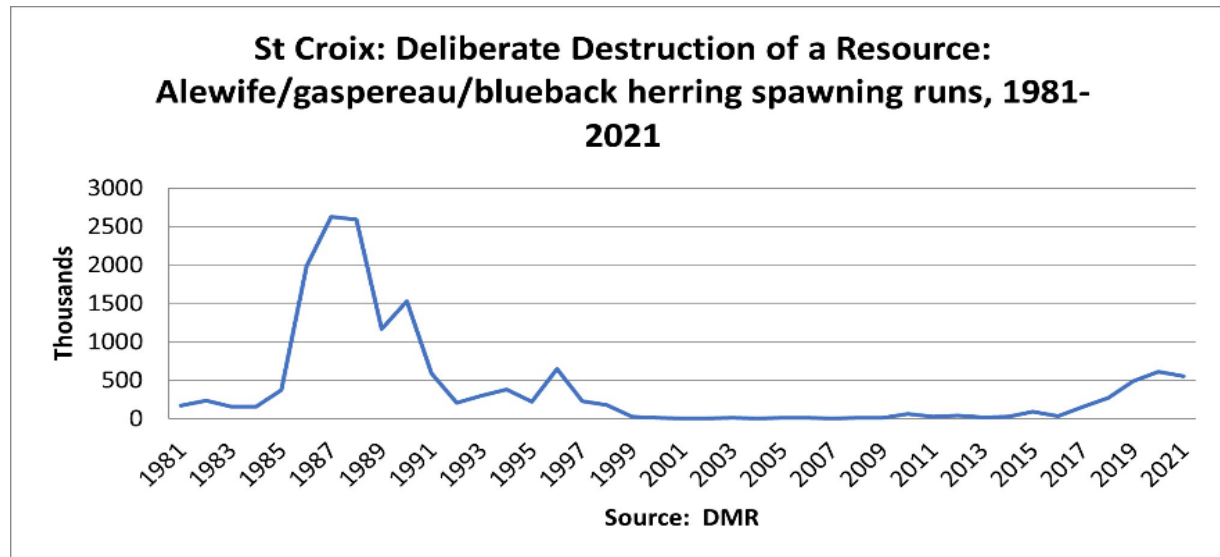
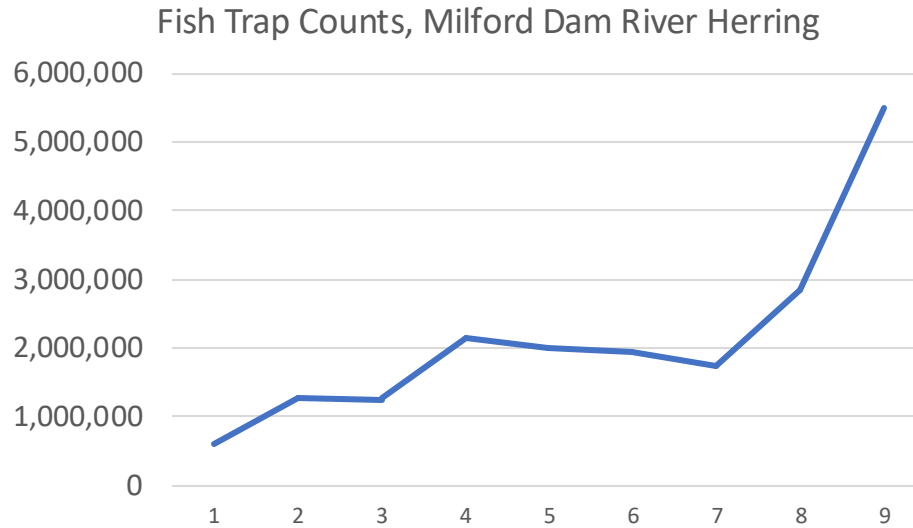
1900 Mass electricity supply & Rivers become Sewers

- Mainstem dams get Bigger –and then MUCH bigger
- Governance: Legislatures address conflicts one at a time
- After 1920: Federal Power Act
- Paradigm: “Coordinated River Development”
- Manufacturing grows on wildlands periphery (paper); Urban wastes into Rivers



By year 1950 “Novel Ecosystems”

- 11 Largest lakes are impoundments
 - Some are prized fishery and recreational assets!
- Introduced fish and other creatures (legacy in part of late 19th c. “science”)
- Extensive modification of streams: removing mainstem dams not enough for some species to recover
- Forests are second/third growth; introduced pests



Governance

- I propose that:
- There are far too many government units
- There is far too little governance
- Mainers (mostly) like it that way

Governance and its Absence

- Politics: ad hoc, reactive with little or no Planning
- Home Rule: hundreds of towns hold land use powers
 - Many don't use them
- State Legislature
 - Minimal Government ideology
 - Industry group power
 - Passive public

Governance Institutions

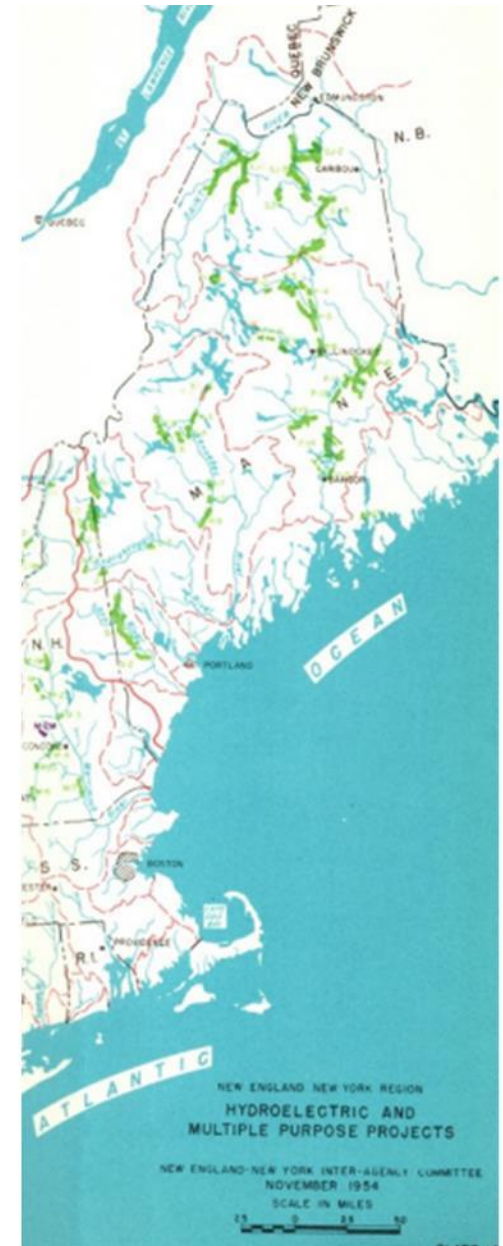
- In 2020:
- 483 municipal governments
- 23 cities (10 > 10,000 pop)
- 430 “Towns”, 30 “Plantations”
- 387 “Places” – less than 2,500 people
- What’s missing – Counties !



Byron Maine 175 Voters

Uneasy federalism

- Federal Policies Driven by issues/conflicts in other regions
- Now, State sends Dam decisions to Washington
- Washington funds Sewage Treatment Plants
- Localism: no real priorities set for action
 - Federal pork encourages this
 - York River NSR?
 - Loring NWR???



Abdication

- Ignore Trust Duties for the waters & their users
- Delegated enforcement of many rules to levels of government unable to perform, often reluctant “state mandates”
- Hostile to Counties which could do so
- Do we have country’s toughest envir. Laws? Not really
- Outsourcing



Results

- Overdeveloped Lakeshores & Riverscapes
- Inadequate management of their wastewater and erosion impacts
- 1970's abatement: go after big cities, manufacturers
- Shifting Baselines

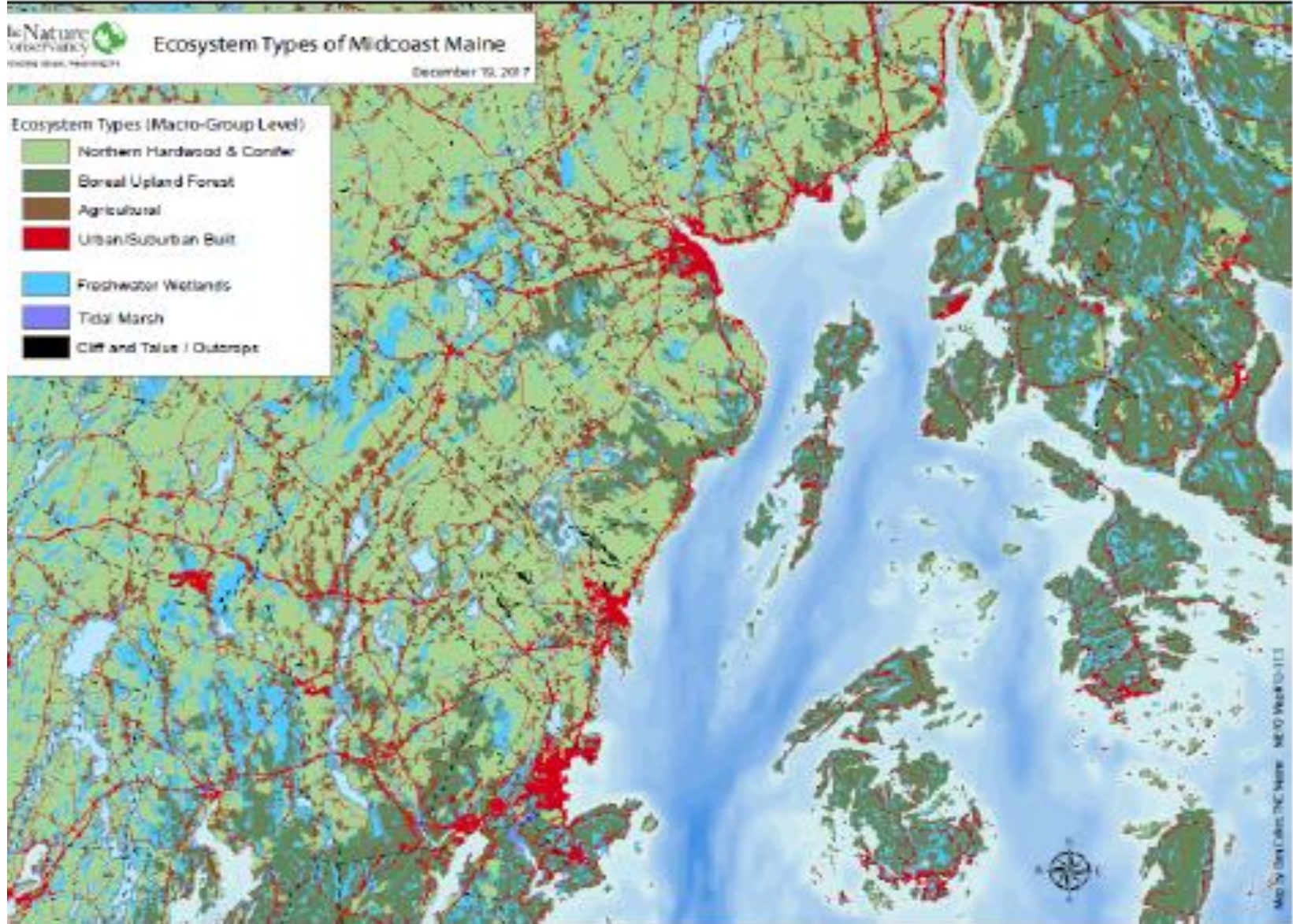


Planned destruction of Rural Landscapes/Lakeshores

- We have built a Giant Sprawl Machine
- Baked in low density sprawl, traffic congestion, and energy waste
- Upping urban/suburban densities fiercely resisted
- Viewed objectively, Maine actually **plans** for this.
- **Worse than unplanned destruction**

Ecosystem Types (Macro-Group Level)

- Northern Hardwood & Conifer
- Boreal Upland Forest
- Agricultural
- Urban/Suburban Built
- Freshwater Wetlands
- Tidal Marsh
- Cliff and Talus / Outcrop



Map by Dan Cohen, INC. Name: ME10 Web 10-113

1/8/2024

Project Share Jan 11 2023

14

Conflicting Fantasies

- Solving one problem can create another one]
e.g. PFA's
- Public tunes out or resorts to “alternative facts”
- Campaigner model of conservation: works against one big bad guy or to stop something
- Used effectively by resisters of conservation plans too

Equity

- Equity: Fair ways to pay costs?
- Equity of overall outcomes, or does every single project/program have to be “fair” as all would see it?
- Double standard -- New development held to strict standards;
- Existing development “grandfathered”

Dismal Science: Some Realities

- Now, have to change behavior of multitudes, not just a few polluters or forest owners
- Federal Piggy Bank is Empty
- Consumers will have to pay for things ignored in past -- user fees or taxes

Tourism: Threats to Sustainability

- Mechanization
- Gentrification
- Privatization
- Sprawl
- Congestion
- Leopold: “nothing left to see and fondle”



Maine is not an island: We are Outsourcing:

- Funding \$\$\$ for Conservation -- NGOs
- More than half our Heating is Oil
- All of our Transportation fuel
- Virtually all materials for solar, wind, batteries
- Much of our building material

Example

- If we wanted, we could have effective septic tank Regulation
- Within the existing structure we could empanel County Health Departments which would take up all septic regulation (no more home rule)
- Areas to be defined by Watershed not arbitrary boundaries

Challenges for managing resources sustainably

- The “Arts” of Politics & Public Administration – Vanishing?
- Educated citizenry – how?
- Shrinkage/extinction of independent journalism in mainstream press
- Politics & Governance are not up to the task



Required Readings if you are Serious about this

- Ted J. Rulseh, *Ripple Effect. We're loving our lakes to death.* Univ. of Wisconsin Press 2022
- Walter Wells, 1869 Report
- NENYIAC Report, 1957
- As Maine Goes (Bowdoin exhibit)
- Nader's Paper Plantation
- Jerome Daviau, *Maine's Lifeblood*
- Biographies of Muskie and George Mitchell
- Duane Lockard book
- Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*

