ANNUAL REPORT
2025

OUR CLIMATE COMMON

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Cover Photo

Fall photo of Borestone Mountain Sanctuary. Our Climate Common surveyed the old-growth forest shown in the photo to help improve our model for accurately mapping true old-growth forest.

Letter from the President

In October 2024, Our Climate Common published our report summarizing three years of field work and computer modeling to map late-successional and old-growth (LSOG) forest in Maine using LiDAR. Almost immediately, the Natural Resource Council of Maine spearheaded legislation that would require Maine to (a) quantify LSOG forest for the entire state, (b) develop strategies to conserve LSOG forest, and (c) report on the status of LSOG forest in Maine at 5-year intervals going forward. Despite long odds, LD 1529 ("An Act to Enhance the Protection of High-value Natural Resources Statewide") was passed by both houses of the 132nd Maine Legislature and signed into law by Governor Janet Mills on July 1, 2025.

Not in 40 years of doing applied science have I seen science translated into policy so fast. Moreover, it's rare for a single scientific study to have such an effect. Having an accurate LSOG map has changed the direction of social discourse about old forest conservation in Maine.

In the following pages we outline our work since we published our 2024 map. Also, we're starting to explore conservation strategies for the LSOG forest we've now mapped. For example, through our fieldwork, we now know that LSOG forest contains two to five times as much carbon per acre than forest managed for timber. Could the carbon offset market be used as a mechanism to fund LSOG conservation? That's one of our main focus areas for 2026.

Thanks to all our generous funders, our field crew, and Our Climate Common's dedicated board, for making our work possible.

1 The LSOG "RAP" (Rapid Assessment Protocol)

In 2024, we evaluated the accuracy of our LSOG map by visiting forest sites that were not used to build the computer model. The goal was to determine the accuracy of the computer's classification of "new" places we had not visited before. This ground-truthing showed that the model was accurate about 90% of the time, a remarkable rate of success.

Download the LSOG RAP here:
https://ourclimatecommon.org/lsog-project/

While the LSOG map is *very good*, in our 2024 report, we encouraged foresters and land conservationists to visit LSOG stands before making any management or conservation decisions—to take a "trust but verify" approach.

To that end, we realized practitioners needed a simple, cost-effective "tool" they could use to field validate the true condition of an LSOG stand on our map. So, we developed the LSOG Rapid Assessment Protocol (RAP).

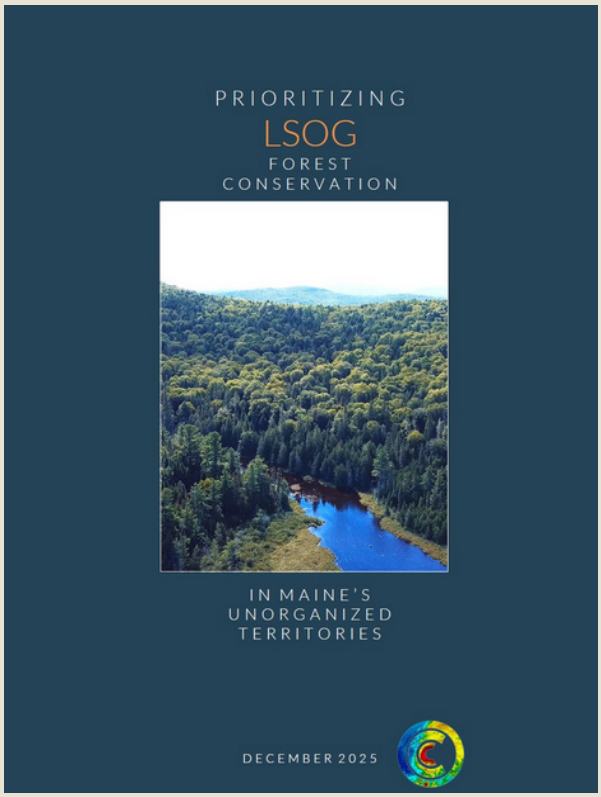
The LSOG RAP takes about 20 minutes to complete, once in the stand of interest. The protocol involves qualitative measurements on 17 different attributes of the forest, such as the number of large trees, the number of fallen logs, and the presence of several indicator lichens and mosses. Each variable is "scored." If the user has a cell signal, they can enter the data into an online app and get an instantaneous classification of the stand. If out of cell range, the user can enter the data as soon as they get back to the office, and get a result.

The RAP will help users decide how to manage, or conserve, the stand. By using the RAP, they also learn how to "read" the forest through our ecological lens. We also produced "The Movie" version of the RAP, to help people learn how to use this new protocol. Expecting an Oscar!

On YouTube at:
https://youtu.be/-JJ3gX1iZCs

2 Prioritizing LSOG Forest Conservation Report

We completed our LSOG map of the unorganized territories of Maine in October, 2024. Having such a detailed, accurate map was an amazing, new conservation tool. However, in our 2024 report, we did not address "prioritization,"—where would you begin if you were a land conservation organization? We identified thousands of small LSOG patches and several hundred larger stands or tracts across the 10M-acre territory. It might seem an overwhelming amount of detailed information.



Download the Prioritization report here:
https://ourclimatecommon.org/lsog-project/

To help land trusts and land conservation organizations, in 2025, we followed up with a report titled "Prioritizing LSOG Forest Conservation in Maine's Unorganized Territories."

This report also introduced a "prioritization framework" that walks a land trust through a series of questions that will help them prioritize LSOG conservation, based on their own interests, in combination with principles of conservation biology.

In this report, we list the largest 128 tracts of LSOG forest we mapped, including whether they are currently off limits to harvesting. This list is a great "roadmap" for where land trusts might focus their time and money.

In 2026, we look forward to assisting individual land trusts in their efforts to conserve LSOG forest.

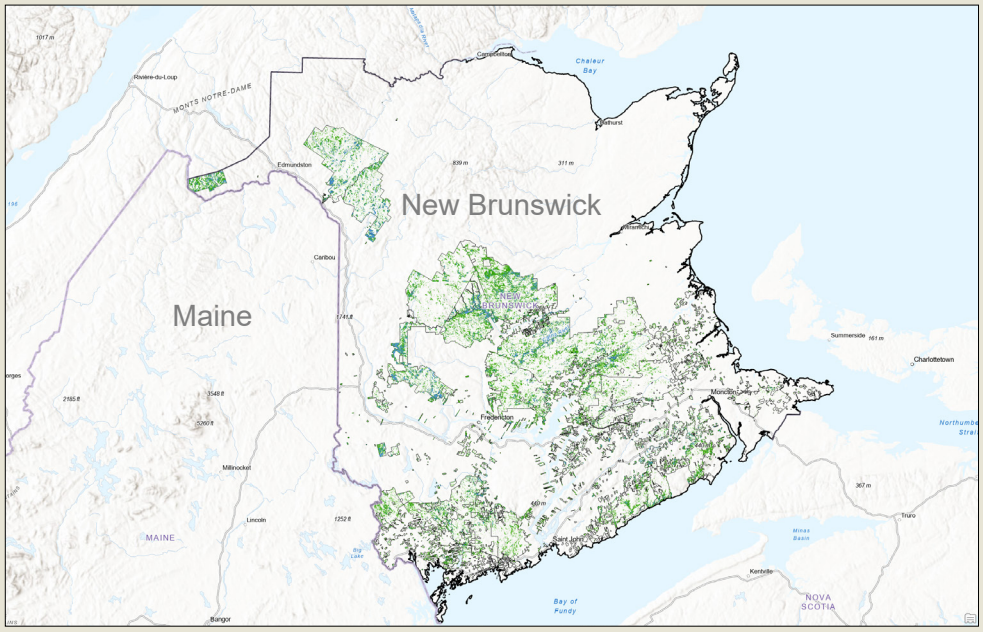
3 Mapping LSOG forest in New Brunswick

Our LSOG mapping method worked great in Maine. Could it work in other parts of the region?

In 2025, we answered this question. J.D. Irving Woodlands, one of the largest forest owners in Maine, and the largest forest owner and manager across the Canada border to the east, asked us to apply our model to their 1.8M hectares (4.5M acres) in New Brunswick. The forest types in New Brunswick are mostly the same as those in Maine, and we expected the model would work well there.

While the accuracy of this map for New Brunswick has yet to be tested on the ground, the map appears to be working as anticipated. The map has identified 357 thousand hectares (882 thousand acres) of LSOG in the area of interest. Eighty-one thousand of these hectares (200 thousand acres) are in the highest quality LS+OGL condition.

This map is now being used by J.D. Irving to refine its forest management plans. This project is a great example of putting science to use.



The LSOG map we generated for J.D. Irving Woodlands in New Brunswick, Canada. We only mapped land owned or managed by J.D. Irving.

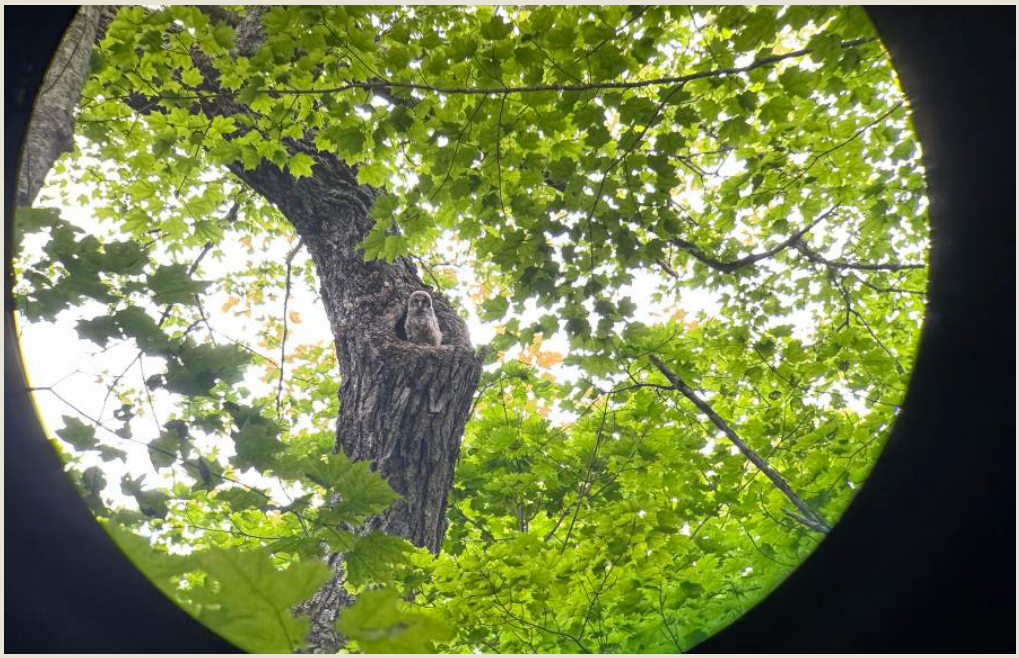
4 Building a better map for “true old-growth”

Our 2024 LSOG map was remarkably accurate for distinguishing “Not LSOG” forest from the three LSOG forest age classes. However, it was not as good at distinguishing between what we called “late-successional” (LS) and “true old-growth” (OG). The former (LS) typically had some evidence of harvest history, even though it was ecologically exceptional.

We wondered if we could fine-tune our classification model to better locate true old-growth. True old-growth, with no evidence of human activity, is extremely rare in Maine. If we could identify it remotely, with a more finely tuned model, it would be a revolution for old-growth forest conservation.

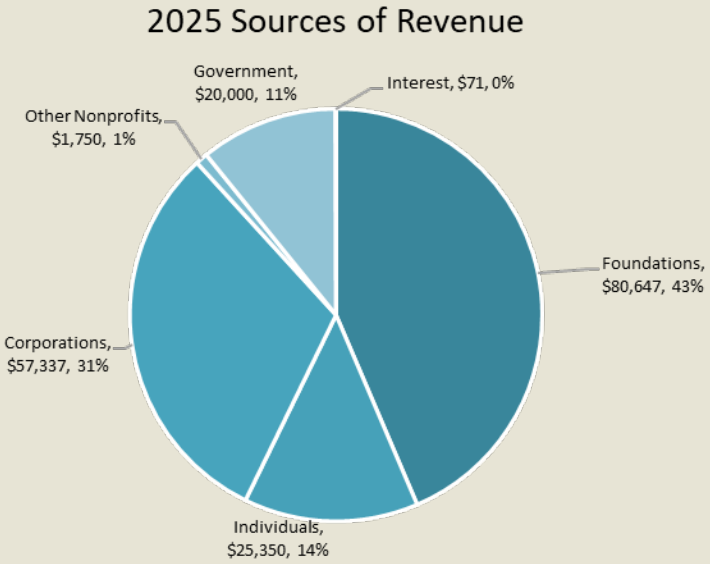
To build a refined map, we needed more true old-growth reference sites that we visited in the field. In the summer of 2025, we visited sites that others had suggested were true old-growth. We needed to see these sites ourselves to make sure.

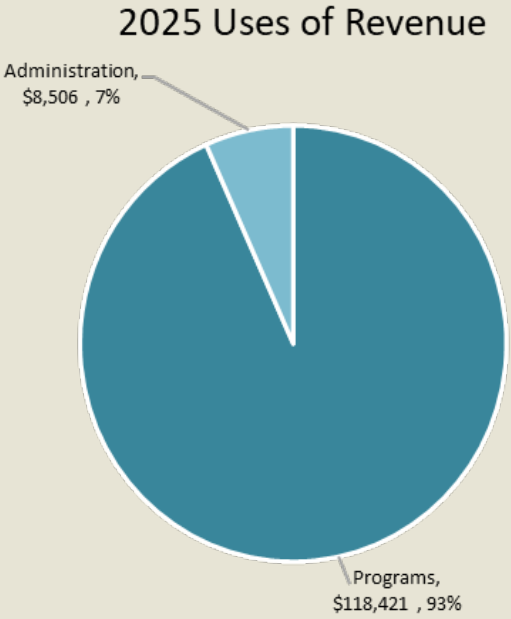
As a result of this fieldwork, we were able to add data from three new true old-growth sites, and rerun the model. The new model has revealed many possible old-growth sites. Part of our field work in 2026 will be to visit these sites and determine whether the new map is correct. We’ll know more after our 2026 field season. Stay tuned.



Barred owl nestling, about to be a fledgling, in one of our new 2025 old-growth reference stands on Gero Island in Chesuncook Lake. (photo by Ben Shamgochian)

2025 Revenue and Expenses





2025 Statement of Financial Activity

	Total
Revenue	
Interest Income	$71
Foundations	$80,647
Corporations	$57,337
Government	$20,000
Individuals	$25,350
From other nonprofits	$1,750
Total Revenue	**$185,155**
Expenditures	
Contractors	$40,200
Field Supplies	$664
Grant Transfers	$0
Insurance	$1,181
Meals & Meetings	$980
Bank fees & Processing Fee	$70
Memberships & subscriptions	$875
Office supplies	$1,219
PO Box rental	$102
Postage	$107
Printing	$163
Small tools & equipment	$6,786
Software & apps	$3,122
Payroll expenses	$1,109
FICA tax	$17,849
Payroll Administration	$15
Salaries & wages	$44,273
Workers' comp insurance	$829
Professional development	$1,415
Reimbursement for expenses	$147
Repairs & maintenance	$6
Books and Media	$139
Auto Rental	$1,553
Bus/Plane/Train	$60
Fuel	$273
Lodging/Rooms	$3,789
Parking	$5
Total Expenditures	$126,930
Net Operating Revenue	$58,225
Carryover from FY2024	**$99,418**
Net cash assets Dec. 31, 2025	**$157,643**

FUNDERS

Avangrid
Sandy and Sissy Buck
Daniel Hildreth
Emily J. Knobloch Foundation
J.D. Irving Timberlands
Horizon Foundation
Seth Sprague Educational and Charitable Foundation
The Betterment Fund
The Dorr Foundation
UMaine Cooperative Forest Research Unit

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