

# For Immediate Release

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**Environment  
Northeast**

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## **Environment Northeast Completes First-Ever Greenhouse Gas Assessment of Plum Creek's Major Development Planned for Maine's Northern Woods**

*Initial Land Clearing Alone Would Release One-Third the Annual Carbon Emissions of a Large Maine Power Plant*

BOSTON-Environment Northeast (ENE) completed a first-ever assessment quantifying the amount of greenhouse gases that the Plum Creek "Concept Plan," the largest proposed subdivision in Maine's history, would produce. The assessment estimated the amount of carbon dioxide that would be released by the deforestation on 20,000 acres of woodland in the Moosehead Lake Region during project construction, and the amount that would be emitted each year from transportation and building energy use associated with Plum Creek Timber Company's plan.

"The global warming impact of the Plum Creek project is substantial. Initial land clearing alone would release some 222,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide, or about one-third the annual emissions of the Wyman power plant in Yarmouth, Maine," said Dan Sosland, executive director, Environment Northeast. "Plum Creek's proposed development challenges the commitments Maine has made to lower its greenhouse gas emissions, but modifications based on smart growth principles could substantially reduce the amount of carbon produced."

The largest and most complex development project to seek state approval, the Plum Creek Concept Plan includes 975 residential units, 1050 resort units (a mixture of single-family units, townhouse and apartment style units), 2 resort lodges, 190 employee housing units and 100 affordable housing units, and 5 commercial zones. The development would be sited in the Moosehead Lake area, the country's biggest expanse of undeveloped woodlands east of the Mississippi. The developer, Plum Creek Timber Company, is the largest private landholder in the United States, and has developed similar resorts in remote areas of Washington state and Montana.

ENE's assessment was filed as testimony on behalf of GrowSmart Maine, an official intervener in the permit proceedings pending before the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission. It includes the following details:

- ENE estimates that approximately 387,378 to 501,081 metric tons of carbon dioxide would be emitted from the deforestation of 14,000 acres of woodland, half of which would be emitted immediately upon being cleared for housing lots, resorts and roads. The remaining half of the carbon dioxide released from land clearing would be emitted over a 50-year time period, resulting from the lost capacity of trees and their surrounding soils to store carbon and act as a carbon "sink."
- ENE projects that roughly 9,566 metric tons of carbon dioxide -the equivalent of adding 1,850 vehicles to Maine's highways-would be emitted each year from transportation associated with the development. This figure includes emissions from resort employee commuting, guest transit from the resort and residential areas into nearby Greenville, and destination travel (i.e., guest transit to the resort from their homes in other locations).

- ENE estimates that approximately 13,018 metric tons of carbon dioxide-the equivalent of adding 2,525 vehicles to Maine's highways-would be released each year from energy used in the development's buildings.
- ENE noted several basic design modifications to the resort development that could yield substantial savings in greenhouse gas emitted.
  - For example, clustering the residential units and decreasing the size of the lots could reduce the amount of land cleared up to 41 percent, yielding a corresponding drop in the amount of carbon dioxide emitted.
  - Similarly, use of advanced building design could cost-effectively improve the energy efficiency of newly constructed buildings by as much as 50 percent, delivering dramatic cost savings to property owners and managers.

Beyond Plum Creek, ENE's assessment demonstrates the need for land developers and public agencies to begin making the connection between how developments are designed and climate change. "Maine simply cannot afford to continue building sprawling, conventional developments that depend on the automobile and plane travel without forethought for their impact on global warming and meeting the state's greenhouse gas emission goals," said Sosland.

State and local governments are moving towards requiring developers to assess the global warming potential of their projects in environmental impact assessments; however, no such analyses have been completed to date. ENE's assessment for Plum Creek can help advance the nascent field of greenhouse gas impact studies on development projects.

According to Alan Caron, President of GrowSmart Maine, "GrowSmart raised the issue of global warming in the Plum Creek case because land use development and global warming can no longer be looked at as two separate and unrelated issues. Global warming will almost surely have a greater impact, over time, on the environment and economics of this region than will this development proposed by Plum Creek."

The greenhouse gas assessment for the Plum Creek Development is in line with the solutions outlined in Maine's Climate Action Plan. The plan was the first in the nation to recognize the opportunities forests offer for sequestering carbon dioxide and to call for consideration of the forest carbon cycle in global warming reduction strategies. A recognized leader for state action on climate change, Maine passed a law in 2003 requiring its Department of Environmental Protection to develop a Climate Action Plan for reducing carbon emissions.

"Forests provide a variety of services that benefit the climate, from sequestering carbon to producing biomass and biofuels that can substitute for fossil fuel use. By preserving our woodlands, promoting the use of sustainably-harvested biomass, and pursuing smart growth development, we can maximize the carbon-reducing potential of Maine's forests," said Ellen Hawes, policy analyst at Environment Northeast.

Environment Northeast is a non-profit research and policy organization addressing large scale environmental challenges such as climate change in the Northeast and eastern Canada with offices in Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

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