

Forest Stewards Guild Tour at the Austin Cary Forest

Baxter State Park | Harpswell, Maine | September 16, 2026

The Austin Cary Forest (ACF) is located on Sebascodegan Island (locally known as Great Island) between Route 24 and Long Reach and surrounds the southern half of Doughty Cove. The ownership totals 228 acres, with 180 acres of woodland, 0.5 acre in the parking lot, 13.5 acres of freshwater wetland (including a small former gravel pit that functions as a wetland), and 34 acres of salt marsh.

Much of the property was once sheep pastureland, as is evidenced by old stone walls and wire fences. These lands were abandoned for agriculture over 100 years ago, and they have subsequently reverted to forest. Pine would have been a likely species to first seed in to these old pastures, and a few of the largest, most limby pine scattered through the property were probably established at that time. Over the years, previous owners harvested wood, usually during the off-season for farming and fishing work. The forest types, ages, and land use history are likely similar to those found on the surrounding properties and indeed, through the rest of Harpswell and many other southern and mid-coast Maine communities.

Austin Cary owned this land for some period of time in the early 20th century. Cary was a nationally known pioneer in forestry, a distinguished and prolific writer, and a professor at University of Florida. Cary's 1899 article "Forest Management in Maine" provides one of the earliest comprehensive scientific accounts of the forests of Maine. He also worked for the US Forest Service, private forest industry, and as a surveyor. Baxter State Park acquired this property through a specific fund and trust agreement Percival Baxter established in his last will and testament.

In the trust agreement, Baxter directed: "All of the lands so purchased under this Trust Agreement are to be forever held by the said STATE OF MAINE in TRUST for the benefit of the People of Maine for the development, improvement, use, reforestation, scientific forestry and the production of timber and sale thereof." Further: "I hope some of the forest land acquired by the State under this provision... will be become model forests... producing a crop of wood to be sold by the State. The State of Maine is given full power to harvest the crop, reforest and protect these lands against damage by insects, fire or otherwise." The ACF was sold to the State of Maine, with some deed conditions, with two conveyances in 1973-4, with purchase funds of \$25,000 from the Baxter trust fund. The letter outlining the proposed conveyance stated the following general understanding: "...Additionally that the area be held for management of game species, particularly waterfowl for reasons of the marshland habitat, and for a model or demonstration forest. These uses will not be such as to encourage large crowds of people and we do not wish to develop any facilities which will concentrate people on the property. However, I think to be realistic some increase in hikers and observers will be anticipated."

The following is a synopsis of activities on the ACF in the past 40+ years, followed by a summary table of timber harvests.

Management Highlights

- 1985: Maine Forest Service conducted an early biomass harvest in what are now stands 5 and 7.
- 1989: Tote road in the northwest portion was stabilized and closed to vehicular access.
- 1997: Baxter State Park Authority and Harpswell Island School developed the parking area in a former gravel pit.
- 1998 / 2019: Forest management plans prepared; the 2019 plan updated stand and management information.
- 2000s-2024: Tours hosted for conservation organizations in the early 2000s and in 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2024.
- 2006-present: Mechanical invasive-plant control began; bittersweet control followed in 2019, along with wild apple release in stand 2.
- 2009: Timber trespass identified along the north line; the property was surveyed.
- 2013-14: Maine DOT rebuilt and expanded the Long Reach Road causeway as a wetlands mitigation project.
- 2019 Forest management plan https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AO8Cna9A3XJavN5CTr_p6YAEHZvyTAmh/view

Current context. Baxter State Park is discussing a possible ownership transfer with conservation organizations because of long-distance management challenges, including changing storm and weather patterns, marine clay soils, winter moth, browntail moth, hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), invasive plants, and abutter issues.

Timber Harvest Summary

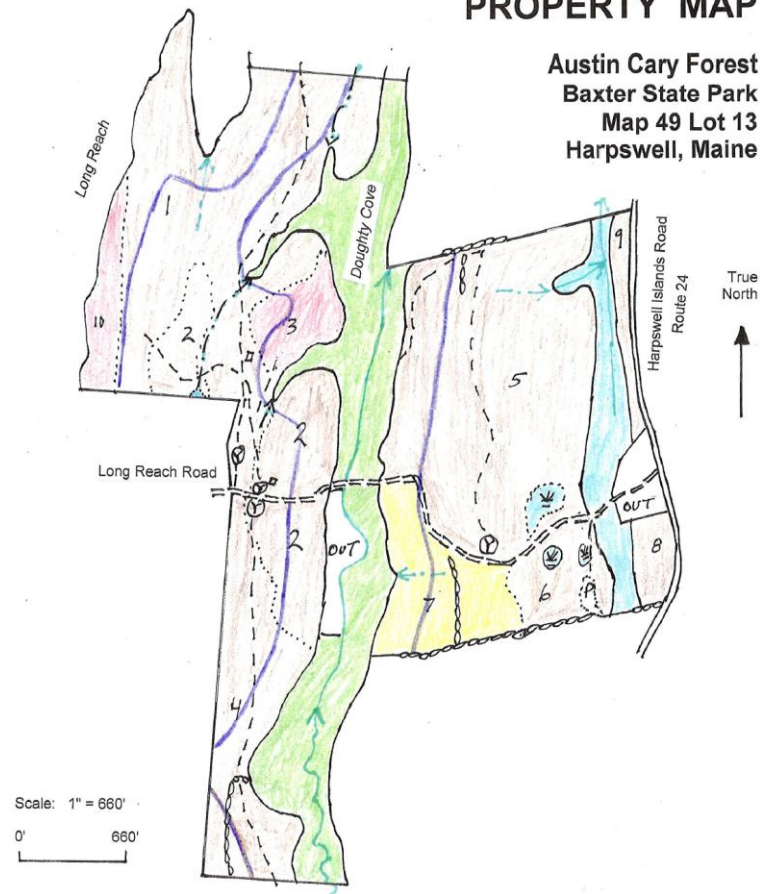
Year	Stand	Acres	Silviculture	Harvest system	Sawtimber	Pulp / firewood	Net revenue
2001-03	2, 3, part 1	40	Selection	Hand crew / tree length	67 MBF	308 cords	\$5,621
2006	3	4	Blowdown salvage	Hand crew / tree length	16 MBF	56 cords	\$2,147
2007	1, 6	21	Selection / salvage	Hand crew / tree length	62 MBF	124 cords	\$7,973
2013	4, 5, 6	45	Selection	Mechanized CTL	93 MBF	367 cords	\$11,774
2022	1, 4, 5	85	Selection / HWA salvage	CTL; pre-bunched	125 MBF	627 cords	\$26,540

Austin Cary Forest - Property and Stand Map

228 acres total | 180 acres woodland | Map detail from 2009 property survey and April 2019 field reconnaissance

PROPERTY MAP

Austin Cary Forest
Baxter State Park
Map 49 Lot 13
Harpwell, Maine



LEGEND

Stand number	2
Stand boundary	
Intermittent stream	~>
Stream	~>
Freshwater wetland	W
Saltwater marsh	W
Woods trail	- - -
Wood yard	Y
Stone wall	o o o
Foundation	□
250' shoreland zone	—

FOREST STANDS

	Acres
1 *M3A Mixedwood sawtimber	54
2 M3B Mixedwood sawtimber	23
3 S1A Softwood sapling	4
4 M3A Mixedwood sawtimber	20
5 M3B Mixedwood sawtimber	46
6 M3C Mixedwood sawtimber	7
7 H3A Hardwood sawtimber	15
8 M3A Mixedwood sawtimber	3
9 M3A Mixedwood sawtimber	3
10 S3A Softwood sawtimber	5
Total woodland	180
Freshwater wetlands	13.5
Saltwater marsh	34
Parking area	0.5
Total property	228 acres

*S=75%+ Softwood; H=75%+ Hardwood; M=Mixedwood
1=0-30' height; 2=30-60'; 3=60'+
A=70-100% crown cover; B=40-70%; C=5-40%

Map detail from 2009 property survey
and field reconnaissance April 2019
For forest management purposes - Not a boundary survey.

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