



VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY

Maine's Land & Garden Preserve

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Average visitor group size of 1-2 people.
- Dogs are only allowed on “hard banks” or banks hardened with rocks of other durable materials along the Preserve’s shoreline.

SUMMARY

Parts of Mount Desert Island are a nonprofit public land and garden preserve off the coast of Maine. At 1,450 acres, it is located between Seal Harbor and Northeast Harbor on Maine’s Atlantic coast, adjacent to Acadia National Park. The Preserve takes you back in time to a simpler existence with nature while still maintaining a strong priority on “botanical innovation, horticultural excellence, ecological health, and best practices in environmental sustainability”.

Before the pandemic, the Preserve saw over 60,000 visitors per year with an average party size of 1-2 people. 50% of visitors at this time would bring at least one dog with tens of thousands of dogs visiting the park each year. These canine numbers have raised several unique management challenges for the Preserve. According to Tate Bushell, Director of Natural Lands, the large amount of dog visitors “trample vegetation, which is a possible impact to species and ecosystem dynamics (forest regeneration)” and as a result require increased protections.

FACTS

Public land and garden preserve on an **island**

Over 60,000 visitors a year

2.5 hour drive from Boston

MORE INFORMATION

- [Maine's Land & Garden Preserve](#)
- [Land & Garden Preserve Framework Plan](#)
- [Guidelines for Dog Visitors](#)

In 2020 a Preserve and Design Team was established, consisting of partners and advisors to develop a Framework Plan for the Land and Garden Preserve. Parking lots and the sheer volume of canine visitors were identified as concerns. To manage canine visitors and reduce ecological impact, dogs are not allowed in the gardens except for ADA service animals. Dogs can be off leash in other parts of the Preserve but must be under voice and sight control of their owner and use only water access points hardened with rock and other durable materials along the park’s 2,000 feet of shoreline. The area remains a popular stop for humans and their canine companions. Additionally, the park identifies that parking is limited and suggests to visitors to return at another time once the lots are full.