

## Maine seeks to preserve 1,600 acres of Holden wetlands to compensate for I-395 connector

by [Lia Russell](#) 7.21.2021



In this April 2012 file photo, traffic flows on Interstate 395. Credit: Brian Swartz / BDN

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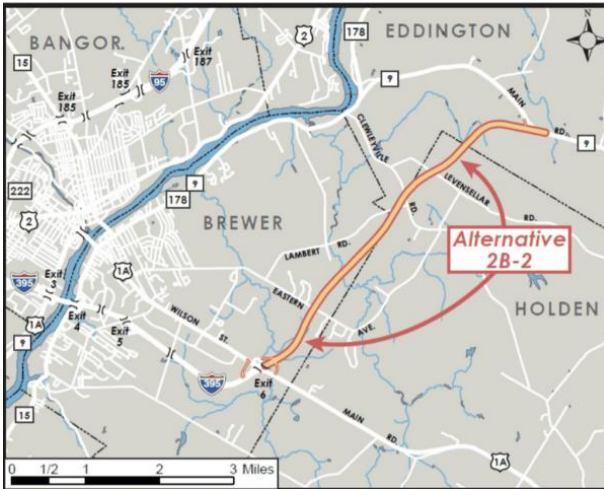
The Maine Department of Transportation is proposing to preserve more than 1,600 acres of wetlands in Holden to offset the environmental impact of the coming construction of a controversial 6-mile connector between I-395 in Brewer to Route 9 in Eddington.

The state agency is seeking approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to preserve the 1,628 acres on either side of Mann Hill Road as a way to compensate for the construction's environmental impact. The Department of Transportation outlined its plans to preserve the land in a June 29 [permit application](#) with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The preservation proposal marks the latest stage toward the development of the 6-mile connector that has been in the works and [debated for decades](#). The new roadway would extend I-395 from its current end near the Brewer-Holden town line about 6 miles northeast to connect it with Route 9.

Drivers currently have to use state Route 46, which passes through Eddington and Holden, to travel between the two larger roads.

The Maine Department of Transportation expects major work on the project to [begin in September](#). Work [began last summer](#) on the replacement of the Wilson Street bridge in Brewer, which carries Route 1A over I-395.



A Maine Department of Transportation map shows the route of the 6-mile connector between the end of I-395 in Brewer and Route 9 in Eddington. Credit: Courtesy of Maine Department of Transportation

If the Army Corps approves the state's application to preserve the wetlands, the Department of Transportation would transfer ownership of the parcel to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, which would manage the land.

"It's a pretty sizable area. It's the single largest tract of land under single ownership" in Holden, said Benjamin Breadmore, Holden's town manager.

The connector route will feature bridges carrying Eastern Avenue in Brewer and Clewleyville and Levenseller roads by the Eddington-Holden town line over the new roadway, in addition to a bridge carrying the connector over Lambert Road, also by the Eddington-Holden town line.

In the two decades the state has planned the road, residents of Brewer, Eddington and Holden have [spoken out against the highway project](#), worried that the state would seize their land in order to build the road, or that the road would cut through or near their properties. The three municipalities also approved resolves to voice their opposition to the roadway.

In Holden, Breadmore said, "two or three homes have been taken" to prepare for the road construction.

Rep. Kevin O'Connell, D-Brewer, said that he had opposed the project during the nine years he served on the Brewer City Council. The resolves from Holden, Brewer and Eddington, "got no response," he said. "There's a lot of bitterness out there because of the non-answers and meetings that didn't do anything," O'Connell said. "We already fought the fight and no one listened."

Another area legislator, state Sen. Kimberley Rosen, R-Bucksport, proposed legislation in 2019 to suspend construction and conduct another outside analysis of the project to determine whether it should proceed. That bill died in March 2019.

Rosen and state Sen. Bradlee Farrin, a Norridgewock Republican who sits on the Legislature's transportation committee, both approved of the wetland preservation project, a spokesperson said.

A public comment period on the preservation proposal will continue until July 29.