



Maine Woods Consortium

2008 End of Year Report

Transition

- At its April 3 meeting, the Coordinating Team voted to move forward with transforming the Maine Mountain Heritage Network into the new Maine Woods Consortium. The initiative will retain its basic purpose and principles but will expand its service area to include all of the “rim” counties of Maine.
- To signal the transition, an ad hoc communications team adopted a new logo, newsletter template and letterhead. The website has been reformatted to reflect the transition.
- In September, Mountain Counties Heritage, acting on behalf of the communications team, sent out notices to all Network members and project teams to announce and explain the change.

Coordinating Team

- During 2008, the Coordinating Team welcomed several new members: Keith Bisson, CEI, Inc.; Mary Ann Hayes, Maine Rural Partners; Mike Eisensmith, Northern Maine Development Commission; Harold Clossey, Sunrise County Economic Development Council; Gayle Chase, Kennebec Valley Council of Governments; Bruce McLean, MAGIC and Andy Whitman, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences.
- Tanya Swain, Western Mountains Alliance, stepped down from the team.
- During the second half of the year, the Coordinating team began work on a “logic model” that lays out goals and objectives for the Consortium. It also adopted a committee structure and a workplan and budget for 2009.

New Funding

- The Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG) agreed to serve as fiscal agent and financial manager for the Consortium.
- AVCOG is preparing to submit a request to the Economic Development Administration in early 2009. The request is based on the workplan and budget proposed for 2009 and focused on the capital investment program (below). If received, this funding would have to be matched.
- Mountain Counties Heritage received a \$10,000 grant from the King and Jean Cummings Funds to help support its general management of the Consortium during 2009.
- Maine Rural Partners received a \$10,000 grant from the Northern Forest Partnership Program to begin developing an information management system for the Consortium.
- The Maine Rural Destination Tourism project (see Networked Economies below) has received funding support from the Lennox Foundation, the Horizon Foundation, the Dorset Fund, and the Betterment Fund.

Information Management System

- Maine Rural Partners received a grant from the Northern Forest Partnership Program to build an information management system for MWC.
- Lucas Sanders, an Americops member with a computer science degree and web experience working with MRP thru August, will be helping with this project.

- The system is envisioned as a web-based searchable database of interested parties and initiatives that are moving towards desired MWC program outcomes. Ideally, it will incorporate tracking and outcome measurement for sponsored initiatives.
- Lucas will begin conducting interviews in early 2009 to determine need and additional functions to be included.

Programs

Landscape Resources Program Development

- Andy Whitman from Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences has agreed to steward this program.
- Andy (who joined us in December) is working on a 2009 program budget and workplan.
- Andy will recruit a small team to lead the development of the program including revisiting the goals/outcomes and determining indicators to measure successes.

Landscape Resources Sponsored Projects

- Northern Franklin County Mapping Project (Western Mountains Alliance, Center for Community GIS). Findings from stakeholder interviews, conducted in 2008, were presented to the project steering committee. A final report will be completed in 2009 and rolled out to the broader community.

Community Revitalization Program Development

- Mary Ann Hayes from Maine Rural Partners has agreed to steward this program.
- Mary Ann has prepared a workplan and budget for program development for 2009. The plan includes identification and assessment of initiatives which are moving toward MWC goals in this program area and developing support for those including capital investment.
- In early 2009, Mary Ann will recruit a small team to lead the development of the program including revisiting the goals/outcomes and determining indicators to measure successes.

Community Revitalization Sponsored Projects

- Downtown Walking Tours. The Farmington Walking Tour signs are up. Mountain Counties Heritage plans to hold an event in the spring to promote the tour. The Skowhegan Walking Tour signs are installed. The Skowhegan High School and Middle School are working on a podcast of the tour that will be ready by springtime.
- Knowledge Power Program. The Knowledge Power Traveling Exhibit had another successful year of touring with an extended stint at the Kittery Visitor Center. Information center projects are at various stages of development with renewed interest in an interpretive center in Bethel and a feasibility study underway in Jackman regarding rehabilitation of the old railroad station.

Networked Economies Program Development

- Bruce McLean, MAGIC and Tracy Michaud Stutzman, Maine Crafts Association agreed to co-steward this program.
- Stewards have created a 2009 budget and workplan for program development. The plan includes identification and assessment of initiatives which are moving toward MWC goals in this program area and developing support for those including capital investment.
- Tracy and Bruce will be working in early 2009 to recruit a small team to lead the development of the program including revisiting the goals/outcomes and determining indicators to measure successes.

Networked Economies Sponsored Projects

- Mountain Made. Dina Jackson, AVCOG, steward of the Mountain Made team, created a database of existing production networks and related service providers. The group felt that they could best offer assistance to networks through grant writing.

- Several Share Your Heritage tourism itineraries. Franklin Foothills itinerary is being revised to accommodate business changes and update it to a new map format. Rangeley Region and Bethel itineraries are nearly complete. When complete, all will be posted on the Maine Lakes and Mountains Tourism Region website.
- Rural Destination Tourism group (Northern Forest scale) has adopted a couple of Maine Woods projects as “prototypes” for its production network initiative.
 1. Franklin County Tourism Network. During 2008, this group conducted business interviews, cosponsored training workshops, supported a customer survey. Next year, the group will develop a communications platform, address additional education needs, and encourage businesses to create new tourism products.
 2. Maine Woods RDT group. Interviews with group members (lead businesses and non-profits in outdoor recreation tourism field) revealed common interests and opportunities for collaboration. The group is exploring opportunities for packaging, branding and on-line booking engines.

Capital Investment Program

- The Capital Investment Committee includes Keith Bisson, CEI; Mary Ann Hayes, Maine Rural Partners; Bruce Hazard, Mountain Counties Heritage; Tracy Stutzman, Maine Crafts Association; Peter Taylor, Maine Community Foundation and Chris Shrum, EMDC.
- Group contracted Chuck Lawton, Planning Decisions to recommend structure and process for the Consortium to guide capital investment. He offered recommendations for organization and governance, organization of the capital investment program, including criteria and process for setting priorities and selecting projects.
- Chuck also sub-contracted an essay on a social network strategy for the MWC from Bazaar Strategies, LLC which puts forward interesting ideas about network organization and process using web 2.0 technologies.
- A list of potential projects for inclusion in the case statement has been growing with submissions from Coordinating Team members and outside organizations.