



Maine Woods Consortium

3/1/09 Coordinating Team Report

Funding

Betterment Fund

- Bruce met with representatives from the Betterment Fund in February in respect to their interest in investment in tourism development in Maine's "rim" counties, directing that investment through MWC. He presented the approach suggested by the Coordinating Team of offering significant funding to 2-3 projects to be chosen by a newly formed sub-committee of the Coordinating Team (as other advisory teams had not yet been formed to establish investment criteria within previously described program areas). Betterment Fund representatives greeted this approach with enthusiasm and they expect a full proposal in April to potentially make funding available this summer.
- Mike Wilson is organizing the tourism sub-committee which includes Dina Jackson, Robin Zinchuk, Mike Eisensmith, and Harold Clossey.

EDA Grant

- Bob Thompson (AVCOG) had a meeting with Alan Brigham on February 17th to discuss which grant program the Consortium should pursue (planning grant or disaster relief). Alan confirmed he would like the Consortium to submit an application under the disaster relief program.
- Bob is currently reworking the language of our initial application with the intent of submitting it soon. It should be noted that we still have to clarify the match requirements. Total program budget, \$265,000.

Communications

- A new strategy of having stewards, Coordinating Team members, and project leaders write articles for the newsletter is being implemented. Bruce McLean submitted an article about the Katahdin Region Forest Cluster Enhancement Project. Josh Platt of Kennebec Valley Soil and Water Conservation District has agreed to do an article for next month on the Kennebec River Initiative.

Information Management System

- Shaunacy and Bruce have met with Lucas Sanders of Maine Rural Partners to determine a strategy for assessing what data needs to be gathered (stakeholder information, project and initiatives, outcomes and indicators), how stakeholders want to manipulate/use captured data, and in what format should it be accessed.
- Shaunacy is working on a framing document and then a survey will be developed for stewards and a few select stakeholders. This survey will go out in early March.
- Lucas is scheduling a meeting with FairPoint and Vital Economies to discuss what kind of support they can provide for this project.
- Lucas expects to make a report to the Coordinating Team at the April 2 meeting with recommendations as to how to move this project forward.

Programs

Landscape Resources Sponsored Projects

- A group in Franklin County calling itself the High Peaks Alliance has grown out of the Woods and Waters resource study sponsored by MWC a couple of years ago. The new group is proposing a multi-use trail system linking communities in the northern part of the county.

- The Mahoosucs Initiative is proposing a “green” wood pellet project linking conservation lands and a new pellet mill.

Community Revitalization Program Development

- Bruce is still looking for volunteer help with this program area. Among other ideas, he is considering a suggestion that MWC sponsor a “charrette” to look at new ways of organizing to provide services and undertake development activities across town boundaries.
- Bruce, Mary Ann, and Keith have been asked to be on an advisory team for David Vail’s “amenity investment” study. The study is intended to determine viability of this approach (investing in amenities to attract visitors and new residents) in Maine’s “rim” counties. It should help identify high priority projects for capital investment in MWC’s Community Revitalization program area.

Community Revitalization Sponsored Projects

- Information Centers. Shaunacy contacted members of the Information Center team to get an update on projects. The Rangeley Outdoor Sporting Heritage Museum broke ground in Oquossoc for the new museum and a winterized structure now occupies the site. The Farmington center (Maine Mountain Heritage Center) is open and now sharing space with the Ski Museum of Maine. The Skowhegan Renaissance Center is open and recruiting tenants. Greenville and Bethel are seeing renewed interest in the building of their proposed centers. Old Canada Road is working on new trails to help build support for a center. The Wabanaki Center has received some funding for development.
- Traveling Exhibit. The exhibit has moved to the Center for Maine Craft at the new Gardiner/Litchfield rest stop. Bob Haynes is talking to LL Bean about hosting it during the summer.
- Knowledge Power Team. Bruce is pulling the team back together for a conference call to talk more about the system of information centers, the “no wrong door” approach to visitor information including the kiosk idea, and to talk about a possible network of centers that would be willing to share museum quality exhibit materials.

Networked Economies Program Development

Dina has proposed to the Mountain Made program team that it merge with the newly forming Networked Economies advisory team as their missions are very closely aligned. This would give a great start for a new team in this program area. Still looking for a steward here, at least until program is funded.

Networked Economies Sponsored Projects

- Share Your Heritage Bethel Area itinerary. The Bethel map is in draft form as is the flyer. Once approved by the local leaders, the itinerary will be ready to rollout.
- Franklin County Tourism Network. This group is on the verge of moving from conversation to action. A survey of planning team members surfaced priorities and core capacities. Two possible avenues for movement forward will be discussed at the next planning team meeting with the hope that workgroups will be formed and specific businesses will be recruited.
- The Maine Woods Discovery group (formerly Maine Woods RDT) has put together a work plan to develop a number of tourism packages for this summer, organized by Maine Woods Discovery “hosts” including Sunday River, Saddleback, Sugarloaf, Northern Outdoors, Maine Huts and Trails, AMC, and New England Outdoor Center (looking for hosts in Aroostook and Washington Counties!)

Capital Investment

- A request for “shovel ready” projects in the February newsletter generated a number of nominations.
 - New Canaan Public Library
 - Carrabassett Valley Library/Child Day Care and Community Center
 - Kennebec Gorge Walking Trails
 - Skowhegan Renaissance Center 2nd floor ADA accessibility for adjoining buildings
 - Appalachian Mountain Club’s Maine Woods Initiative
 - Opera House Healthy Community Connections
 - High Peaks Trails Connecting Communities

- Maine Huts & Trails -Phase I trails and bridges/hut #3
- Dead River Multiple Use Trail
- Kennebec River Walking Trail
- Charleston Culvert Replacement
- Maine Fiberarts Tour Map and Fiber Arts Weekend
- Renovating Newly Acquired Space at Center Theatre for the Performing Arts

These have been added to the capital investment opportunity list for consideration by advisory teams (once formed) and capital investment program group. (See the whole list at www.mainewoodsconsortium.org)