

# Maine Woods Consortium

## 5/15/08 Coordinating Team Report

Since the last meeting, the transition from the Maine Mountain Heritage Network to the Maine Woods Consortium has begun. Stewards are working with their Action Teams to determine how to expand their programs and membership. The Coordinating Team has welcomed Keith Bisson, Project Developer for Rural Resources at Coastal Enterprises, Inc. The Marketing Committee and Capital Campaign Committee have met and worked on further defining the Consortium's role in the community.

Below is an update on progress made since our April meeting.

### Knowledge Power

**Traveling Exhibit:** The Maine Mountain Heritage Traveling Exhibit summer schedule is starting to fill up. At this time, there is no plan to add additional stories to expand the exhibit to cover the recently expanded geography. Please contact Shaunacy if you would like to display the exhibit at an event.

**Information System:** Mountain Counties Heritage has requested an appropriation through Congressman Michaud's office to fund development of an electronic kiosk to serve as a prototype for our proposed touch screen system. This first prototype would be installed at the new Center for Maine Craft located in the new travel plaza being built at the convergence of I 95 and 295 south of Augusta.

### Woods and Waters

**Northern Franklin County Mapping Project:** To collect information on local landscape values that can be used to inform communities and decision-makers. The Center for Community GIS is wrapping up their stakeholder meetings. Findings will be presented at the next Steering Committee meeting at the end of May and the group will discuss next steps for the project. Interest has been expressed in opening up data collection for the mapping project to include a widespread public survey but additional funding and more input from landowners are necessary first steps.

### Mountain Made

**Signature Product Press Campaign:** Seven press releases have gone out to various media outlets and the eighth and final one is in the works. The future of this program is dependent on determining if efforts in a different area could have more on the ground impact.

**Production Networks:** The action team is exploring ways to help support production networks, businesses that link together to gain increased production efficiencies and market reach. The team decided to focus on wood products, tourism, and agriculture. Before recruiting new members to mirror the Network's geographic expansion, current members are creating a goal statement that will define what the value added is for this program. Meanwhile, Tanya is waiting on a business plan from WoodNet and is working on an online farmer's market. Mark

Hews anticipates the Fairbanks School in Farmington will be the second Shared Kitchen open in Maine.

## **Share Your Heritage**

**Franklin Foothills Itinerary:** The three-day driving itinerary has gone through many changes and is in its final stages of development. It will be going to Portland Webworks this month for conversion to a web-based itinerary to be on the Maine Office of Tourism website.

**Rangeley Itinerary:** This itinerary is almost completed. Shaunacy has met with sites to explain the project. Wilhelm Reich is collaborating with Shaunacy to track down the final permission forms and images. The itinerary is tentatively debuting on the Maine Lakes and Mountains website if the MLM Tourism Council approves.

**Bethel Itinerary:** Shaunacy has met with the local leads to finalize the itinerary. A plan is established to gather the images and permission forms will need to be collected. This itinerary is also tentatively debuting on the Maine Lakes and Mountains website if the MLM Tourism Council approves.

## **Marketing**

**External Marketing Site :** The Marketing Committee met and decided to wait on pursuing an external marketing website that would have included events, products, and visitor itineraries to help brand the region. Dina will pull together a matrix organized by sectors (tourism, wood products, agriculture, etc.) of existing promotional efforts to get a handle on what's already in place i.e. Made in Maine, Get Real Get Maine. All agreed that it is important to have a better sense of what marketing is out there, what is doing well, how much are they spending to be successful?

**Marketing the Consortium:** The Consortium should not be focused at this point on developing a Woods Consortium brand. Instead, we should focus more on product development and assessing existing programs and structures. The MOT is going out to bid for a new advertising agency contractor and when they do, the new contractor may be assessing brands that would work for Maine and could assess the impact of a Maine Woods brand. Until then, Mountain Counties Heritage will work on a distinctive logo that can be used for communications and the website.

## **Capital Campaign**

The Capital Campaign Committee (Bruce, Chris, Tracy, Mary Ann, Peter Taylor, and Keith Bisson) met in early May and have scheduled another meeting for later in the month. The committee decided to undertake a process to more fully develop MWC statement of outputs and desired outcomes - project level, regional level, various time frames. They will present a strawman of this to Coordinating Team for discussion and adoption at the next meeting.

This committee will outline an organizational business plan for the MWC, including:

- required capacities (information management, project management, etc)
- roles of participating organizations (distributed capacity model?)
- timelines and budgets
- governance

This will be applied to network management as well as investment side. Model will be informed from tests with potential capital investment sources

The consultant will be asked to create organizational business plan from the committees outline and a case statement based substantially on previous writings of group, new metrics, and outlines provided. The statement will be tested with a limited number of potential capital sources representing all categories of capital. A consultant will be selected once the outlines for a business plan and case statements are complete and approved. This should be the end of May.

## **Communications**

**Communicating the Transition:** Currently, information about the transition from the Maine Mountain Heritage Network to the Maine Woods Consortium has only happened through the Network newsletter. Although this has begun to get the word out, many Network members are still not understanding the change. There is a need for a Communications Plan to explain the change effectively and concisely.

**Stakeholder Update:** The Stakeholder Group has not been updated on the transition other than through the newsletter. Staff feels that some sort of communication is needed to reengage this group with the Maine Woods Consortium and would appreciate input on how to do this.