



# Maine Woods Consortium

## 7/15/08 Coordinating Team Report

### Coordinating Team Membership

Tanya Swain (Western Mountains Alliance) has stepped down from the Coordinating Team and the Woods and Waters group. She will be greatly missed but will continue to be engaged with the Consortium as a Mountain Made action team participant (see below).

Mike Wilson (Northern Forest Center) is reengaging with the team. This should help insure good alignment with the Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative per discussion in the last meeting of the Coordinating Team. Welcome back, Mike!

Note: New members as of last meeting include Keith Bisson, CEI; Gail Chase, KVCOG; Bruce McLean, MAGIC. New members as of two meetings ago: Harold Clossey, Sunrise County RC&D; Mike Eisensmith, Northern Maine Development Commission; Mary Ann Hayes, Maine Rural Partners. Welcome all!

### Programs/Landscape Resources

*(Note: It is the goal of this program area to support multiple uses of landscape resources for maximum long term benefit to local communities and businesses. The program has focused on resource mapping and information sharing among stakeholder groups.)*

**Woods and Waters Action Team:** Tanya's departure from this group leaves us without a steward. MCH will convene a small planning team in August to help set an agenda for this group and to recruit a new steward.

**Northern Franklin County Mapping Project:** The NFCMP Steering Committee reviewed stakeholder interview findings at the last meeting. Members were interested in supporting the newly emerging High Peaks Alliance plan to create a trail system that connects communities. Stephen Engle (Center for Community GIS) and Tanya agreed to help HPA find funding to hire a project support staff person. Group expressed interest in the Franklin County Tourism Network (see below) and how these two groups could collaborate.

### Programs/Community Revitalization

*(Note: It is the goal of this program area to support vibrant communities as places to live and visit. Work in this program area has focused on development of walking tours and interpretive centers. As with landscape resources area, MCH will convene a small planning group to further develop community revitalization agenda and to recruit a steward.)*

**Knowledge Power Traveling Exhibit:** Mountain Counties Heritage continues to manage the Traveling Exhibit. Shaunacy Cobb is working with Bob Haynes (Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway) to finish the contract. MCH will create a promotions plan to increase exposure and encourage more organizations to present the exhibit. Current exhibit schedule is on calendar at [www.mainemountains.org](http://www.mainemountains.org) and includes stops in Rangeley (Logging Museum), Bethel (Historical Society) and Skowhegan (Margaret Chase Smith Library).

**Knowledge Power Interpretive Centers:** Work on individual centers continues. MCH has applied for an appropriation through Congressman Michaud's office to finance a prototype for the proposed electronic kiosk system (\$150,000). That request is still pending. All local projects that currently seek funding are included on the capital investment project list (see Capital Investment Program section below).

## **Programs/Local Economies**

*(Note: It is the goal of this program area to support development of a diverse and robust regional economy through promoting creative and sustainable use of the region's cultural and natural assets.)*

**Mountain Made - Production Networks:** The Mountain Made action team is exploring ways to help support development of "production networks." Production networks are systems of businesses (and sometimes non-profits) that link together to gain increased production efficiencies and market reach. Examples include Maine WoodNet and the shared use kitchens being promoted by the RC&Ds. The team has decided to focus on wood products (or more broadly artisan products), tourism, and agriculture. The group is creating a goal statement using a wiki and plans a next meeting July 28. Dina Jackson (AVCOG) has created a matrix of existing production networks and related service providers to help the group frame its work.

**Rural Destination Tourism:** Work is proceeding on two Maine prototypes, Franklin County Tourism Network and Maine Woods Outdoor Recreation Tourism Network.

**Franklin County Tourism Network:** This prototype is using a "tourism council" model similar to the Piscataquis County Tourism Taskforce. MCH has completed interviews with 37 businesses. The FCTN planning team has reviewed findings from these interviews and is now planning workshops for this fall intended to address identified needs such as hospitality training, creating a marketing plan, and developing packages. Marc Edwards of Franklin County Cooperative Extension is undertaking a visitors survey to help determine who the current customers are for Franklin County. This survey will provide the FCTN with information about visitor patterns, demographics, and other tourism products they would be interested in.

**Maine Woods RDT:** This prototype is using a "hub and spoke" model focusing on lead businesses and non-profits ("pod leaders") as organizers of local networks of tourism providers. Funding has been secured for hiring a consultant to interview potential "pod leaders" to identify opportunities for collaboration and to begin to tease out "brand values" and network membership criteria. Jeff Rowe and Donna Fichtner have been hired to do the first round of interviews and to facilitate discussion with MWRDT planning team to develop next steps. Results from these interviews are expected in late summer or early fall.

## **Communications**

**Communicating the Transition:** A July 8 meeting of the MWC Communications Committee (Dina Jackson, AVCOG; Robin Zinchuk, Bethel Chamber; Chris Shrum, EMDC) highlighted the need to clearly explain the transition from Maine Mountain Heritage Network to the Maine Woods Consortium – especially to those who have been involved in the MMHN in the past. Members need to understand why we are doing this. The electronic newsletter (Network News) has announced the change, but there are still Network members who are not aware of the change. The committee identified three groups that need to be addressed: general Network members, action team/project members, and the stakeholder (Dec 6) group. The plan is as follows: General Network members will receive an email detailing the change. Action Team

members and people/organizations that have worked on specific projects will receive a letter. The Stakeholder group has not had an update since February and they will receive a different communication discussing progress made and future steps for the Consortium. Shaunacy (MCH) will do a draft of each for the committee to review and edit. Once they have approved, it will go out to the Coordinating Team for approval.

Coordinating Team members will be asked to include an article in their organization's newsletter detailing the change. Shaunacy will create a press release for Coordinating Team approval to use for this article. The release will also be sent out to various media outlets.

**Logo:** The committee agreed that using the Maine Woods logo chosen for the external marketing site with a couple of changes would work for the internal communications site. Insyt New Media is working on those changes. They are also creating a letterhead and email signature with this logo.

**Internal Communications Website:** Insyt New Media has agreed to change the overall appearance and logo to reflect the transition to the Maine Woods Consortium. The actual structure and functions of the website will not change. Once that is completed, MCH will update the sections to reflect new program language and structure.

**Newsletter:** The newsletter is on hold until the website change is made. The skin of the newsletter is being changed by Insyt New Media to reflect the Consortium logo and color scheme.

**Deadline:** The Communications Committee set a transition deadline from Maine Mountain Heritage Network to Maine Woods Consortium (new logos, colors, language) has been set for September 1. All communications, programs, and websites will reflect the change to the Maine Woods Consortium by that date.

## **Marketing**

**External Marketing Website:** Members of the Marketing Committee (Carolann Ouellette, Maine Office of Tourism; Dina Jackson, AVCOG; Harold Clossey Sunrise County RC&D) at Carolann's urging have reconsidered their earlier decision to stop work on an external marketing website. Insyt New Media has completed work on the site. MCH has developed a portion of the content using Share Your Heritage itineraries and Mountain Made product articles. We are exploring opportunities to work with the Maine Office of Tourism to develop additional content.

## **Capital Investment Program**

Chris Shrum/EMDC, acting on behalf of the Capital Investment Committee (Peter Taylor, Maine Community Foundation; Keith Bisson, CEI; Mary Ann Hayes, Maine Rural Partners; Tracy Stutzman, Maine Crafts Association) has hired Chuck Lawton of Planning Decisions as the consultant to create organizational business plan for the Consortium based substantially on previous writings of group, new metrics, and outlines provided. Chris Shrum is working on a case statement into which this business plan will be incorporated. The statement will be tested with a limited number of potential capital sources representing all categories of capital beginning this fall. Shaunacy Cobb (MCH) has created a grid of MMHN members including project teams, action teams, and rally attendees for the consultant, as well as a list of potential capital projects suggested by members of the Coordinating Team and others. Most of the Coordinating Team members have sent Shaunacy the necessary information on their suggested projects.

## **Funding**

Chris Shrum has identified a potential source of funding for the Consortium from EDA. Chris and Bruce Hazard (MCH) met with Alan Brigham, EDA regional representative, on July 7 to discuss the possible grant. Alan suggested that focus on the capital investment strategy might be the best way to appeal to EDA. EDA money (\$100,000) would require match.

**Next Meeting**

Full day, face-to-face meeting at EMDC Thursday September 4.