



Maine Woods Consortium Coordinating Team Meeting Notes, 10/1/09

Participants: Keith Bisson, Coastal Enterprises, Inc; Gail Chase, Kennebec Valley Council of Governments; Harold Clossey, Sunrise County Economic Council; Mike Eisensmith, Northern Maine Development Commission; Lucas Sanders, Maine Rural Partners; Bruce Hazard and Shaunacy Cobb, Mountain Counties Heritage; Dina Jackson, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments; Phil Savignano, Maine Office of Tourism; Tracy Michaud Stutzman, Maine Crafts Association; Mike Wilson, Northern Forest Center; and Robin Zinchuk, Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce.

Note: The full group was participating from the beginning of the meeting until approximately 1:00 PM. Following a lunch break, Dina Jackson, Harold Clossey, and Mike Wilson ("Nuts and Bolts" team) stayed on to discuss concrete next steps, several of which are recorded below as suggestions for group's consideration.

Key Decisions

- General value of MWC: It is a "voice for the Maine Woods" that is broadly representative and incorporates a triple bottom line approach. The structure is simple and comprised of networks. The group focuses on being innovative and opportunistic for the greater good of the region.
- The core functions of MWC are: 1) Information sharing to promote innovative programs and make sure people know what other are doing related to sustainable development in the Maine Woods; 2) expanding the collective Influence of consortium members on relevant large-scale initiatives in the region; and 3) as resources allow, Incubating and guiding Investment in initiatives that advance the MWC vision.
- The Coordinating Team will meet face-to-face quarterly. Meeting locations can be rotated but need to stay within Maine Woods region.

Suggestions/Decisions to be Made at Next Meeting

- Take the "Contact Us" field off the website and use the Coordinating Team contact list for this function.
- Reach agreement on the role of support staff.
- Fundraising plan for coordination and communications roles (Bruce and Shaunacy preparing budget estimates).
- Who should be invited on to Coordinating Team from conservation community or other constituencies?

Individual To Do List

- ® **Bruce**
 1. Phone calls for Coordinating Team conversations to determine future participation.
 2. Cost summary for meeting coordination role.
- ® **Shaunacy**
 1. Rework Coordinating Team contact list (add Andy).
 2. Cost summary for communications role.
 3. Organize Coordinating Team meeting for November.

® **Lucas**

1. Send out link to database. See information management section below for more details.

® **Mike Eisensmith and Harold**

1. Help MWC get real EMDC buy-in.

Meeting Notes

Goals, Values, and Functions. MWC has the potential to be a voice for the Maine Woods – both people and place. There is currently no other entity that has the range of organizational representation and speaks as a unit with attention to the triple bottom line approach (consideration of natural, community, and economic goals). Using this way of describing MWC could make it easier for Coordinating Team members to justify their time to their supervisors or boards. Answers the question, why are we participating? This is important since resources are scarce and members must be able to show value for participation.

If we can establish this group identity, MWC can begin to participate in processes and conversations that do or will have a big impact on the Maine Woods. Initiatives and topics in which MWC would like to explore having input include: America's Treasured Landscapes large scale conservation of land north and west of Baxter State Park, Maine Office of Tourism discussion of changes to tourism regions, and Doug Hall's work backing new business starts in Maine – and many others.

Structure and Capacity. MWC has operated as a “hub and spoke” network with Mountain Counties Heritage as hub. With Bruce turning to other projects as of November 1, group must decide how to support work going forward.

The group does not want to lose important aspects of MWC like communications, information sharing, connections, project best practices, and funding possibilities because of a lack of capacity. Moving towards incorporating and having an executive director was discouraged although everyone agreed that staffing is necessary. The Tourism Committee does have some funds to support these functions for tourism but group does not want to merge the Tourism Committee with the Coordinating Team.

Discussion distinguished between “staff” support and “leadership.” The group feels that some staff assistance will be required, both to support meetings and to keep core communications functions going. Core communications functions include newsletter, website, and database of organizations and initiatives. Meeting support includes sending out meeting notices, making meeting arrangements, taking and distributing notes. Bruce and Shaunacy will prepare cost estimates for meeting support and communications functions and will circulate for funding ideas. The group will explore how to raise the money for these functions. Could each organization pitch in to leverage grant funds? The concern is long term sustainability so a mixture of funding sources like member contributions, Maine Community Foundation's county funds, portion of Betterment grant could work.

The leadership role could be shared among members of the coordinating team. This role includes setting agenda for the group, determining what issues to engage and how. To do this, the group has agreed to meet four times per year face to face (with possible touch base calls or web meetings in between). Coordinating team members would bring issues or opportunities to the group at these meetings for discussion and action. Meeting facilitation would be handled by group members with perhaps different members facilitating different parts of a meeting.

Taking this approach, members of the Coordinating Team will have increased responsibility to the group. Bruce agreed to call members who have not been participating actively or regularly to determine future participation. Mike Eisensmith and Harold Clossey agreed to contact EMDC to encourage a more active participation.

The “Nuts and Bolts” team recommended a process for making this new approach to meeting organization work: the last ½ hour of each meeting is spent talking about the next agenda and which 3 (or more) people will work together to plan the next meeting, what special guests might be invited per topic, etc. Ultimately, the group needs to create some healthy peer pressure so that those coming to the meeting have something to add to the conversation and accountability to the people around the table.

Conversation focused on keeping the structure simple and nimble. It can be built outward when deemed necessary. All agreed that MWC needs to keep it simple, be innovative and opportunistic, and maintain the connections across sector lines.

Note on EDA funding. Dina Jackson assured the group that the EDA request was to go in the very near future. If this funding comes through, all functions/activities that the group discussed in this meeting would be covered. In addition, program plans laid out last spring would be supported as well.

Information Management. Lucas Sanders of Maine Rural Partners presented a demonstration of the information management system he is creating for MWC. The system will manage information about initiatives and organizations that are relevant to MWC’s goals and focus areas. Visitors to the database will be able to browse it without logging in but they will need to login to create or update a profile. The system is self-supporting with a small amount of staff time to handle updates and approve submissions. The system will be hosted on the MRP server with a link from the MWC website.

A couple of changes were suggested: adding a field for a brief organizational description with a link to their site; simplifying the categories to “Landscape,” “Community” and “Economy;” and change the language from “Lessons Learned” to “Results.” Lucas will send out a link to the database, a summary of intentional decisions based on budget, a layout of the next phase with associated costs, project development with reasons for decisions, and a deadline for suggestions from the group. Phase Two is populating the database and there needs to be a plan for that. Shaunacy has suggested using a UMF student to assist with this. The group needs to determine if they are more interested in developing initiatives piece in a more comprehensive way or building the individuals component.

Website & Newsletter. Gail Chase observed that the current organization of the website and language is too deep and complex and needs to be simplified. Group agreed. Also, the MWC login will be removed since there will be a login for the database. Bruce explained the link between the newsletter and the website – feature articles in newsletter move to program page on website facilitating updated content on website. The Coordinating Team should continue to identify articles and writers to keep costs down. Several member organizations noted that they had capacity to maintain the website for a fee. “Nuts and bolts team” recommended that we eliminate the “Contact Us” page and info@mainewoodsconsortium email, replacing those with the Coordinating Team contact sheet so that questions or issues get directed to members of the team, not a central email address. Note: This means that Coordinating Team members will need to either know what is going on with MWC or be willing to track down answers (Harold Clossey: “Don’t have the answer to that question but let me put it out to the group and get back to you.”).

Meeting adjourned at 3 PM.