Maine Woods Consortium

Network of non-profits, businesses and government agencies dedicated to advancing a “triple bottom line” approach to development and conservation in the Maine Woods region.

- Dina Jackson, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments
- Robin Zinchuk, Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce
- Sarah Medina, Seven Islands Land Co.
- Fred Michaud, Maine DoT, Scenic Byways Program
- Angela Arno, Destination Moosehead Lake
- Alain Ouellette, Northern Maine Development Commission
- Jen Peters, Sunrise County Economic Council
- Mia Purcell, Community Concept Finance Corp.
- Anne Ball, Maine Downtown Center
- Charlie Woodworth, Greater Franklin Development Corp.
- Donna Moreland, Maine Office of Tourism
- Sandra de Urioste-Stone, University of Maine
- Chris Winstead, Piscataquis County Economic Dev. Council
- Robert O’Brien, Maine Development Foundation
- Dan Rinard, Appalachian Mountain Club
- Keith Bisson, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
- Mike Wilson, Northern Forest Center
- Andy Whitman, Manomet Center for Conservation Science
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Network Activities/Outcomes, 2013-2015

- Maine Woods Tourism Training Initiative -- 70+ training workshops for tourism businesses and their employees through the Maine Woods Tourism Training Initiative – serving over 800 individuals
- Financial & Technical Assistance -- Matching grants and technical assistance to help over 40 tourism providers implement marketing and business development projects
- Maine Woods Discovery -- Standards-based, cooperative marketing delivering roughly $2 in million marketing services to participating businesses and the Maine Woods region
- Network & Policy Development -- Regional network and capacity building through a series of five Maine Woods Destination Retreats and Rallies, and advocacy to help create new Rural Destination Development program within the Maine Office of Tourism
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Community Destination Academy

The Community Destination Academy (CDA) is a 3 part, professionally-led capacity building program for Rural Destination Area Teams.

Part 1 – Training Workshops
Creating Memorable Visitor Experiences
Finding the Money: Destination Financing for NGOs, Towns, and Businesses
Selling Your Story: Destination Marketing
How Teams Get Things Done: Turning Plans into Action

Part 2 – Collaborative Project Implementation

Part 3 – Training Workshops – to be determined based on participants interest and experience through parts 1 and 2
Rural Destination Areas

DESIRED OUTCOME:

➢ Network of marketable Rural Destination Areas
  o Clustered recreational amenities, natural attractions, trail systems, water access
  o Transportation infrastructure
  o Vibrant downtowns
  o Service oriented businesses & communities

➢ Expanded economic and job opportunities that attract visitors, businesses and new residents
High Potential Rural Destination Areas in the Maine Woods
Bethel – Maine West

Anchored by the skiing and recreation hubs of Bethel and Newry, the Maine West area stretches south to Paris, Norway and the Oxford Hills, and north to the papermill town of Rumford and the River Valley.

• Bethel currently positioned as primary destination
• Maine West including Norway-South Paris and Rumford areas
• Sunday River as anchor business – attracting visitors who then decide to relocate
• 4,000 beds just at Sunday River
• Winter focus
• Expanding to summer and fall – businesses busier during summer and fall
• Name/brand is a big challenge. People know Bethel but not broader region
• Maine West is an existing organizational structure that could shepherd work forward
Maine’s High Peaks

From the gateway, college town of Farmington, Maine’s High Peaks stretch north and west through Kingfield, Carrabassett Valley, and Stratton, and south to encompass a largely undeveloped mountain region that includes 10 of Maine’s highest peaks.

- Farmington to Coburn Gore
- Attractions – outdoor recreation
- 10 of Maine’s highest mountains
- Sugarloaf as anchor business
- Maine Huts and Trails
- Dynamic mountain bike community and trail infrastructure
- Variety of lodging opportunities
- Leadership and capacity – new, young dynamic business leaders
- Maine High Peaks trademark held by MATLT with support from GFDC and High Peaks Network
- Building a tool box for businesses to use in conjunction with Maine’s High Peaks brand
- High Peaks Initiative – funded network focused on conservation with interest in recreation
- Some history of organizational tension around trademark
- Potential opportunity for leadership to learn more about destination marketing
Rangeley Lakes

A Maine Woods travel destination for 150 years anchored by the town of Rangeley, the Rangeley Lakes region is famous for fishing and outdoor recreation amid beautiful lakes and undeveloped ponds, vast conservation lands, working forests.

- Rangeley and Mooselookmeguntic Lakes
- Shops, restaurants, movie theater in downtown Rangeley
- Historic Rangeley Inn other in-town lodging
- Classic sporting camps
- Some organizing capacity through Chamber, Rangeley Economic Opportunity Community
- Extensive conservation land and recreation infrastructure maintained by Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust
Upper Kennebec Valley

Extending north from Waterville/Skowhegan, the Kennebec River is the spine of a recreation area that has grown up around the whitewater rafting industry in The Forks and extends to Jackman and the Canadian border,

- Kennebec River unifying force that ties region together – Moosehead to Waterville
- Skowhegan as anchor/hub community
- Significant agritourism opportunity
- Examining the corridor and opportunity for river trail systems (Larry Warren, SEDC)
- Negotiating with County Commissioners around use of TIF funding
- Near Term focus on Run of River and Boat House project (crew)
- Incorporating new Kennebec River Company to advance projects – more focused/dedicated capacity toward tourism development than SEDC
- Looking at a whole series of trails linking the region along the river corridor and linking to Moosehead
- Also looking at development of a “sports authority” to attract and support activity in the area
Moosehead Lake

From the center of Maine’s largest lake, the Moosehead Lake region extends 25 miles in all directions to include the communities of Greenville, Rockwood, Beaver Cove and Monson and hundreds of thousands of acres of conserved working forest land.

- 25 mile radius from center of Moosehead Lake
- Bigger than Delaware
- New wayfinding systems ($250k)
- Website with interactive map (exploremoosehead.com)
- Future IQ master planning process (consultant has be hired by the local community to ensure buy-in)
- New downtown master plan, and consultant recommendations from Roger Brooks and Joe Veneto
- Chamber transitioning to a Destination Marketing/Management Organization
- Libra Foundation – investing in Monson as an “artist village” (up to $10 million with potentially more to come)
- Been working hard for years – now seeing impact
- AMC – Maine Woods Initiative
- Community Destination Academy
Katahdin Region

Encompassing Baxter State Park, the new Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, and the West and East Branches of the Penobscot River, the Katahdin region is anchored by Millinocket in the south and extends north to Patten and Matagamon.

- Region defined largely by KWW byway – Baxter State Park, south entrance to north entrance
- Includes Millinocket, East Millinocket, Medway, Sherman and Patten
- Natural resource amenity rich area – Baxter State Park, Gateway to Allagash and North Maine Woods, West Branch Whitewater, KWW National Monument
- Focus on trails and trail development
- Combined branding from KWW Monument and new trails putting the area on the national radar
- Lots of infrastructure needs – visitation could exceed capacity (lodging) in near term
- Stakeholders increasingly coming together, and committed to logical development of tourism future
- Our Katahdin bring new energy and ability to think holistically
- OK providing staff support to Katahdin Collaborative (KTP, Chamber, Higher ed, small businesses) embarking on visioning process (with support from TNC) to look at tourism and other factors
- KTP still moving with amenity development along the byway
St. John Valley

From Allagash Village, the St. John Valley extends east along the Canadian border through Ft. Kent and Madawaska to the village of Hamlin and south through the Deboullie and Fish River Lakes.

- Distinctive asset is the Acadian culture – more in common with Canada than south – recent hosting of World Acadian Congress
- Fishing, hunting, etc... make up tourism economy and complement to core agricultural economy ($2.2 billion ag versus $185 million tourism)
- Working with Canadian partners on potential new projects
- Snowmobiling and ATV
- Four major Nordic Ski Centers (some small downhill)
- Byways – Fish River and St. John Scenic Byways
- NFCT – end point in Fort Kent
- Watertrails map an guide (legal put-ins)
- Allagash Wilderness Waterway – decline in usage
- Irving – Fish River Concept Plan combining development, conservation and recreation/tourism
- Aroostook County Tourism – ongoing marketing activity, new regional map and guide
Downeast Lakes

From Lincoln to Danforth and south to Grand Lake Stream, the innumerable rivers, lakes and ponds of the Downeast Lakes region make it a classic Maine destination for fishing, canoeing, and experiencing nature.

- Large, interconnected systems of lakes, ponds and waterways
- Classic fishing destination – Grand Lake Stream nationally recognized
- Lots of conserved lands
- Very limited community amenities, lodging, dinning, etc.
- Limited organizational capacity
Bold Coast

Where the Maine Woods meet the Maine Coast, this region follows the Bold Coast Scenic Byway from Millbridge to Lubec – the eastern-most point in the United States.

- Only Maine Woods area with coast line
- Washington county Council of Governments manages Downeast Acadia Regional Tourism (20 stakeholder orgs)
- Bold Coast scenic byway designated 5 years ago – Stuben to Eastport
- Three areas...
- Crystal Hitchens (DART) serving as planner for BC Byway
- Fisheries Trail
- Bike Maine 2016 – record sell out – evolving into “scenic bikeway” – working with Bicycle Coalition of Maine on hospitality train geared to cyclists... also generating maps and gps linked app (required constant updating), including 1-2 day sub-regional itineraries
- Ice Age Trail
- DART/Crystal is serving as the “champion”
FUTURE OF MAINE WOODS TOURISM
This foresight research report is examining emerging tourism trends, including activities, types of tourists and technology, how these trends might affect the Maine Woods, investigating challenges and opportunities for the region, and providing predictions about the next 5-10 years in the Maine Woods.

MAINE WOODS TOURISM ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
An investigation into the tourism industry in Maine Woods, including current economic impact, tourism drivers, visitor profiles, and scenarios for the future of sustainable tourism for the region, the potential economic, social and environment impacts.