

Moosehead Region Futures Committee

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The Moosehead Region Futures Committee's mission is to encourage, gather and incorporate area residents' ideas and expertise to shape and balance the region's future development, economy, and conservation efforts.

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To our valued friends and supporters:

The four weeks of technical hearings on Plum Creek's proposal concluded on January 25. The MRFC Steering Committee worked diligently throughout this period. We attended and contributed to every daily session as well as attending each of the four public testimony sessions held throughout the state since early December. The eight MRFC witnesses, who submitted a combined total of over 200 pages of testimony, were questioned with regard to their areas of expertise by LURC and other parties. MRFC Steering Committee members cross-examined numerous witnesses, using in-depth local knowledge to challenge flawed or incomplete information provided by Plum Creek and other intervenors. Throughout the proceedings, we continued to examine the details in Plum Creek's proposal through the lens of "Citizen Solutions": the planning guidelines incorporating your ideas about how to secure a vibrant, sustainable future for our region. Your local voices have been and will continue to be a key component of the LURC evaluation process!

Our intensive participation in the four weeks of hearings has proven successful. MRFC testimony and cross-examination, in combination with the work of other intervenors, clearly demonstrated that there are still significant problems with both the development and conservation components of Plum Creek's proposal. Even Plum Creek has acknowledged that there is a need for further revision of its proposal. It is clear that LURC's evaluation of Plum Creek's application is far from over.

We expect that the next steps in the process will be as follows. The MRFC and other intervenors will prepare post-hearing briefs, specifying recommended revisions to Plum Creek's proposal. LURC staff and consultants will use these briefs as they prepare a list of issues to be resolved and potential options to address those issues. The LURC Commissioners will identify which options they prefer, and a list of revisions recommended by the Commissioners will be distributed to all parties for comment. Plum Creek will then revise its proposal. There will be an opportunity for comment on the revisions by intervenors, and possibly even additional hearings.

The MRFC Steering Committee supports this approach. As we stated in our testimony, we continue to view LURC's evaluation of Plum Creek's proposal as an opportunity to develop a framework that will secure a vibrant, sustainable future for the Moosehead Region. Last week, LURC invited intervenors to submit their comments regarding the revision process. Listed below are several concerns our Steering Committee shared with LURC:

- a) MRFC testimony articulated substantive concerns with regard to the size and location of development zones, the types of zoning proposed for certain locations, and the terms, size and location of the conservation easements. To address these concerns, substantive and meaningful changes to Plum Creek's application will be required.
- b) The MRFC Steering Committee understands that a number of revisions are necessary in order to provide clarification where insufficient detail has been offered, where language is ambiguous, and/or where Plum Creek's intent is unclear. While we encourage revisions of this nature, such revisions alone will not resolve the major issues that we have identified in our testimony and that have been raised by other parties to these proceedings.
- c) We look forward to engaging in a revision process that is open, transparent, and fair and that offers all parties an opportunity for full participation. We are grateful that the LURC staff, consultants, and Commissioners ensured such a process during the four weeks of technical hearings. We believe that this approach must continue throughout the revision process in order to achieve the best possible outcome for the Moosehead Region.

We are very pleased that our hard work to date has borne fruit, and we look forward to active contribution throughout the revision process for Plum Creek's proposal. We strongly believe that thoughtful involvement by well-informed local citizens is vital to a successful outcome.

However, the likely timeline for the post-hearing process places an unexpected strain on our financial resources. When we planned our budget for the hearings, we expected that the process would be completed by May. Now, it appears that it will continue for many more months than we had anticipated, and will likely not reach a conclusion until late this year. Your donations, large or small, will be gratefully received and will ensure the presence of a strong local voice throughout the revision process (you can send a check by mail or donate with a credit card via our website at www.mooseheadfutures.org).

We thank you for your loyal support over the past three years. As always, we welcome your comments about the work we are doing during this pivotal time for the Moosehead Region. Without your ideas and contributions, none of the MRFC's work would be possible!

Sincerely,

Wendy Weiger, Coordinator
On behalf of the Moosehead Region Futures Committee