

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.

June 2008

To our valued friends and supporters:

On May 20, Maine's Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC) staff and consultants released a 127-page list of recommended revisions to Plum Creek's proposal. During two days of deliberations in Augusta (May 27-28), the Land Use Regulation Commissioners affirmed their overall support of the staff/consultant recommendations.

We do not yet know if Plum Creek will agree to the revisions LURC is recommending. Unfortunately, even with these revisions, we believe Plum Creek's proposal would still fall far short of being a good deal for the people of the Moosehead region and the state of Maine.

On the one hand, we are pleased that LURC's recommended revisions include some modest improvements to Plum Creek's proposal long advocated by the MRFC. These include the following:

- Relocation of development proposed for the remote, wild-feeling north shore of Long Pond.
- Revision of the working forest easements so that conservation values will be somewhat better protected.
- Expansion of funding for local community projects. In response to earlier suggestions by the MRFC, Plum Creek proposed that each time a house lot is sold, a percentage of the sale price would be contributed to a community fund. In our post-hearing brief, we further requested that this fee be levied on resort accommodations as well as house lots. LURC now recommends that this fee be extended to individually-owned resort accommodations such as condos and cabins, with the proceeds funding local needs such as recreational facilities and affordable housing.

By supporting the MRFC's work during the Plum Creek hearings, you contributed to these steps forward. Together, we have made—and will continue to make—a big difference in our region's future.

However, much work remains to be done. LURC's recommended revisions fail to address the MRFC's concerns regarding development in several high-value natural areas. We believe that the development still proposed for these areas would irrevocably degrade the natural character of the Moosehead region and undermine its traditional culture and nature-based economy. These areas include:

- Brassua Lake
- Lily Bay
- Indian Pond
- Upper Wilson Pond

With regard to Brassua Lake, we are especially concerned that development proposed for the south peninsula will create a new commercial center sprawling into what is now raw, undeveloped territory. In our post-hearing brief, we requested the following: 1) that the total number of lots allowed on the peninsula be cut by at least half, 2) that proposed commercial development be eliminated from the peninsula and instead be located close to existing commercial development in Rockwood Village, and 3) that development be eliminated altogether from the remote northwestern section of the peninsula, in order to conserve high value wildlife habitat and protect the character of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. Unfortunately, the LURC recommendations represent a step backward: Instead of decreasing the number of lots allowed, the recommendations pave the way for even more lots than Plum Creek is currently requesting. Instead of placing new development near existing development, the recommendations push needless development outward.

Plum Creek is proposing both resort and large-scale residential development for the Lily Bay peninsula. As with the Brassua peninsula, an entire new commercial center would be created far from established service centers. This development would degrade the experience of visitors to Lily Bay State Park, which currently provides an authentic, yet affordable, “North Woods” experience to many people from Maine and from away. Although LURC recommends a reduction in the number of acres to be rezoned for development, it is not recommending any reduction in the total number of house lots or resort accommodations. The MRFC believes that, in order to avoid undue adverse impacts, there must be a further reduction in acreage and a major decrease in the number of development units at Lily Bay.

Plum Creek is proposing resort development on the shore of Indian Pond, a popular fishing, boating, and camping destination for local residents and tourists alike. The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Maine Natural Areas Program both requested that the proposed resort zone on Indian Pond remain undeveloped. We are disappointed that LURC recommends retaining this proposed development zone.

Plum Creek is also proposing a residential subdivision on the shore of Upper Wilson Pond. Like Indian Pond, Upper Wilson offers a remote, wild-feeling recreational experience, yet is relatively accessible from the gateway community of Greenville. We are disappointed that LURC recommends retaining this proposed development zone.

What you can do:

From now until 4 PM on Friday July 11, LURC will accept comments on the revisions it is recommending for Plum Creek’s proposal. As usual, our Steering Committee is conducting a detailed analysis of these revisions and will work hard to prepare thorough and thoughtful comments for LURC. But you have an important role to play too: LURC needs to hear from citizens like you who are deeply concerned about the future of the Moosehead region. This is your last chance to offer substantive input to LURC on Plum Creek’s proposal. Even if you have written to LURC before, please take the time to do so again now. You can send written comments to:

Land Use Regulation Commission
22 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0022
Email: LURC@maine.gov

You can access LURC’s recommended revisions to Plum Creek’s proposal at:

<http://mainegov-images.informe.org/doc/lurc/reference/resourceplans/moosehead/2008-06-02amendments.pdf>

A smaller, text-only version of this document is available at:

http://mainegov-images.informe.org/doc/lurc/reference/resourceplans/moosehead/2008-06-02amendments_text.pdf

It is vitally important that we continue to articulate a strong local voice throughout the Plum Creek process. However, the extended timeline for this process is very challenging financially for a small organization like the MRFC. We are now engaged in a “war of attrition”: our resources are very limited, while Plum Creek has endlessly deep pockets. Plum Creek undoubtedly hopes that the lengthy post-hearing revision process will force some of the intervenor groups to drop out due to lack of funds.

Because we operate on a shoestring budget, every dollar we receive in donations will be put to good use (you can send a check by mail or donate with a credit card via our website at www.mooseheadfutures.org). As always, we are very grateful for your loyal support!

Sincerely,

Wendy Weiger, Coordinator

On behalf of the MRFC Steering Committee: Suzanne AuClair, Rockwood; George Bakajza, Sandbar Tract Township; Jim Glavine (President), Beaver Cove; Bob Guethlen, Tomhegan Township; Sandra Neily, Sandy Bay; Christina Pritham, Greenville; Joe Richards, Greenville; Jim Thorne, Misery Gore; Wendy Weiger, Greenville and Frenchtown Township; John Willard (Vice President), Rockwood; Joan Wisher, Frenchtown Township.