

# 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.*

May 2008

*To our valued friends and supporters:*

The three and a half months since the end of the Plum Creek hearings have been busy ones for the MRFC. We have continued to offer feedback to the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC) on issues ranging from the format for the post-hearing process to Plum Creek's traffic permit to the agenda for further deliberations by the LURC Commissioners.

Our major accomplishment since the hearings was the submission to LURC of our post-hearing brief. (If you would like to get a copy of the brief, please email us at [info@mooseheadfutures.org](mailto:info@mooseheadfutures.org) or call 207-695-4888.) In their briefs, intervening parties were invited to provide detailed lists of requests for revisions to Plum Creek's proposal. We based the MRFC's requests on the testimony presented by MRFC witnesses as well as what we learned through the testimony of more than 150 witnesses from other parties. As always, we built our work on the strong foundation provided by *Citizen Solutions*: the planning guidelines incorporating your ideas about how to secure a vibrant future for our region. (To view the *Citizen Solutions* guidelines and map, visit the MRFC website at [www.mooseheadfutures.org](http://www.mooseheadfutures.org).)

As indicated in our post-hearing brief, the MRFC continues to view the LURC evaluation process for Plum Creek's proposal as an opportunity to develop a framework that will secure a sustainable future for our region's culture, economy, and the natural resources on which they depend. In revisions over the past three years, Plum Creek has already incorporated some of our recommendations into its proposal. Plum Creek submitted its initial proposal to LURC in April 2005. Several suggestions from *Citizen Solutions* were included in Plum Creek's April 2006 revisions: relocation of a proposed resort to a more suitable location at Big Moose Mountain, provision for affordable housing, and establishment of a Community Fund based on contributions from the sale prices of house lots. In the April 2007 revisions of Plum Creek's proposal, development was eliminated from certain locations the MRFC judged to be unsuitable (Prong Pond, Big W Township, and the northwest of Brassua Lake).

We are pleased that Plum Creek has responded to some of our suggestions. However, we believe that further revisions are necessary before the company's proposal will support our goal for the Moosehead Region: to create a world-class model of carefully planned development balanced by permanent conservation that will support our region's nature-based economy for generations to come. The revision requests in our post-hearing brief are aimed at achieving this goal.

The following are some of our continuing concerns with regard to Plum Creek's proposal:

*Total acreage proposed for rezoning to development:* Plum Creek is still asking LURC to rezone many more acres than are necessary to accommodate the house lots and resorts included in its current proposal. The MRFC is requesting that the total acreage proposed for rezoning to development be

significantly reduced. We are asking that the following areas be excluded from rezoning to development: areas with unsuitable soils, areas determined to be unsuitable for development by the Maine Natural Areas Program, and high-value areas for nature tourism and wildlife recreation. We are requesting that development be located in accordance with your values as expressed in *Citizen Solutions*.

*Unsuitable locations proposed for development:* The MRFC is requesting that the north shore of Long Pond, the northwestern section of the Brassua Peninsula, and Upper Wilson Pond be excluded from rezoning to development. Development of these remote areas would cause undue adverse impacts to resources that support nature tourism and wildlife recreation, identified in *Citizen Solutions* as two of the four sectors that provide a strong foundation for future economic growth in the Moosehead Region. We are also asking that the resort accommodation currently proposed near the shore of Indian Pond be relocated away from the pond.

*Unsuitable types of development proposed for certain locations:* There are certain areas where limited residential development may be suitable, but Plum Creek continues to propose large-scale development. *Citizen Solutions* does not support the resort and other large-scale development proposed for Lily Bay or the commercial development proposed for Brassua Lake. The MRFC is requesting that proposed development be scaled back in type and size so that it will be more compatible with the unique character of these areas.

*Inadequate protection provided by proposed conservation easements:* The MRFC is requesting that the easement terms be strengthened to prohibit commercial and industrial activities that are incompatible with the conservation values expressed in *Citizen Solutions*. We are also asking that the Forest Management Plan be strengthened to guarantee sustainable forestry practices. Sustainable forestry is identified in *Citizen Solutions* as one of the four sectors that are vital to future economic growth in the Moosehead Region.

*Adverse impacts to nature tourism economy:* The MRFC's analysis suggests that Plum Creek's proposal, as now written, would harm, rather than benefit, the Moosehead Region's current and future nature tourism economy. *Citizen Solutions* identifies nature tourism and wildlife recreation as key components necessary for sustainable economic growth in our region. Examples of locations where proposed development would cause undue adverse impacts to nature tourism include the following: the north shore of Long Pond, the northwestern section of the Brassua Peninsula, the Lily Bay Peninsula, Upper Wilson Pond, and Indian Pond.

The following represents our current understanding of how the remainder of the Plum Creek process will likely unfold:

- In late May, the LURC Commissioners will hold two days of meetings to discuss potential revisions to Plum Creek's proposal. MRFC Steering Committee members will attend these deliberative sessions.
- LURC staff and consultants will prepare a report capturing preliminary decisions made by the Commissioners during these sessions.
- This report, which will likely be completed in July, will be posted for a 30-day period to allow comment by Plum Creek, intervenors, and the public. The MRFC plans to conduct a detailed analysis of this report, comparing the Commissioners' recommendations to the requests presented in our post-hearing brief. Plum Creek's response to LURC's report will probably indicate whether the company finds revisions recommended by the Commissioners to be acceptable, at least in principle.

- LURC staff and consultants will draft specific revision language for Plum Creek’s proposal.
- Plum Creek, intervenors, and the public will have the opportunity to submit comments on the draft revisions.
- The Commissioners may then accept the draft revisions and proceed to a final vote on Plum Creek’s proposal, or they may make changes to the draft revisions and seek further comment from Plum Creek, intervenors, and the public before proceeding to a final vote.

What you can do:

The deadline for comments to LURC on Plum Creek’s proposal has passed. However, you can still send letters to newspapers around the state! We are currently in a critical period when LURC must decide what revisions will be required. LURC staff, consultants, and Commissioners have a huge job ahead as they consider the volumes of testimony and other data relevant to Plum Creek’s proposal in light of the criteria they must use to make a final decision. Now more than ever, it is important to show that the residents and supporters of the Moosehead Region remain deeply concerned about the impacts Plum Creek’s proposal will have on the future of the Moosehead Region and Maine’s North Woods. In July or August, after the Commissioners’ recommendations are posted for public comment, you will once again have a chance to communicate directly with LURC.

The extended timeline for the post-hearing process is placing an unanticipated strain on our financial resources. When we planned our budget for the hearings, we expected that this process would be completed by May. Now, it appears that it 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](http://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 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.