

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.

November 2007

Save the dates!

- MRFC Open House Wednesday November 28, 6-8 PM, Community House, Greenville
- Public testimony sessions scheduled for December (see below for dates and locations)

To our valued friends and supporters:

As indicated in our October updates, Plum Creek has made additional revisions to its development proposal for the Moosehead Region in response to concerns expressed in written testimony filed by state and federal agencies and various organizations, including the MRFC. The latest version of Plum Creek's proposal will be considered by Maine's Land Use Regulation Commissioners during 3 to 4 weeks of hearings scheduled for December and January. The MRFC Steering Committee has analyzed Plum Creek's latest revisions through the lens of *Citizen Solutions*, the planning guidelines and map incorporating your ideas about how to secure a vibrant, sustainable future for our region (you can view the *Citizen Solutions* guidelines and map on the MRFC website at www.mooseheadfutures.org).

The MRFC Steering Committee is encouraged by Plum Creek's willingness to modify its proposal. However, there are still several major areas of concern:

Total acreage proposed for rezoning to development: Plum Creek is asking LURC to rezone many more acres than are necessary to accommodate the house lots and resorts included in its current proposal. We are concerned that the surplus acreage could be used for additional development. Plum Creek says that development will be forever "capped" at the number of house lots and resort accommodation units specified in the current proposal, and that unused land may eventually be placed into permanent conservation. However, after reading the fine print, it appears that there is no limit on the amount of rezoned land that may be deeded over to homeowners associations and public access to this land would not be guaranteed. In areas rezoned for residential development, land not sold as house lots could be used for certain types of additional development, including structures such as caretaker or manager housing, large clubhouses, schools, and healthcare facilities. There is no limit specified as to how many such structures could be built. It is reasonable to expect that subdivisions will require a certain amount of infrastructure, and to rezone more land than the actual house lots will occupy. However, the acreage currently proposed for rezoning far exceeds what might reasonably be required. We are concerned that the offer to turn "leftover" rezoned land into conservation will be used as a means to help gain approval of Plum Creek's rezoning request, even though the loopholes would allow all of this land to be developed or closed to public access, in effect retracting the offer.

Unsuitable locations proposed for development: There continue to be several areas of concern in Plum Creek's current proposal. Plum Creek is still proposing development on Upper Wilson Pond and the north shore of Long Pond, as well as intensive development on the northwestern section of the Brassua peninsula. When viewed through the lens of *Citizen Solutions*, these remote areas are not suitable for development. Development here would cause undue adverse impacts to resources that support nature tourism and wildlife recreation, identified as two of the four sectors that provide a strong foundation for future economic growth in the Moosehead Region.

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.

Inadequate protection provided by proposed conservation easements: Plum Creek's latest revisions include some modest improvements to the proposed conservation easements. However, the easements still permit numerous activities that are incompatible with the conservation values expressed in *Citizen Solutions*. For example, the easements could allow disposal of septic waste from the developments, various levels of mining operations, and subdivision of easement lands into parcels that could become "kingdom lots", thereby losing their non-exclusive public recreational benefit. On the majority of the easement lands, multiple commercial water bottling facilities could also be built.

Adverse impacts on nature tourism economy: The MRFC's analysis suggests that Plum Creek's proposal, as 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.

The MRFC Steering Committee continues to view the LURC evaluation process for Plum Creek's proposal as an opportunity to develop a framework that will secure a vibrant, sustainable future for the Moosehead Region. We are encouraged that Plum Creek has revised its proposal in response to concerns expressed in written testimony and are optimistic that further changes will result from information presented at the hearings. We continue to view this process as an opportunity to create a world-class model of carefully planned development balanced by permanent conservation that will support the region's distinctiveness from other places and its legendary nature-based economy for generations to come.

In advance of the public hearings, we are holding an Open House on Wednesday November 28 from 6-8 PM at the Community House in downtown Greenville. MRFC Steering Committee members will be there to answer questions about the MRFC's work and to provide information about how you can share your own ideas and vision with the LURC Commissioners. Please come and bring your family, friends, and neighbors!

At this critical juncture, we cannot overstate the importance of thoughtful input from well-informed citizens who care deeply about the Moosehead Region. We hope that all of you will participate in the public hearing process, either by speaking at a public testimony session or writing to LURC. Your efforts at this crucial time will make a real difference!

Public testimony sessions are scheduled as follows:

- Saturday December 1 in Greenville (Greenville High School Auditorium)
- Sunday December 2 in Augusta (Augusta Civic Center)
- Saturday December 15 in Portland (Holiday Inn by the Bay, 88 Spring Street)
- Sunday December 16 in Greenville (Greenville High School Auditorium).

Each of these sessions will run from 10 AM to 1 PM and 2 PM to 6 PM. Sign-up for those wishing to speak will begin at 9 AM, and speakers will be called in the order in which they sign up, so you may want to arrive early. Speakers will likely be limited to 3 minutes each. If your comments will take longer than 3 minutes to present, you may summarize your comments orally, then provide a longer version in writing.

If you cannot attend a public testimony session in person, please send your written comments to LURC:

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

We thank you for your loyal support over the past two and a half years. As always, we welcome your comments about the work we are doing during this pivotal time for the Moosehead Region. Your donations, large or small, will be gratefully received and will help us carry a strong local "voice" to the Plum Creek hearings (you can send a check by mail or donate with a credit card via our website at www.mooseheadfutures.org). 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; Christina Liros, Greenville; Sandra Neily, Sandy Bay; Joe Richards, Greenville; Jim Thorne, Misery Gore; Wendy Weiger, Greenville and Frenchtown Township; John Willard (Vice President), Rockwood; Joan Wisher, Frenchtown Township.