

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.

October 2007

To all of our valued friends and supporters:

On August 31, the Moosehead Region Futures Committee reached an important milestone, the culmination of over two years of hard work. On that day, the MRFC submitted pre-filed testimony for the Plum Creek hearings to Maine's Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC). This testimony presents a detailed analysis of the latest version of Plum Creek's proposed Concept Plan for the Moosehead Region. The testimony builds on the strong foundation provided by *Citizen Solutions*, the planning guidelines and map incorporating your ideas about how to secure a vibrant, sustainable future for our region. The values embodied in *Citizen Solutions* come from numerous meetings with area residents as well as the 2005 LURC scoping sessions, in which many of you shared your visions for our region's future. You can view the *Citizen Solutions* guidelines and map and read the MRFC testimony on the MRFC website (www.mooseheadfutures.org).

The MRFC's analysis has led to the conclusion that Plum Creek's proposal, in its current form, does not support the best interests of the Moosehead Region. In brief, here are some of the 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. The surplus acreage could be used for additional development in the future.

Inappropriate locations proposed for development: Although Plum Creek is to be commended for withdrawing development previously proposed for certain areas (Prong Pond, Big W Township, and the northwest of Brassua Lake), there are still several areas of concern in Plum Creek's current proposal. Plum Creek continues to propose 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 areas are not suitable for development.

Inappropriate types of development proposed for certain locations: There are certain areas where limited residential development might be appropriate, but Plum Creek continues to propose large-scale development. The *Citizen Solutions* guidelines do 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: The proposed "conservation" easements permit numerous activities that are incompatible with the conservation values expressed in *Citizen Solutions*. For example, the proposed 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.

Adverse impacts on nature tourism economy: The MRFC's analysis suggests that Plum Creek's proposal would harm, rather than benefit, the Moosehead Region's current and future nature tourism economy. *Citizen Solutions* identifies nature tourism as one of the key components necessary for sustainable economic growth in our region.

Despite these concerns, 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 vibrant, sustainable future for the Moosehead Region. On October 1, Plum Creek indicated to LURC that further revisions of its proposal are in progress, and additional revisions will be possible after the hearings. The MRFC Steering Committee will carefully evaluate any changes to Plum Creek's proposal and continue to offer constructive suggestions for further improvement. The MRFC Steering Committee remains eager to work with LURC, Plum Creek, and future developers to create a world-class model of carefully planned development balanced by permanent conservation that will support the region's legendary nature-based economy for generations to come.

Of course, participation in the Plum Creek hearings entails considerable expense. Simply meeting LURC's requirements for the August 31 submission of pre-filed testimony cost over \$1000! We had to provide 16 paper copies of MRFC testimony (each copy was over 200 pages in total, including 48 exhibits, many in color); we also had to supply 36 CDs (to satisfy LURC rules, an electronic copy of MRFC testimony was mailed to each member of the Plum Creek "service list"). During the two-week hearing period in November, at least one Steering Committee member must be present at all times in addition to the witnesses (8 in total) who will testify on specific topics on various days; expenses will include gas, food, and motel accommodations in Bangor. Donations by mail or via the MRFC website will be gratefully received and will ensure that a strong local "voice" is clearly heard by LURC Commissioners.

Please remember that you can speak directly to the LURC Commissioners yourself! Public testimony sessions are scheduled as follows:

Saturday November 3 in Greenville
Sunday November 4 in Augusta
Saturday November 17 in Portland
Sunday November 18 in Greenville.

If you cannot be there in person, you can submit your comments to LURC in writing:

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

Please encourage friends and family members to join you in participating in this process, either by speaking at a public testimony session or by writing. This is your chance to make a real difference at a crucial moment for the future of the Moosehead Region! And again, sending a donation, in any amount, will help carry our work through these vitally important hearings.

As always, *thank you* for your past, current, and future support. The MRFC Steering Committee continues to work diligently on your behalf and welcomes your comments about the work we are doing during this pivotal moment in all of our history. Without you, 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.