

“Permanent conservation and sustainable community development are the bedrock foundations of the Moosehead Region’s future health and vitality.”

“Citizen Solutions”

communicated by the
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Economic Sectors of the Moosehead Region’s Sustainable Economy

Four sectors provide a strong base for economic growth in the Moosehead region, growth that is both sustainable and compatible with our region’s culture and traditions. All four sustainable sectors are dependent upon intact woods, waters, and wildlife resources. Permanent conservation and sustainable community development are the bedrock foundations of the Moosehead Region’s future health and vitality.

1. Sustainable Forestry:

Sustainable forestry practices ensure healthy forest environments, an ongoing supply of harvestable timber and forestry jobs for generations to come. These practices also protect the ecological health of our region, support diverse populations of wild animals and plants and facilitate the growth of nature-based tourism.

2. Nature-Based Tourism:

Camping, boating, hiking, canoeing & kayaking, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, photography, rafting and diverse guided experiences of many types are part of the strongest economic sector of this region and much of the area’s employment is somehow connected to this sector. Nature tourism is projected to be one of the mainstays of the region’s future economy.

3. Wildlife Recreation

Hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching, all require healthy diverse wildlife populations. Contiguous tracts of undeveloped land, riparian areas, high value habitat for wild animals, and intact natural plant communities are essential to the ecological and economic vitality

of the region. The potential long-term economic benefits of conserving unfragmented, high value habitat will likely outweigh the short-term benefits of inappropriate development.

4. Retirement/ 2nd Home Industry

This industry also depends on conservation of high value resources that define the region. People want to own retirement or second homes near the woods, waters, and wildlife habitat that initially attracted them to the area. Supporting real estate development that uses “Smart Growth” and sustainable community principles (in the location and amount of development) ensures strong real estate values even as we secure the health of the region’s other resource based sectors.

PLANNING (REVISION) GUIDELINES FOR A SUSTAINABLE MOOSEHEAD REGION FUTURE

Many hundreds of area citizens, joined by those who value the Moosehead Lake Region, have been clear about the values that should guide future land use planning. The Moosehead Region Futures Committee has worked to gather these values into “guidelines” that might shape Plum Creek’s revision of its rezoning application, LURC hearings on McPherson’s Burnt Jacket subdivision proposal, and future development and conservation plans for this region.

1. Development Near Communities: Development should be based on “smart growth” and sustainable community principles (in the amount and location of development) and be located near to or within the communities of the region. Action: create a “Gateway Community Development Zone” to guide future development in the region.

2. Permanent Conservation: Maine’s laws are clear: applicants must provide significant, permanent conservation in their rezoning Concept Plan applications. Permanent conservation easements should be placed on significant portions of rezoned land and take place before development begins. Action: create landscape scale conservation areas, securing large blocks of contiguous woods and waters as working forest, habitat, and recreation sites.

3. Guaranteed Public Access: Public access in this region includes valued relationships with forest landowners, traditional access to large tracts of forest lands, and access to publicly owned resources: lakes, navigable rivers, wildlife. Public access is also essential to our tourism economy. Action: create a permanent agreement by landowners to keep forested lands open to the public for recreational use with appropriate restrictions as necessary to assure a safe environment for continued forest management activities.

4. Rivers, Ponds, Habitat, Conserved: Wild trout ponds, undeveloped or sparsely developed river segments and shore frontage, high value wildlife habitat (the “green infrastructure” of the economy) will be conserved. Action: these resources will be

inventoried, valued for both their ecosystem and nature tourism potential, and protected from inappropriate development.

5. Business Benefits: Economic activity created by development should benefit the local economy whenever possible. Action: create an agreement to offer local businesses (contractors, service providers, suppliers, etc) fair opportunities to bid competitively for projects that result from development.

6. Intact Forestlands: Fragmentation of forest resources by inappropriate backcountry development reduces the future value of “working” forests and degrades north woods tourism opportunities. Action: require the creation of “restricted development” and “no new development” zones that would eliminate back-woods lot development (residential and commercial) in high value woodlands.

7. Nature Tourism Experiences Protected: Tourism is Maine’s and this region’s largest employer. Action: create a regional planning process to identify the current and future experiences that will grow this economic sector and protect and manage the natural resources that deliver these experiences.

8. Trail Planning: A world class land and water trail system will be at the heart of the region’s economic and wellness future. Action: convene a planning process to determine the need for and location of permanent people powered and motorized trails appropriate for all types of use and users. Trail easements created by developers will be granted in perpetuity (with appropriate buffers) and sited to benefit tourism and local fitness and recreation needs.

9. Squaw Resort Revitalized: Plum Creek’s current site for a resort in Lily Bay does not offer the most economic promise for the region. Action: relocate the resort proposed for the Lily Bay region to an area adjacent to and/or contiguous with the Squaw Mt. Resort in order to revitalize the region’s winter economy, benefit both Rockwood’s and Greenville’s economies, and reduce backcountry sprawl.

10. Affordable Housing: This region needs to retain and attract a diverse labor force. Action: create affordable housing units within the communities affected by Plum Creek’s rezoning application. Create strategies to ensure units are not subject to speculation and are reserved for area workers who most need them.

11. Impacts Reduced: As the region grows it will be essential to plan more carefully for the impacts of that growth so that we retain our “north woods” character as much as possible. Action: require developers to create plans that limit the scale of development in sensitive areas, support scenic corridors, create cluster housing and shared amenities (roads, docks, etc) whenever possible and attach deed covenants that contain specific outdoor lighting and noise restrictions. Area planners and state agencies should cooperate in regulations that protect north woods experiences (for example: limit personal watercraft on waters that provide “traditional” north woods experiences.)

12. Rockwood Area Reevaluated: The density, scale and location of Plum Creek's original development proposal would significantly alter the Rockwood/Brassua area. Action: redesign both the location and scale of proposed development (resorts, house lots, campgrounds, visitors' facility) so that development reflects the specific needs of the Rockwood Community and the surrounding region.

13. Roach Ponds Conservation: Second and Third Roach Ponds and the lands surrounding them have the highest value as more remote backcountry experiences, wildlife habitat, and working forest (where appropriate). Action: support an agreement by the landowner to enter into a multi-year option that will enable the State of Maine to acquire high value lands in the Second and Third Roach Ponds region.

14. Impact Fees For Education: A diverse local population depends on healthy area schools. Unless the region is to become comprised of only retirement or vacation home owners and those who service their needs, the Moosehead Region needs help to secure and improve its schools. Action: require landowners and development applicants to pay per-lot impact fees that will be used to establish a school endowment, providing programs that offer incentives for local students and their families to remain in the region.

15. Tree Growth Benefits: When land is rezoned out of forestry and developed the cost of providing infrastructure and services for this development falls on local communities. Action: consider the creation of a state mechanism for the return of a portion of tree growth tax penalty payments (for lands developed and removed from forestry in the region) to service-center communities as compensation for increased infrastructure expenditures.

16. Infrastructure Assistance: With the benefits of increased development also come infrastructure demands that struggling northern communities cannot support. Action: Plum Creek will deed to the communities of Greenville, Shirley, Rockwood, Beaver Cove, and the state or county on behalf of unorganized territories, land proven to be suitable for the development and construction of a Solid and Liquid Waste Disposal and Recycling Facility, in accordance with the anticipated future needs of the region.

17. Professional Planning & Research: In order to assure that these values and guidelines are incorporated into future development and conservation, this region requires the benefits that flow from 3rd party analysis and research. Action: LURC, other state agencies, the University of Maine will convene appropriate research and analysis on (but not limited to) the following: the costs and benefits of development as well as conservation (lost opportunities as well as realized economic opportunity); the impacts and infrastructure requirements of future development (roads, septic systems, etc); a thorough survey that clearly identifies and quantifies the flora and fauna of the aquatic, avian and terrestrial natural communities in areas might support development or be adjacent to development; water quality assessments; an inventory of high value working forest lands and their current and potential products, and an inventory of nature tourism sites and requirements (experiences, view sheds, trails, access, amenities, information services, etc).

The Opportunity: Current large scale development proposals (Plum Creek's Lake Concept Plan, McPherson's Burnt Jacket subdivision application) as submitted, do not adequately address large and important development and conservation planning for the Moosehead Region. Residents and area supporters might see this as a valuable opportunity to craft a vision for the future of the region. While development pressures for these last wild areas of Maine are sure to increase in the coming years, it is our duty and responsibility as citizens of the region to rise to this challenge and not allow the desires of a few to dictate the future for the many. The very nature of these unprecedented applications demands that the Land Use Regulation Commission, the Department of Conservation, the Office of the Governor, the Conservation Community, potential developers and the public work cooperatively to reassess the future needs of the entire state and make such changes in rules, regulations, policies and practices as may be required to assure that the culture, history, traditions and values of Maine are represented in future land use decisions. There is little doubt that this is the first of many such plans to be presented by this and other landowners, large and small. The decisions we make now will become important precedents for future rezoning and land use applications.

The Moosehead Region Futures Committee looks forward to continuing to play a positive role as an "honest broker" of information from local voices who want to be heard by the decision makers of our state. There's much more "listening" and research to be completed. Please visit the interactive map on the Futures Committee's website to share your ideas, suggestions, knowledge and solutions!

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