



ADVOCATE

...helping people shape the future of western Maine.

www.westernmountainsalliance.org

Summer 2007

Getting Acquainted with the Neighbor Next Door

Grappling with Land Use Changes, Western Maine Communities Meet their Neighbors on the Map

Western Maine is a special place: 960 lakes, 650 square miles of inland waters and 575 mountains over 1000 feet in elevation define a large part of the region's geography. So, too do eight million acres of productive forestland and hundreds of miles of current and former logging roads that crisscross the four counties (Oxford, Franklin, Somerset and Piscataquis) that comprise Maine's westernmost border.

Around half of western Maine's 12,000 square miles fall under the jurisdiction of the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC) which governs over 10.4 million acres in Maine's unorganized territories. Scattered along the edge of this large landscape, dozens of small communities depend on its privately held natural resources for their livelihoods. In the paper industry, for forestry, recreational and service businesses, natural resources play a tremendous role in local economies. They are also frequently the source of conflict.

Land use changes in the region over the past 10 years have been well-documented with the sales of paper company lands to new owners capturing significant attention. Over the past year, several regional groups have started to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to explore and map where local values intersect with the landscape, where common interests exist and, in some cases, to inform future landscape planning.

In the Mahoosucs surrounding Bethel in Oxford County, the Moosehead Lake region area in northern Piscataquis and along the Kennebec River Corridor running from northern Somerset County to Waterville, three mapping projects have been initiated in the last year. Each involves using maps with individuals or in community forums to collect information on specific geographical areas valued for reasons ranging from personal recreational enjoyment to ecological factors to productive working forest.

Along the Kennebec River corridor, Josh Platt of the Kennebec County Soil and Water Conservation District (KCSWCD) and Project Director for the Kennebec River Initiative hopes his group's efforts will lead to conservation as well as new community and economic development projects. Supported by a collaboration of organizations that includes the Department of Conservation, the Natural Resources Council of Maine and the Kennebec

Valley Council of Governments, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine and Trout Unlimited, KCSWCD launched its project this winter with a series of forums held at different locations along the Kennebec Corridor. At each meeting, approximately 160 people participants looked at a series of maps detailing sections of the river and brainstormed a list of uses and values associated with access issues, conservation interests and areas suitable for economic development. Platt says the immediate goal of the initiative is "to create an action plan that will set the direction for the Kennebec in the coming years". The second phase of the KRI will be the implementation of those specific actions identified in the plan.

Participatory GIS (PGIS) is a hybrid framework that blends GIS and participatory research methods. PGIS uses an inclusive process to gather input from local residents and stakeholders about the geographical areas they value. Public input is entered and coded in a GIS database that can be used to examine the distribution and relative magnitude of community values across the landscape. In addition to PGIS's capacity to inform land use planning, the framework can also be used as a tool to forge common ground between stakeholder groups, according to Stephen Engle, Director of the Center for Community GIS in Farmington.



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WESTERN MOUNTAINS ALLIANCE

Mission Statement

The Western Mountains Alliance strives to improve the quality of life and to strengthen the regional identity of Maine, while honoring rural values and the environment, and supporting sustainable community development. We provide a forum to bring together many voices and many communities to find common ground through regional dialogue, bold thinking, and capacity building. We serve as an energetic advocate for the western mountains region.

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Here at the Alliance

Thank You Steve Brown

Deb Burd, former ED for the Western Mountains Alliance reflects on Steve Brown's true advocacy for the organization's mission. "The Alliance lost a kindred spirit with the retirement of Steve Brown from the board. He appeared at most every event and seldom missed a board meeting in his 10 years on the board. Steve was there in the adolescent years of the Alliance and with his thoughtful, deliberative and quiet ways helped to mature the organization. We thank you, Steve, for all that you are and all that you do!"

Students Power the Alliance

With the enthusiastic ideas and powerful drive of students from the University of Maine at Farmington and Bates College, WMA has been able to accomplish so much! In support of the Woods and Waters Group of the Maine Mountain Heritage Network and facilitated by WMA, intern Cian Marnagh completed extensive research into funding sources for natural resource conservation projects. KC Duffy-Stanley conducted outreach to area farms and markets, documenting places to buy locally grown food. Eric Auner is researching models for community scale renewable energy projects. These students pursued their professional and educational goals while volunteering for the Alliance. Check out the expanded "Links" page on our website, thanks to Eric's skillful

annotations. If you're a student looking for an interesting internship opportunity, give us a call.

New Website for WMA

The Alliance recently launched a redesigned website and monthly e-newsletter in an effort to connect people with information and resources promoting sustainable development. With increased visitors to the website and more requests for our e-newsletter and publications, we're pleased with the public's response. The new look for the website was led by Tricia Cook, WMA program assistant. Check it out at

www.westernmountainsalliance.org

You can now support the Alliance by shopping on our website, where you'll find 100% cotton tee shirts with the Eat Smart Eat Local graphic in blueberry, eggplant or kale colors.

You'll also find original postcards with 'buy local' commentary art designs by graphic arts students from Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School. Funds from the sale of these items are

earmarked to support the Eat Smart Eat Local Initiative.



Visitors can view WMA's strategic plan and a list of free publications and workshop proceedings. The updated Franklin and Somerset county Local Farm and Farmstand directories listing over 150 up-to-date places to buy locally grown food is also online.

*Learn. Participate. Share your ideas.
Be active. Build the future.*

...helping people shape the future of western Maine

Support Local Economies, Build Capacity and Leadership and Promote Conservation and Planning – It's What We Do!

Thanks to Paula Day, We're Eating Smarter!

For the past two years, Paula Day of the Maine Alternative Agriculture Association (MA3) coordinated the Eat Smart Eat Local initiative in Somerset and Franklin Counties.

The project launched with an art poster contest and included 2006 and 2007 winter workshops for farmers on topics such as greenhouse technology, new markets, and root vegetable storage. The initiative helped create new partnerships with area schools, parents, health care practitioners and the community and promoted local farms and an appreciation of how the consumption of fresh locally produced foods can support improved nutrition. From schools to restaurants to family kitchens, local foods are on the table.

The Alliance's work in support of local agriculture goes on, even as we say THANK YOU and a fond goodbye to Paula Day. Paula is continuing her work with local agriculture through MA3, an organization she founded "to serve as a research and organizing body for Maine farmers interested in chemical-free agriculture." This summer, we're still thinking (and eating) local.

Angela Norton, formerly a school health coordinator, started work on the Eat Smart Eat Local Initiative in July. Angela is organizing a series of workshops with Greenhouse Coordinator John Pino this summer and fall. To reach Angela, contact eatSMARTeatlocal@tds.net.

Winter and Spring Workshops Attended by 700+ People

From January through July, the Alliance hosted or co-sponsored workshops on funding resources for renewable energy projects, how to build a farmer's coop, biological agriculture practices, and year-round greenhouse construction. WMA also supported the successful Kneading



John Pino, Greenhouse Coordinator for the Eat Smart Eat Local Initiative, documented the construction, planting and harvesting at a demonstration greenhouse at the Marble Family Farm in Farmington. A power point tutorial describing the construction process is available on WMA's website. John's next presentation will be held in September at the Oxford County Fair at the new Farm Life Center.

For more information contact, Tricia Cook at tricia@westernmountainsalliance.org.

Conference in Skowhegan and the Oxford County Ag Group's public forum series.

The Institute for Civic Leadership presented a community workshop in Rumford, sponsored by our Lead Western Maine program, on Harnessing the Energy of Inclusive Community Groups and How to Find and Keep Great Board Members. Caucuses were held in Farmington on topics: Our Neighbors in Poverty, Renewable Energy Solutions, Wind Energy for Western Maine, and Public School Restructuring, debating the challenges and showcasing positive efforts to address them. Look for stories about the recent Lead Western Maine graduates in the next Advocate newsletter.

Telling Their Stories

Telling Their Stories, Women Business Owners in Western Maine, a publication of the Alliance and its partners, continues to reach advocates for rural economic development across the nation. Requests for the book, which can be downloaded from our website, have come from Wisconsin, North Carolina, Wyoming, Ohio, Washington, Virginia, California and Tennessee.

Articles about the book appear in Grit Magazine and the New York Times.

Maurer Meals

WMA staff, Tricia Cook recently joined the Steering Committee for the Maurer Meals project. This local food and farm project's mission is to raise money for the Justin A. Maurer Memorial Scholarship at the University of Maine at Farmington, while raising awareness of activities necessary to improve local community health nutritionally, economically, environmentally and spiritually.

Fundraising is done each fall in partnership with locally owned restaurants that serve a local foods menu and donate a portion of the proceeds to the scholarship fund. The event is October 12 and 13, 2007. Maurer Meals is a growing network, actively advocating for more restaurants to purchase produce and meats from area farms. For a list of participating restaurants, visit their website www.maurermeals.com.

Woods and Water Group Asks for Viewpoints on Land Values

On February 28, thirty stakeholders interested in northern Franklin County's future met in Phillips to discuss the development of a Participatory GIS Mapping Project for communities surrounding Route 27 from Strong to Stratton. The process was initiated by the Woods and Waters Group of the Maine Mountain Heritage Network, a group of conservation and community development groups interested in supporting sustainable multiple land uses in western Maine.

Woods and Waters is facilitated by WMA and has formed a Steering Committee to oversee development of the Franklin County mapping project. Steering Committee meetings are held monthly. The group welcomes involvement from the community, area businesses and landowners. You can learn more by visiting the Maine Mountains Heritage Network website www.mainemountains.org/ network or contact Tanya Swain at tswain@westernmountainsalliance.org.

The Biennial King Cummings Leadership Award and the Jane deFrees Youth Rural Leaders Award

Biennially since 1997, Western Mountains Alliance has recognized the work of exemplary organizations from Western Maine that are making positive strides towards economic sustainability and the preservation of rural heritage and natural resources with the King Cummings Leadership Award. On the occasion of its twentieth anniversary, WMA will also award the NEW Jane deFrees Youth Rural Leaders Award to a youth-led social action group that has made a significant contribution to Western Maine's future.

The Awards Committee will select two recipients to each receive a \$500 gift and plaque to be presented at a celebration of the Alliance's 20th Anniversary Celebration, November 1, 2007 in Kingfield. A community dinner and inspiring program is being planned.

Written nominations from the general public are encouraged and **must be received no later than October 1**. No self-nominations please. The application may be downloaded from www.westernmountainsalliance.org. There are two categories for nominations.

King Cummings Leadership Award Criteria:

This award will recognize the work of an exemplary organization that is making positive strides towards Western Maine's economic sustainability balanced with the preservation of rural heritage and natural resources.

- 1) A nonprofit organization from Western Maine: Somerset, Franklin, Northern Androscoggin, Piscataquis, or Oxford County.
- 2) Organization demonstrates commitment to work energetically and collaboratively to: Improve quality of life for people in Western Maine, strengthen regional identity and civic leadership, preserve rural values and cultural heritage, promote the sustainable use of natural resources, and/or support sustainable economic development.

Jane deFrees Youth Rural Leaders Award Criteria:

This award will recognize a youth-led social action group that has made a significant contribution to western Maine's future.

- 1) A youth group (actively involved youth ages 15-25) from Western Maine: Somerset, Franklin, Northern Androscoggin, Piscataquis, or Oxford County.
- 2) Group has youth leadership, but also works cooperatively with adults and other community groups.
- 3) Youth demonstrate commitment to work energetically and collaboratively to: Improve quality of life for people in Western Maine, strengthen regional identity and civic leadership, preserve rural values and cultural heritage, promote the sustainable use of natural resources, and/or support sustainable economic development.

NOMINATION FORM

Name of person submitting nomination: _____

Your contact information: _____

Your relationship to the nominee: _____

Category (choose one) : King Cummings Leadership Award Jane deFrees Youth Rural Leaders Award

Name of Organization/Group being nominated: _____

Name of Organization/Group's executive director, chair, president, etc.: _____

Nominee's contact information: _____

Name and contact information of person who will accept the award, if selected: _____

One sentence (Describe why you are nominating this nonprofit organization or youth group): _____

Rationale for nomination (No more than 750 words to describe how this nomination addresses the criteria): _____

Attachments (You may enclose up to 3 articles, photos, letters, etc. to support your nomination)

Due no later than October 1 to:
Kathleen Beauregard, Western Mountains Alliance
PO Box 29, Farmington, ME 04938 • E-mail: kbeauregard@westernmountainsalliance.org

Getting Acquainted

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The Center for Community GIS has applied Participatory GIS in many different kinds of projects ranging from natural resource management to economic development, and neighborhood planning.

In the Mahoosuc and Moosehead regions of western Maine, Engle says, the PGIS projects that the Center has been most involved in share the common aim of strengthening the quality and depth of conversations about current and future land uses.

PGIS-derived maps can illustrate, for example, areas that local residents and businesses value for forestry, recreation, open space, scenic, or historical characteristics. The results of these projects are helping communities and planners discuss enhancements to the region's tourist products, promote long-term forest health, and target acceptable areas for both growth and conservation.

While interest groups may embrace participatory mapping, Patrick Strauch, executive director of the Maine Forest Products Council, cautions that landowners are leery of projects that create expectations of public entitlement to privately owned property.

Strauch says, however, that efforts to overlay public interests on privately held land create expectations of public entitlement that raise red flags for landowners and may ultimately jeopardize the benefits interest groups

are hoping to preserve. "Communities need to better understand their neighboring landowners and work to understand how relationships can be strengthened before imposing a vision for the landscape that ignores their management objectives," he said.

Jim Batey, executive director of the Somerset Economic Development Corporation echoes these concerns.

"Access to private lands by residents and visitors is essential to the future of the

Strauch attributes some of the community interest in landscape planning and the desire to conserve property for recreational use to trepidation about the future of the wood products industry in Maine. He notes that Maine has been sustainably producing record amounts of paper and lumber but as a manufacturing sector has needed to modernize equipment and reduce labor and raw material costs to survive in an intense globally competitive marketplace. These changes have resulted in downsizing of the labor force, and an increase in productivity, but not, Strauch says, in the viability of the industry.

"It does not mean we are leaving; it means that a vision for Maine needs to include the continued use of sustainably managed natural resources in the forest industry," he said. "The "wilderness-like" experience that the public currently perceives and enjoys is within a mosaic of very actively managed land with regular tree harvests and road construction occurring on the landscape for centuries. Maine's woods have a nationally unique tradition of multiple use and that has historically generated good will among landowners and visitors."

recreational tourism industry and to the continuation of "traditional uses" for residents and visitors alike," Batey says. "One of our most serious concerns, however, is the possibility that one or more of the large landowners in the region becomes frustrated over public policy and chooses to change this long standing tradition."

Regardless the public or private, development, industry or conservation perspective, controversies over land use, the management of natural resources

and access have been part of the western Maine dialogue for a long time. As new pressures from second home development and new economic opportunities for natural resources emerge, Engle remains convinced of the power of map and GIS-based approaches to support a dialogue around the land.

"On its own, mapping will not solve the challenging land use questions that face the communities of western Maine. Tools like Participatory GIS, however, make it possible to explore a wide cross-section of community voices and to promote more locally responsive forms of landscape planning and zoning," he said.

Patrick Strauch is interested in meeting with community leaders and also encourages communities neighboring the unorganized territories to be involved in the Land Use Regulation Commission's 10 year review of its

Comprehensive Land Use Plan where many of these issues are being discussed. Patrick can be reached at the Maine Forest Products Council, 207-622-9288.

For more information on the Land Use Regulation Commission's update of its comprehensive plan, visit LURC's web site at www.maine.gov/lurc/.

For links to organizations mentioned in this article, visit the Western Mountains Alliance web site at www.westernmountainsalliance.org.



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In Collaboration: Celebrating 20 years!

Since 1987, the Alliance has been striving towards the goal of balanced economic growth in the region, while preserving natural resources and the rural character of our communities for future generations. Over the years, WMA's work has included leadership programs, educational forums on topics of interest to the region, and projects to promote traditional industries such as agriculture. In commemoration of its 20th anniversary, WMA published an impact study this spring examining ways in which the organization is making a difference and opportunities for future work.

Guided by an Impact Study Advisory Committee, led by Dr. Mark Lapping, Distinguished Professor, Muskie School of Public Policy, University of Southern Maine, a graduate student interviewed more than 40 people from multiple sectors,

geography and socio-economic status. Using a narrative inquiry method, research for the report revealed four primary ways WMA has impacted the region:

- WMA has increased people's awareness of western Maine and given voice to its people and issues;
- WMA has been instrumental in bringing people of diverse and sometimes polarized positions together, facilitating the pursuit of common ground;
- WMA has built both social and human capital in the region through leadership development and entrepreneurial supports; and
- WMA has brought prosperity to western Maine through strategic

*Have you seen
WMA's Annual Report?
It is full of photos reflecting
our twenty year history of
community building and
you might be in it!
Call us for a copy today.*

collaboration building and by acting as a mentor and sponsor for fledging grassroots projects.

The full impact study is available on our website or in hard copy by contacting our office. Staff welcomes reactions and comments to the report – please send yours to kbeaugard@westernmountainsalliance.org.

For more on our 20th Anniversary plans, see page 5.