

Here's an update on recent Maine Association of Conservation Commission news. See our website for more details about these and other related activities: www.meacc.net.

President's Message

Two years ago MEACC was reconstituted as an organization in the belief that Maine needs a statewide organization to promote the work of conservation commissions. There is still much to do, but we have made real progress in that time.

Our successes include identifying towns with active commissions (no easy task since no one keeps such a list), getting a majority of those active commissions involved as members, and building partnerships with a wide variety of groups and organizations. We have developed an active board of directors, hired two part time staff, built a communications system for members that links them to each other and useful resources, and hosted a variety of events and activities that brought people together around their common interests.

Remaining challenges include growing our membership base and building an even stronger membership network, supporting the creation of new commissions in towns without them, revising state authorizing language, and – most urgently – raising the money we need to accomplish all we want to do.

If you are a member, thank you and please continue to take an active part in the association's work. If your commission has not yet joined, we need you! Please find a way to become a member soon.

–Keith Fletcher, MEACC President



Stacie Grove of Saco and John Bird of Old Orchard Beach discuss the possibility of some joint work at MEACC's Conservation Commissions 101 event in Scarborough on September 16th. Participants rated the event "thought provoking" and even "inspirational." They also valued the opportunity to glean ideas from the work of other commissions around the state.



Community Forest Workshops

Community [town] forests are an old idea in New England and are receiving renewed interest both for their economic and conservation value to a town. Community forests provide a wide variety of benefits to a community, including recreational opportunities, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, educational opportunities and economic return through the sale of wood products.

Community forests will be the focus on a workshop for elected and appointed officials in communities that own and manage forestland and for communities that are interested in acquiring town forestland. Other interested people are also invited to attend. The event will be held in two locations: Bangor on October 16th and Bath on October 23rd.

This event will review the history of community forests in Maine and engage participants through facilitated exercises that promote an exchange of questions, information and experience on issues related to:

- ❖ Different models of ownership and management of community forests
- ❖ Challenges and opportunities for communities in owning and managing forestland
- ❖ Engaging your community in acquiring and managing a community forest
- ❖ What resources are available to help communities own and manage forestland
- ❖ What roles community forests play in achieving local or regional conservation goals, town master planning efforts, and local community development

This event is cosponsored with the Maine Forest Service and the Community Forest Collaborative of Manchester, NH. Registration information is available at www.meacc.net.

Home Rules, Home Tools: Locally Led Conservation Achievements

Case studies describing the work done by five local conservation commissions around the state that have changed the way their communities deal with a key conservation issue are in the process of being published by MEACC.

According to MEACC executive director Bob Shafto, “These case studies are designed to be both informative and inspirational – to give other people ‘how to’ examples of projects that can make a real difference in a community and to motivate others to tackle such substantial work.”

The five cases prepared to date include:

- ❖ *Brunswick’s* rural smart growth initiative, one of the earliest and most comprehensive efforts in Maine to contain suburban sprawl;
- ❖ *Falmouth’s* comprehensive open space protection effort, including its land acquisition, financing, and management strategies;
- ❖ *Kennebunkport’s* “Lawns to Lobsters” initiative, an extensive effort to minimize fertilizer and pesticide use in their community;
- ❖ *Rockport’s* successful effort to protect open space and the extensive viewshed around Clam Cove; and
- ❖ *Wells’* longstanding and very successful effort to protect open space in their community for future generations.

Each case study offers a description of the work done by each commission, why it was thought to be important, and how each commission gained the requisite community support for the work. Most of the case studies include additional background materials that other communities considering similar projects will find invaluable. Each case study will be available on MEACC’s website over the next several weeks. Regional workshops showcasing these projects will also be scheduled later this year.

According to Shafto, “This is just the beginning of our efforts to document and disseminate examples of successful municipal-based conservation work. If you have done work you would like to see included, please contact us.”

IF&W’s *Beginning with Habitat* program has been a key partner in this work, and funding was provided by grants from the Horizon Foundation and the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund.

MEACC Support for Open Space Planning

MEACC has been operating a special project to help towns interested in protecting high value open space properties, and particularly in promoting local funding for such acquisitions. Our staffer for that work, Marcel Polak, has been working with eight towns in that regard and he is available to work with other towns at no charge to them.

Marcel, chair of his local commission in Woodstock, works at many different levels with municipal conservation commissions and open space committees. One of the basic goals is to foster and build a local conservation culture and develop the organizational capacity to implement a municipal land protection program. He offers three levels of service, depending on where people are in the process:

- ❖ First, he can help the group get clear about what their desired outcomes are and what needs to happen organizationally to successfully achieve those outcomes;
- ❖ Second, he can help the group to develop Open Space Plan for their community. These plans are the foundation of educating the public about the need to protect important natural resources and developing the needed voter support for municipal land conservation.
- ❖ Third, to work with the group to implement their open space plan, including specific land conservation project identification and strategic campaigns for voter approval of land conservation funding and other land protection measures.

Contact MEACC if you are at a place in your work where Marcel’s help might be valuable. He will then contact you to talk at more length about how he might be of service.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust, The Nature Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation have provided support for this work.

Is your commission a MEACC member? If not, why not? We need your support and involvement in our effort to promote the role of municipalities in protecting Maine’s quality places.