

The 2nd Summit for the Northern Forest

Convening Partners



Summary of Results and Next Steps for 6 Working Groups

Nearly 140 people gathered at the 2nd Summit for the Northern Forest to advance collaboration on several topics important to implementing the recommendations of the [Sustainable Economy Initiative](#) for the Northern Forest.

Practitioners from the public, private and non-profit sectors and all four states gathered at the Mountain View Grand in Whitefield, N.H., in early May to further their work in:

- Community Forests
- Higher Education
- Regional Tourism
- Ecosystem Services
- Regional Investment
- Public Policy

The energy at the Summit was palpable. As one attendee said, “This is the only event of its kind in which I see these people and am able to engage across these diverse areas.” Each working group attended to its own agenda, while also looking for opportunities to assist or gain support from the other working groups. Brief summaries from each working group begin on the next page, along with contact information and suggestions for how people who didn’t attend the Summit can get engaged in the ongoing work of each group.

The 2nd Summit for the Northern Forest was convened by the [Northern Forest Center](#), [Northern Forest Canoe Trail](#), [Conservation Collaboratives](#), [Hubbard Brook Research Foundation](#), [Community Forest Collaborative](#), [Plymouth State University](#) and [Coastal Enterprises, Inc.](#)

The host organizations are grateful to the following institutions for their generous support of the Summit:

- [Federal Reserve Bank of Boston](#)
- [Citizens Bank Foundation](#)
- [Maine Community Foundation](#)
- [The Vermont Community Foundation](#)
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- [Adirondack Community Trust](#)
- [The Lyme Timber Company](#)
- [Community National Bank](#)
- [Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank](#)

Ecosystem Services Working Group Summary

Purpose Statement: The broad purpose of the Ecosystem Services Working Group is to expand market opportunities for landowners to receive payment for ecosystem services, and to inform and engage landowners in participating in these new market opportunities.

Working Group Lead: David Sleeper, Hubbard Brook Research Foundation; Laury Saligman, Conservation Collaboratives.

Status of Working Group: The work of this group at the first Summit in 2008 led to the creation and funding of two pilot projects on biomass energy and ecosystem services.

Importance of Ecosystem Services to Northern Forest

Potential markets for the payment of ecosystem services (PES) represent a way to focus public and private investments on land-conservation projects and other initiatives that protect the region's vital, forest-based ecosystem services: clean water, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration/climate mitigation, biomass energy production, recreational opportunities, flood control, and more. The Northern Forest region has the opportunity to be a leader in the field of payment for ecosystem services (ES), especially by stacking a variety of services and by creating new investment vehicles to pay private landowners to manage their lands wisely. The goal should be to create regional systems or infrastructure to cover financing, information transfer to "buyers" and "sellers" of services, and education and outreach to the general public.

Three unique yet related projects were discussed:

- 1) A Regional Ecosystem (ES) Clearinghouse that could be used to collect and coordinate ES research in the Northern Forest, and provide tools for landowners to navigate the ES world. This would aid researchers and nonprofits that need to stay up-to-date on ES information. It would also serve a consulting function to help landowners layer incentives to deliver a real financial incentive for good stewardship.
- 2) A Market Mechanism to capture dollars from residents and visitors to the Northern Forest who benefit from the working landscape and its associated ES. Although these people enjoy and appreciate the beautiful vistas, fresh air, and clean water, there is currently no mechanism that enables them to contribute to the long-term protection of these assets. Similarly to *One percent for the Planet*, this initiative will reach out to the tourism sector and other consumer focused industries to raise funds for local land trusts and other conservation groups. In short, this group will develop or adapt a mechanism to "invite free-riders to come on board." Steps to achieve this goal include conducting market research and developing appropriate and understandable messages to engage both the supply side (e.g. – small land trusts) and demand side (e.g. – consumers) of the equation.
- 3) Nature's Benefits Fund. This would be a \$50 million fund to provide financial assistance to ES project development, especially helping with high initial costs of projects. While fund investors (philanthropic institutions, universities, and private individuals) would expect a rate of return, it wouldn't be as high as the private equity market. Investment and lending policies would be flexible, intended to encourage innovative PES opportunities. A revolving loan fund and threshold payment marketing website could be incorporated into the fund. Possible projects

might focus on: community-scale biomass energy facilities, carbon sequestration credits, establishment of community forests, term easements for land protection, water filtration waivers through forest management practices, and wetland and habitat banking.

Group accomplishments at Summit

- Sharing of disparate ongoing PES projects among a variety of stakeholders.
- Thorough discussion of policy opportunities and obstacles related to the Farm Bill and other existing or potential legislation.
- Identification of three projects (see above)

Top priorities for follow-up after Summit

- Follow-up for three proposed projects listed above
- Follow-up meeting of participants (or subset) for networking, information sharing, and additional project development (through the Northern Forest Ecosystem Services Network).

Needs & Opportunities for cross-sector collaboration

- Market Research – with tourism group
- Nature’s Benefits Fund – with investment group, higher education (for program-related investment opportunities and education and outreach), and community forests.
- Policy – with policy working group.

Opportunities for new participants to engage in network and or specific projects

- Northern Forest Ecosystem Services Network (Laury Saligman and Joe Short), which includes a listserve and face-to-face meetings (contact Laury at laury@conservationcollaboratives.com for further information.)

Higher Education Working Group Summary

Purpose Statement: To support educational, economic, environmental, and cultural vitality in the Northern Forest by strengthening and sustaining academic and community partnerships

Working Group Leads: Thaddeus Guldbrandsen, Plymouth State University; Pavel Cenkl, Sterling College; Brian Kermath, University of Maine at Fort Kent

Working Group Status: Officially “launched” at the 2008 Summit, the Northern Forest Higher Education Resource Network will continue to facilitate communication and collaboration among colleges and universities and off-campus partners throughout the region.

Importance of Higher Education to Northern Forest

The Northern Forest Higher Education Resource Network (NFHERN) is a diverse group of college faculty, administrators and community advocates committed to strengthening the ties between rural universities and the communities we serve. NFHERN works to expand the reach of higher education services to students of all ages in the rural northern border region of New England and Canada.

The Northern Forest is a region that is rich with high quality colleges and universities. Higher education is a major sector of the economy; a major employer; a resource for work force development; and catalyst of innovation in all sectors of the economy, the arts, and the

environment. The region will be better served by increased collaboration and community/regional engagement with university faculty, staff, and students.

Group accomplishments at Summit

- Developed strong collaboration and project proposals for technical support for hospitality and tourism, including collaboration with the tourism working group
- Clarified opportunities for collaboration on workforce development, increasing access to education, and raising aspirations and success among rural, underserved populations
- Advanced the “Northern Forest Studies” initiative involving multi-institutional collaboration around place-based education and regional development.

Top priorities for follow-up after Summit

- Further develop the Northern Forest Studies program and develop grant proposal
- Develop a technical assistance program for hospitality and tourism
- Improve communications among higher education institutions and off-campus partners.

Needs & Opportunities for cross-sector collaboration

- Great opportunities to support and enhance work in hospitality and tourism in terms of research, workforce development, and technical assistance for business
- Workforce development in all sectors
- Research in all sectors

Opportunities for new participants to engage in network and or specific projects

- Share information about what is happening in the region and subscribe to occasional newsletter
- Seek opportunities for collaboration with higher ed partners
- Advocate for higher education
- Contact Thad Guldbrandsen, Plymouth State University: tguldbrandsen@plymouth.edu

Regional Investment Working Group Summary

Purpose Statement: to increase flexible and patient capital in the Northern Forest Region by better connecting foundations and other investors with lending institutions and other organizations advancing in new and emerging projects relating to the natural resource base.

Working Group Leads: Rob Riley, Northern Forest Center; Keith Bisson, CEI, (and a foundation representative to be determined).

Working Group Status: Officially “launched” at the 2011 Summit; will continue based on work plan outlined in summary to participants.

Importance of Regional Investment to Northern Forest

The Northern Forest region of northern Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York is home to more than 2 million people who live in communities surrounded by the largest intact forest in the eastern United States. The region’s 30 million acres of woodlands, lakes, rivers, wetland, farms, hills and mountains are the source of regional culture, quality of life, and economic opportunity now and into the future.

While the region is rich in amenities, it is consistently challenged by a lack of capital to advance innovative, collaborative and integrative strategies to address fundamental issues – including biomass renewable energy, carbon storage, and working landscape conservation – that affect both community and economic development and environmental protection.

In 2008, the Northern Forest Center helped to produce the first-ever Northern Forest regional strategy for sustainable economic development, *Economic Resurgence in the Northern Forest*, which was endorsed by the region’s four governors through the Sustainable Economy Initiative. Three guiding principles were identified to support the vision for the Northern Forest:

- **Build Sustainable Wealth**
- **Work Through Networks**
- **Think and Act as a Region**

These principals have only become more critical as volatile energy costs continue; state and federal policies foster uncertainty; and forest-reliant businesses and communities continue to face significant economic changes. Furthermore, despite strong local foundations, national foundations are shifting focus away from rural places like the Northern Forest. According to *The State of Rural Philanthropy, January 14, 2011* “Rural development” (domestic, not international) did not fare well in foundation grant portfolios 2004-08. During that span annual foundation grants for rural development declined from \$92.7 million in 2004 to \$89.5 million in 2008 – a 3.45 percent decrease during a period when total annual foundation grant making increased 43.4 percent.

Group accomplishments at Summit

- Provided forum for learning and exchange among participants
- Assigned specific and actionable near term activities to:
 - **CDFI and other lenders:** Identify capital and lending gaps and opportunities for targeted and collaborative investment in traditional (e.g. wood products, business, etc.) and emerging areas (e.g. carbon storage projects, non-profit energy service companies, etc.) and identify the appropriate vehicles for capital. More specifically, explore the concept of a “deal-flow depository” (an on-line inventory of projects, or at least areas ripe for investment) and an “investors forum” (events designed to provide project developers and investors the opportunity to meet and match capital to projects) to increase the awareness of investment opportunities for foundations and other investors; and
 - **Foundations:** Provide tools and examples of projects that will demonstrate the demand for program-related investments (PRIs) in the community and inspire new and existing donors to utilize their assets in new ways, across geographic boundaries and disciplines.

Top priorities for follow-up after Summit

- Develop a collaborative regional PRI strategy to ensure a broad stakeholder base, with participation from practitioners, foundations and other interested parties;
- Provide a framework and vehicle for foundations to invest in to further community and economic investment in the Northern Forest region;
- Strengthen innovative regional intermediaries (CDFI and others);
- Leverage investment from outside the region from national foundations and those interested in rural and Northern Forest issues;

- Lead, over time, to measurable benefits in the communities and the economy of the Northern Forest region.

Needs & Opportunities for cross-sector collaboration

- Development of a “deal-flow depository” (an on-line inventory of projects, or at least areas ripe for investment) and an “investors forum” (events designed to provide project developers and investors the opportunity to meet and match capital to projects) will require multiple sectors and specific technical organizations
- Conceptual “regional fund” to invest specifically in natural-resource based opportunities

Opportunities for new participants to engage in network and or specific projects

- Contact Rob Riley, Northern Forest Center: rriley@northernforest.org; Keith Bisson, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.: kbisson@ccimaine.org.

Tourism Working Group Summary

Purpose Statement: Build on momentum since 2008 Summit to create action plans for future activity in three areas: Product Development, Training/Workforce Development, and Research

Working Group Lead: Kate Williams, Northern Forest Canoe Trail (and Mike Wilson, Northern Forest, following the Summit)

Working Group Status: Officially “launched” at the 2008 Summit with one formal gathering and several projects initiated prior to 2011 Summit

Importance of Tourism to Northern Forest

Tourism has always played a significant role in the Northern Forest economy. It also is one of few economic sectors to see consistent job growth in recent years – with the number of regional leisure and hospitality jobs increasing 5.5% between 2002 and 2005. These workers serve as ambassadors to visitors seeking forest-based recreation, heritage and cultural experiences. With 70 million people living within a day’s drive, there is clear potential for job growth in the Northern Forest tourism sector. Unfortunately, many tourism jobs remain relatively low-wage, seasonal, and without benefits. The November 2010 issue of *Maine Labor Market Digest* reports average weekly earnings in leisure and hospitality of \$330.48—less than half of the statewide average earnings of \$669.64.

As we look to the future, there is significant untapped potential to secure community benefits from the region’s tourism sector. Enhancing tourism experiences in the Northern Forest so that visitors stay longer, spend more money, return more often, and encourage others to visit is vital to increasing tourism business profitability and associated wages and job stability.

At present, efforts to develop, brand, and market Northern Forest tourism are concentrated within the individual states and state tourism regions. Historically, each has viewed neighboring states as competitors for tourists. Because of strong local allegiances to the Adirondacks, Northeast Kingdom, White Mountains and Maine Woods, four-state collaboration has not come naturally. Regional collaboration represents an emerging opportunity for tourism operators to work together to develop, market and benefit from the Northern Forest as truly world class tourism destination.

Group accomplishments at Summit

- Clarified assumptions about how a Northern Forest Tourism Network can/should operate and what it can provide to local- and state-level practitioners.
- Confirmed ongoing support for a three part regional tourism strategy built upon: Research, Training & Workforce Development, and Product Development;
- Developed clear plans and teams to advance action in each of the three strategy areas.

Top priorities for follow-up after Summit

- Research – Survey and compile an inventory of existing tourism research related to best practices, markets and marketing, and the significance of tourism to the overall Northern Forest economy.
- Training & Workforce Development – Develop a framework of tourism training tools and delivery systems and inventory resources available to help business owners, managers and frontline employees respond to the changing demands and expectations of visitors.
- Product Development – Produce a comprehensive inventory of tourism product development activities (named sub-regional initiatives designed to enhance or market a particular area) and assess opportunities for collaborative packaging and marketing.
- Network Coordination – Develop a shared leadership model (Northern Forest Canoe Trail and Northern Forest Center); update and refine existing communication platform; and provide ongoing support to action teams and team leaders.

Needs & Opportunities for cross-sector collaboration

- Policy: Utilize results of research into tourism's economic contribution to the regional economy to raise the profile of the tourism sector in state and federal policy development and investment decisions.
- Regional Investment: Develop new tools to address the unique challenges and capital investment needs of the tourism sector – small and mid-sized businesses, widely dispersed across vast geographies, often seasonal and not easily characterized by lenders.
- Higher Education: Coordinate, promote and better utilize emerging hospitality training and workforce development programs.

Opportunities for new participants to engage in network and or specific projects

- Contact Mike Wilson, Northern Forest Center: mwilson@northernforest.org or Kate Williams, Northern Forest Canoe Trail: kate@northernforest.org.

Community Forest Working Group Summary

Purpose Statement: The purpose of the Community Forest Working Group is to continue efforts to build a sustained infrastructure of technical assistance and support for communities that want to own and manage forest land.

Working Group Lead: Julie Renaud Evans, Sustainable Forest Futures; Marcy Lyman, Community Forest Collaborative.

Working Group Status: The Community Forest Collaborative was launched in 2005 as a partnership of The Trust for Public Land, Northern Forest Center, Sustainable Forest Futures and the Quebec-Labrador Foundation. The Community Forest working group convened for the first time at the 2011 Summit.

Importance of Community Forests to the Northern Forest

Rural communities in northern New England face significant economic and social pressures, many of which exert their greatest force at the interface of human populations and the natural resource systems that support them. For forest-based communities, questions related to the future of their most valuable asset—productive forestland—also relate to their civic vitality and economic well-being.

Lessons from the past demonstrate that there is a historic relationship between the use of forest resources and community welfare, and that communal forests have always been important pieces of community structures. New England's town forests and, more recently, the acquisition of land according to the Community Forest Model described by the Community Forest Collaborative, suggest that community ownership of forestland offers the potential to achieve conservation goals while advancing economic and social objectives, particularly in the low-income rural communities of northern New England.

Community Forests are based on the principles of sustainable development and community-based natural resource management. They have the potential to be a valuable component in a mosaic of conservation, community and economic development strategies for the region that can result in the conservation of productive forestland and important ecological systems while promoting community vitality and economic well-being.

The Community Forest Model builds on historic practices of town forests and communal lands, but incorporates additional safeguards and principles that address many of the issues facing the region's communities and forestland. Community Forests are owned and managed by a municipal entity or other group on behalf of a community; the community participates in managing the forest; the community has secure access to the values of the forest; and the conservation values of the forest are permanently protected.

The Community Forest Working Group at the Summit was composed of a good representation of public agencies, private non-profits and individuals representing Community Forests and potential Community Forest projects. Participants offered specific examples of existing resources for technical assistance and support, identified and discussed gaps in support, as well as opportunities for coordinating resources or creating new capacity.

Specific discussions included the need to revise rules and regulations for existing federal funding programs such as WHIP (NRCS' Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program) to allow municipalities to access those funds; to create service centers within the region that would offer a place where people can go for technical assistance; create new financing models for financing both acquisition and stewardship of Community Forests; and build new partnerships with the community- and economic-development sector for technical assistance and support for Community Forest projects.

Group accomplishments at Summit

- Brought together a broad spectrum of organizations that support Community Forests.
- Identified critical gaps in the existing support system for Community Forests.
- Identified new opportunities for engaging supporting organizations in creating and managing Community Forests.

Top priorities for follow-up after Summit

- Complete fundraising to fully capitalize the Community Forest Fund managed by the Open Space Institute.
- Secure appropriations for the US Forest Service Community Forest Program.
- Revise rules and regulations to allow municipalities to access more of the state and federal landowner assistance programs.
- Expand the public outreach program to bring the Community Forest model to new communities.
- Continue to engage new organizations and public agencies as partners in the support of Community Forests.

Needs & Opportunities for cross-sector collaboration

- Work with the finance and investment community to establish Community Forest investment as community investment, and to develop new models that enable mission-related investing in creating and managing Community Forests.
- Work with Public Policy advocates to create more flexibility within the guidelines for state and federal programs so that municipal landowners are eligible for funding and technical support.
- Work with Higher Education to get student assistance on timber valuation, research and stewardship, and inventory work in Community Forests.

Opportunities for new participants to engage in network and or specific projects

- Contact Julie Renaud Evans, Sustainable Forest Futures: jevans@northernforest.org; Marcy Lyman, Community Forest Collaborative: marthalyman@yahoo.com.

Public Policy 2011 Summit Summary

Purpose Statement: To frame a coordinated state and federal public policy agenda for the Northern Forest region for the 2011-2012 legislative sessions, with particular emphasis on reauthorization of the federal Farm Bill in 2012.

Working Group Lead: Joe Short, Policy & Program Director, Northern Forest Center.

Status of Working Group: The working group convened at the first Summit for the Northern Forest in 2008 to follow up on the policy recommendations of the Sustainable Economy Initiative. Between Summits, participants collaborated on several coordinated policy initiatives and will continue to do so.

Importance of Public Policy to the Northern Forest

In the federal policy arena, coordinated policy development and advocacy across state lines has served the Northern Forest region well. Regionally coordinated efforts have led to the creation and funding of the Northern Forest Lands Council, Forest Legacy Program, Northeast States Research Cooperative, and the Northern Border Regional Commission. In the 2008 Farm Bill, advocates and Congressional leaders from the Northern Forest states were instrumental in the creation of the Community Wood Energy program and the Community Forest & Open Space program. In a time of shrinking budgets, speaking with a coordinated regional voice is crucial to ensuring that programs and policies important to this region are maintained and strengthened.

The Summit Public Policy working group focused on identifying priorities for a 2011-2012 Northern Forest policy agenda, with particular emphasis on reauthorization of the federal Farm Bill. The session goals were to:

- Connect Northern Forest policy interests and advocates with each other and with other networks working to advance rural economic development and conservation priorities in the Farm Bill;
- Outline draft priorities and a preliminary work plan to develop a Northern Forest Farm Bill platform; and
- Identify additional priorities for coordinated regional policy advocacy in the coming year.

Group accomplishments at Summit

- Connected Northern Forest policy interests and advocates with each other and with other networks working to advance rural economic development and conservation priorities in the Farm Bill;
- Outlined draft priorities and a preliminary work plan to develop a Northern Forest Farm Bill platform; and
- Identified additional priorities for coordinated regional policy advocacy in the coming year.

Top priorities for follow-up after Summit

- ‘Refresh’ the messaging of the Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative (SEI) recommendations as a basis for engaging state and federal elected officials to advance policies that support regionally-identified priorities.
- Refine Northern Forest priorities for regional advocacy in the coming year. The group will solicit input and share draft priorities with other Summit participants and other regional networks, and develop an outreach strategy for key officials to engage with the ideas.
- Conduct a regional sign-on campaign to convey continued community, business, and landowner support for the SEI strategy
- Engage the region’s governors and congressional leaders to advance identified policy priorities for federal FY12, the Farm Bill, and other legislation.

Needs & Opportunities for cross-sector collaboration

- Work with the Summit investment group to explore possibilities and potential vehicles to leverage public investment with private investment.
- Work with all Summit working groups to understand important public policy levers for advancing their work and incorporate those as appropriate in to regional advocacy efforts

Opportunities for new participants to engage in network and or specific projects

- Contact Joe Short (jshort@northernforest.org) or join Northern Forest Center policy email/RSS list for updates and to learn how you can get involved in developing priorities and in advocacy efforts. <http://www.northernforest.org/subscribe.html>