



Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative

Embargoed until 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, October 8, 2008

For information:

Joe Short, Program Manager, Northern Forest Center, 603-229-0679 x104;
jshort@northernforst.org

Kelly Short, Communications Director, Northern Forest Center, 603-229-0679 x105;
kshort@northernforest.org

See end of release for list of regional project spokespeople, by state

A Strategy for Economic Resurgence in the Northern Forest *Plan Released today by the Sustainable Economy Initiative*

The Sustainable Economy Initiative (SEI) today released *Economic Resurgence in the Northern Forest*—the first-ever, 4-state strategy for sustainable economic development in the Northern Forest. The Northern Forest comprises the northern reaches of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York.

A 60-member steering committee, appointed in 2006 by the governors of the four states in collaboration with the Northern Forest Center and the North Country Council (joint project managers), brought wide-ranging expertise to the initiative.

“SEI has created the first-ever integrated strategy for the region’s economy,” said Joe Short, SEI program manager for the Northern Forest Center. “The strategy is based on balanced investment in business, community and environment, and it can help build a resilient economy and create good jobs in the four-state region,” which stretches 400 miles, encompasses 30 million acres and provides a home for 2 million people.

“The greatest opportunity for Northern Forest communities to regain economic success in a global marketplace is to band together to solve common problems,” said SEI Steering Committee member Bob Thompson of the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments in Maine.

“Our communities are mostly rural, and they’re facing the same challenges trying to be competitive in a global marketplace whether they’re in Maine or New York,” said committee member Terry Martino of the Adirondack North Country Association.

The long-term goals identified by the Sustainable Economy Initiative are to:

- Protect and enhance the region’s assets by investing in its people, communities, infrastructure and natural resource base.
- Expand enterprise by encouraging workforce, entrepreneurial and business development
- Coordinate and advocate as a region to adapt to change by understanding and advocating for regional interests and priorities.

“Our region has unique opportunities because of the quality of our natural resources, and the SEI strategy recognizes that we must maintain those resources to succeed,” said committee member Kay Henry of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.

The SEI strategy calls for sparking the economy through creativity and business growth, regional marketing and encouraging the ‘buy-local’ trend that keeps wealth in our communities. It also recommends strengthening the economic backbone of the region by investing in world-class telecommunications, improving transportation systems and harnessing renewable energy. Preparing to meet future changes, coordinating and advocating as a region, and securing federal investment to support SEI’s strategy round out the recommendations.

“It was remarkable the way the SEI committee members came together around a vision for the region,” said committee member Racheal Stuart of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

“We want the Northern Forest to be recognized for its vital economies and communities and the unique culture and ecosystems that support them,” said committee member John Bartow of the Tug Hill Commission in New York. “We’re ready to work together, and within our own states and organizations, to make our vision a reality.”

SEI’s conveners and participants are now working to advance the recommendations through their organizations and initiatives underway across the four states. The completion of SEI coincides with the recent authorization of the Northern Border Regional Commission to invest \$30 million per year in federal resources for economic development and job creation in the Northern Forest region.

The Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative executive summary and full report may be downloaded at www.nfsei.net. Funders for SEI included the Economic Development Administration, Public Service of New Hampshire, First Colebrook Bank, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the Surdna Foundation and others.

###

More information at www.nfsei.net

SEI Steering Committee Spokespeople

Maine

Robert Thompson, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments: 207-778-0863

New Hampshire

Racheal Stuart, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: 603-463-9091

Vermont

Kay Henry, Northern Forest Canoe Trail: 802-496-7126

New York

John Bartow, Tug Hill Commission: 315-785-2380

Terry Martino, Adirondack North Country Association: 518-891-6200