

**NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS**

***For immediate release***

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### **Tourism Workshop a Success!**

**Machias, ME** – On March 17 the Vacationland Resources Committee of the Down East Resource Conservation and Development Council held the first Downeast Sustainable and Experiential Tourism Workshop in Machias. The workshop attracted 112 participants wanting to learn about sustainable and experiential tourism business opportunities in the Downeast region. One participants reported that “learning how to collaborate with other organizations, to leverage and share resources, is why I attended this conference.”

The workshop was targeted toward tourism sites, organizations, and businesses in Hancock and Washington counties that are interested in growing and learning about sustainable tourism practices, and collaborating at various levels to expand the tourism economy of Downeast Maine.

One participant reflected, “The most valuable session I attended at the conference was hearing from actual businesses who shared their stories of successful collaborations.” Participants needed to look no further than their own neighbors to learn. Most presenters and workshop leaders were from the two-county region, sharing solutions and perspectives from their own Downeast experience.

Michael Boland, restaurant owner and former Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce board president set the tone for the day. “In a 2003 study by the Travel Industry Association of America,” Boland said, “58.5 million US tourists said that they would be willing to pay more to use travel companies that strive to protect the environment. More than a third of US tourists said that they would choose a travel company that protects the historical and cultural aspects of a destination even if the costs were higher.”

Presenters showed numerous examples of how to work with other like-minded businesses to tap into this growing market. In one example, Sue Wilmot spoke about collaborating with fellow potters in the Deer Isle region to create the successful Peninsula Potters initiative. In another example, Sue Baker of the Peacock House Bed and Breakfast in Lubec told how local businesses are sponsoring the food at Summer Keys concerts, which benefits both the well-known music program and promotes the businesses.

In three afternoon breakout sessions, participants dove into the nuts and bolts of working collaboratively. Sessions covered the basics of packaging tour itineraries, legal considerations in building business partnerships, and how to successfully market great tourism products.

Everyone went home with a CD full of resources, compiled by Maine Sea Grant, on sustainable tourism practices, Maine-based certification programs, economic and community development

organizations, and speaker presentations. Most of these resources are available on the web at <http://www.downeastrcd.com/>. Maine Sea Grant and The Vacationland Resources Committee recently received a grant to expand on this work and are looking for business input.

According to one participant, "Learning about successful models of collaborations in sustainable and experiential tourism was the most valuable session for me today."

In the true spirit of collaboration, the workshop was sponsored by multiple organizations including: Vacationland Resources Committee of the DownEast RC&D, BSA Environmental Consulting, Bucksport Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, DownEast and Acadia Regional Tourism, Maine Sea Grant, Savory Bay Consulting, Saint Croix Island International Historic Site, Sunrise County Economic Council, Washington County Council of Governments, Washington Hancock Community Agency.

For more information about the conference please contact Judy East, Washington County Council of Governments, (207) 454-0183 or Barbara Maurer, Down East RC&D, (207) 546-2368

*Photo enclosed in attachment: Sue Baker makes a comment at the Downeast Sustainable and Experiential Tourism Workshop in Machias. Photo by Meg Scheid.*

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