



# VRC Outlook

## A Voice for Sustainable Tourism Down East

#5, January 2011

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### Winter Family Fun Day

#### [Cobscook Bay State Park](#)

January 22, 2011  
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Contact: 726-4412

### Upcoming Tourism Trainings

#### Customer Service: What's it all about?

January 19, 2011  
9:00 AM - noon

Washington County  
Community College  
Assembly Room

Sponsored by SCEC,

### From the Cockpit

(Notes from our Chair)

Welcome to the fifth issue of VRC outlook! Many of you have let us know that you find this newsletter useful for learning about all sorts of tourism related news in our region. Thanks! We are always open to suggestions for topics we should cover or any announcements.

We would like to extend an invitation to any of you who might like to join the VRC. Joining as a member simply means becoming more proactively involved in helping forge partnerships that foster local sustainable tourism initiatives. VRC is about supporting tourism that supports our Downeast communities, and we could use some fresh energy! If you are curious, please contact me or any other members listed on the [VRC webpage](#).

Thanks, and enjoy the snow!

[Natalie Springuel](#)

[Maine Sea Grant](#) and [VRC](#) Chair

### Legislators Hear about Tourism

VRC and partners held a breakfast meeting with the new legislative delegation from Washington County on 12/08/10 at the [Chandler River Lodge](#) in Jonesboro. The goal was to inform legislators about the various organizations' collective work in tourism and issues they are facing as they head into the new year. A similar event in Hancock County was cancelled due to weather.

Judy East, Executive Director of [Washington County Council of Governments](#), discussed proposed cuts by the State Planning Office that would severely impact WCCOG's ability to provide technical assistance to local municipalities. Municipalities and legislators in attendance spoke in support of WCCoG's work, indicating that these cuts are not acceptable and would not be supported by the legislators.

Nathan Pennell, President of the [Down East Resource Conservation & Development](#) Council, introduced that organization's work, especially its ability to build partnerships throughout the community. Fred Cook, Executive Director of [DownEast & Acadia Regional Tourism](#), outlined

WHCA, and WCCC  
 \$10.00 registration fee  
 To register or for more info  
 call Roland Bechard,  
 214-2192  
 or email  
[rbechard@whcacap.org](mailto:rbechard@whcacap.org)

### Marketing Your Tourism Business

March 9, 2011  
 9:00 AM - noon  
 Machias Career Center  
 Sponsored by SCEC and  
 the Women's Business  
 Center at CEI  
 \$10.00 registration fee  
 To register or for more info  
 call Jen Peters  
 255-0983  
 Or email  
[scec@sunrisecounty.org](mailto:scec@sunrisecounty.org)

## 2010 Tourism Season: A Snapshot

Acadia National Park had over 2.4 million visitors as of Oct 2010, an 11.6% increase from 2009 when visitation was up 7.3% from 2008.

Bar Harbor's Night Sky Festival drew over 1,000 people to Cadillac Mountain on a Saturday night in September.

The Ellsworth chamber reported 2010 numbers were up 20%. The new Downeast Scenic Railroad is a big hit in town, offering excursion trips to Green Lake.

marketing efforts region-wide and emphasized Maine Office of Tourism sub grant opportunities for locally led initiatives as great assets to the area. Misha Mytar from the [Bureau of Parks and Lands](#) and spokesperson for the VRC gave background on the VRC and how its network maximizes sustainable tourism efforts throughout the region. She presented an overview of the Nature Based Tourism Initiative, and the Chickadee Signs that have been put up so far. She also updated the group on the [Downeast Fisheries Trail](#), a project that encourages visitation, education and the preservation of a very vibrant part of the local heritage. The legislators thanked all the groups for their presentations and the ongoing communication.

## Washington County Nature Tourism Survey Results

In terms of tourism, Washington County is a region of abundant opportunity and little visitation compared to other regions of the Maine coast. Few recent county-specific studies exist to guide the decisions of local business owners, natural resource managers, and local organizations working on sustainable tourism development. A 2009 research project, funded by the [Center for Tourism Research & Outreach](#) (CenTRO) was designed to provide the county's tourism stakeholders with information about travel patterns, the consistency between visitor expectations and their satisfaction, and by identifying tourism promotion needs in the region. The survey provided many encouraging findings for the county's tourism community and led to several reflections for the tourism community, such as:

- Visitors are attracted to Washington County for a general experience of being in a natural, scenic area; not for one specific attraction, event, or activity. They come because it is a beautiful, un-crowded, remote place to explore. The majority of the participants (75%) stayed in the county for three or more days, however, participants expressed little familiarity with many of the most common attractions in the county.
- Visitors are attracted here because they appreciate the scenic quality, the remoteness, and the opportunity for solitude. Local residents appreciate this place for the same reasons and don't want to see that change.
- The most popular type of accommodation in the county was house/cabin rentals.
- Over half (52%) of the participants were above the age of 50, most (61%) did not travel with youth under 16, and the majority (86%) had a 4-year college or graduate degree. Most visitors (72%) were traveling with one other person or in a group of up to 5 people, and the majority (76%) were traveling with family. Participants came from 21 states and 1 province, and the most represented states were ME, CT, NY and NJ.

For more details, contact project lead Andrea Ednie at University of

The Holbrook Island Sanctuary had over 30,000 visits in 2009, an increase of 27% from 2008.

Lamoine State Park had 48,373 visitors in 2010, an increase of 25% from 2009.

The Sunrise Trail was officially opened in September 2010. Local business owners reported an increase of visitors and increased business.

More than 600 people attended the 10th annual Downeast Salmon Federation Smelt Fry in Columbia Falls.

The 2010 Wild Blueberry Festival in Machias was a big success - including a street dance with 500 participants.

Quoddy Head State Park had over 93,000 visits in 2010, a 14% increase from 2009 and a 54% increase from 2008.

Visitors from ME, VT, MA, D.C., MD, CA, and AZ attended the 2010 Downeast Birding Festival.

Cobscook Bay State Park had 21,893 visits in 2010, up 30% from last year, which was up 3% from 2008.

In August, Roosevelt Campobello International Park's visitation was up 36% from 2009. 2010 visitation was up 20% from 2009.

Maine at Machias ([aednie@maine.edu](mailto:aednie@maine.edu) or 255-1303). A one page summary and the full report are also available at [Maine Sea Grant](#) (scroll down for partner projects).

### **Nature-based Tourism Final Report to Governor Baldacci**

Since 2005, three regions in Maine (Downeast, Western Mountains, and The Maine Highlands) have participated in the state's Nature-based Tourism Initiative. The Governor's Task-force on Nature-Based Tourism presented its final report to Governor Baldacci this past December, before he left office. The report covers the outstanding progress made by all three regions, both individually and collectively, as they strive to develop nature-based tourism opportunities. The report also presents methodology for how to assess readiness for the development of tourism itineraries, and how to go about developing thematic approaches to tourism development. You can download the report from the Department of Economic and Community Development at [http://www.maine.gov/decd/decd\\_information/reports.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/decd/decd_information/reports.shtml).

**Down East Garden and Landscape Map** This new map depicts the public gardens, scenic byways and outstanding landscape vistas of Down East Maine from the head of Penobscot Bay to Passamaquoddy Bay. US Hwy 1 and State Hwy 9, "The Air Line" from Bangor and Belfast to New Brunswick define the area. In addition to guiding visitors and residents to our beautiful gardens, landscapes and byways it serves as a resource for nurseries, garden supply outlets and green businesses to advertise our products to a receptive audience. Maps will be distributed through all 8 State Tourism Information Centers from Kittery to Fort Kent, area Chambers of Commerce and subscribers throughout the region. The gardens of Roosevelt Campobello International Park will be featured on the back page and 1" and 2" column ads are available on the inside for just \$95 and \$150. Jeremy Gabrielson from WCCOG is the mapmeister and Alvion Kimball from DART is collecting the ads ([ackimball1995@msn.com](mailto:ackimball1995@msn.com), 469-1144). Local garden clubs and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program are important collaborators with the project.

### **Partner Profile: Downeast Salmon Federation**

Did you know that Washington County encompasses five of the eight remaining rivers in the US with endangered populations of wild Atlantic salmon? [The Downeast Salmon Federation](#) was created in 1982 to protect and restore Atlantic salmon and the watersheds and habitats the species requires. Originally composed of anglers, the organization has broadened both its mission and membership to include land trust activities, technical support, and outreach directed toward the increasingly diverse conservation needs in the region.

The Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge counted over 39,000 visits in 2008. An estimated 60,000 people toured the Park in 2009.

*Compiled: December 2010.  
Sources: Maine Department of Conservation, Acadia National Park, Bangor Daily News and unofficial reports from Downeast Acadia Regional Tourism meetings.*

**Quick Links**

[Resource Guide for Sustainable Tourism](#)

[Down East RC&D](#)

[VRC website](#)

The Wild Salmon Resource Center in Columbia Falls serves as the main base of operations and features displays, a lending library, conference room, the Pleasant River Fish Hatchery (a demonstration and education scale hatchery), and soon there will be a new Columbia Falls Fisheries Heritage Center - a living history site that will serve to educate visitors and residents about the region's fisheries heritage. Downeast Rivers Land Trust, a regional land trust program of DSF, holds easements and properties totaling approximately 2,000 acres with nearly 14 miles of river and stream frontage.

With the East Machias Aquatic Research Center, DSF is developing a fisheries restoration center / lab and conservation hatchery in a donated Bangor Hydro Electric Company facility, including a museum and visitors center, a wet laboratory / classroom, a certified water quality laboratory, a GIS and technical resources center, and office space for staff and visiting researchers. For more information, contact [dsf@mainesalmonrivers.org](mailto:dsf@mainesalmonrivers.org).

**The mission of the VRC is to promote sustainable tourism practices in Down East, Maine.**

The VRC is a committee of [Down East Resource Conservation and Development Council](#). Meetings and membership are always open. For more information or to join the VRC, please [contact us!](#)

The VRC logo was designed locally by Deborah Bailey at [Barnstormer Design Group](#), 207-497-5446.

**[Forward email](#)**



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Maine Sea Grant | College of the Atlantic | 105 Eden St. | Bar Harbor | ME | 04609