



A Committee of the Down East Resource Conservation and Development Council

MISSION

"The mission of the Vacationland Resources Committee is to promote sustainable tourism practices in Down East, Maine."

What guides our work?

DESTINY 2010 (Down East Sustainable Tourism Initiative 2010) provides a road-map for the development of sustainable tourism in the Down East region (p.3). As such, DESTINY 2010 serves as the strategic plan of the Vacationland Resources Committee (VRC) and helps prioritize activities undertaken by the committee or in support of activities undertaken by our partners. The plan includes five goals in the areas of: economic development, ecological conservation, cultural preservation, local coordination, and education. Within each are several objectives and a number of actions items that guide our work. The plan is available for download at <http://www.downeastrcd.com/vrc.htm>

DESTINY 2010 is dedicated to sustainable tourism in the Down East region. To that end, the VRC adopted The World Tourism Organization's description of sustainable tourism as "a model form of economic development [I]t is development of the physical community, the social environment, and the economy which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainable tourism seeks to balance the economic benefits of business development with efforts to minimize negative social and environmental impacts. When implemented properly, sustainable tourism can provide educational opportunities, incentives for natural and cultural preservation, and a community-building experience. (p. 4 of DESTINY)

How does VRC relate to other organizations and partners?

VRC is a committee of the Down East RC&D. The Down East RC&D is a program under the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency of USDA. RC&D's mission is resource conservation through systematic use of soil, water, plants, wildlife, human and recreational resources while maintaining quality in the natural resource base and improving the economy through properly managed development. The VRC's role as an RC&D Committee is specific to tourism conservation and development throughout Washington and Hancock counties.

VRC works extensively with partners throughout the region and beyond. We define partners as any group or individual who shares any of our goals and works to advance them. Our partners include all of the organizations represented through VRC membership and many more. We often work directly with partners on specific projects (such as hosting a workshop), but partners can also be working on their own in support of the DESTINY goals. When we identify that organizations or individuals are actively implementing DESTINY 2010, we make every effort to let them know about us and offer our support, such as adding them to our communication list for outreach and steady contact.

An important partner is DownEast & Acadia Regional Tourism whose mission is to market the DownEast & Acadia region as a tourist destination, support the tourism industry through programs that strengthen the position of the DownEast & Acadia Region in the market and advocate for the wise use of the cultural, historical and natural resources in the region. DART's primary mission is marketing the region while VRC develops programs, products and training to sustain the tourism resource.

How does the VRC function internally?

The committee usually meets monthly at the Down East RC&D offices in Cherryfield, Maine. The meetings are open to the public. VRC members who are unable to attend in person can call in via speaker phone, or be briefed via email and meeting notes which are kept by a Down East RC&D staffer.

VRC decisions are approved by the full committee. Sub-committees are sometimes charged by the group to tackle a particular task. Some level of autonomy is given to these sub-committees though they report back to the Committee regularly and larger decisions are made by the whole group through informal consensus or when necessary, member voting.

Email is often used as a means of information sharing among members, as well as an occasional decision-making means. When input is called for via email, silence on the part of members is considered tacit agreement of the proposal at hand.

As a committee of Down East RC&D, VRC funds are managed by Down East RC&D. Funding comes from various sources including: grants applied for by the committee, registration fees for events sponsored by the committee, occasional sale of committee products, and collaborations with partners who bring funds to the table.

RC&D provides support to the VRC through technical assistance from the coordinator and program assistant, including administrative and meeting support as well as technical advice/input or guidance when needed. Although the RC&D staff is nominally on the committee, they are not voting members.

Every two years, the VRC informally elects a chair and co-chair, ideally one from each county (Washington and Hancock). The chair is responsible for setting meeting agendas, running the meetings, coordinating committee operations, making sure the scope of the mission and the intent of DESTINY 2010 are maintained, representing the committee to outside partners and interests, and maintaining communication with stakeholders. The co-chair is responsible for assisting the chair however necessary, including stepping in for the chair when she/he is unavailable. (As of Oct 2009, the co-chair seat is vacant).

Member Rights and Responsibilities

VRC members donate their time in-kind, either as volunteers or through the organizations they represent. Membership is open to any individuals or organizations committed to sustainable tourism in the region. Joining is simple; express your interest and commitment, come to our meetings, and participate. Member rights and responsibilities include:

- Commitment to the mission as stated above
- Regular in-person (or via conference call) attendance at the meetings and participation via email input between meetings
- Voting rights for committee decisions at meetings or during email exchanges
- A working knowledge of RC&D (see above), what it does and how VRC fits as part of it, including an understanding that actions of the committee reflect on RC&D and that actions and financial decisions need to always uphold good practices and adhere to IRS Standards
- An understanding of the information contained in the document and agreement to the guidelines herein

Who are we?

Current VRC membership includes business, environmental and planning professionals, extension agents, volunteers, and tourism providers. As of October 2009, we are:

Barbara Arter, BSA Consulting
Sherry Churchill, Savory Bay Environmental Planning and Project Management.
Harold Clossey, Sunrise County Economic Council
Fred Cook, DownEast & Acadia Regional Tourism
Judy East, Washington County Council of Governments
Alvion Kimball, Orland House B&B, Bucksport Bay Area Chamber of Commerce
Barbara Maurer, Down East Resource Conservation and Development
Misha Mytar, Bureau of Parks and Lands
Sarah Nugent, Washington Hancock Community Agency
Jennifer Peters, Sunrise County Economic Council
Phil Savignano (ex-officio), Maine Office of Tourism
Meg Scheid, National Park Service
Natalie Springuel (chair), Maine Sea Grant