

**2018 Northern Forest Regional Symposium: Our Outdoor Recreation Economy
*Trends and Opportunities for the Region's People, Communities and Landscape***

State Caucus Conclusions

On the closing morning of the Symposium, participants from each state convened with each other for a facilitated conversation on three questions:

- What top two Outdoor Recreation priorities do we want to work on in our state?
- What one or two Outdoor Recreation priorities would be most like to work on together with others in the region—in a coordinated way?
- What one challenge/goal do we want to pose for the region?

After an initial brainstorm of ideas (raw notes at the end of this document), each caucus narrowed in on consensus responses for each question to present back to the full Symposium.

These conclusions are presented on the following pages.

NEW YORK

New York Action Priorities

- Advocate for the prioritization of existing NYS funds to support the ongoing stewardship and long-term improvement needs of recreational infrastructure in the Adirondacks.
- Create a new forum or process that reframes the conversation and includes new voices and perspectives to inform recreational priorities including stewardship, access, education and new sources of funding.
- Increase the use of digital imagery and technology to educate users and promote quality experiences in the Adirondacks highlighting outdoor recreation, community assets and activities, cultural opportunities, and other unique offerings in a format accessible to visitors and residents alike.
- Increase opportunities for community benefit through recreational facilities on state, municipal and private lands that are directly accessible from hamlet areas
- Create uniform and ongoing messaging to educate users about appropriate use of recreation amenities and ways to address potential overuse.

Northern Forest Priority

- Create a relevant recreation-focused data set for the Northern Forest (and each state region within it) as a basis to advocate and educate stakeholders about the importance of the industry and its impact on the region's economy and communities.
- Consider a regional forum or process with new voices to define and address issues of recreation stewardship and education.

Challenges: (NY)

- State entities and tourism promotion agencies need to learn more from neighboring states in the Northeast and participate in similar regional collaborations outside of New York state.
- Northern New York has different community, cultural and recreation dynamics than other Northern Forest states because of its location outside of New England and because of the presence of the Forest Preserve in the Adirondack Park.
- Move from talking together to working together.

VERMONT

Vermont Action Priorities

- Endorse the VOREC and advocate for its continued development and momentum.
- Create an expanded and inclusive public network structure to inform VOREC's continued work and act on its recommendations.
- Broaden the base of advocacy for outdoor recreation- e.g. business, conservation, land stewardship public health, workforce development- and get better at advocating together for policy that support the sector.

Northern Forest Priority

- Work regionally to fund regional destination development support/capacity that addresses shared issues (e.g. marketing to Canada, community training)
- Continue to identify models of collaboration that work. (e.g. Vermont Brewers Association marketing collaboration)

Challenge to the Region

- Is it possible to provide a consistent, quality of REGIONAL experience, and how do we do that?

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Action Priorities

- Establish a formal office of outdoor recreation, additive to the state park system and other recreational efforts and tasked, among other things, with addressing the other items listed here. Ensure statewide input from local communities.
- Develop datasets necessary to guide outdoor recreation development and investment, including economic impact, assessment of infrastructure, cost/benefit assessments and user statistics.
- Examine potential for “pay to play” or other funding models as an ongoing revenue stream to ensure adequate resources for development and stewardship of recreational assets.
- Balance and support diverse forms of outdoor recreation and diverse user groups.

Northern Forest Priority

- Collaborate on a regional destination marketing and/or recruitment campaign that uses outdoor recreation to attract new visitors and new residents. Include a strong stewardship ethic in the messaging.
- Collectively, strive toward broad recognition that outdoor recreation is a significant community asset with economic and health benefits for all.

Challenge to the Region

- Creation of a regional Outdoor Recreation dataset as a foundation to include and sustain the entire region.

MAINE

Maine Priorities

- Organize a coalition comprised of public, private, and non-profit stakeholders to inform and advocate for the significance of the outdoor recreation industry to the Maine economy, gain recognition as an economic driver, and the importance of making the Office of Outdoor Recreation permanent. This coalition could then work with the Office to secure and invest resources based on a strategic framework that will have lasting impacts on state's economy.
- Establish Destination Development as a strategic pillar of the outdoor recreation strategy for the State and build on the work already underway to develop destinations and work more collaboratively with the forest products industry to support vibrant and economically diverse rural communities.

Northern Forest Priority

- Raise the stature of outdoor recreation as a critical sector for rural economic revitalization.

Challenge to the Region.

- Collaborate across the region to invest in rural workforce and reverse out-migration. Work regionally to build the skills training across multiple sectors, and the outdoor recreation infrastructure necessary to attract/retain skilled workers and drive entrepreneurial interest. It's going to take everyone working together to advocate for investments in people and communities.

For reference: flip chart/sticky note content from Symposium state caucus sessions, reflecting the brainstorm that began each session and informed the conclusions presented above.

NY Question #1

- Proper and consistent management of our current trails
- Maintaining what we have and planning for new lands being acquired
- Educating users on how to be good users before they arrive. While they are still on the couch
- How to better support those that maintain/patrol the resource
- Imbalance between resources for outdoor recreation tourism promotion and stewardship/education. What can we do?
- Better define/manage multiuse – Subgroups? Signage? Primary/designed use?
- Backcountry skiing!!
- Better management of the resources associated with all aspects of outdoor recreation
- Funding for stewardship
- How can we simultaneously grow our outdoor rec. sector & a widely accepted land use ethic?
- Infrastructure needed to make more collaboration happen
- Encourage state to increase investment in outdoor rec. infrastructure: MMPs, trail maintenance, staffing (rangers, operations)
- To spread out the use so overused areas are not so stressed
- Educate the public on proper use – Leave No Trace
- Improving existing trail systems – maintenance by pro trail crews = jobs
- Wilderness education – NY protects over 1 million acres of wilderness, but little to no effort by state to educate public. Need coordinated effort with better results
- User management and access – risk assessment
- Education of users
- Measure economic impact of outdoor recreation to leverage funding
- Develop digital funding mechanisms for trail stewardship
- Address the “pay-to-play” matter
- Better anticipate technologies and get ahead of policy making (drones, e-bikes, etc.)
- Coordinate outdoor rec. Business development with changing demographic
- Make it easier to run a small business in NYS
- Liability mitigation for public use of private lands
- Biking!
- Backcountry skiing
- Improving winter-based recreation across the park
- Biking – better connectivity in town to recreation access/paths; larger landscape scale – town to town connections
- Mountain biking is great but what about CONNECTIVITY between areas of use and connections of areas to towns/downtowns where we can eat, drink, & sleep
- Non-alpine trail building between communities – foot/bike/multi-use. Could include rail trails, English-style rambling across private/public lands, and backcountry skiing!
- Focus on our communities: \$ and place
- Prepare for disruptive change

NY Question #2

- Address stewardship and education in new forum with new voices
- Turn Common Ground to Cherished Ground
- Political pressure on Albany, local business/govt. to provide funds for infrastructure improvements
- New/innovative funding mechanisms that directly fund stewardship, education, maintenance, and long-range planning
- Moving funds from marketing to communities and infrastructure
- Manage the resource
- Infrastructure improvement

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- Cooperative regional marketing that represents the region/private entities – ADK
- Better tourism resources for (or that incorporate) stewardship ethics
- Better information on the ADKs – signage, infographics, accessible areas, etc.
- Funding to address stewardship – now and future
- Development of regional walkabouts featuring: activities, lodging, food, beer
- Protect/improve the asset
- Educate the user
- Let's collaborate on an infographic that focuses on connectivity; connecting like activities to like activities, with each venue connected to other necessary amenities
- National funds for stewardship funding
- How to apply what other states are doing that is working in the NF that we can utilize to address our priorities
- Learn from what has worked in other areas
- Educate users to Leave No Trace ethics
- Do a better job of branding the 4-state region as the Northern Forest
- Northern Forest Leave No Trace education
- Outdoor recreation sector professionalism and economic power
- Learn from pay-to-play models/funding in Northern Forest: fees, taxes, etc.
- Regional/cross Northern Forest trails ala NFCT: bike route, hiking/hut to hut route

NY Misc. (unclear which question addressing)

- Funding for outdoor recreation/stewardship education: coordinated effort needed multi-sector to identify new sources. Outdoor Recreation focus in DEC (they are stewards)
- Reframing the solution
- More coordination between local govt and recreation/stewardship

VT Question #1

- Advocacy (VT trails alliance)
- Stewardship
- Who isn't here?
- Shift/add \$ and responsibility to VT tourism & marketing
- Reorganize architecture of support for community development/product development
- Collective Outdoor Recreation vision as economic driver
- Collective promotion/advocacy: can we agree on common value statements?
- Public health, workforce development, land stewardship
- Endorse the concept of VOREC and advocate for expanded/inclusive structure to feed from it (a la F&P)
- Diversity and inclusivity
- Create and sustain a network based on this event (Symposium)
- VOREC was a big step forward – expand and stay inclusive
- VT Outdoor Business Alliance (VOBA) needs to grow and play key role in concert with VOREC
- VOREC is awesome – let's build off it and add a network
- Farm to plate as a model? – collaborative approach that has been durable
- Education re: cost & value of trail systems
- Safeguard L.O. liability laws
- Stewardship and contribution ethic of users – broad definition of pay to play
- Landowners – consistent approach & incentives; land ethic
- Current use evolve to support outdoor recreation
- Bring destination/regional marketing \$ back
- Pay to play at state level approach (“VT Outdoor Club”)
- Pay to play needs creative methods and approaches
- Public health
- Ecological fabric/stewardship

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- Inclusivity
- Wildlife
- Community Development
- VERMONTERS
- Consistency of pay to play across state
- Strengthen connection/support from diverse constituency that benefits
- Better articulate the benefits of Outdoor Recreation beyond economic dev. at Statehouse
- Outdoor recreation caucus at Statehouse
- Carry the message to the Statehouse
- Public and private partnership for promotion
- 30 sec videos of trail-building/work behind trails for users

VT Question #2

- More of these conversations
- Support consistency across the region while honoring/celebrating the regional individual differences
- Is it possible to?
- Models to look to
- Broad blended map of region/destinations
- Regional tagline to coalesce behind
- Regional funding for collaboration
- Borderlands is a model (broad/consistency) – expand to other rec?
- Support consistency and quality across region
- Use regional funding to support regional destination development support/capacity
- AT example – 1 broad message, diversity of place maintained
- Examples in other industries? Ex. Breweries
- Are there examples in other parts of country?

NH Question #1

- Develop by statute, a council of outdoor orgs. that can work with outdoor recreation office to influence policy
- Valuation of existing outdoor infrastructure
- Programs for elevating local assets, primarily historical main streets and connection to recreation economy
- Current/updated economic impact data for all users to guide development (regionally and county level)
- Figure out how to balance and support a diversity of outdoor rec, not let any 1 activity dominate
- Attention to growth of the next generation of outdoor rec enthusiasts and business owners/entrepreneurs
- As industry grows avoid tragedy of the commons (i.e. everyone uses the resource for their own benefit while ignoring the common good)
- Ensuring that wildlife activities (hunting, fishing, watching) continue to be major parts of the North Country economy
- Focus on enhancing the quality of wildlife recreation (hunting/fishing/watching) to make the North Country a nationally known destination of choice
- Economic impact studies to bring awareness & more funding to industry
- Need a public resource for statistics/data on outdoor recreation
- Space for all but not all in same space
- Expand Ride the Wilds to encompass other activities – summer/winter
- Develop outdoor rec industry standard on community engagement at outset of development effort – engage range of stakeholders, understand what success will look like
- Focus on community outreach to include all populations that are represented in the local communities. Give them all a chance to feel that “sense of place” feeling

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- Common ground across user groups
- Economic development without sacrificing lifestyle
- Equal marketing \$ and funding
- Revenue source – pay to play system
- Implement coordinated pay to play, not just government fees
- Figure out a pay to play system – maybe related to the office of outdoor rec.
- Expand outdoor rec. beyond volunteers and fund it via pay-to-play
- Pay to play
- Infrastructure that leads to collaboration
- Funding model beyond grants
- Pay to play: rooms and meals tax is 9%. Add/change to rooms/meals/recreation tax of 10% or 12% and allocate funds correctly
- New revenue into system through a voluntary fee, tax, or R&M tax. “pay to play”
- Create a statewide communication push for leave no trace
- Comprehensive map with ethics for each activity
- Campaign: Leave No Trace
- Getting diverse groups to work together on creating regional culture
- Accessible/ADA trails
- Give greater incentives for current use for recreation
- Living wages for recreation staff and to find affordable living arrangements
- Develop a regional transport model that enhances the recreation experiences of locals and visitors to the White Mtns.
- Leadership of user groups
- Leadership
- Consistency!
- Sustainable volunteers
- Encouraging and developing volunteers while ensuring that they are not taken advantage of
- Build trail infrastructure that is accessible to wide array of user groups – local/visitor, multi-generation, expert-beginner
- Support an alternative transportation system for popular outdoor recreation sites
- Make an outdoor rec. living wage state wide
- Create better support and fund seasonal positions that are vital to the outdoor recreation sector
- Focus on increasing revenue generated per user to avoid trap of increasing use/overuse of resource
- Create an Outdoor Rec office for that state!
- Develop an Outdoor Rec office
- Dept. of Recreation coordinates with key point position in different regions
- Dept. of Outdoor Economy – “coordinated leadership”
- Create NH State office of Outdoor Rec.
- Create NH office Outdoor Rec with a point person in each region of the state
- Create State office of Outdoor Rec!
- Develop Dept. of Outdoor Rec. in Economic Affairs Dept.
- Develop an office of Outdoor Rec. in NH
- Create statewide office of Outdoor Rec. with regional representation
- Create State office for Outdoor Rec.
- Need State Outdoor Rec. office/dept.
- Create State Office of Outdoor Rec.
- Develop Outdoor Rec. office
- Create State Office for Outdoor Rec.

NH Question #2

- Create a regional marketing initiative for the Northern Forest Region
- mid-level trade association

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- Regional destination marketing
- Collaborate to connect unique destinations throughout the region and promote the Northern Forest as a “must visit” destination with all these unique and different destinations within it
- Create an organized Northwoods brand identifying the unique niches by location
- Set of regional standards for trail design and recreational use
- Accessible/ADA compliant trails throughout the Northern Forest
- Initiative for the creation of ADA compliant trail options (families, seniors, people w/ disabilities)
- Northern Forest Assoc. of Recreation Guides – across discipline/user groups, live in region
- Climate change plan for the region – “what ifs?”, how will recreation change or need to change
- Liability insurance in a leading challenge for OR groups. Can state agencies collaborate/negotiate umbrella policy?
- Develop systems to share and leverage resources for various sectors of industry (ex. Trails collective or WMNF transportation working group)
- Continue to hold convenings like this one (Symposium) in each state every other year
- Regional trail plan that harmonizes motorized and non-motorized uses through appropriate designations and trail locations
- Regional coordinated public transportation
- Regional stewardship education
- Coordinated message
- Land use ethics and how to deal with overuse/how to dilute impact
- Working together to build a better infrastructure to help mitigate the high traffic seasons in popular outdoor rec. spots (ex. Setting up shuttles, building more parking lots)
- Coordinate a large-scale effort to bring true broadband internet to all communities in the region
- Get solid and consistent data on economic cost/benefit of activities to make better informed decisions about how and where to invest in outdoor rec.
- Coordinated marketing
- Collect/create evidence-based data
- Develop economic case studies and models to share and leverage across region
- Develop marketing plan of Northern Forest to attract outdoor people
- Regional pay to play strategy
- Sharing in resources
- Office of Recreation with governing council guiding them (needs 2 tiers: state and regional)
- Understanding carrying capacity to identify opportunity and/or stress
- Coordinated Outdoor Rec. data collection: who is coming, what are they doing here, how much are they spending
- Education of ethics in our Outdoor Rec. segments
- Regional messages and education around stewardship
- Develop a broader alternative transportation network servicing popular rec. destinations
- Cross-promoting our individual resources/activities to create regional focus on Outdoor Rec.
- Have the 4 states work together on Leave No Trace messaging across every sector
- Regional coordinated effort to attract and hold people to the area via outdoor rec.
- Coordinated marketing effort to appeal to families/younger people to move to the region driven by quality of life (you don’t have to go to Portland, OR or Boulder, CO or Santa Fe, NM to have an awesome outdoor quality of life)
- Coordinated promotion of outdoor rec lifestyle and opportunities to market the Northern Forest as a place to LIVE and play (not just visit) – NOT tourism marketing
- National promotion and marketing of Northern Forest region recreation – embed shared fulltime position in the states depts of Travel and Tourism
- Promote as a Northern Forest Region
- An opportunity for travel connecting recreational opportunities
- Cross border collaboration to promote particular activities as a broader experience
- Reaching farther outside of our region
- Regional marketing (maybe even regional branding) – multi-state “destination” packages

- Marketing!

NH Question #3

- Finding the right entity/organization with the capacity to compile the data and finding the \$ and resources to make it happen
- How do we ensure focus on outdoor recreation as a significant industry?
- How do we ensure that a new statewide office focuses on what “we” consider outdoor rec?
- How to structure/govern Office of Outdoor Rec to ensure efficiency and sustainability
- Making sure that local voices in communities are heard by the Outdoor Rec. Office to ensure no one is marginalized in decision making
- Regional offices need a clear path to communicate with each other
- Broad recognition that outdoor rec is a significant community asset with economic and health benefits for all (changing current mindset about value of outdoor rec)
- Promote thriving communities that develop and maintain a sustainable outdoor rec economy
- How do we get the cooperative leadership implemented at the local level?

ME Question #1

- Raise our stature as an economic driver to secure/establish incentives/environments in which we can realize our potential to...
- Distinguish recreation as a segment of tourism – brand it and market it
- Develop some real economic figures to use that support our promise of being an economic driver
- Branding/coordination of efforts
- Economic driver – need to realize this
- Cohesive message platform with data
- Finding a unified voice to have a better advocacy impact
- Unity and shared message from Outdoor Rec. providers/ Forest Products industry/ State govt
- Recognizing RJP(?) and other funding for trails(?) exists
- Increase/expand treating trails as infrastructure, similar to how we think of highways. Includes building connections, but very importantly, funding to maintain/steward
- Recreation for Maine’s Future Board
- Encourage the new administration to keep/put resources behind the new Outdoor Rec. office
- Ask for more/dedicated funding source for outdoor rec at the state level with a unified voice
- Outdoor rec as key pillar in new gubernatorial administration strategy (e.g. State of the State)
- Collaboration on advocacy and large investment attractions
- Get the new Maine Dept. of Outdoor Rec off to a good start
- Provide liability coverage to clubs looking to run programming in local communities
- Understanding the liability laws as applied to service providers making money on private lands (Kingdom Trails example)
- Incentivizing landowners
- Increased access to wild land and waters with stewardship endowed
- Destination development as a key priority for the state
- Destination development of communities which includes outdoor recreation as a key driver for both tourists and residents
- Destination development: local capacity development; build on our strengths
- State govt. support for tourism and acknowledgment that it is an economic driver
- Education about other outdoor recreation opportunities “nearby” to practice sending people to nearby places
- Create a network with nodes (destination development)
- Creating better tools/models to tie together local clubs/initiatives to reduce the need to reinvent the wheel and promote better communication
- Creating a team of public and private landowners, businesses, and non-profits that talk together and collaborate on strategy
- Collaboration

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- Be outcome based with specific strategies targeting economic impact, visitor experiences, resource sustainability
- Transform rural Maine
- State-level coalition for comprehensive “forest economy” economic development plan/strategy
- Look at recreation holistically so that we recognize, plan for, and showcase its value to the many sectors it touches
- Integrate outdoor recreation effectively into regional destination development
- Bring ALL outdoor rec providers up to the standard of our best practice businesses
- Building a business model that allows for livable wages in the outdoor rec economy: might include co-op benefits, higher-value business offerings, supplemental businesses (i.e. hospitality for a land trust)
- Destination development – continue to follow Mshd’s example in more communities (Rangeley is near ready)
- Opportunities “close to home”
- How to ensure local businesses have access to capital to grow their businesses and remain locally owned?
- Support for the small businesses in the sector – real business development for a change
- Bring economic benefits directly to Main St.

ME Question #2

- Search and rescue
- Branding and marketing the Northern Forest as an outdoor recreation region
- Liability/Insurance:
 1. Look at landowner liability laws in all four states – see whether any could/should be strengthened (ex. ME requires suing party to reimburse defense’s legal costs if landowner prevails. Makes people rethink frivolous suits and landowners more comfortable)
 2. Consider group insurance across industry, across states. (i.e. insurance for northern forest mountain biking – any club could apply at reasonable cost OR states get more (hike, bike, etc.) liability insurance like they now do for motorized uses
- Develop a network of professional education/training programs for outdoor rec businesses – the goal is to get ALL outdoor rec providers to “best practices”
- One park pass for Northern New England?
- How to reach visitors before they come on what to expect so they can choose the right destination
- Marketing with messaging that makes it easy for the prospective visitor to see multiple recreation alternatives available over multiple days – “come to ___ for ___ and spend a week/days” Don’t message just the experience
- Raise our stature – secure support
- Federal funding issues
- Rec industry relations (e.g. manufacturers, leave no trace, etc.)

ME Question #3

- How different, really, are the 4 states? Can we stop competing and actually work together?
- Common message to elevate our role as economic/social driver