

Outdoor Recreation: A Few Big Sector Development / System Questions

1. Exactly **where** (*at what points or in what situations*) in the development of the outdoor recreation sector/culture is **passion** getting in the way of (*or not well balanced with*) **strategy**?
 - ... and what can we do about it?
2. What specific **risks** do we most want to manage if/as we transition to a more serious/professionalized industry sector?
3. What **processes** do we need to strengthen to support **multiple uses** across the landscape?
4. How do we build a **pay-to-play** system(s) – and culture – in the outdoor recreation experience?
5. What is the **infrastructure** we need to make more **collaboration** happen in the outdoor recreation sector? Exactly what would make collaboration easier?
6. How can we **simultaneously** grow our outdoor recreation sector and a widely accepted **land-use ethic**?
7. **Volunteerism** has both economic and community-building value in society overall – so we likely don't want to eliminate it from **any** sector! But in outdoor recreation, as we strengthen the sector:
 - To what extent or in what situations do we want volunteerism to be a **service opportunity vs.** a critical part of the **business model**?
 - What is currently being done by volunteers that we would **most like to turn into local businesses and family-supporting jobs**?
8. How do we build a system that allows for some **standardization**/streamlining/standard practice in **working with landowners** – while including necessary **flexibility** and variation?
9. What federal (*and state?*) **policy changes** could better support outdoor recreation in our four states – that we could work together (and with other states) to advocate for?
10. How does our outdoor recreation sector transition **from following trends to leading them** (better connect to market demand)?
11. How can we build the sector in ways that more fully incorporate **community voice** and surface/strengthen **local leaders**?

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Wednesday Table Teams

- Need recreation jobs that are at livable wages / are a career choice where you don't have to choose between passion and wages (i.e., what other billion-dollar economic engine is supported by bake sales?)
- The importance of Resolve.
- The need to address diversity matters.
- What about carrying capacity/issues?
- Funding supportive of the outdoor recreational economy should be built into state and regional economic development strategies
- How to change the culture of your community to embrace growth in Recreational Development.
- How do we create sustainability – funding, trails?
- How do you share a vision together, train, share grant funds? Be collaborative with different outdoor interests.
- Volunteers – critical and challenges.
- Appropriateness of siting events and outdoor recreation.
- Collaboration – importance of learning from each other.
- BE NIMBLE.
- Electronic kiosks from a parking meter company.
- Let go of our preconceived notions of what outdoor recreation is!
- Discussion of passion vs. strategy...need to develop the strategic planning necessary for growing businesses.
- Outdoor recreation has power for societal changes – own it and talk about it.
- Strategy vs. passion. There are no islands.
- We need to do better at asking and getting people to pay for their outdoor recreation experiences: kiosks (electronic), education, membership models.
- Collaboration is key
- Consider all diverse ideas
- So much depends on volunteer effort
- For-profit build on non-profit/volunteer work
- Recreation trails of many forms are connecting communities – creating a regional economic churn.
- Figuring out how to handle e-bikes is crucial!
- Coordinate “SCORP” across four states?
- Passion ≠ Strategy
- A voluntary but universal minimum wage for outdoor recreation workers
- Passion for our activities/sports can:
 - can blind us to strategies for success
 - can hinder “readiness for change/buy-in”
- Barriers to local access
- How to capture fees/investment from (affluent) users who are used to using trails/systems without paying – a.k.a. capture existing \$\$ from industry users
- You need to be flexible as needs of visitors change over time.
- Volunteer dependence – for better or for worse?
- Local buy-in & community support
- You need local buy-in when creating visitor attraction.
- How to tap into all the \$ to support land stewardship & maintenance?
- Hubs for multi-modal recreation – “one” jumping off point for water adventures, hiking, biking snowmobiling, ATV in community center.
- Lodging & eating experience has to meet market, which is increasingly upscale.
- Intersectionality: connections between non-profits, for-profits, civic organizations, government → to all work together to make change & evolve.
- Diversify gas-dependent recreation systems for when gas reaches \$8.00 a gallon.
- Trend: Recreationists go to destinations where services are provided. Destination development is growing on purpose – greater social component – friends, family...
- Events make things happen, bring in people to grow area. People come back on their own. Events get bigger. Shoulder season bonus.
- Need for “for-profit” partnerships such as Polaris & Ride the Wilds. Motorized recreation is unique because manufacturers realize they need trails to help their sales.
- There's a huge disconnect between size & impact of outdoor recreation industry and states/corporate support = too much reliance on volunteers?!!
- Any industry, including outdoor recreation, needs:
 - Innovation – continual
 - Evolving Leadership & now
 - Constant planning and anticipation of trends.

Breakout A. Building Quality into OR Experience: Trends & Innovations

A1: Trails – Path to Quality

- Collaboration & patience are key.
- Maintaining our backcountry: Cost. Sustainability. Volunteers.
- Cohesive strategy for telling our story as an industry and individual states/organizations/groups about the impact and importance of outdoor recreation to the economy, health & wellness, etc.
- Create enthusiasm and excitement within the community.
- Being able to get the landowners that own and use the land on board with the different ways the land can be used.

- Education begins in the school – create partnerships with local Boys & Girls Clubs and municipal recreation departments.
- Trails organizations have similar challenges – should work together to find innovative solutions.
- Community buy-in. 100%
- For all of these organizations it is important to build relationships and partnerships. Also important to work with the community and manage volunteers 😊
- How trail building can influence the local economy.
- Is there a toolkit available for people trying to navigate user group conflicts – bring them together.
- All groups referred to impacts of climate change but didn't use those words. Is there value in discussing opening the conversations with trail users?
- All user groups face the same challenge of liability concern from stakeholders. How do we mitigate that?
- Challenges should be embraced, especially with regard to legal or regulatory hurdles. But a long-term strategy and vision needs to be embraced.
- Community partnerships are vital.
- Ask permission – be legit.
- Partnerships. Sustainability. Growth. Change. Time. Money. Impact.
- Underlying theme: Community buy-in is key to success.
- More collaborative planning across user groups to build, maintain & sustain trails, based on common interests rather than difference.
- Improved accessibility and proactivity in the advancement of backcountry trails can increase involvement and benefit small town economies.
- Accessible/universal trails are increasing (yay!) but require a greater duty of care & knowledge/skill to properly maintain – how do we do that? Contractors with trained volunteers? Need to plan for!
- Backcountry skiing: Big lines are great but accessible/shorter get more use (lunch laps, etc.)

A2: Better Together – Dynamic Destination

- Build strong foundations.
- Reduce duplication
- Increase collaboration
- Build on experience for visitors
- Landscape-scale conservation and vibrant communities can positively feed each other – with a lot of work.
- Create a process first, then follow the process.
- Promote the tangibles.
- Grassroots – build local relationships before outside relationships.
- Building personal relationships is essential for any success.
- It seems that a critical part of the story of Moosehead Lake is the leadership and guidance of Donna Moreland and her office. How to find that person/influence for other communities that need it?
- Having an awesome destination product is great, getting buy-in from local business, navigating political landmines, and keeping people plugged in long-term.
- Local community buy-in and engagement is an integral part of destination development.
- Meet people where they are – but bring the rest of the world to them; we are all experts in our neighborhoods but very few are experts on neighborhoods.
- Tough Question: What is the relationship between tourism development and quality of life for residents?
- Marketing effort – Rebranding – Brand Leadership Team – Community Destination Academy
- Projects need to engage community.
- Destination Collaborations. Business, non-profit & municipal leaders all & equally at the table!
- What connections are there between the tourism and the people who actually move there? What economic impact studies capture this?
- The high cost in volunteer times & paid staff time to build a grassroots destination effort.

A3: Consistence in Visitor Experience Quality

- Investigate (understand?) the role of operator who charges for recreation opportunity & landowner in regards to liability laws and protections.
- Accountability and integrity
- Local recreational users with visitors
- Collaboration between regions and user groups key – will all groups pay-to-play to have a quality experience?
- Visitor Expectations: Need to recognize and message across outdoor recreation activators – most outdoor users are multi-disciplinary and multi-seasonal. Avoid silos and response to latest fast-growth trend.
- Northern Forest region businesses, clubs, states and recreation users need to start working collaboratively rather than competitively.
- What can motivate this collaboration other than \$\$? – because the seeking of \$\$ tends to divide people.
- Identify incentives (beyond \$\$) for creating high quality experiences and getting past competition to collaboration. Improve total experience!
- Consistent information.
- Manage expectations.
- Individual locations, attractions, activity centers cannot offer visitors/residents all the experiences they want – Regional cooperation and mutual promotion can.

- Clear authentic descriptions of available experiences so users have positive experience and then share with others.
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A4: Technology in Outdoor Recreation

- We need to have a paradigm shift in human-powered recreation to “Pay-to-Play” but it has to be easy and convenient to do.
 - An app that makes it really easy for trail users to make trailside donations.
 - Improving data for users is absolute need for future.
 - Need to get past “old” ways, but own the data.
 - Can we work towards one online presence for recreation assets for New England?
 - Overall trail mapping for all user groups available to all. Free of use.
 - Data is critical to protect.
 - Use your resources for knowledge.
 - One GIS/GPS app is not the same as the other. All apps are unique.
 - It would be great to integrate the technology for the user of all four states or Northeast for trails & availability.
- Copy the VAST web/app in New Hampshire.
 - Integrate rules into allowing to continue along app.
 - Integrate pay-to-play with apps scannable on signs of trails.
 - How to coordinate trail info with payment methods so we can begin encouraging individual users to pay?
 - Technology is available to better connect users with trail and recreation resources.
 - How can we better use technology to raise money for trails?
 - I can use Yelp to check wait times at a restaurant. What if I could check whether a trailhead parking lot is full before I drive there? (New Hampshire Parks did this at Hampton Beach in 2018.)
 - How do we get community buy-in for expanding access “from away”?
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A5: Outdoor Recreation Events

- Passion & dedication are key ingredients to success of every event. Also important to know the customer and take their input into account.
 - Every event has a unique genesis – so foster lots of people and ideas.
 - \$ is not the problem.
 - Participant-driven. Make the event theirs.
 - With the private owner landscape in mind: How many events, festivals, etc., can we work collaboratively as a region – including multiple centers?
- With regard to events, know your audience/target and keep aiming for base hits instead of swinging for the fences.
 - Events bring people. People bring money. Money stays in the community.
 - Non-profit, for-profit business and participant-led models can all work for events – with a strong leader that works in concert with local culture/input.
 - Volunteer leaders & organizers are priceless.
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A6: Evolving Traditions/Trends in Wildlife-Based Recreation

- Bringing new folks to outdoor sports
 - “R3 Coordinator” – Recruitment, Retention, Reactivation
 - Mentorship in Outdoor Sports
 - Nature in the Classroom
 - Cradle to Grave Outdoor Appreciation & Care
 - “5 Rivers” – fly fishing clubs at colleges
 - Better engagement/collaboration with private sector for-profit to help grown & support business, connect to non-profit/public resource
 - We need to be using town & community forests more to engage young people in the outdoors.
 - Formulate business model for successful small business in the outdoor world – marketing, pricing, mentoring
- Our industry is very much supported by volunteers
 - How do we get to a place where outdoor recreation is viewed as a business and supported as a business?
 - We need to work harder and more effectively to engage youth & younger adults in wildlife-related recreation.
 - Mentorship – how do we get there.
 - Problem: Too many people at small number of well-known fishing spots (social media – everyone flocks there)
 - Make other species have cache of trout – bass, chub, sunfish, perch – to spread out pressure.
 - Also address regulation to single-hook-, catch-&-release-only, etc. to spread pressure.
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Breakout B. Building Quality into OR Experience: Trends & Innovations

B1: Managing User Conflicts

- Recognize that compromise is not a dirty word – We’re all trying to reach the same goal of enjoying the outdoors.
- Separate users when conflict exists with others.
- How can we be proactive vs. reactive?
- Don’t assume what each user group’s thoughts are.
- Getting different user groups out working on a project together to improve a shared place – can build camaraderie and trust.
- Is there a user group/conflict-management toolkit available for outdoor recreation groups? Process checklist for groups with less experience managing conflict or fewer resources or time to manage conflict?
- Anticipate conflict in advance.
- E Bikes!
- How can communities anticipate conflict and then try to avoid it?
- The rapid change in technology and impact of marketing campaigns to push more aggressive recreational uses will continue to create conflict.
- Communication and education is a key to restoring user conflicts. Open dialogue.
- Who is the convener to initiate cross-group discussion?
- Stereotypes about other user groups perpetuate conflicts ... how to challenge stereotypes and get people to know/respect each other?

B2: Managing Visitors

- If a state or agency is trying protect wilderness, they should educate public on what wilderness is and why its important to have it and protect it ... foster a wilderness ethic.
- Feasibility study on capacity concerns – parking, traffic flow, # of visitors on trail. What organization or resource can do this type of study?
- Public perception of visitor use “problems” may not match land manager/conservationist perception ... which makes “solutions” even more elusive.
- Adopt Leave No Trace principles for all local and regional trails. Leave No Trace website has a 30-minutes online awareness workshop. Watch it!
- Should we identify standard “good” roles for interest groups (NGO’s, towns, state, federal, advocacy, etc., and disseminate.
- Manage expectations before people choose their recreational experience.
- Remember that the 1st time user who makes mistakes because of lack of knowledge/experience could be the next conservationist.
- How can we find ways to collaborate across interests and organizations to create ambassadors for education?

B3: Making a Living in the Outdoor Recreation Economy

- Obtain credentials, work your way up to year-round positions
- Communicate with other outdoor businesses and collaborate.
- Being aware of the problem facing the industry, but focusing on possible solutions. Be innovative welcome change. Always be adapting to the current state of your customers/environment.
- Create NE-wide outdoor recreation job listings per state.
- Strengthen networks among employers to build opportunities for workers.
- Is there an opportunity to “unionize” recreation workers – to create both quality/skill standards and an opportunity to negotiate wages, benefits, etc....
- Create a Northern Forest Recreation and Hospitality Cooperative. See CCA Global in Manchester NH.
- More money needs to be payed out to employees in the industry. How do we do it?
- Collaboration between Businesses, Non-Profits & Hospitality.
- Be open to any type of work. When you are working different jobs, you are gaining resources and skills. Those resources are the things that will set you apart.
- Pay your employees more if you want better returning employees.
- There must be a way for the service part of the industry to “cash in” on those who spend \$ on high-end equipment whether it’s a mountain bike, OHRV, bass board, etc.
- Local business owner groups to share info about employees, job openings, and job share opportunities.
- Encourage collaboration between not-for-profits, NGO’s and government with the recreation industry.
- Pay scale vs. cost of living → how to support business owners to develop their business to pay more and how to educate consumers that recreation is worth more.
- Low pay + seasonal is an industry problem that we need to fix.

B4: Private Land Use for Outdoor Recreation

- The more we can proactively work with private landowners, the better chance we have to advance any outdoor recreation objective.
- Give tax break for lands that have trails, especially if trail is permanent.
- Confusion about land ownership and liability
- Maine's landowner liability law should be a model for strengthening the landowner liability laws in the other three states.
- Treat landowners with respect and courtesy. Find out what hesitations they have and work to address those.
- Lots of talk at the Symposium about outdoor recreations economy/tourism and the importance of private land access for outdoor recreation → be careful about over-promotion of recreation facilities on private land and changing landowner perceptions.

B5: Who Can Play -- Access

- Trust and partnerships, along with community outreach, can make a huge impact.
- I need to volunteer for Adaptive Sports more!
- RAH – (Recreation After Hours!)
- Surround yourself with the best people and believe in it.
- Be involved in the community!
- Find a way to get everyone in your town engaged in activities!
- Help other people everyday! (hope)
- Accessibility information – no central clearing house for trails, paths, etc., for Northeast – opportunity.
- Regional Recreation Insurance Pool negotiated by State Departments of Outdoor Recreation. (Liability insurance is a significant barriers for smaller non-profit trails organizations) – Workman's Comp is also a significant barrier.
- Taking care of our "small town needs" is really important.
- Kids learn to MTB program.
- Build strong partnerships and relationships.
- Come up with a standardized model/suggestions for pay-to-play recreation opportunities → eSure funding for continued maintenance while still balancing access to all socio-economic groups.
- Offer best practices for the industry that local groups and organizations can use for pay-to-play.
- Adaptive hiking – seems like a lot of opportunity there for new innovation and growth, with different kinds of partners.
- Recreation for all levels is a great community builder.

B6: Who Decides – Community Engagement

- Organized Town Forest Tour Program (Bring towns together, share their town forests with broader population.)
- Important to hold multiple input sessions of various sizes and formats to allow everyone who wants to give input a comfortable forum in which to offer it.
- Community members become advocates.
- Listen to the community and not just those who speak the loudest.
- It takes time and effort to develop community consensus ... but it's worth it.
- Engage stakeholders early!

Breakout C. Partnerships for Prosperity

C1 Striking the right (A)Chord: Harmonizing Funding

- Attracting slow money investors to outdoor recreation, illegible a carrot project for trails of community outdoor center → public private partnership
- Replicate Maine outdoor brands model at the national level to provide powerful advocacy voice for outdoor recreation industry
- Don't stop ask and keep exploring
- State outdoor rec departments provide data for economic impacts of outdoor recreation?
 - Send to local orgs to use as messaging
 - Give presentations in towns working on progress
 - Help tell story on the ground to encourage investments
- Change peoples minds who don't understand impact of rec (only see mills, etc as economic drivers)
- Funding for outdoor rec—we need to reach beyond our base and advocate for trails as economic development to everyone else who can take trails info and Spread the word to small towns that funding trails is smart business
- Funding options/modes similar to other industries -- town bonds.
- Neighborly, a fintech company that is modernizing the municipal bond to lower cost of borrowing smaller amounts of money. Allows for community investment.

- Have an organization(s) with connections to multi-year funds and capacity convene trail organizations to quantify cost of (line types) trails planned (or visioned) to add capacity/resources/time/ to go after BIG federal funds for infrastructure (trails) as economic development (SCORP plan revisions as vehicle? Backbone/ framework for doing this work)
- Can we go to towns to fund trails as bond issues same as they fund other recreational assets? What education / data do we need to be successful locally?
- Need better economic development data dissemination. More professional, universally adopted publications.
- Federal Policies are not all that helpful to the recreation economy. Its worthwhile to push up ideas—policy ideas—to get federal policies better aligned with the growing recreation economy→ partner nationally for better leverage for change.
- The outdoor rec world needs to quantify the economic development benefit of outdoor recreation activities.

C2 Stating the Obvious: Regional Collaboration

- Encourage funder collaboration
- Collaboration not competition grows the pie larger
- Regional collaboration is worth it but takes time. Should be grounded in needs of community but also in perceptions and use and also outdoor recreation travel illegible—especially when innovating brands, promotion, etc.
- We do a disservice to our customers if we do not take the entirety of their experience into consideration and if not collaborate then at least do what we can to support the entire system.
- Collaboration at scale with appropriate partners on similar arenas topics in the best way to advance priorities.

C3 The Talent Map: Workforce

- Get good help by asking good employees
- Provide life skills orientation to new/young employees
- Home grown your employee that have career potential
- Single payer healthcare
- Finding options for people to get affordable housing
- Recruiting young people to work in the hospitality industry
- Linkages with high schools trade schools (vocational/tech) + creating mentorship programs
- Hotels buying homes for employee Housing
- Housing challenges for entry level professionals

C4 Owning Up

- Volunteers are community to build community
- The organizations wouldn't be as strong without literally building buy-in
- Volunteers are doing the work for their own benefit
- Volunteers aren't doing the work for tourists. They're doing it for themselves and their community.
- Local engagement & buy in creates ownership & is critical to growth & sustainability of (product) trails.

C5 Partnering for Promotion: Marketing

- “Local buy-in” can include maybe should include innovative fees to support ether trail infrastructure stewardship, t/o marketing also use as source of leverage for public or private sources.
- Small idea: Print Lives
- Marketing should do more than draw people to an area. We have a duty to outdoor people as promote stewardship
- Get creative about funding regional marketing (\$2/night optional charge on lodging bills to support regional marketing –north country chamber in NH is doing this)
- Conservation & promotion go hand in hand –
- Any news is good news
- Including ethics & promotion in every message & hitting both subjects
- Multiple sustainable funding sources for marketing
- Reach out further together
- The availability (or unavailability) of data; what are the best ways to acquire this data and what is the most useful data to track? Sales, visitors, etc....
- Fostering program for small business w/ regional DMO
- Workforce development by storytelling

Thursday Miscellaneous Thoughts

- Statewide Outdoor Recreation Northern Forest Regional Approach to providing liability coverage for club and volunteers running programs to get people outdoor
- Ticks, new tick-borne illnesses? Tick liability? Tick signage? What else?
- No one is talking horses. Not much representation of Nordic skiing lots of mountain biking. Ties to definition of recreation.

- Invite some private landowners to join this for all or part of the conference – or have a session about working with landowners.
- The Sasquatch in the region Weather and Climate’s effect on the industry
- Municipal Master Plan

Thursday Final Session- Table Team Afternoon Insights

- More cross pollination between recreation types would help minimize conflict or at least find things they agree on
- Think Creatively – Know your target audience
- Volunteers build community (While Building trails)
- Create a partnership between town councils + businesses and marketing and private landowners to provide designated/coordinated access to recreational areas and support for visitors.
- Intentional collaboration between business, municipal and non-profit, volunteer required for a successful recreation destination
- Offer a multi-state snowmobile trail access registration at a premium cost
- Ensure private land owners continue to be allowed public access for recreation (e.g. liability protection)
- People and communities need to be ready for change. Even great ideas at the wrong time will not take root.
- Importance of mentoring program from job → to career
- Collaboration not competition
- Bonding for public trails
- Value of actually having face to face conversations
- Endowment for Stewardship
- Figure out how to be a value to the community and the customers.
- Pay it forward
- Be proactive vs reactive
- We are in a rec economy
- Paradigm shift to pay-to-play is necessary
- NGOs, guides, government agencies, non-profit outdoor recreation need to collaborate in each other’s territories
- Need to professionalize/pg for conservation/recreation/trail expertise & establish real value.
- Nonprofits need to work with & pay for professional services
- Communities should define what success looks like before taking on change
- We need to educate people in the value of outdoor recreation (in our region):
 - Legislators
 - Town councils
 - Rural poor @ schools
- Make sure nonprofits and government agencies utilize professional outdoor services and pay market rate for services
- Check your baggage and be open.
- Local support/buy in before tourist buy in, comes after. Push the collective voice
- Public policy- change the statutes that make it hard for federal economic development agencies to invest in recreation as an economic development strategy (USDA Rural Development, EDA)
- User pay systems (fees, dues, tax levies, points-of-sale add ons)
- The lack of consistent cellphone coverage and fast internet service is a SIGNIFICANT barrier to economic development in the region
- Respect diverse perspectives and collaborate to listen, plan, and compromise
- Events come to town and the money stays
- No telling communities what you will be doing

- There is no “capping” numbers (yet). We can only manage expectations
- Strong landowner liability laws are key
- How can we be good stewards of the land given numbers of people visiting?
- Information on trails should be for the entire Northern Forest
- Affordable housing is an issue
- Reach a wider audience on the importance of outdoor recreation (for funding purposes)
- Don’t underestimate/under-sell your professional worth.
- Collaboration vs Competition
- Diversity of industry
- Think bigger together: resources; collaboration; marketing/outreach; workforce support; research needs; capacity building
- The priority focus is local development, not “tourism”
- Can the OIA fund a regional position to advocate for and bring assistance to underserved communities that lack the organizational capacity to seek funding?
- Could have a regional standard “Northern Forest” information site system (i site0 so that anywhere a traveler goes it’s easy to find local info and a universal easy to see signage system for restrooms and more public restrooms in our villages
- Take a coordinated regional approach to updating our SCORPS to help address today’s issues- including getting real, honest, (clearly defined) numbers to reflect outdoor recreation economy for region
- Get states to play together at highest level.
- Promote development of an Outdoor Recreation Dept in NY State DEC
- Convene range of community stakeholders to build consensus around a definition of what success of development effort will look like. Who is responsible for convening stakeholders? Destination Management Organizations? Chambers? Funders?
- Collaboration may/will require rebuilding Of current or traditional means of funding, community planning models, etc.
- Outdoor recreation is stronger when we take into account visitor perceptions of experience (and us) and community voice.
- Intentional Outdoor Recreation tourism development is hugely important
 - ➔ “Don’t let tourism happen to you.”
 - ➔ Community conversations about how fast to grow and what to do when you find that growth has happened too fast.
- Active funder-supported, regional collaboration (Betterment Fund model)
- Standardization of visitor use experience on a multi-state basis
- We need to advocate for outdoor recreation as the economic driver it is and be unified (through diverse user groups)
- Let’s explore social impact investing in the Northern Forest! (quantify ventures)