

Natural and Working Lands Working Group Meeting

4/30/2024

Intro JoD

Shifting today's agenda to Mitchell Center first, then public comment (so subgroups can take in and respond to this), then reports from the subgroups. What will be critical to what ends up in the Climate Action Plan is the body of recommendations and actions from the subgroups.

Caroline Noblet (CN), Mitchell Center (MC).

Mitchell Center report will be available in writing in a couple of weeks. Caroline will send the slide deck.

They surveyed/worked with a variety of groups. Tribal groups prefer government to government interactions. Healthy/local food, clean water, natural spaces rose to the top in the surveys, climate change just after that. What do people regularly access/seek to access? Water and land for recreation. Barriers include lack info what's available, cost of access, transportation, processes to gain access. Barriers to use include increased ticks, browntail, lack frozen pond/snow.

More funding (education and staffing) and recognizing Wabanaki sovereignty will improve access and improve and protect resources.

Local Food is available in local grocery stores and farmers markets. Barriers include price, finding culturally preferred foods, food deserts, information on grocery items, empower people to produce their own food. SNAP, programs for seniors allow access.

Careers in natural resources. Barriers-lack awareness, youth barriers (looking for mentoring/guidance), new Mainer barriers (language, lack transportation, lack familiarity). Opportunities-community committees, training programs in multiple languages, hire members of underserved communities to share info.

Questions

Andy W-curious about participation numbers. The top couple items in survey responses are clear in terms of significance, but significance of other items less clear because of small sample size, not clear how to weight that concern. CN-Citizen survey was one piece of data, they had people answer a rotating bank of questions avoid survey fatigue. Through survey or community-based engagements, if things rose to top in those surveys/discussions, put on list. Not sure if those things top of mind were necessarily most important.

Dana Doran. Are there any plans for focus groups to expand the data set or to truth-test what came in from survey. CN-as guinea pigs, this is first time they've dived into data, they know where respondents live, have asked questions about themselves, so know who falls into which priority populations. Can do spatial analysis. Yes, have held focus groups, have asked community-based partners to follow up with survey data. Shifting into a second round of engagements. Those community-based partners are KVCAP, Maine Council on Aging, PassivHaus, Community

Organizing Alliance, Coastal Enterprises Inc, Sunrise County Economic Council, Maine Environmental Education Association, Center for Ecology Based Economy.

Maureen Drouin-when prepared for meeting, didn't have access to that info, this is broadening our lens. CN-more helpful to hear from JoD. Brittany Peets expressed same sentiment in terms of food and successes.

JoD- MC was supposed to just gather info, not make recommendations. CN-yes, that was her understanding. NWL group is in a better position to make recommendations as are more engaged in components than MC. Our deadline is in ~ 2 weeks, we need to get this information to our groups and incorporate it in our final recommendations next meeting. There will be an opportunity for public input after that during the Climate Council process.

Amanda-We can flag important things that might need more dialogue, more research, and more understanding.

Nyalat Biliew, Sierra Club-question – list of organizations MC surveyed is not broad enough, what went into choosing those organizations and how they accurately represent the populations they're supposed to represent. Wants to understand the survey process-respondents spoke about low hanging barriers, there may be more in-depth information. MC-lots of people (GOPIF, working groups) made suggestions about groups that work with priority populations. Reached out to a lot of organizations to see if they were willing to partner. NB-Was there any intentionality diversifying that wide net? Community Organizing Alliance works with Somali, but there are other immigrant communities. Were those people in the room? MC-yes, we know we don't have that social capital with a lot of those groups, but the other organizations did.

JoD asked MC for full list of organizations they engaged with. If there are obvious gaps, people can provide public comments or NWL group can provide comments. CN will include w/ copy of slides. NB-really wants to make point as new Mainer that it was hard to understand structure and process. She now gets paid to engage in this work and to be present. All of us representing our communities have resources to engage and understand the work. Others may not have the capacity to understand this work or to engage, can't necessarily represent themselves in this space, no matter how many surveys or conversations, they can't necessarily be in the room... she is paid and has education and still has hard time, others may have really hard time.

Public Comment *(these will be submitted in writing to Tom Gordon)*

Alex Redfield, Food Solutions New England, Wildlands Woodlands Communities. Are there any priority populations on that list that are not represented? Is there disproportionate representation for some groups? Important to understand the community feedback that was gathered.

Acknowledge scale and transformative impact of investment, 350-500M \$ public money to be allocated. Imagine where the dollars go and who they stop with. Cornell study 2023 examined distribution economic benefits and conservation funding. 43% of those benefits accrue to wealthiest, if we want to get maximum benefit, think about programs that see that those dollars accrue in other places. Compare this to 3c in food recs to invest in Harvest Bucks and Senior Food Share-a proven model, results in material livelihood for people who need it the most. What is most transformative in this historic moment of investment? Underscore process consideration, how much money this is, permanence of conservation investments. If things have lasting and legal perpetuity, feedback is important before we make decisions as well as having information to make decisions fairly.

Jennifer Melville representing self vs OSI. Supports Nyalat and Alex about priority populations. Was surprised by MC list, felt it was incomplete. Is there an opportunity in second round engagement to really dig into that. This opportunity to do something like conservation by design is an opportunity to reach into all our communities to see what people care about. Look at climate science, forest inventories-it's an opportunity to bring people in for full conversation. Knowing that we'll have an open process that is community driven and science driven is important.

Kristina Kalolo, Sewell Foundation (and a food equity group?)-Supports Nyalat and Alex's comments. 3c increasing funding. Invest in local foods, climate friendly practices, food/nutrition security. Build community, resilience, supply chain disruptions-local programs provided support to vulnerable communities. State food plan is a powerful opportunity to listen to place based expertise and create shared vision where we want to go as a state, but to be equitable, how it's done is important. We can create change if it's led by the people most impacted. *(Kristina had many points, suggest reading her written comments)*

Jimme DeBiasi, Maine Federation of Farmers Markets. Echoes previous comments. Operates Maine Harvest Bucks. Has secured some state funding, would love to see nutrition benefit programs that benefit a wide range of communities and farmers. Lot of economic benefits can be spoken to from farmer markets, working farms conserve lands, farmers markets pop up in areas where there isn't great access to fresh food.

Stephanie Cesario, Maine Community Foundation, 44 seems like a low number of respondents. MC close to 400 people answered other parts of survey.

Nyalat, are there educational resources provided for people to better understand the survey questions? MC- in the survey there was information to tell why they were being asked and how the information would be used. NB-was there any work to understand what the question is asking? MC-different groups had different support. Online didn't have those supports, surveys with community-based partners did have some support.

30% land recommendations-Bethany Atkins

Rec 1-Adam Bishop. Proposed revised definition of conserved lands (see slide). Every conserved land project may not achieve each of the listed benefits-this is what we're trying to achieve in the whole suite of conserved lands. Not all conserved lands provide public access.

There was a long discussion about the terminology and jargon in the original and revised definitions and highlighting specific ecosystem services. Several people (Ches Gundrun, Phillip deMaynadier, Karin Tilberg) felt it was important to keep 'conserving biodiversity', especially as ecosystem services imply anthropogenic benefits, but biodiversity stands on its own without people. Clean water should also be kept (Maureen). Carbon should be referenced (Andy W). There was discussion of equitable and inclusive (does it refer to people or the conserved lands/Bethany H, Maureen, Ivan). Pat noted the challenge of the different types of conserved lands (fee/easement) and the public's impression that they have certain rights to private lands (Jennifer). A glossary was suggested (Phillip), others felt it was important to use simple, lay-audience terminology, others felt it worth explaining more complex terms in the definition itself. Eliza T noted 'management' an important component of definition. Soil biodiversity important (Heather). The grammatical construct of the definition needs to be reviewed.

Bethany Atkins will take lead on redrafting the definition in an email subgroup with Pat Strauch, Bethany Humphrey, Maureen Drouin, Nyalat, Ches. Eliza and Jennifer will send email comments about definition to Bethany A

Rec 2: Funding, rec is for \$50M. Bethany A talked about where that number was generated from. Minor change to expand dedicated funds for 'resource conservation'). This number accounts for the fact that land will get more expensive.

Rec 3: Capacity. Lot of support for landscape conservation design/blueprint, but there is concern about what exactly this means, and if it will become a regulatory tool. Revision intended to be a way to move forward, haven't been able to dig deep into specific metrics or priorities, blueprint intended to move the conversation forward. Added 'non-regulatory' and referred to the effort more generally as 'blueprint' vs landscape conservation design, specifically referenced individual management.

Maureen-change tribes to nations when referencing Wabanaki.

Ellen Griswold -Introductory language may be helpful as it can be confusing if farmland conservation is a component of other recs. Ellen will send a few comments with examples where it could be flagged earlier on.

Ches-Rec 2, reallocation sporting goods/meals tax, her understanding that reallocation of this is not possible, federal mandate and DIFW preference to it to continue to go to general fund vs specifying where it goes. Get clarity from DIFW. Broaden that portion to reallocation of outdoor recreational goods vs sporting goods.

Comments at level of specificity that weren't appropriate in recommendations may be more appropriate to refine and incorporate with actionable items.

Food Updates, Brittany Peat

The Introduction highlights why food is so important in climate change discussion. Added context around the Maine Food Plan. New recommendation 1C to center community involvement particularly youth and underserved pops in ME food plan. Mitchell Center great jumping off point that work.

JoD, Are things in right priority order? Brittany, we organized recs in terms of long (1)- or short-term (2 & 3) goals vs priority.

Ellen G- what is the purpose of marketing plan? Are there other goals w/in that around access, consumer education, connections local food systems/climate? Identify what those goals are beyond the overarching goal of increasing consumption of ME food, especially in terms of equity. What are the subgoals we want to achieve in the marketing plan to tie to b and c. JoD recommended making sentences 3 and 4, in 3a clearer. Brittany will revise and incorporate Ellen's suggestions.

Craig L, there was an attempt to acknowledge that we're not at beginning, there are ongoing efforts and existing tools to tap into. JoD, pointing to those 2 major plans would be helpful.

Bethany H, really struck by Alex's earlier comment 3c, important piece to getting food to people, can it be more specific, with more accountability. Can we set a goal for funding and what those programs might be or provide more specific suggestions?

Silvan Shawe discussed the importance of sustained, stable funding. Understands calling out Maine Senior Farm Share, but not sure listing just one program is beneficial. There are several valuable nutrition incentive programs that provide sustainable funding and administration for those programs. Silvan will offer suggestions to Brittany about this.

There was discussion about including climate-friendly agricultural practices such as organic production (Heather S). JoD, there isn't sufficient reference to climate friendly practices. Andy W noted that life cycle assessment shows non-organic food has lower greenhouse production than organic. Pat referenced his family dairy farm, high carbon in dairy farm soils, doesn't feel we gain anything splitting this out.

Craig-group trying to make 3 points (1) a localized food system has potential to have positive climate benefits, (2) if is here we have mor opportunity to influence those, and (3) is a mitigation strategy in terms of reduced food miles and resiliency-shortening vulnerable supply lines.

Andy W struck by MC work and Nyalat's comments, how do we enter this sector? Silvan, there was a lot of conversation around targeting tech assistance and service to priority populations, feels it is important to call out and include.

Jeff-still has issue w/ 30% goal and not knowing where we currently are. How do we articulate that to the public?

Forest Carbon, JoD

Page 4 in packet-The introductory paragraph is an attempt to bring together the work of the three working groups, then three templates w/ their own paragraphs. Three topics independently don't tell as compelling a story as together, is why this is there.

Red line changes to shorten. Discussion 3f and 3g.

3f is on the appropriations table and may be taken up in the coming days. This is an important rec (Karin). Be more explicit because of the amount of work that went into this, it exists right now, but needs that funding (Ches). Change from 'should be reviewed' to be more explicit that there's language that needs to be forwarded/implemented, needs to be a stronger recommendation. Rec that if not passed, climate council should build on (re-introduce) this hard work that has been done (Karin, JoD).

3g attempt to get at cross state collaboration, introduced potential language last meeting. Sticking point in 3rd line 'to define' suggesting multi-state collaboration would be used to define how ME does this activity (Andy W). JoD, one outcome of which would be for ME to define. Intention is it is informed by but not determined by.

Wrap-up

Info from this meeting will go on webpage ASAP. The bulk of the next meeting is to address any priorities you think critical to the template such as priority populations.

When you receive the packet for the next meeting, go through MC info again and review the priority population section in the template and see if there are better ways to incorporate recommendations. This may be tricky in that a lot of recs aren't quantitative-aspirational or somewhat vague is OK. If there are other questions you want to focus on, we can build an agenda around that.

The public comment period will be early in the meeting.

Discussion about role of equity committee-their role is to support questions each working group brings up and to have their input integrated in recommendations.

Final public comments *(conserved lands comments put w/ discussion above)*

Val-have talked some today about ways priority populations might have been better engaged along the process, some of our recs are to make more processes w/ more committees making more decisions. Call out that those processes should be done with groups that are primarily from priority populations because they know what solutions they need. How can we make sure that happens? What support do those populations need? Compensation, better meeting times, childcare, transportation. Will send comments.

Next mtg May 15, 10-1