

Recreational Support Businesses

At its April meeting the committee expressed an interest in considering what regulatory changes might facilitate the growth of existing, and development of new, businesses that support outdoor recreation, but which may not be considered a recreational lodging facility¹. This document describes recreational uses occurring in the region, provides some examples of the commercial businesses that support recreational users, and discusses some considerations for where those businesses might be located. These are preliminary thoughts provided by the LUPC staff, not as a thorough listing, but as a means of generating committee discussion.

Recreational Uses and Support Businesses

Some recreational uses that attract visitors to the region include: motorized trails-based activities, non-motorized trails-based activities, water-based activities, and wildlife viewing & other traditional forms of recreation. All of these activities rely on ancillary goods and services provided by small businesses. Some of the more general commercial businesses that support recreational users include: restaurants, cafes & bars, grocery stores, retail, and gas stations. Other businesses and services may provide more indirect support for the recreational economy and can include some construction businesses, sign-makers, cartographers, police, fire, and ambulance coverage, as well as public meeting spaces where trail groups or other volunteers can gather (e.g., clubhouses, community spaces, etc.).

Many of these support businesses serve more than one user group. There are some common needs to all groups like gas, food, restaurants, etc. After long hours moving down the trail, through the forest, or spent out on the water, grabbing a bite to eat and a beer at a local establishment can cap a perfect day in the Maine Woods. Setting aside these commonalities for a moment, it may be useful to think about the components of a business from the perspective of different recreational user groups and the kinds of services and products they may expect.

Non-motorized trail users such as hikers, mountain bikers, climbers, cross-country skiers, trail runners, backpackers, walkers, and others may expect the following services and products:

- Bike repair, rental and sales;
- Ski repair, rental and sales;
- Camping, hiking, climbing, and other equipment rental and sales; and
- Others?

Motorized trail users such as ATV riders, snowmobile riders, Jeep/ORV enthusiasts, and others may expect the following services and products:

¹ While sporting camps and similar lodging often provide direct services for many different kinds of recreational experiences, the recent change in the Commission's rules regarding recreational lodging facilities addressed many of the land use concerns around appropriately locating this kind of development.

- ATV or snowmobile repair, rental or sales;
- ORV tracks, “mud runs”, and facilities for technical riding;
- Maps, accessories, and safety equipment sales; and
- Others?

Water-based recreational users such as boaters, whitewater enthusiasts, canoeists, kayakers, and sailors may expect the following services and products:

- Various equipment and facilities to support white-water rafting and paddling;
- Boat, jet ski, and other watercraft equipment repair, rental, and sales;
- Guiding services;
- Canoe, kayak, and paddling accessories repair, rental, and sales; and
- Others?

Wildlife viewing and traditional recreational users may expect the following services and products:

- Hunting, trapping, and fishing gear and accessory sales (e.g., gear, bait, licenses, etc.);
- Camping, orientation and other accessories – sales and rental;
- Wildlife interpretation including books, binoculars, and other accessories;
- Guiding services and equipment rental; and
- Others?

Services and products for “down time”, when users are not engaged in recreational activities:

- Food & drinks served on premise (could include outdoor, temporary facilities);
- Groceries;
- Gas;
- Books, arts, crafts & memorabilia;
- Picnic areas/outdoor space;
- Indoor meeting space for clubs/groups;
- Information centers;
- Real estate services; and
- Others?

Under the Commission’s current rules, it can be difficult for businesses that provide support services and products for recreational users to locate closer to areas where there may be demand for these services and products (such as where trail systems converge), particularly if these areas are remote and somewhat removed from other similar kinds of development.

Locational Considerations

When considering where a recreational support business should locate, it may be useful to think about things the business should be relatively near to, and things the business should be relatively far from. What is meant by “far” or “near” may change depending on the details (such

as the size and type of business, how much activity it generates, what other uses are in the area, what resources are in the area, etc.). But for now it may be sufficient to think about why it would be desirable for the business to be far from something, or near something, from the perspective of the business owner, from the perspective of others in the area, and to ensure adequate protection for public resources and values.

Considerations for a business may include:

- Ease of access to and from the site
- Proximity to attractions, natural features, or activity hubs
- Proximity to services and workforce

Considerations for others in the area may include:

- Keeping incompatible uses separate from each other
- Minimizing impacts to existing uses (such as forestry and recreation)
- Allowing for future desirable uses

Considerations for protection of public resources and values may include:

- Efficient and economical provision of public services (such as fire and rescue, road upkeep & plowing, solid waste)
- Minimize development and fragmentation of land ownership near productive natural resource based activities
- Maintain remote and undeveloped character of areas
- Ensure continued availability of quality water, air, forest, wildlife habitat and other natural resource values of the area
- Promote economic health of development centers

Factors that influence where it would be appropriate for a business to locate could include being **near to** or **far from**:

- Roads and other infrastructure;
- Trailheads and intersections of trail networks;
- Activity centers (such as rafting centers, ski areas, eco-tourism sites);
- Service centers or retail hubs;
- Areas with traditional recreation opportunities (hunting, trapping, and fishing);
- Water features (ponds, lakes, rivers);
- Public lands, parks and facilities (such as boat launches);
- Recreational lodging and campgrounds; and
- Existing development patterns

Where it would be desirable to locate each kind of business depends on finding a balance between business needs and protection of resources and existing uses.

Questions for Consideration

1. What need or demand is there, or will there be, for:
 - a. Equipment rentals and repairs
 - b. Food, groceries and drinks
 - c. Guiding and instruction services
 - d. Other supplies and services?
2. What goods or services should be provided “in town” – in service centers, towns and villages, and areas with existing development?
 - a. Why?
3. What goods or services should be, or need to be, provided closer to remote activity centers?
 - a. Why?
4. What does the committee need to do to meet the objectives of the first phase:
 - a. to refine the area of focus;
 - b. to identify goals for the planning process;
 - c. to identify key issues relating to the area of focus; and
 - d. to outline the contents of a final product?