**Greater East Grand Region Economic Planning Team**
**Danforth, Maine**
**For Immediate Release**

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## Economic Planning Effort Begins in the Greater East Grand Region of Eastern Maine

*"The lowland forests and wetlands of the Mattawamkeag, the ridges overlooking the valley of the Baskahegan, and the highlands and lakes of the Upper St. Croix"*

It was in April 2019, that nearly 40 area citizens, business owners, town officials and planning consultants gathered at the historic Danforth Town Hall to discuss the future of this sparsely populated East Grand Region of eastern Maine. It is an area of over 300,000 acres, situated at the extremities of three (3) counties, divided by the Washington – Aroostook county line and eight (8) of the seventeen (17) area towns are within the Unorganized Territory (UT).

The resounding theme was:
*"We want our children to live here; we want those who love the outdoors to visit. Recent area investments mean we are not starting from ground zero; this is all important. Act now!"*

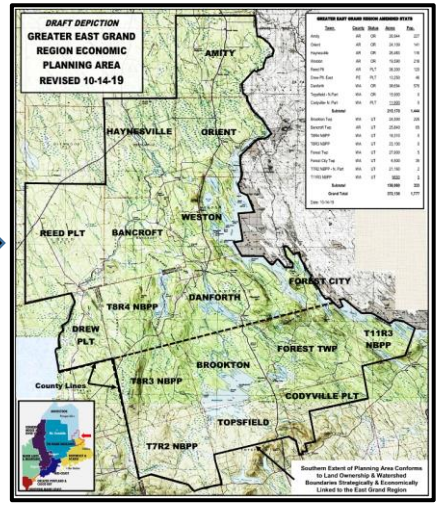
Based on much research, the planning team has chosen a citizen-driven, asset-based approach to economic planning and development. Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC) and Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) have partnered as supporters and participants.

With a recent award of $10,000 from the Washington County TIFF and nearly an equal amount of private donations, the planning team thru SCEC, has engaged Sarah Strickland of Strategic Wisdom Partners in Robbinston, Maine as Project Director. Full funding of the project is anticipated by December; the total budget being $45,000, including in-kind contributions.

Over the next six (6) months, Strickland and the team will be meeting with groups and individuals within each community to identify key assets suitable for potential economic benefit. The final report will focus on combined strengths, gaps, connections and solutions. The underlying goal of the plan is to overcome past barriers to communication by arbitrary administrative, financial, and political use of county and municipal boundaries.

Realistic expectations include: maintain and grow existing businesses; foster new entrepreneurships; help address physical blight; facilitate workforce training; develop nature-based recreational infrastructure; expand services to lake neighborhoods; improve/expand local agriculture; promote connectivity to place and heritage; become a credible voice of economic advocacy; and build partnerships between communities and organizations.

The planning team would like to thank all those who have provided funding and incentive for this project. Of note are several area timberland owners, the Chipuneticook Lakes International Conservancy (Efforts with Forest City Dam), Washington County Council of Governments, and the Washington County Board of Commissioners.

Partnering organizations include: Citizens Organization for Rural Education, Machias Savings Bank, East Grand School, the Towns of Danforth and Weston, the Greater East Grand Lake Chamber of Commerce, Sunrise County Economic Council, and the Northern Maine Development Commission.

**MAP DEPICTION GREATER EAST GRAND ECONOMIC PLANNING REGION**