

**June 10, 2020**  
**Final Press Release**

**ConnectMaine Broadband Planning Grant Awarded to  
Greater East Grand Region (GEGR) Economic Development Initiative**

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A \$10,000 community broadband planning grant was awarded to the *Greater East Grand Region Economic Development Initiative* by the ConnectMaine Authority earlier in June. The grant will help engage communities, identifying needs and engage potential broadband service providers to expand the availability of broadband to the region. Matching funds, which are required by ConnectMaine, will be secured over the next three months, to complete the funding for the Phase 1 study.

The *GEGR Economic Development Initiative* is a citizen-led effort to study and recommend regional priorities that can improve economic vitality and community sustainability in the region. One of the critical infrastructure needs identified for the region was expanded availability of high-speed broadband. Since Covid-19, this infrastructure need has been significantly amplified – as remote learning and telehealth have become required for students, teachers and patients. Looking ahead, interest in moving to rural communities is anticipated and reliable high-speed internet is a pre-requisite for people who are working remotely.

The *GEGR Broadband Task Force* will lead the Phase 1 planning effort and include co-chairs Dwayne Young and Jenn Fronczak, Ardis Brown, Peggy White, Jessica Potter, Kyle Burdick, Carolyn Fickett, Elbridge Cleaves, Denise Smith and Susan Hatton. Don Flewelling, Pioneer Broadband, will provide technical expertise to assess the current and needed infrastructure. Sarah Strickland, Strategic Wisdom Partners, will assist in assessing resident need and digital equity issues.

Dwayne Young shared, “we are excited to be starting this effort this year because it is a critical priority of the regional economic planning initiative. And as we have learned over the past three months, access to reliable, high speed broadband is more important than ever. This will be a marathon to get us from where we sit today to an expanded network – but this first step will position our region and its broadband partners to secure available federal and state funds for the next phase of work.”

For additional information please contact:

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The Greater East Grand Region includes the communities of Amity, Orient, Haynesville, Bancroft, Weston, Reed Plantation, Drew Plantation, Danforth, Forest City, Brookton TWP, Forest TWP, Codyville Plantation, T11R3, T8R4, T8R3, T7R2.

The ConnectMaine Authority was created by the legislature in 2006 to make a secure, reliable, competitive and forward-looking broadband infrastructure and make broadband service universally available. It is funded by a small assessment on land lines and broadband services to customers in Maine, with an annual budget of just over \$1.5 million.