

MEMORANDUM Email String

Date: February 10, 2020

To: Greater East Grand Region Economic Planning Team

By: Elbridge

Re: Email String – Angela Wotton – SASWCD - NRCS Contact – Houlton Maine

QUESTION

From: Elbridge <egcleaves@pioneerwireless.net>

Sent: Thursday, February 6, 2020 1:36 PM

To: Wotton, Angela - NRCS-CD, Houlton, ME <angela.wotton@me.nacdnet.net>

Cc: 'Sarah Strickland' <sbs04671@gmail.com>

Subject: Great East Grand Region Economic Planning Effort - Southern Aroostook Soil & Water Conservation District - Natural Resources Conservation Service

Hi Angela:

Thank you for your time this morning on the phone. It was good to hear that you love our area and praise the scenic beauty, rural character and abundance of natural resources. Those are our key assets.

This email follows up the call with some information about the Greater East Grand Region Economic planning effort, and our desire to obtain your input about SASWCD and/or NRCS programs which you believe should be included in forthcoming economic planning recommendations, especially regarding local agriculture and local food. We estimate there are approximately 2000 acres of inactive, fallow and overgrown farmlands in the GEGR. Most (not all) of these fields are small in size, and had a history of dairy and pastureland. Some of these fields continue to produce hay thus remain in an open condition. There are also a few examples of active farming, particularly David Apgar with the Snow Farm situated in Danforth, and at least two small beef operations, one in Orient and the other in Danforth.

There is no need, necessarily, to duplicate information and/or resources that you may have already provided to municipalities in the area. Our goal is to find ways to support ongoing efforts whether in communities or with individuals.

If you think it would be more efficient to garner your input in a meeting rather than by an email inquiry we would be happy to do so. Attached is a Map Depiction of the Greater East Grand Region Planning Area and a somewhat dated press release as we now have proceeded quite far into the planning process.

We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you. Sincerely, Elbridge Cleaves, Member GEGR Planning Team PS-Sarah Strickland is the GEGR Economic Planning Project Director

ANSWER

From: Wotton, Angela - NRCS-CD, Houlton, ME [<mailto:angela.wotton@me.nacdnet.net>]

Sent: Monday, February 10, 2020 9:56 AM

To: Elbridge <egcleaves@pioneerwireless.net>

Subject: RE: Great East Grand Region Economic Planning Effort - Southern Aroostook Soil & Water Conservation District - Natural Resources Conservation Service

Elbridge,

As you probably know, the Southern Aroostook SWCD works in large part through education to provide knowledge and tools to a variety of landowners on best practices for soil and water quality. NRCS deals with cost-share programs for those landowners with resource concerns. They do have programs such as delayed mowing but sometimes those don't get funded as frequently due to low ranking compared to other natural resource issues.

When I think of East Grand area I think of the positive aspects. Danforth has started what seems to be a successful farmers market but it sounds like many of the vegetable growers are not from east grand area but maybe Hodgdon? That could be a good outlet for someone wanting to start a market garden since a local outlet is already established. I believe that there may be quite a few abandoned orchards as well? Cider making has really taken hold in Maine with people searching for appropriate wild apples – for example, we had a couple come to Aroostook Apple Day to speak about cider making and they were busy searching out and picking several bushels of wild apples while here. You-pick operations for orchards (or other fruit) are lacking as well. It seems like there are several niche markets that people could tap into to supplement their living or way of life, on a smaller scale.

I also believe that with a changing climate, Maine is going to face its own challenges with people wanting to buy land for various reasons (including for carbon credit offsetting? – I'm sure you know about that) The beauty of this area includes its rural character and finding a balance of economic growth while retaining our natural resources is difficult. I do hope that with the Monument that there will be more opportunity for businesses like bed and breakfast places or farm stays – places that provide a more authentic experience. And for hunting or fishing I believe that Maine has 98% of the brook trout population. Those kinds of things are draws and should be highlighted in any plan.

I don't think I helped but thanks for letting me ramble. Both SASWCD and NRCS are here as resources to the public on many different levels from technical assistance to education to conservation programs. If we can help as you progress with your planning, please let me know. Angie Wotton Southern Aroostook SWCD 304 North St, Houlton 254-4126

From: Elbridge [mailto:egcleaves@pioneerwireless.net]

Sent: Monday, February 10, 2020 4:24 PM

To: 'Wotton, Angela - NRCS-CD, Houlton, ME' <angela.wotton@me.nacdnet.net>

Cc: 'Sarah Strickland' <sbs04671@gmail.com>

Subject: RE: Great East Grand Region Economic Planning Effort - Southern Aroostook Soil & Water Conservation District - Natural Resources Conservation Service

Thank you, Angela. We appreciate your input and will memorialize our GEGR email communication for future reference. I recall attending an extremely informative apple tree tour with John Bunker in our area a few years back. Your right, we do have a ton of old orchards with some very old trees some hailing from Russia -- just might be a good project. Thanks again, Elbridge

From: Wotton, Angela - NRCS-CD, Houlton, ME [mailto:angela.wotton@me.nacdnet.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 12, 2020 2:11 PM
To: Elbridge <egcleaves@pioneerwireless.net>
Subject: NRCS

I asked my colleague Helena Swiatek at NRCS for info to pass on to you and committee. Ideas to keep as reference for people who are unaware of programs with NRCS. Her email:

“The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) would offer assistance in replanting fields for forage and mowing for wildlife (which also has the benefit of keeping the fields open). Both EQIP and AMA programs offer high tunnels for vegetable production. We also have the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) that pays for the development rights, to keep farmland as farmland.

These are some examples you can pass on.”

Angie Wotton
SASWCD