



CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2009

Contacts:

Jim Gooch, Trust for Public Land, (207) 772-7424

Regional "Greenprint" Effort Completed

Bangor, Maine – When it comes to Maine's Quality of Place, if we don't hang together, we will hang separately. That is the message embodied by "The Penobscot Valley Community Greenprint: A Regional Vision for Environmental and Economic Opportunity," released today by The Trust for Public Land. The release comes after more than a year's partnership with twelve local municipalities, The Penobscot Valley Council of Governments, and the Bangor Land Trust.

When Bangor City Manager Ed Barrett approached the Trust for Public Land last April for help in developing an open space plan, the goal was simple: craft a vision for parks and open space for Bangor.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a nonprofit conservation group recently noted for the successful protection of Katahdin Lake at Baxter State Park, Shaker Village in New Gloucester, and the Bayside Trail in Portland. However, TPL's mission goes beyond parcel-by-parcel conservation into helping communities plan for conservation and creating strategies to accomplish it.

TPL offered the City a service known as "Greenprinting." Through public meetings and surveys, TPL asks a community to identify and rank its conservation preferences and priorities. Hard data about the community's land base is married to this wish list. Using computer modeling and geographic information system (GIS) mapping technology, TPL then helps develop maps that pinpoint community land-use patterns, values, and priorities.

At the suggestion of Bangor officials, TPL reached out to surrounding communities to explore regional interest in this effort. Ultimately, 11 other municipalities invested in this project and became stakeholders: Bradley, Brewer, Eddington, Hampden, Hermon, Holden, Milford, Old Town, Orono, Orrington, and Veazie.

Over the last year, TPL conducted a region-wide telephone survey, held two public listening sessions, conducted 30 intensive interviews, researched every town's Comprehensive Plan, and sought out input from a large range of local groups. A

stakeholders group of local citizens and a steering committee of local officials met regularly. "The Penobscot Valley Community Greenprint has required a significant investment of time and effort on the part of representatives of the 12 cooperating municipalities and numerous stakeholders from throughout the region" said Ed Barrett, Bangor City Manager.

Now, in the form of interactive GIS Maps and a detailed final report, a vivid portrait of this region's Quality of Place has emerged. "Quality of Place resides in the landscape, both in the built environment and in open spaces," said Jim Gooch, Program Coordinator for TPL's Maine CommunityScape Initiative. "When you can see regional conservation priorities laid out on a map, you have an objective basis for making both conservation and growth decisions."

"The City of Brewer is very fortunate to have worked with the Trust for Public Land to create the Penobscot Valley Community Greenprint," said Linda Johns, Brewer City Planner. "It was amazing how TPL organized the project and pulled the 12 participating communities together for a cohesive product to benefit not only individual municipalities, but also the entire region. The Greenprint will be a very useful tool giving direction for amendments to the Land Use Code and the Open Space Plan. It will also aid in work with the Brewer Land Trust on what areas of the community should be preserved open space or improved with parks and trails."

Establishing the Greenprint is only the first step, Johns pointed out. "Many of the relationships between the individuals involved in the Greenprint will continue with contributions to regional organizations and coalitions. We now have the resources, when combined together, to make real changes happen."

A series of Action Steps developed by the stakeholders is included in the report. Almost all of them reflect a need for greater planning cooperation among the communities of the Penobscot Valley. "The Greenprint identifies and maps in an interactive and usable format identified conservation priorities and provides a blueprint for these communities to follow to ensure that we preserve and protect a shared heritage while supporting a vibrant regional economy," said Barrett. "Working with stakeholders and partners, our communities can now work to implement the findings of this effort in a manner consistent with our vision of protecting and preserving our high quality of place as a basis for continued and future prosperity."

"A picture – in this case our maps – is worth a thousand words. It is so much more than I thought it would be," exclaimed Nancy Chaiyabhat, a resident of Hampden who served on the Stakeholder Group. "The reports, summaries, and tables that accompany the maps are excellent, and the overlay maps are beautifully effective in bringing all of the information we collected to life. This is a great example of the difference between reading information in tabular form and seeing it through the clarity of a picture.

Chaiyabhat continued, "I am extremely proud of the elected officials and professional staff members of the municipalities that have shown the vision and insight to join this regional project."

The Penobscot County Council of Governments will maintain the web-based system on behalf of the communities involved. All communities will be able to access the maps; PVCoG stands ready to help them make use of the maps as they plan the future of their shared landscape.

TPL's Gooch concluded, "At a time when development pressures are threatening our communities' character and when Maine towns are just beginning to think about their "quality of place" as their strongest economic asset, these Penobscot Valley communities are making a plan to do something about it."

Copies of the Final Report and Brochure are available at town offices or by contacting The Trust For Public Land. Maps can be viewed at "http://tpl.geocortex.net/Penobscot_Greenprint/"

The Trust for Public Land, established in 1972, specializes in conservation real estate, applying its expertise in negotiations, public finance, and law to protect land for people to enjoy as parks, greenways, community gardens, urban playgrounds, and wilderness. In Maine, TPL has protected over 100,000 acres with projects ranging from city parks and pathways to coastal habitat and working farms and forests. For more information, visit TPL on the web at www.tpl.org.