

# FOUR ELEMENTS OF A STRONGER CLUP

Prepared by Native Forest Network

We are requesting that LURC make substantial changes to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) in four key areas: climate change, economics, ecosystem protection, and democratic planning.

## 1) CLIMATE CHANGE

Global climate change presents one of the greatest threats to human and planetary well-being in history. As industrialized cultures continue to pour massive amounts of carbon emissions into the atmosphere, the earth's capacity to absorb and store carbon is diminished by the ongoing destruction of the world's forests. Maine's North Woods is part of a global tract of temperate forests that act as a significant part of "the world's lungs." Any activities that diminish the health of these forests only act to deepen the emerging climate crisis. It is critically important that LURC understand this reality and the responsibility that comes with it.

We are asking LURC, in their new CLUP, to:

Develop a chapter that specifically addresses climate change.

Clearly identify the severity of climate change to the ecological, economic and social health of the region and state.

Identify, based on review of the best currently-available scientific literature, the region's significant current ecological contributions--on both a regional and global scale--to climate change remediation.

Affirm that LURC has a responsibility to current and future generations in regard to protecting these assets.

Mandate that "significantly reducing the region's contributions to climate change and protecting the region's capacity to contribute to climate stability" be included as a major requirement of all future land use planning decisions made by LURC.

Affirm that the carbon cycle is not private property and must be managed for the collective good for the current and future generations and ecosystems of the region.

Affirm that hydrological system integrity and health is a keystone element to eco-system protection and long term climate stability. Water is part of the Commons, where all have the right to use, but no one has the right to profit from water.

## **2) DEMOCRATIC, LOCAL & COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

For too long, communities in the North Woods have been presented with a false choice between the kind of "economic development" offered by large, multinational forest products corporations and a future of perpetual hardship and underdevelopment. The long-term health of the region's communities and environment can only be sustained by implementing a different model of development.

In place of an economy dependent on a small number of large, out-of-state employers, we call for economic development strategies that build on local strengths and assets, that foster local participation and economic control, that build long-term community wealth (rather than extracting it to the pockets of distant owners), and that recognize that economic and ecological health are inseparable.

It is LURC's responsibility to engage in land use planning that serves these kinds of community-based development goals. While the Commission does envision, in the new CLUP, "well-planned, appropriate development that does not adversely affect the natural resource and other values," their strategy for fostering economic development remains reactive. Unless a proactive approach for democratic, community-based development is explicitly adopted, the current corporate-driven status quo will continue and LURC will be forced simply to limit its adverse impacts.

We are asking LURC, in their new CLUP, to:

Clearly identify that the ongoing and historical pattern of economic dependence on a small number of large corporations--and the disproportionate power they wield--poses a major threat to the long-term economic security and stability of North Woods communities and ecosystems.

Outline the framework for a substantial and viable vision for environmentally-sustainable and socially equitable community-based economic development in the region, one that reduces dependency on unstable global and national markets and on out-of-state corporations and builds strong, local economies in which local people are equitably empowered to determine their own futures.

Develop land use rules appropriate to fostering such a vision.

Develop and adopt methods of economic measurement for the evaluation of proposed land use changes that account for:

- a) The substantial differences between locally-owned, community-based businesses and non-local corporations.
- b) The differences between different types of employment, their impacts on individual workers, family and community life and the environment, and their long-term stability.
- c) The "externalized" costs of certain forms of economic development that, while creating jobs and economic growth, might do so in the present at the expenses of the future. Measuring long-term economic and social impacts of proposed developments is crucial.
- d) The ways in which different forms of economic development affect different communities of people and the cultures that they share. How might the development of high-end housing, for example, affect low-income families in a given community?

### 3) PROTECTION OF LARGE-SCALE INTACT ECOSYSTEMS.

The current CLUP draft is built on a framework that views the environment as a set of "resources" rather than the basic context that sustains all living things. Whole ecosystems are divided, then, into clusters of discrete attributes such as "forest resources," "plant and animal habitat resources" and "scenic resources." This approach encourages the reductionist thinking that allows for living ecosystems to be cut up piecemeal until they cannot sustain life.

We are asking LURC, in their new CLUP, to:

Develop a clear definition of "ecosystem" and "ecosystem health" that allows land use planning decisions to be evaluated in terms of their broad impacts on interdependent communities of plants, humans, other animals and the landscapes in which they live. For example, a key to ensuring ecosystem health is to prevent habitat fragmentation. Language affirming the importance of wildlife corridors, especially for large predators, would be important. A mandate to preserve large predator corridors and rehabilitation of lost ones would be better.

Develop a legal understanding that ecosystems have an inherent right to live, thrive and unfold in its own evolutionary time frame. The new CLUP should contain language that recognizes that living ecosystems have the same individual legal rights as natural individuals or (legally fictitious) corporations.

Develop a land use plan whose driving framework is the management of the land base for maximum biodiversity. As this idea pertains specifically to forest management practices, forests should be managed for multiple species and age classes and not even-aged management. Even-aged management is regressive and leads to unhealthy disease-prone forests that do not sequester as much carbon dioxide as healthy, biodiverse forests.

Develop a land use plan that will address future threats to the forest ecosystem such as the introduction of genetically engineered trees for use in large scale paper or biofuel/cellulose ethanol production. The introduction of genetically engineered trees would negatively impact the biodiversity, water, land, forests and the communities that depend on intact forest ecosystems, and could trigger an ecological disaster for forest trophic chains. The use of unreliable and dangerous "terminator" technologies, proposed as a solution for the possible genetic contamination of forests, would only worsen the problem by potentially resulting in the extinction of numerous species associated with the flowering and fruit-bearing of trees. The new CLUP should prohibit the release of genetically modified trees - including field testing – or, at a minimum, declare that such plantations are a form of development that can only proceed with a full hearing process.

Affirm that the carbon cycle is not private property and must be managed for the collective good for the current and future populations and ecosystems of the region.

Affirm that hydrological system integrity and health is a keystone element to eco-system protection and long term climate stability. Water is part of the Commons, where all have the right to use, but no one has the right to profit from water.

#### **4) EQUITABLE AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING.**

We are asking LURC in their new CLUP to:

Affirm that a primary goal in all LURC land use planning is to foster genuine, equitable democratic participation from all people and communities who may be affected by such planning. The CLUP could address the needs of people who live in towns bordering LURC territory to have a more effective voice in land use decisions, especially in the permitting of things such as large-scale water extraction or waste dumping facilities in LURC territory, which can impact the water quality and truck traffic in surrounding towns.

True democratic planning would build equity into the participation process, reducing power imbalances by eliminating corporate influence and in place, only give credence to the voice of natural persons.

The CLUP could address concerns about scale appropriate zoning. Many people are calling for more fair and effective ways for LURC to set up its permitting process so that individuals or families can more easily make small-scale low-impact changes to a home or camp without having to deal with unnecessary red tape, while at the same time making sure there is an effective process that allows the Public to have a voice in decisions about large-scale, high-impact developments.