

**NORTH COUNTRY
COUNCIL
PLANNING
REGION
COMMUNITIES**

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Berlin
Bethlehem
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Carroll
Chatham
Clarksville
Colebrook
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Dalton
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Easton
Eaton
Ellsworth
Errol
Franconia
Gorham
Groton
Harts Location
Haverhill
Jackson
Jefferson
Lancaster
Landaff
Lincoln
Lisbon
Littleton
Lyman
Madison
Milan
Monroe
Northumberland
Pittsburg
Plymouth
Randolph
Rumney
Shelburne
Stark
Stewartstown
Stratford
Sugar Hill
Thornton
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Whitefield
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North Country Council, Inc.
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Bethlehem, NH 03574

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**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS**

March 22, 2011, *Transportation Advisory Committee*, 3-5:30 p.m., NCC Offices.

April 6, 2011, *CEDS Meeting*, 2-4:00 p.m., NCC Offices.

April 6, 2011 *Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee*, 4:30-6:30 p.m., NCC Offices.

April 20, 2011, *Transportation Advisory Committee*, 3-5:30 p.m., NCC Offices.

May 4, 2011, *CEDS Energy Subcommittee Meeting*, 2-4:00 p.m., NCC Offices.

May 4, 2011 *Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee*, 4:30-6:30 p.m., NCC Offices.

May 18, 2011, *NCC Board Meeting*, 3-5:00 p.m., NCC Offices.

June 1, 2011, *CEDS Meeting*, 2-4:00 p.m., NCC Offices.

June 1, 2011 *Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee*, 4:30-6:30 p.m., NCC Offices.

June 15, 2011, *Transportation Advisory Committee*, 3-5:30 p.m., NCC Offices

July 6, 2011, *CEDS Energy Subcommittee Meeting*, 2-4:00 p.m., NCC Offices.

July 6, 2011 *Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee*, 4:30-6:30 p.m., NCC Offices.

July 20, 2011, *NCC Board Meeting*, 3-5:00 p.m., NCC Offices.



North Country Council
Regional Planning Commission

POINTS NORTH

A Regional Report From The North Country Council

North Country Council, 107 Glessner Road, Bethlehem, NH 03574

March 2011

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NCC Chosen as "One of the Most Effective in the Nation"

by
US Economic Development Administration

In addition to being a state designated regional planning commission, North Country Council (NCC) is a federally designated economic development district (EDD) which maintains the region's comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS).

Over the winter, NCC hosted university researchers who were hired by Economic Development Administration (EDA) Headquarters in Washington DC to "gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing EDD's as they plan for and help facilitate economic strategies". Specifically, the research team was hired to 1) conduct an assessment on the effectiveness of EDA-funded EDD's and an assessment of the quality of the comprehensive economic development strategies (CEDS) documents produced by the EDD's. As part of this study, NCC was chosen as "one of the most effective in the nation and as one of the most effective within the northeast region" which is quite an honor given that there are over 300 EDD's nationwide.

Researchers interviewed NCC's management, Michael King, Executive Director and Jeff Hayes, Director of Economic Development, along with board members and other economic development partners 'instrumental' to NCC's success including:

- Roy Duddy, State of NH Director of Economic Development

- Glenn Coppelman, Economic Development Director, NH Community Development Finance Authority
- John Dyer, Director of Community and Corporate Affairs, White Mountains Community College
- Beno Lamontagne, State of NH DRED, NCC Board and CEDS Member
- Peter Powell, NCC Past President and CEDS Member
- Bill Andreas, current CEDS chair, NCC Board and EDA RLF for the region

Phone interviews with:

- Jack Donovan, Executive Director, NH Business Finance Authority and
- Kathy Eneguess, President, White Mountains Community College.

EDA periodically evaluates district performance looking at factors such as organizational and financial management, board of directors involvement, staff capabilities and performance, and also reviews the overall CEDS document for quality, and relevance to regional economic conditions. EDA recently approved NCC's updated CEDS adding "All who have contributed to this effort are to be commended for their outstanding work that has resulted in a well documented and presented CEDS that addresses and sufficiently describes the key CEDS elements as required by EDA's regulations under 13 C.F.R. Part 303."

In NCC's 35+ years as a federally designated economic development district, the organization has facilitated over \$40 million in direct grants from the US EDA which typically require a 50% state and local match for a total of over \$80 million in regional economic development infrastructure projects. Just about every industrial park in the northern third of the state including Littleton, Conway, Berlin, Haverhill, Whitefield, Colebrook, and Lancaster received NCC and EDA assistance to become a reality. Other projects have included community water and sewer projects, business incubators and, the latest project to be funded, is the Gorham Mill Natural Gas and Methane Pipeline being built by the Androscoggin Valley Regional Refuse and Disposal District (AVRRDD) to substantially increase the mill's access to affordable energy supplies. The latest proposal NCC has submitted to EDA is the "Groveton Mill Reuse Initiative" which recognizes the mill complex as the lifeblood of western Coos County for the last 150 years and seeks to form a public/private partnership to address redevelopment barriers after several years of closure. NCC recognizes that this honor is for the entire region and wants to thank its communities and economic development partners for helping to make its programs a success.

Planner's Corner

Unintended
ConsequencesIs Your Rural-Ag
Zoning Hurting
Farmers?

Many New Hampshire residents are placing increased value on locally grown products. Benefits are seen as security, health, economic recovery, energy efficiency, community building, and preservation of open space.

Unfortunately, many engaged in agriculture full-time find it difficult to generate enough income to support the farm and their families. Much local agriculture is now being conducted by those with other sources of income. In addition, more and more farms rely on specialty markets, direct sales, processing to produce value-added products, or creative approaches such as agritourism. Like any business, agricultural enterprises need to be able to respond to the pressures of today's global economy.

Planners and agriculture experts have begun to reexamine traditional rural-agriculture zoning to try to help communities create an environment that is supportive of the business of farming in today's world. This means ensuring that local ordinances enable the flexibility farmers need to respond to the rapidly changing technologies and economies of farming.

It is now understood that several provisions in traditional rural-agriculture zoning such as large minimum lot sizes, narrowly defined use regulations, restrictions on structures, and common sign regulations, may actually contribute to the loss of local agriculture.

The *requirement for large uniform minimum lot sizes* throughout many rural-agriculture zoning districts makes it impossible for farmers to create a house lot, e.g., for the next generation on the family farm or for revenue needed to modernize equipment, without taking substantially more acreage out of production than is needed for a home, well and septic system. In addition, neighborhood fields many farmers rely upon to lease for pasture or feed crops are increasingly becoming unavailable as they are developed into 5 or 10 acre house lots. More flexible zoning approaches such as lot size averaging are needed to enable the creation of house lots without needlessly eliminating large areas of productive farmland.

Land use provisions contained in many zoning ordinances define agriculture in terms specific to the production end of the business without regard to processing, marketing, or the need for inexpensive labor, sometimes on a seasonal basis. Typical home business-like restrictions limit processing and marketing to products produced on site with disregard for the need for the cooperative ventures

often necessary to achieve the required economies of scale. Similarly, use restrictions often preclude the activities needed to engage in agritourism, an increasingly popular way to make farming sustainable. These activities might include retail sales featuring products from a number of related ventures, lodging, or a cafe. Broader definitions of agricultural activities are needed, coupled with site plan review limited to health and safety issues.

Regulations on dwellings, buildings and structures based on what has been typical in the past can also create barriers to farmers who need the flexibility to adapt to the economies and technologies of today and tomorrow. For example, limiting dwelling units to one per lot prevents even seasonal or temporary farmworker housing. Local regulations sometimes also prevent the construction of greenhouses or temporary structures needed for storage or shelter of livestock.

Sign regulations often require a certain standard of sign unreasonable for advertizing local seasonal products. Many communities also prohibit off premises signs, again constructing a barrier to sustaining the agricultural use most communities support in principle.

Sustainable agriculture requires the support of the community, not just by shopping at farmers markets and supporting land trust efforts to obtain conservation

easements, but also to provide farmers with the flexibility needed to remain economically viable.

Several resources have been developed to aid New Hampshire communities to make their towns more farm friendly:

[Is Your Town Farm Friendly? A Checklist for Sustaining Rural Character](#), Gary Matteson, 2000. Online at cecf.unh.edu/sustainable/farmfrnd.cfm.

[Preserving Rural Character: The Agriculture Connection](#), NHOSP Revised Technical Bulletin 6, Lorraine Stuart Merrill, 2006. Online at www.nh.gov/oep/resource/library/technical_bulletins/documents/rural_character.pdf.

[Innovative Land Use Planning Techniques](#), New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commission with assistance from NHDES, NHOEP and NHMA, October 2008. Online at des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/repp/innovative_land_use.htm. See also American Farmland Trust Planning for Agriculture Guides at www.farmland.org/resources/publications/default2.asp.



Northern Pass Update

Article by: Michael King

One of the largest and maybe the most intrusive land use projects to come along in the North Country in a long time is what is known as the Northern Pass project. This development project, as I am sure most everybody is aware of by now, is to build an electrical power line from the Canadian border to a substation in Franklin, New Hampshire that

would enable the flow of approximately 1200MW of power into New Hampshire and the New England region. This power line could impact 24 towns in the North Country region. As the regional planning commission for this region, we are paying careful attention to this development and will, per our charter, provide input to the various

agencies reviewing and approving the project.

This project is still in the very beginning stages of development. There will be a number of public hearings and there will be a number of opportunities for both the regional planning commission and the public to provide input. I hope that the information here and on our

website will give you a better overview of what we have been doing and what we are planning to do. If you have questions or would like to get further information, please feel free to contact me or visit our website which we will continue to update regularly.

To date, North Country Council has taken and/or participated in the following with regards to the Northern Pass project:

- We have filed for intervenor status with the United States Department of Energy in regards to Northern Pass's application for a Presidential Permit.
- Established a link on the NCC website dedicated to correspondence and information about the Northern Pass project (www.nccouncil.org).
- Surveyed the 51 communities in the North Country Council region regarding the Northern Pass Project
- Attended a number of meetings held by the "Bury the Pass" coalition and hosted the meetings at the North Country Council offices.
- Met with Congressman Bass and Senator Shaheen.
- The Board of Directors passed a resolution opposing the Northern Pass project and requesting the commissioning of an independent study to evaluate the impacts.
- The NCC board or staff attended all of the scoping hearings in our region during the week of March 14, 2011.
- Provided input to the New Hampshire House Committee on Science, Technology and Energy in regards to House Bill 649.

Further Activities Planned:

- Provide written comments by the April 12th deadline to the scoping meetings held during the week of March 14th.
- Hold an "elected officials meeting" in the month of April to receive input on the Northern Pass project.
- Participate in the many public meetings that will be held regarding the Environmental Impact Statement, the Site Evaluation Committee Review or other Northern Pass meetings.
- Continue to publish information regarding the Northern Pass Project on our website.
- Respond to other requests that may come to North Country Council as they relate to the project.

Listed below are North Country Towns potentially in the Northern Pass Project Area (24):

Bethlehem
Campton
Clarksville
Colebrook
Dalton
Easton
Groton
Haverhill
Jefferson
Lancaster
Landaff
Lincoln
Littleton
Northumberland
Pittsburg
Plymouth
Rumney
Stewartstown
Stratford
Sugar Hill
Thornton
Wentworth
Whitefield
Woodstock