

## **Rural Youth Futures: Youth Aspirations and Labor Market Perceptions in Rural Communities**

### **Progress update: November 19, 2017**

#### *Project Team:*

- Mindy Crandall, Jessica Leahy, Nicole Bernsen, School of Forest Resources, University of Maine
- Dawna Blackstone and Andy Muller, Appalachian Mountain Club
- Jesse Abrams and Cass Moseley, Ecosystem Workforce Project, University of Oregon
- Alexa Bruckner and Liz Galli-Noble, Coos Watershed Association
- Barb Baker and Sheila Norman, Cooperative Extension, University of Maine

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#### **Research**

For the first quarter of year one (Sept – Jan), our focus is to implement the youth survey in schools in Piscataquis County, Maine, along with schools in Jackman and Dexter (two communities with ties to schools in Piscataquis County). Parental permission to participate in the survey is required.

- IRB approval was granted for recruitment activities for the youth survey.
- Dawna and Nicole worked together to contact officials at all schools involved to solicit their participation in the survey project and to discuss the distribution of permission letters.
- Permission letters were printed and distributed to schools.
- The project team held a conference call to kick off the project and review the year one timeline in October. Next call is set for December 19.
- Steering committee (SC) meetings are designed to bring together community members, educational program leads, and educators from the communities to help guide the development of the survey. SC meetings were held in Guilford on November 16<sup>th</sup> and in Dover-Foxcroft on November 20<sup>th</sup>. The draft survey was reviewed; comments & suggestions will be incorporated before final IRB approval.

#### **Education**

A graduate-level course at the University of Maine taught by Mindy Crandall and Jessica Leahy titled *Rural Communities: Theory and Practice* is integrating course material with seminars held in conjunction with Oregon students and researchers. In addition, course assignments are tailored to help advance rural community development and student engagement with rural places.

- Eleven students from a wide variety of majors are enrolled in the class for Fall 2017.
- Students gathered and summarized Census data for all the communities in this study.
- Community leaders were asked for suggested topics for a “best practices” paper to be completed by each student to address a topic of need for rural places.
- Guest lecturers represent a variety of rural development perspectives: investment (Charlie Spies, CEI Capital Management); resource-dependent communities (Bruce Weber, Emeritus, Oregon State Univ.); development of remote places (David Vail, Emeritus, Bowdoin College); rural education (Cat Biddle, Univ. of Maine); and engaged rural research (Jesse Abrams, project team, Univ. of Oregon).

#### **Outreach**

- Barb Baker, along with 5 co-authors, presented “Contribution of 4-H Participation to the Development of Social Capital within Communities” at the 2017 National Association of Extension 4-H Agents National Conference in Indianapolis, IN, November 11, 2017.
- In conjunction with the Rural Aspirations Project, the University of Maine is currently planning a *Winter Summit* for January, 2018. The summit will bring teachers to campus to investigate post-secondary and rural school landscapes in preparation for establishing a Maine Forest Collaborative.