



## **The Natural Resource Education Center at Moosehead Grant proposal for the Warming Hut/Fire Warden's Cabin**

### Background

The Natural Resource Education Center at Moosehead (NREC) is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit educational organization located on the shores of Moosehead Lake. The organization was incorporated in 1996 with the mission of providing natural resource-based education to residents and visitors of the Moosehead Lake Region, the entrance to the Maine North Woods. NREC is governed by a 100% volunteer Board of Directors. All of our funds go directly to our programming. For nearly 20 years, we have provided outdoor nature-based education to thousands of youths and adults in the area. Our Maine Woods Explorers program (MWE) is designed to get kids outdoors and enjoy the woods and water. This K-12 program runs for at least 6 weeks each summer and is coordinated with the Greenville Recreation program so children from Greenville and visitors to the area have the opportunity for a healthy, active summer vacation. In addition to children from Greenville, the program has served many youths visiting from around the US, including New York, Florida, and Texas.

It is our mission at NREC to students to increase their awareness and appreciation of the natural resources around us and to understand the stewardship necessary to sustain them. These goals are met through in-depth, science based, experiential education and outdoor recreation. We provide quality hands-on, nature-based activities that are challenging and fun. The woods and waters of Maine, especially those of the Moosehead Lake region, provide us with the perfect setting for our outdoor recreation.

### Example of two NREC programs

Two of NREC's most visible programs are the Maine Woods Explorer (MWE) program and our Visitors' Center at the entrance to the Moosehead Lake region.

Our MWE program gets kids outdoors, connects them to nature and fosters a sense of place so that they will not only appreciate the natural resources around them, but also become good stewards of these special places in which we live.

In 2009, NREC received a USDA grant via the Town of Greenville to construct a Visitors' Center in Greenville to serve the people that visit the region each year. In 2016, NREC reconstructed the nation's first manned fire tower that stood atop Big Moose (formerly Big Squaw) Mountain overlooking the majestic Moosehead Lake. The restored tower now sits on the NREC Visitors' center campus on Route

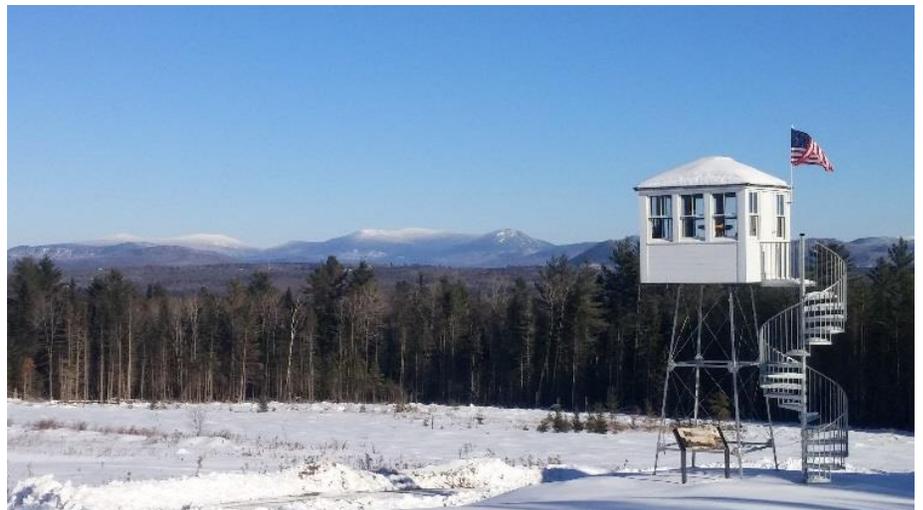
15 at the entrance to the region. The original steel framework from the early 1900s was used during construction. The new cab contains many artifacts and educational material from the 1950s and 1960s vintage fire towers. The project was completed in August and in just the first three months of operation, hundreds of visitors signed into the logbook representing dozens of States and several foreign countries. The Chamber of Commerce reported that over 7,000 visitors stopped by the campus in the summer tourist season in 2016.

### Project Description

We request support to reconstruct the Big Moose (Squaw) Mtn fire watchman's camp to provide a warming hut for the afterschool cross-country skiing program for twenty age 8-16 students and the cabin will contain educational material about the natural and cultural history of the Moosehead Lake Region for our summer visitors to enjoy.

### Overview

We propose to construct a replica of a fire watchman's camp on our Visitors' Center campus at the entrance to the Moosehead Lake region. The watchman's camp will be located next to our recently restored Big Moose (Squaw) Mtn Fire Tower. Both the camp and fire tower will serve as educational attractions to the public. Artifacts and educational literature related to the life and purpose of fire watchmen will



be included in each structure. Additionally, the camp will serve as a warming hut for the afterschool cross-country skiing program that is held on NREC property in the winter. This has been identified as a priority need from the participants and organizers. The location is exposed to the wind and can be very cold when students are preparing for the day or waiting for their parents to arrive at pick up time late in the afternoon. We will build a storage area in the rear of the camp to store the children's ski gear (mostly rentals) for the winter, making it easier for them to leave directly from school on the bus to the Visitors' Center.

## Outcomes

We have two specific outcomes. First, we hope to increase visitors to the Moosehead Lake Visitors' Center campus. Bringing more guests to the Center will provide them with a better experience while visiting the area. We have other educational projects ongoing that are not part of this grant process but will combine to provide an opportunity to learn about the natural and cultural history of the region while enjoying the spectacular view of the mountains to the east of Greenville. They will have access to the Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce staff and all the information they provide. The Chamber staff routinely track visitors so we can directly evaluate this outcome.



The second outcome is to increase the participation in the afterschool youth cross-country skiing program. We believe providing a warming hut and storage area will make the program more successful. NREC coordinates with the program organizer, Dawna Blackstone, to facilitate the program. Dawna is also an NREC Board member. NREC recently held two biathlon training events to inspire interest in this area. We believe these efforts will encourage children to get outdoors in the winter months. NREC will track the number of participants to evaluate the outcome.

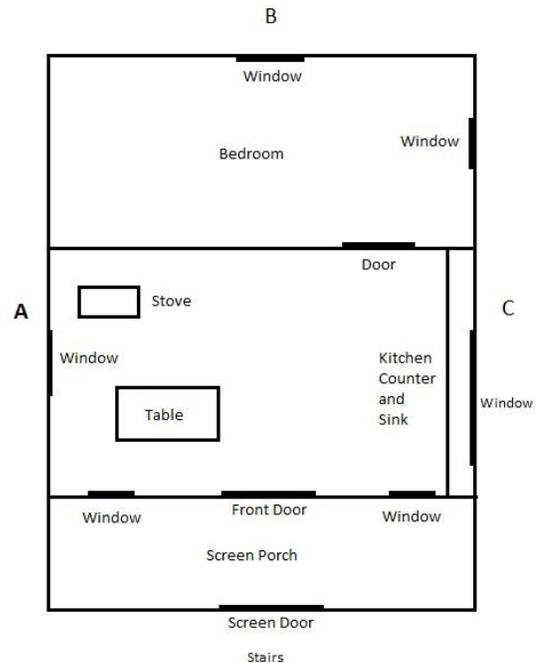
## Impacts

The Moosehead Lake Region is highly dependent on tourism and providing a quality experience is an important component in the satisfaction rate and return rate for our visitors. Happy visitors stay longer, return more often, and pass along positive information to other potential visitors. NREC has demonstrated its commitment to developing a Visitors' Center campus that will be an effective tool for the region to enhance tourism to the area. We continue to develop new programs and educational infrastructure, including this project to reach this goal.

NREC believes getting children outdoors is important to their personal health and growth, as well as to develop an understanding of their environment. This can be a particular challenge in the winter months. This project, combined with our ongoing efforts to develop a biathlon program, directly impacts (improves) our ability to offer a fun and healthy recreational opportunity once the snow begins to fall.

### Activities to achieve

1. We plan to construct the 16x26 foot fire watchman's camp in the fall of 2017. A local contractor will provide the proper fill to level the site immediately across the access road near the newly constructed fire tower. NREC will work closely with the Forest Fire Lookout Association (FFLA) to develop a building plan for the camp that is as historically accurate as possible.
2. We will also work with the FFLA to provide educational materials and artifacts for the camp.
3. We will advertise the opening through local media and social media. In the fall, we will provide information to the Greenville school system about the cross-country skiing program and the availability for a warming space and storage area and we will coordinate with the program director to help ensure children have access to ski rentals.
4. NREC will continue to develop its biathlon program to increase interest in this activity, and we will have both summer and winter related events at the Visitors Center campus.



Squaw Mountain Watchman's Camp  
Rough Layout

### Partnerships and Collaboration

We will partner with the FFLA on the construction of the watchman's camp as we did on the fire tower restoration project. The FFLA has tremendous resources regarding the history of fire towers and the people that manned them. They will provide important education to be displayed in the cabin for the public. We will also partner with the Moosehead Lake Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has an office in our Visitors' Center and can provide feedback and use information on the project. We will collaborate with the cross-country ski program director to help promote the program and ensure there is sufficient advertising with the goal of increasing participation. We also appreciate the efforts of Erik Cochrane, a private citizen, that voluntarily grooms the trails at the Visitors' Center.

## Population Served

We estimate this project will directly serve 7,000+ visitors to the Visitors' Center campus based on the estimated use from the Chamber of Commerce for 2016. These visitors are all ages and come from a wide range of locations. For example, NREC provided a sign-in logbook for the newly constructed fire tower this summer. From the opening of the tower during the second week of August through the closing in November, over 240 families and/or individuals signed the book. This, of course was not a complete record, but in that short time, people signed in from 28 different US States and 5 foreign countries. These numbers will expand as we add to the campus and have a full summer of activity. This project will also indirectly serve all the businesses in the Moosehead Lake region that cater to these visitors by enhancing the experience of the visitor and increasing rates of return visits and perhaps producing secondary visits through positive reviews of the area.



The project will also directly serve 15-20 children ages 8-14 that participate in the afterschool cross-country skiing program and biathlon programs.

## Key Personnel

Tim Obrey, NREC President: Tim will be the grant and project coordinator. Tim has written many grants in his 30 years as a Fisheries Biologist for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and as a member of the NREC Board. His past grants ranged from a few thousand dollars to an annually recurring Federal grant for nearly \$100,000 that included staff and equipment expenditure. Tim was the project coordinator for NREC's Fire Tower restoration project and the construction of the deck at the Visitors' Center.

Bill Cobb, FFLA: Bill Cobb and the FFLA provided all of the educational material and artifacts for the restored fire tower. He has extensive experience working on restoration projects related to forest fire lookouts across the US. Bill and the FFLA have many old photos from the watchman's cabin and they also have personal experience with the camp. This will be invaluable as we design the new replica.



## Board of Directors

### **Officers**

President: Tim Obrey – Regional Fisheries Biologist, Maine Dept of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Vice President: Stephen Seeback – Fisheries Specialist, Maine Dept of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Treasurer: Suzannah Sinclair - Artist

Secretary: Patti McLaughlin: Retired nurse

### **Board members**

Sally Tornquist – Appraiser, Forester, Director of Greenville Recreation Department

Mildred Kennedy-Stirling- Artist, Sporting Camp management, asset manager.

Ray Ary- Wildlife Biologist, Weyerhaeuser

Noel Wohlforth – Educator

Loyola Marsh: retired

Jeff Pomerleau –Police Chief, Greenville Police Department

Kelly McNeil: Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce

Jamie Brown: Sales, Indian Hill Trading Post

Sarah Lavigne: Property manager

Janice Lavigne: Property manager

Dawna Blackstone: Piscataquis education programs coordinator for AMC Maine

Stacey Dunham, Owner – Stress Free Moose Pub & Cafe