

# Maine Forest Products Council

## Annual Report

September 2013

Dear Members,

It is a pleasure to be celebrating another annual meeting with you this weekend.

Over the course of the past year MFPC has been focused on providing the maximum amount of value to the membership through effective advocacy and communications on a wide range of issues. We are back up to speed on support services with the addition last fall of Roberta Scruggs as our communications director and Sue McCarthy continues to do an excellent job as office manager.

The 2014 election is fast approaching and we will be investing much energy and effort in candidate forums and a concerted effort to reach out to the legislative candidates. Fortunately we have up-to-date information about the importance of our industry to Maine.

Over the past year, a subcommittee of the MFPC Board, chaired by Steve Schley with staff assistance from Roberta, has worked with the University of Maine, the Maine Forest Service, the Department of Labor and other agencies to collect the best information available. It's been included in a report on Maine's Forest Economy that will be presented in draft form this morning. We view this as a cornerstone of our major initiative to inform decision-makers, candidates and the public about our industry and the opportunities it provides.

Our agenda for the 126<sup>th</sup> Legislature necessarily focused on defense, particularly protecting the gains we made in the 125<sup>th</sup> Legislature. I'm confident, though, that we made great strides in getting to know not only the many new legislators, but also the new legislative leaders, and in demonstrating that we are a credible source of information about the issues facing our industry. Legislators will continue to look to us to provide a vision for Maine's forest economy and that gives us an opportunity to work with them on the steps needed to secure the industry's future.

As always, I appreciate the effort and energy you invest in insuring forest products remain an important piece of Maine's economy and environment.

I look forward to working with you on the challenges ahead.

With warm regards,



Patrick Strauch  
Executive Director

## 2012/2013 Financial Report

In 2012, the Board of Directors of the Maine Forest Products Council approved a budget with a dues increase of 3 percent because the capital reserve account had been decreasing. We received \$351,207 against the budgeted \$370,617 in 2012.

However, our Membership Committee has been very active and with the success of our ongoing membership recruitment, we have revitalized revenue and are beginning to build up our reserve account. Thanks to a great effort by Sue and strong support from members, our major fundraising event, the summer golf tournament, netted more than \$20,000 in July – 23 percent more than we had budgeted.

In 2012, we had separate fundraising efforts for legal expenses associated with mining labor and LURC legislation. The projects were not budgeted, but were managed independently from the operating budget.

Our building continues to provide an exceptional work environment and is heavily utilized by members, and our partners and colleagues, such as the Natural Resource Network and the Maine Forest Service. We also hosted a very successful Maine Conservation Recreation Forum in March (funded with a grant) and we continue to collect revenue from outside groups using our conference room.

During the year, the adjacent MFPC building lot has been under contract, although complications by the developer have postponed the final sale. The area is expanding with the addition of the new Maine General Hospital and we expect land values to increase as well.

## Communications Update

All of our staff and many board members have contributed to our much improved communication efforts this year. Below are a few of the highlights:

- As noted earlier, a major effort this year has been to collect up-to-date information about our industry and disseminate it to legislators, officials and the public. With the “big” book on Maine’s Forest Economy nearly completed, we are planning a press release/event to highlight the health of our industry and Maine’s forests. Patrick and Roberta also plan to go on the road -- meeting with editorial boards of the Maine’s major media, talking at forestry forums, meeting with development officials etc., across the state. Roberta is also about to create a “small” (pocket-sized) book of forest facts similar to the one developed in 2007.
- The MFPC website -- [www.maineforest.org](http://www.maineforest.org) -- was completely redesigned to better reflect our work, focus on issues, and highlight efforts and achievements by our members. It is still a work in progress. For example, all the statistics, essays, charts etc., that have been gathered and



developed for the Maine's Forest Economy book will also be distributed throughout the website, so it will be easy to focus on a single issue or topic.

- The \$8 billion economic impact of our industry also will be a major topic on our Woods and Wildlife Tour (in partnership with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife) for Maine's legislators Oct. 2-3.
- We transitioned to a weekly newsletter during the legislative session (monthly after the session) so that members could get up-to-date information on bills and have a chance to make their voices known on issues of importance before decisions were made in the Legislature. Fridays – the day the weekly newsletter was emailed -- were quite a scramble, but we think it helped members stay in touch with MFPC's efforts on their behalf, despite the fast pace of legislative events. The weekly newsletter also gave us a way to highlight other issues and events in our industry across the state and nation.
- We've been developing a databank of photos of the working forest, allowing us to share them with groups including Keeping Maine Forests, Maine Woods Forever and others.
- We're making videos now, so that people can see -- not just read about -- what's going on in our industry, including the dramatic improvements in safety (and lower workers comp rates), the use of logging simulators for training and the successful efforts of the Fisheries Improvement Network.

## Advocacy

**State Legislative Partners:** A very important part of MFPC's strategy is to connect members and their legislators. New faces are appearing at the Capitol every two years and many newcomers have little or no knowledge of the forest products industry. Having members directly educate their lawmakers on their sector of the industry provides firsthand knowledge of business operations and enables legislators to craft more effective laws.

**Congressional Delegation:** We have a very good working relationship with our congressional leaders and we are considered an important sounding board for national policies. EPA's Tailoring Rule, Forest Roads/Clean Water Act, International Trade provisions and Critical Habitat issue are all examples of the federal regulations these legislators help us navigate through. We also continue to work with national associations such as FRA, NAFO, AF&PA, to manage national issues. These connections are an important investment for MFPC's members.

**Partnerships:** The Council acts as a large umbrella for policy issues, but independent organizations provide focused input into our discussions. John Williams from the Maine Pulp and Paper Association,



Tom Doak from SWOAM and Mike Beardsley from the Professional Logging Contractors are examples of the partners we value as we actively work on issues at the Legislature.

**Coalition-Building:** We continue to build alliances among various groups in the natural resource fields in an attempt to strengthen the legislative focus on the larger policy issues. The Natural Resource Network has been a force for more than five years now and it continues to bring together advocates in the forestry, farming, fisheries and fun (recreation) industries. This group continues to meet weekly during the legislative session to discuss bills and issues of common interest. In the past session, NRN successfully developed and established an ACF merger plan that became the core concept for the reorganization of the departments.

**Keeping Maine’s Forests:** This is the fourth year of participation, resulting in constructive dialogue among members of the industry and environmental community. This group has been supportive of training to improve stream crossings, northern Maine educational brochures, and encouraging the benefits of the working forest in Maine.

**The Sustainable Forestry Initiative.** The efforts of Pat Sirois on the Fisheries Information Network (FIN), are an example of how SFI works with the Council to demonstrate stewardship and sustainability.

**UT County Government Committee:** We are developing a plan to work more closely with county governments, since that is where many of the most important LUPC and tax issues are being determined.

**Forest Legacy PAC:** The Forest Legacy PAC is separate from the Council, allowing individuals members to participate in candidate events as campaigns start gearing up for election season. Our participation affords us the opportunity to support legislators representing our interests and keep them informed of issues concerning MFPC members

### Strategic advocacy focus for 2014

Navigating the 126<sup>th</sup> Legislature’s short “session” is perhaps best visualized by the river drives of earlier years. We’ve worked hard to define our issues (cut and stacked our wood) and now we take the plunge into the flat water and rapids of the legislature. There will be log jams requiring dynamite and casualties. And we are never sure of the final result, but somehow your businesses keep rolling and producing goods. My job is to navigate the waters and minimize the distractions, but I’m counting on your help if I sound the alarm.

#### Strategic Advocacy Focus 2014



- Issues driven
- Capitalize on message of economic importance
- Educate candidates

MFPC will be focusing on our core issues and engaging in a strategy to:

- Continue to Build on the Reputation of the Council as an Issues Driven Organization
- Capitalize on our message of economic importance

- Educate candidates on our messages and policy for inclusion in their political platforms

We should be fine, and the political season is an opportunity for us to capitalize on our message and for candidates to associate themselves with the opportunities being created by our natural resource industries.

Sue McCarthy, Roberta Scruggs, Pat Sirois, Michele McLean and I all look forward to providing you with the services you need in the next year.

