

NORTH COUNTRY REDC

WORK GROUP STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS REPORT FORM:

- ❖ *Work Group Name: Tourism/Community Development*
- ❖ *Date Submitted: July 30,2012*
- ❖ *Council Member/Work Group Contact: Jim McKenna/Cali Brooks*

This form should be used to report the following\:

1. Refinements to existing strategies which are included in the NC REDC Strategic Plan.
 2. New “Strategies” that fit within the NC REDC Strategic Plan “Visions”.
 3. Information about a potential project(s) that implement refined or new strategies.
1. Review designated “Strategies” and suggest refinements, if need, or a new strategy. If this is a new strategy(ies) please add information justifying the strategy(ies).

“Refined” or “New” Strategy:

TOURISM Strategy 2: Creation of the Tourism Business Revitalization Program, a mechanism to assist existing business owners to update amenities and provide funding to enable season extensions.

- Regional Tourism Planning Initiative, to build connections between communities by taking advantage of opportunities already identified in the many community development plans.

SB/CD Strategy 1: Recognize the importance of community planning in achieving the NCREDC’s Vision of tourism, housing, arts, culture and infrastructure improvements.

- Assist North Country communities in funding and implementing community planning efforts to strengthen their economies and improve the quality of life and services they offer

The concept proposed is to revise the Regional Strategy to identify major inter-community connections that have recognized management plans that when fully implemented, have regional transformative impact. It is proposed that projects that directly implement Blueway Trail plans, Scenic Byway Comprehensive Management Plans and regional Trailway Corridor projects be identified as “implementing a strategy recognized in the Regional Strategic Plan.” Thus, small or moderate sized projects could receive up to 15 points in the CFA scoring.

(See attached Initiative paper.)

2. Review list of 2012/Year 1 designated “Actions” and suggest refinements, if needed. Note where an action has been accomplished or if an action is currently in progress. If this is a new strategy describe “Actions” that are underway and have to be completed in 2012/Year 1.

Actions that implement the “Refined” or “New” Strategy in 2012/Year 1:

July 2012 – WG submits refined strategy to Council
September 2012 – Council adopts Strategy refinement in 2012 Plan Implementation Report.
October 2012 – State Scenic Byways Advisory Council approves Black River Trail and Maple Traditions Scenic Byway CMPs
Fall 2012 – Public outreach explaining revised Strategy.

3. Review list of 2013/Year 2 designated “Actions” and suggest refinements, if needed. Note specific actions which have to be accomplished to keep the action on tract or if an action is currently in progress. If this is a new strategy describe “Actions” that are underway and have to be completed in 2013/Year 2.

Actions that implement the Strategy in 2013/Year 2:

Spring 2012 – legislation enacted amending Black River Trail and Maple Traditions Scenic Byway.
Spring 2012 – CFA solicitation for projects that implement Blueways, Byways and Trailways projects.

4. Review list of “Stakeholder” resources (see Regional Implementation Agenda forms) and suggest revisions and/or additions which advance refined or new strategies and actions.

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Blueways, Byways and Trailways

Tourism/Community Development Infrastructure Initiative

Concept:

Over \$64 million of the total \$750 million in 2012 Consolidated Funding available, or over 8.5 percent, is devoted to funding municipal planning and public infrastructure projects aimed at improving quality of life through economic development in our North Country Communities. This funding traditionally serves a number of purposes, including enhancing and promoting a community's unique history, arts, culture and character; providing essential public services and amenities; creating affordable new and rehabilitated housing; and improving recreation and waterfront development opportunities. The overarching goal is to assist North Country communities in creating sustainable and attractive places for community and economic development to occur, particularly in the tourism sectors of the region's economy.

Funds are distributed to individual projects based upon the conditions and guidelines of that particular State program administering those funds. We find, however, that while many projects throughout our region are not singularly transformative on a regional scale, they *are* transformative when collectively tied to corridor and other regional initiatives. For many rural North Country communities this may well be the best economic potential that they have. Public infrastructure investments also compliment and attract other private sector investments in the region's tourism economy.

The problem is that with the State scoring criteria for CFA projects, these proposals find it hard to score more than 10 of the 20 points allocated to CFA scoring. The competitive nature of these funds statewide makes the 20 points allotted to the Regional Economic Development Council's key to successful project scoring. It is, however, difficult for the Council to identify these projects as "Priority Projects" identified in Regional Strategies (20 points) or be projects identified in the Regional Strategy (15 points). The concept proposed is to revise the Regional Strategy to identify major inter-community connections that have recognized management plans that when fully implemented, have regional transformative impact.

It is proposed that projects that directly implement Blueway Trail plans, Scenic Byway Comprehensive Management Plans and regional Trailway Corridor projects be identified as "implementing a strategy recognized in the Regional Strategic Plan." Thus, small or moderate sized projects could receive up to 15 points in the CFA scoring.

Recognized Blueways, Byways and Trailways:

Throughout the North Country there are hundreds of miles of Blueway Trails, Scenic Byways and regional Trailways that exist or could be developed under recognized planning processes with federal, state and local participation. These corridors are major community, regional and inter-regional connectors that support the region's tourism economy. They offer ways for strategic investment in public amenities and infrastructure to benefit not only local residents but visitors to the region,

compliment and attract private sector investment, and when cumulatively assessed have major regional impact. The following are the proposed regional corridors to be identified in the North Country Strategy refinement:

Blueway Trails – Blueway Trails are boat and paddling routes that combine water-based recreation and environmental awareness and allow users to travel between designated stops that link New York’s heritage sites, trails, greenways, historic resources, scenic byways, and revitalized community centers. Blueway trails contribute to regional economies, where individual blueway projects can be catalysts for local economic development and promote environmental stewardship. By connecting communities to nearby waterways, places that otherwise would not be a tourism destination become important stops for recreation and cultural tourism along the route. In the North Country there are presently two Blueway Trails:

- **Black River Blueway Trail** – The 114-mile Black River corridor from Forestport to Dexter spanning three Counties (Oneida, Lewis and Jefferson) and empties into Lake Ontario at Black River Bay. The route is inclusive of the City of Watertown, 22 towns and 14 village waterfronts.
- **Raquette River Blueway Trail** – The 174-mile Raquette River corridor from the Hamlet of Raquette Lake to Akwesasne through three counties (Hamilton, St. Lawrence and Franklin) and empties into the St. Lawrence River. This route is inclusive of 13 towns and three village waterfronts.

Scenic Byways - **Scenic Byways** are transportation corridors that are of particular statewide interest. They are representative of a region's scenic, recreational, cultural, natural, historic or archaeological significance. In the North Country these include National designated Scenic Byways and State designated Scenic Byways and include over 1,700 miles of highway corridors and seven (7) cities, 115 towns 64 villages, and 77 hamlets. Scenic Byways in the North Country include:

Adirondack Trail	Dude Ranch Trail ²	Great Lakes Seaway Trail
Black River Trail ¹	High Peaks Byway	Lakes to Locks Trail
Blue Ridge Road	Maple Traditions Trail ³	Southern Adirondack Trail
Central Adirondack Trail	Military Trail ⁴	Roosevelt-Marcy Trail
	Olympic Trail	

Trailways – Trailways are inter-community trails that serve as regional community connectors for recreational activity. Within the North Country there are hundreds of miles of regional trail networks that provide bicycling, hiking, boating and snowmobiling opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts. Trailways within the North Country region include:

¹ Proposed CMP amendment before Scenic Byways Advisory Council for approval in fall 2012 and legislation in spring 2013.

² Proposed CMP amendment underway with name change to First Wilderness Trail. Approval in Spring 2013.

³ Proposed CMP amendment before Scenic Byways Advisory Council for approval in fall 2012 and legislation in spring 2013.

⁴ Proposed CMP amendment underway with name change to North Country Trail. Approval in Spring 2013.

- Regional hiking trails such as the Northville to Placid Trail
- State snowmobile Corridors
- The North Country Trail – an 4,600 mile interstate trail from North Dakota to New York
- The Northern Forest Canoe Trail – a recreational paddling route from New York to Maine
- The 90 Miler – a paddling trail from Old Forge to Saranac lake

Targeted CFA Resources

The proposal would enable projects that communities and non-governmental organizations to score a minimum of 15 points under the CFA scoring system if they can demonstrate that their project directly implements the corridor management plans for the designated Blueway, Byway or Trailway identified in the Regional Strategy. Targeted CFA funding sources for this initiative include:

- Community Development Block Grant (\$22.8 million in 2012)
- Office of Parks, Recreation, Historic Preservation and Heritage Area Projects (\$16 million in 2012)
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs (\$15 million in 2012)
- Canalway Grants (\$1 million in 2012)
- NYS Council on the Arts projects (\$4 million in 2012)