



## Town of Island Falls

# *Growing Into Modern Times*

### The Comprehensive Plan

The Selectman, Planning Board, and many of our committees have been working for several months to develop a *Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Island Falls*. We hired Eastern Maine Development (EMDC) to help with the writing. The survey presented in Newsletter 1 is a part of the Plan. Questions we've received about the Plan are:

- Didn't we do this before?
- Why is the "Plan" so important?
- What's in it?

The answer to the first question is "yes". In March 2001 we submitted a Comprehensive Plan to the State. It was rejected for 4 reasons:

1. The 2001 Plan did not address tourism and the related economic and seasonal development, and their impacts on our lakes and natural resources.
2. The 2001 Plan did not clearly map and delineate potential growth areas.
3. The 2001 Plan did not specify expected capital expenditures to support growth.
4. The 2001 Plan did not address regional coordination.

The answer to the second question is "money". Without a State approved Comprehensive Plan we are not eligible for many of the grants available for development. The committees that manage grant awards need to be assured their money is being used to promote their goals. Many of the grants are specific to community, recreational, or environmental development programs. The grant committees need assurance that their goals are aligned with our goals. A state approved Plan gives them that assurance.

There is no short answer to the third question. As the name implies, the Plan covers everything associated with the development and growth of our community. It is a lengthy and complicated document divided into four Phases:

- I. Phase I focuses on:
  - a. **Population and the Demographics.** This includes changes in the total population of Island Falls broken down by age group, median age, income, and education. The trend in these changes (usually covering the last 10 years) are then used to project where we will be in the future.
  - b. **Economy.** This includes employment trends, a breakdown of the labor force by sector, commuting data, and unemployment rates. This section also focuses on the issues faced by local businesses, availability of land zoned for business development, access to utilities, and size of individual lots.
  - c. **Housing.** The total number of dwelling units are identified and the information broken down by "year round" and "seasonal" houses. This section combines housing availability data with affordability data and provides insight to what our current residents and future residents can afford.

- d. **Transportation.** The overall condition of our road system is reviewed as well as parking availability, sidewalks, and public transportation in the downtown area.

II. Phase II focuses on:

- a. **Water Resources.** The Town Water Department is evaluated (discussed in Newsletter 6) as well as problems with private wells and potential surface contamination.
- b. **Natural Resources.** The Mattawamkeag River is now Class A Water. The adequacy of our natural resource protection measures are evaluated.
- c. **Agricultural Resources.** Acreage for farm land and open space are reviewed as well as changes in private woodlots held in tree growth.
- d. **Forestry Resources.** The Town's timber harvesting practices are reviewed to ensure sustainable growth.

III. Phase III focuses on:

- a. **Historical and Archaeological Resources.** We currently have a number of historical buildings. Three of which are on the National Registry.
- b. **Recreation.** Existing recreational opportunities and programs are reviewed as well as the potential for future recreational opportunities. Examples are the Town Playground, snowmobile/four wheeler trails, hiking/walking trails, canoeing/kayaking/boating areas, boat launches, public beaches, and picnic areas.
- c. **Public Facilities and Services.** This section reviews our facilities and the services the Town provides our residents. It also focuses on the future needs.
- d. **Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan.** As Selectmen, we have developed a "capital strategy" to attract new business as well as improve our community. Projects such as the Purchase of Common/Undivided Forest Land, Public Sewer System, Island Park, River Walking Trail, Fire/Ambulance Department Improvements, Town Office Renovations, etc. are reviewed in this section as well as how they will be financed (grants, taxes, loans, or some combination).

IV. Phase IV utilizes the information from the first 3 phases and ties it all together:

This section reviews current changes in land use patterns (permanent homes replacing camps along the lake shores, deterioration of our downtown area) and projects future needs of the community (assisted living for our aging population, recreational development areas, industrial park for major business development, prosperous Main Street). It provides an image of how we would like our town to develop.

As your Selectmen, we have a vision -- *Island Falls: An Historic Community with a Distinctive Heritage Growing into Modern Times*. The challenge is "how do we do it". The Comprehensive Plan provides the basic road map for our development. More importantly, it communicates our willingness to make the necessary changes to improve. This in turn will provide access to funding for our various projects.

The Plan should be completed in July. We look forward to reviewing it with you at a Town Meeting.

***Tony***

Anthony Binotto  
Selectman – Town of Island Falls