

# The Value of a Great View

## Identifying important scenic coastline in Washington and Hancock counties

The Maine Coastal Program began a resource inventory of the Maine coast 25 years ago, working from Penobscot Bay south. Back then, researchers identified scenic qualities as a priority for conservation, realizing that beautiful views contribute both to quality of life and to economic activity.

Researchers Terry deWan and Holly Dominie developed a scientific methodology for the inventory back then. The results and a handbook were published. On paper, of course.

Fast forward a quarter-century.

"We said, let's resurrect the methodology and move on to inventory and protect the rest of the coast," said Jim Connors, senior planner at the Maine Coastal Program, State Planning Office.

MCP provided the funding, but formed partnerships with the Washington County Council of Governments (WCCOG) and the Hancock County Planning Commission (HCPC) to do the work.



The Bold Coast, one of the Downeast region's beautiful views.

Views are rated as having national, state or local significance, with the first two required to be considered when siting turbines under the new wind power law.

"The community can include these views in their conservation planning and land trusts can give them planning priority," said Kathleen Leyden, Maine Coastal Program director. "Their significance means they need to be considered, but it doesn't mean they need to be purchased. It's more about creating design standards that respect the views."

"It's been unfolding since we did the Maine Coast Protection Initiative five years ago," said Connors. The MCPI (see accompanying story) was intended to build capacity of land trusts and the pace of land conservation along the coast, and to establish GIS centers. The Machias GIS center is one the initiative created.

In 25 years, many things had changed but some things, surprisingly, did not. For instance, the science and methodology developed by deWan, principal with Terrence J. DeWan & Associates landscape architecture and planning firm in Yarmouth, Maine, and consultant Dominie, a former SPO planner, held up.

"We went through the recommended training, with a host of volunteers in both counties, using the manual method in the handbook," explained Judy East, executive director of WCCOG. "Then we partnered with the GIS (geographic information system) department at University of Maine in Machias to create models to take the method to the next level."

Now the inventory of around 242 scenic sites is complete, the report is housed on the web and accessible to anyone who wants to see it or to print out parts of it.

There's no paper version.

"It's too big to print. It doesn't lend itself to paper in any way. It's not a book," said Jim Fisher, senior planner with the HCPC. "It's isn't two-dimensional. The informational is all digital now, from the coordinates on GPS to the pictures."

"We are really pleased with the results," he added. "It's part of the process I've worked on for years, doing online interactive content. We've kicked it into the 21st century."

If the results are high-tech, so was the nomination process.

"Washington County created a Facebook page and got people to nominate views," said Fisher. "I was amazed at the number of nominations they got that way, through a social networking site."

Scenic sites were scored by two methods - desktop and field analysis, with a third score for the combined numbers.

"The desktop scores were done by a bunch of people sitting around a desk, using known features," said Fisher. "The field analysis was done by people actually going to the site, which revised the desktop scores."

The bigger the dot on the resulting map, the bigger the rating for the scenic site. Some sites

rated at a national level, such as the views from Cadillac Mountain and Schoodic Mountain.



The scenic beauty of the Bar Harbor-Cadillac Mountain region is apparent.

Other views were rated as being of regional value, such as the sight of Machiasport from Whiting or Cutler. Some were primarily of local value.

"Local significance might be a lovely marsh, visible from the town office," said East. "The concept of 'outdoor rooms' is big also."

"I can't get over how slick it is, that you can look at a form within the map and save or print a single report," said Fisher.

While the inventory is designed to help with planning, Fisher also said he was active with the National Scenic Byways and "I see it as a way to market our 'views' for geotourism."



Terry DeWan's new handbook based on the updated methodology for the scenic inventory was named outstanding planning accomplishment of 2009 by the Maine Association of Planners. Connors holds the award, a silver cup that will be housed at the State Planning Office for a year.

"We're working toward saving the views, and one issue came up already - about the top of Schoodic Mountain," said Fisher, who organized a meeting with Bangor Hydro regional stakeholders.

"We're trying to work out what happens to the views when you put a power line through it. We need to figure out how to save the view and meet the obligation to provide residents with power."

All the research was finished in 2009 and the report finished in early 2010. The results, including hundreds of thumbnail pictures of the scenic views, are posted at:

If those involved in the project needed any outside confirmation of the quality of their work, they certainly got it. DeWan's new handbook based on the updated methodology was named

outstanding planning accomplishment of 2009 by the Maine Association of Planners. Connors' desk will host the silver cup for a year to prove it.

**DOWNEAST COASTAL SCENIC INVENTORY**  
HANCOCK AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES, MAINE



St Croix River, Calais

Prepared for the Maine State Planning Office Coastal Program by the  
HANCOCK COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION &  
WASHINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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*Downeast Coastal Scenic Inventory.*

"The methodology didn't really change, it was the GIS mapping techniques that were new," said Connors. "That's the link to the GIS work done in Machias."

"I and Terry deWan just answered questions and contributed to the technical issues," Connors said. "We supported the effort like coaches. The gang Downeast just took it and ran with it."

Students at the GIS center in Machias also won an award in a student competition for their work.