

# OUR PARKS

Frills or Untapped Resources?



A Maine Citizen Summit in Belfast  
Saturday, August 1, 2009

# Keynote Address

10:00am – 11:15am

**Dr. John L. Crompton**  
**Distinguished Professor of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Sciences**  
**Texas A&M University**

## “Maine Parks as Economic Engines”

Even though Maine has been billing itself as “Vacationland” as long as anyone can remember, our local parks and recreation resources have considerably more value than we realize. At least that’s one of the several surprising assertions that Dr. John L. Crompton, an internationally recognized authority on the actual worth of parks and recreational programs, will make when he presents “**Maine Parks as Economic Engines**” to a statewide audience at the UM Hutchinson Center in Belfast on Saturday, August 1, 2009.

Dr. Crompton has spent most of his notable career assessing the impact of parklands on local economies, and is known worldwide for his work on the marketing and financing of recreational services. The results of his research are eye-opening. According to his findings, the benefits of well-run parks are far greater than just pretty scenery, fresh air, and more tourists. “Park and recreation agencies can be a central contributor to economic development,” he insists.

His focus on finding answers to the question “How do we pay for leisure services in an era of reduced public tax support?” has been termed, by the *Journal of Leisure Research*, “the most significant research contribution of the past decade in aiding public recreation administrators to adjust to difficult financial restraints.”

Today, Dr. Crompton is the most published scholar in the history of both the tourism and the parks and recreation fields. He has lectured or conducted workshops throughout the U. S. and in many foreign countries and has delivered keynote addresses at the Annual National Park and Recreation Conferences in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, and Japan.

He has been awarded the prestigious Pugsley National Medal, with a citation noting that “John Crompton has personally contributed more for the advancement of our profession than any other individual . . . He stimulated our imagination for devising new ways of generating cash from our facilities without prostituting the meaning of Public Leisure.”

Perhaps his ultimate accolade, though, came just three years ago when the citizens in his home community of College Station, Texas, recognized his many contributions to the city by naming a new sixteen-acre park after him. Included in John Crompton Park are signs incorporating two of the professor’s most widely quoted observations: “There are no great cities in this world that do not have a great park system,” and “Parks are a community’s canary in the coal mine. They are barometers that convey a visible impression of the city’s economic and social health and vibrancy.”

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And, as if that singular honor were somehow inadequate, in 2007 the voters of College Station, Texas elected Dr. Crompton to the City Council, where he continues to serve today.

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Dr. Crompton’s keynote address is part of the Distinguished Speaker Series of Senior College, and is sponsored by Senior College, Waldo County Healthcare, Inc., and the Hutchinson Center of the University of Maine, with support from Friends of Belfast Parks and the Maine Recreation and Parks Association. The keynote presentation is free and open to the public.

## Lunch Provided (for paid registrants)

**11:30am – 12:15pm**

The \$25.00 registration fee for the Citizen Summit includes a box lunch with drink. Just indicate your sandwich choice on your completed registration form. Then pick up your lunch ticket and name tag at the registration desk on the day of the event.

## Concurrent Breakout Sessions (for paid registrants)

**12:30pm – 1:45pm**

Four concurrent sessions will expand upon the ideas raised in Dr. Crompton's keynote address. These discussions will be particularly useful to members of parks and recreation commissions and advisory boards and to the recreation professionals who are responsible for providing these essential services in their community. The breakout sessions include:

### **Parks and Recreation Are Not Frills**

In a session aimed squarely at volunteers who sit on parks and recreation department advisory boards and commissions across the state, Dr. John Crompton will lead a discussion on effective — and legitimate — advocacy. At a time when tax revenues are plummeting and unemployment is soaring, how can you make a convincing case for funding your local parks and recreation budget? How can you help councilors, selectmen and selectwomen, and other municipal officials more fully understand the heightened demand that local parks & recreation programs experience during times of economic downturn?

### **Current Trends in Parks and Recreation Across Maine**

Every municipality in the state is experiencing budget pressures, and frequently the parks department is a prime target for cuts, reductions, or mergers with other agencies. What are some of the tactics towns are using to balance their books, and what are the long-term effects of various cutbacks? A panel of Maine parks and recreation directors from across the state, including Tom Farrell, Director of Brunswick Parks & Recreation Department, and Tracy Willette, Director of the Bangor Parks & Recreation Department, will compare notes on what has happened in their communities — for better and for worse.

### **Taking the Pulse of Your Parks & Recreation Department**

Is your town getting all that it can or should for the amount of tax dollars that are put into your parks and recreation department? Have your parks flat-lined? Do your programs need to be jolted back to life? This session will consider the basic programs an effective parks department should be offering in communities of different sizes, talk about the norms in Maine, and explore ways you can assess the vigor and effectiveness of your local parks and recreation department. Dr. Bill Eckart, Professor of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management at the University of Maine at Machias, will lead the discussion.

### **Building an Effective Recreation Coalition in Your Community**

Developing strong relationships with other recreation-oriented community organizations is a key strategy for strengthening local parks and recreation departments — and also for building up volunteer clubs and groups that have a vested interest in recreation. What are some of the more effective ways to build these collaborations? What are the potential benefits? Members of coalition-building efforts from around the state will compare their successes and challenges.



# Roundtable Summary (for paid registrants)

2:00pm – 2:45pm

The Citizen Summit will conclude with all participants reconvening for a brief roundtable summary. Dr. Crompton will join Doug Beck, Executive Director of Maine Recreation and Parks Association, and representatives from each of the four breakout sessions to offer a summary of the major ideas of each session. It's another chance to have questions answered and a tidy way to get an overview of the entire day. The Summit is scheduled to adjourn by 3:00 pm, so you'll still have plenty of time to enjoy the recreational attractions available in midcoast Maine!

So don't delay. Be a part of this important event! Complete the attached registration form and mail it with your \$25.00 registration fee today. **Your registration must be received by July 25!**

## The Day At A Glance

<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>Registration Desk opens</b>
<b>9:00 am — 12:30 pm</b>	<b>Belfast Outdoor Recreation Fair</b> Representatives from various local outdoor recreation groups will be describing their missions with literature and displays in the Hutchinson Center Atrium. Participating organizations will include Green Streets, Coastal Mountains Land Trust, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Come Boating, Belfast Bicycle Club, Belfast Garden Club, Belfast Dog Park Group, Friends of Belfast Parks, and the Belfast Parks and Recreation Commission.
<b>10:00 am</b>	<b>Welcome from Belfast Mayor Walter Ash</b>
<b>10:00 am – 11:15 am</b>	<b>Keynote Address by Dr. John L. Crompton - "Maine Parks as Economic Engines"</b>
<b>11:30 am – 12:15 pm</b>	<b>Box Lunch (for paid registrants)</b>
<b>12:30 pm – 1:45 pm</b>	<b>Concurrent Breakout Sessions (for paid registrants)</b>
<b>2:00 pm – 2:45 pm</b>	<b>Summarizing the Summit (for paid registrants)</b> A roundtable discussion of the ideas and suggestions raised during the day

## Directions & Area Information

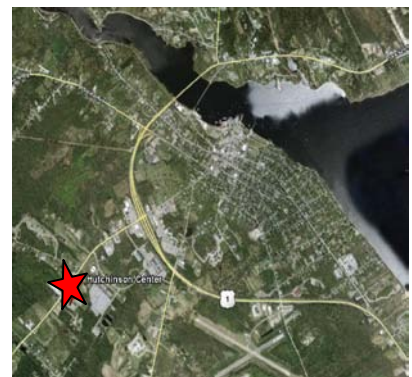
Directions: The Hutchinson Center of the University of Maine is located on Route 3 about three-quarters of a mile west of the intersection with Route 1. It is a long, low, beige building visible from the road and well marked with a large sign on Route 3. Ample free parking is available, and the entire facility is handicapped accessible.

For information on places to stay, as well as shops and restaurants in the area, visit the Belfast Chamber of Commerce website at: [www.belfastmaine.org](http://www.belfastmaine.org).

For more about local parks, visit the Friends of Belfast Parks website: [www.friendsofbelfastparks.org](http://www.friendsofbelfastparks.org).

For listings of other events in the area, visit [www.waldo.villagesoup.com](http://www.waldo.villagesoup.com).

FMI: Call Dale Kuhnert (338-2160) or Debbie Hockensmith (338-1704) or e-mail [debbieh1@roadrunner.com](mailto:debbieh1@roadrunner.com)



## “MAINE CITIZEN SUMMIT FOR PARKS & RECREATION ADVOCATES”

Community parks and recreation programs in Maine, as throughout the nation, have become increasingly vulnerable to local budget cuts. Many have experienced significant reductions in staffing and programs due to current economic pressures.

In the fall of 2008, Friends of Belfast Parks, a small nonprofit organization, envisioned a need for a statewide event that would bring parks and recreation advocates together to share experiences, learn from one another, and discover more effective ways to convince local decision-makers of the essential services that parks and recreation programs provide, and how they directly impact the economic viability of a community.

The task of planning such an event began in November 2008. Over the next eight months, FOBP collaborated with the Maine Recreation & Parks Association (MERPA), Senior College of Belfast, University of Maine Hutchinson Center, and Waldo County Healthcare Inc., to create a one-day conference to address these issues. Summit brochures and invitations were mailed to municipal park departments in Maine, requesting that the information also be distributed to citizen advisory board members.

On August 1, 2009 the “**Maine Citizen Summit for Parks & Recreation Advocates**” was held. The goal was to provide advocates with valuable information about the economic impact of effectively managed parks and recreation programs, and the essential role that local programs contribute. The event targeted P&R professionals, advisory board members, and citizen advocates.

More than a hundred attended the Summit on what was “the most perfect Maine summer day of 2009.” Included in the audience were Maine’s Commissioner of Conservation, state and local government officials, and citizen advocates from throughout the state.

The event began with a Belfast Outdoor Recreation Fair, where fifteen local recreation groups presented displays, described their efforts and distributed literature to prospective members.

John L. Crompton, Distinguished Professor of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Sciences at Texas A & M University and a world-renowned expert in parks advocacy and repositioning, was the featured speaker. Dr. Crompton’s

professional expertise with regard to the economic value of parks and recreation services is unparalleled. And his experiences as a current city councilor in College Station, Texas added an extraordinarily valuable perspective to his address.



National Recreation & Parks Association board member; Dr. William Eckert, Professor of Parks, Recreation and Tourism at the University of Maine at Machias; and Patrick Walsh, an authority on effective coalition-building.

While no formal evaluation was conducted, the participants’ anecdotal evaluations were extremely positive. Many of the attendees advised us that they were excited to implement the ideas learned at the Summit in their local communities. With Dr. Crompton’s permission, a video recording of the keynote address was provided to each Summit participant.



The Summit concluded with a two-hour roundtable panel discussion, moderated by Doug Beck, Executive Director of MERPA. Panelists included Dr. Crompton; Tom Farrell, Director of Brunswick Parks & Recreation, and a former



The Summit earned front-page coverage and the lead editorial in the *Bangor Daily News*, reaching a readership of more than 100,000 in Maine.