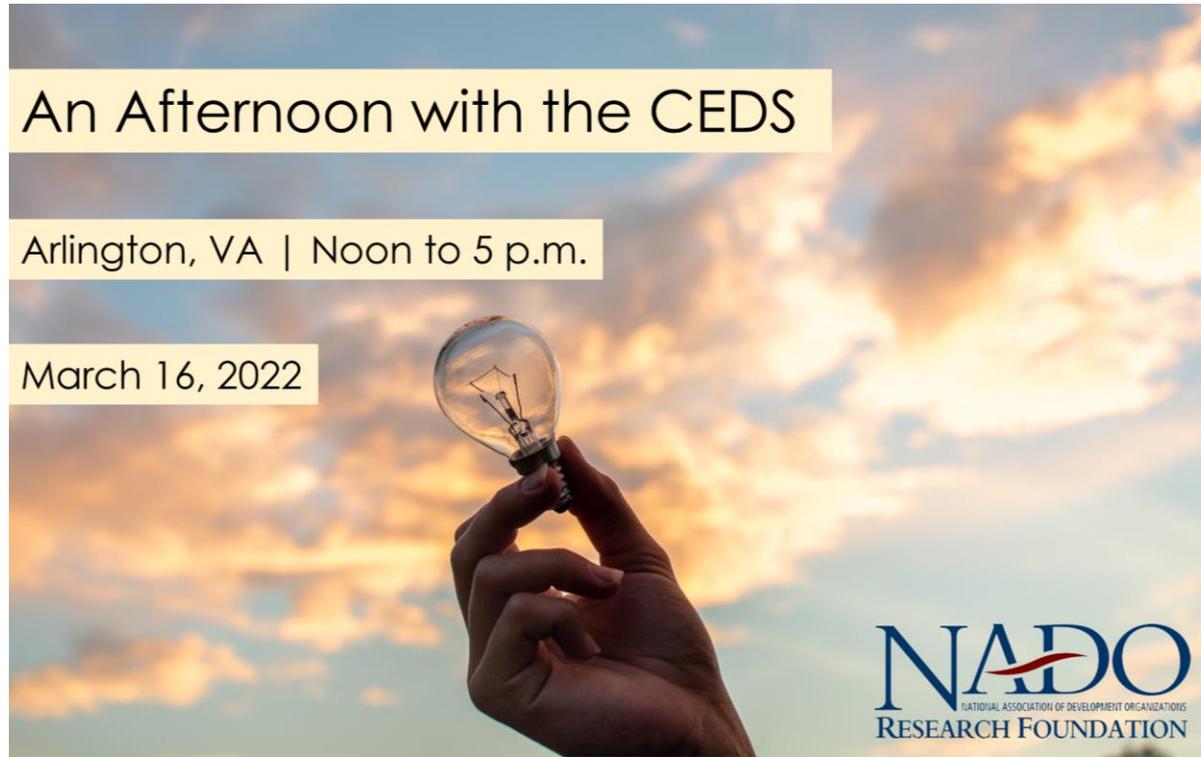


An Afternoon with the CEDS

Arlington, VA | Noon to 5 p.m.

March 16, 2022



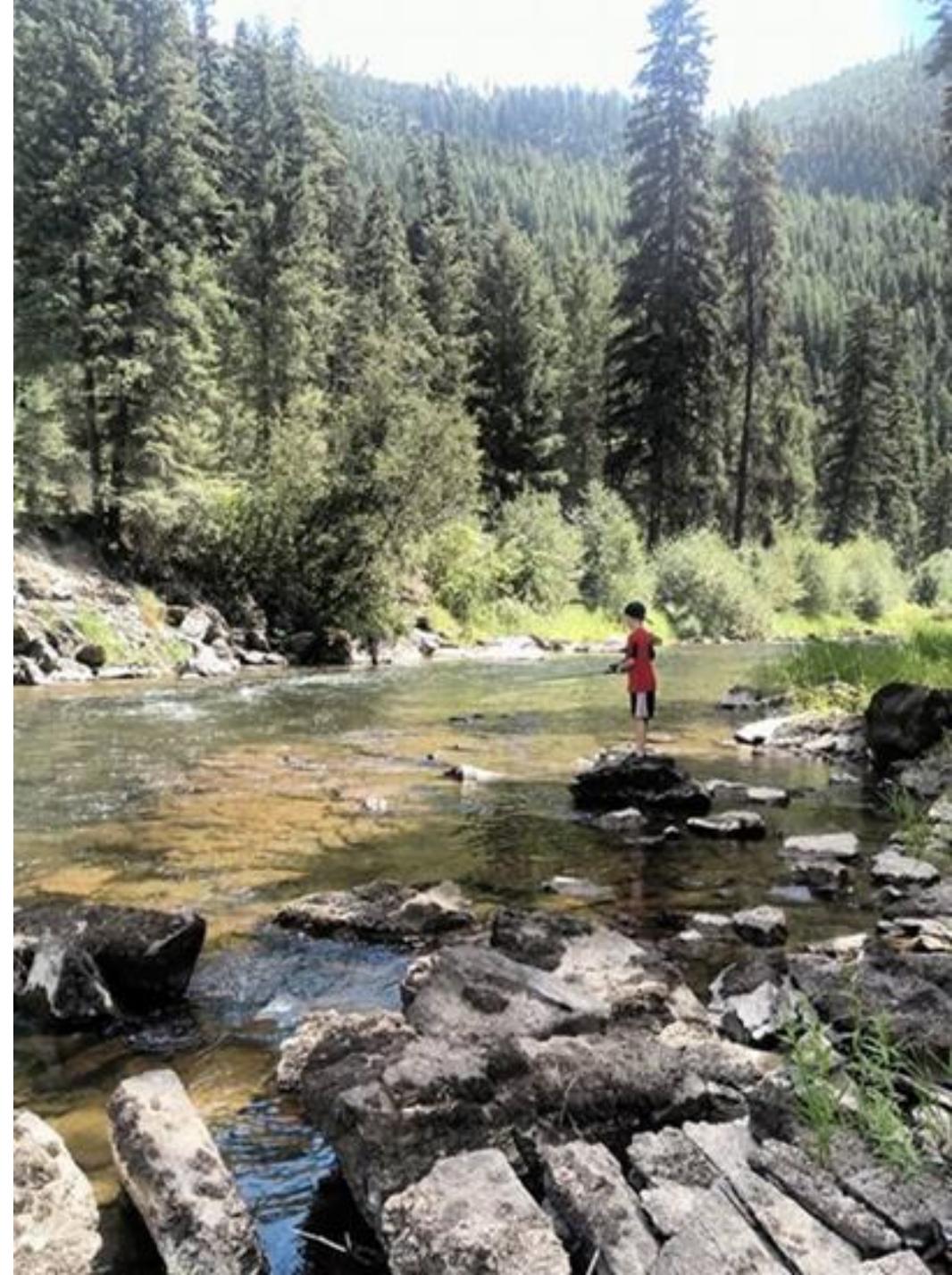
# Outdoor Recreation as a Rural Economic Driver

Megan McConville

March 16, 2022

# Today's presentation

- Why outdoor recreation?
- Roles of regional development organizations (RDOs)
- Peer inspiration: Fryeburg, Maine
- Four ways to support the recreation economy with your CEDS





## First: What is outdoor recreation?





**Why outdoor recreation?**

# Outdoor recreation is a strong and growing sector

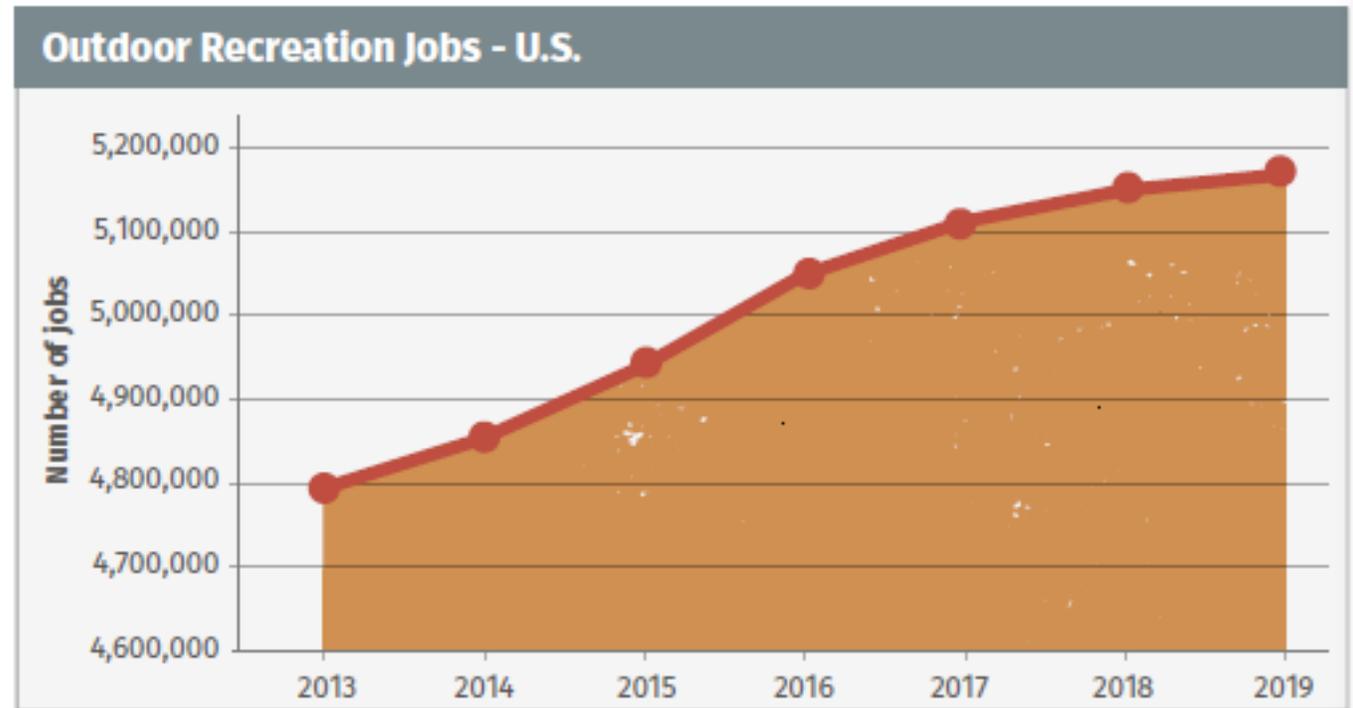
Over **2%** or **\$459B** of the nation's GDP in 2019

**2x oil and gas development**

**2.8x motor vehicle manufacturing**

**3x the airline industry**

Outdoor rec jobs are **growing**



# Outdoor rec supports jobs in diverse industries

manufacturing

arts and entertainment

finance and insurance

wholesale trade

government

transportation

professional and business services

real estate and rental

accommodation and food services

retail

# Outdoor rec brings big benefits to communities

## TOURISM

Visitors who come to enjoy the outdoors spend money on lodging, restaurants, and other services, creating jobs and putting money into the community.

## ENTREPRENEURS + TALENT

Access to the outdoors and a high quality of life attracts and retains new businesses and skilled workers.

## RETIREMENT + INVESTMENT INCOME

Wealth from retirees and investors—who are drawn to live near outdoor access—helps boost the local economy.

## TAX REVENUE

Spending at local businesses and increased property tax revenue contribute to the tax base.

## NEW RESIDENTS

Places with recreation amenities on federal public lands have higher rates of in-migration, helping fuel jobs for teachers, doctors, construction workers, and more.

## MAIN STREET BUSINESSES

Restaurants, grocery stores, gear stores, and other local retailers benefit from visitors and new residents.

## GEAR MANUFACTURING

Companies that make outdoor equipment tend to locate in places with outdoor amenities, providing jobs and investment in the community.

## HEALTHIER RESIDENTS

Access to the outdoors improves public health and reduces costs of chronic conditions, especially for impoverished and under-resourced neighborhoods.



An aerial photograph of a town, likely in the Northeastern United States, showing a central street lined with trees and buildings. The trees are in various shades of green and yellow, suggesting autumn. A prominent white church with a steeple is visible in the lower-left corner. A large, multi-story building with a red roof is in the center-right. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white banner across the middle of the image.

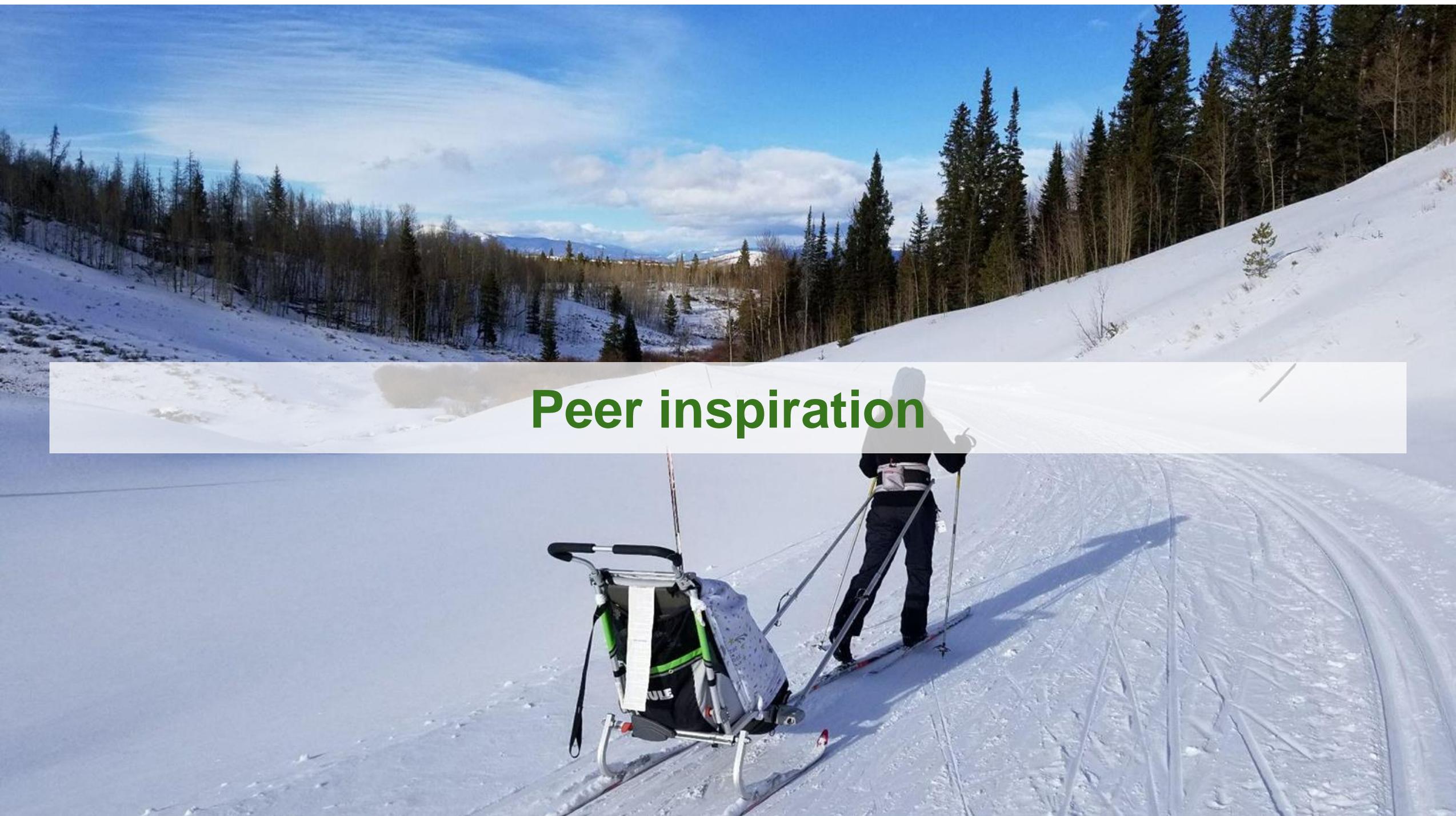
***Outdoor rec = A strong part of a diversified regional economy***



# **Roles of regional development organizations**

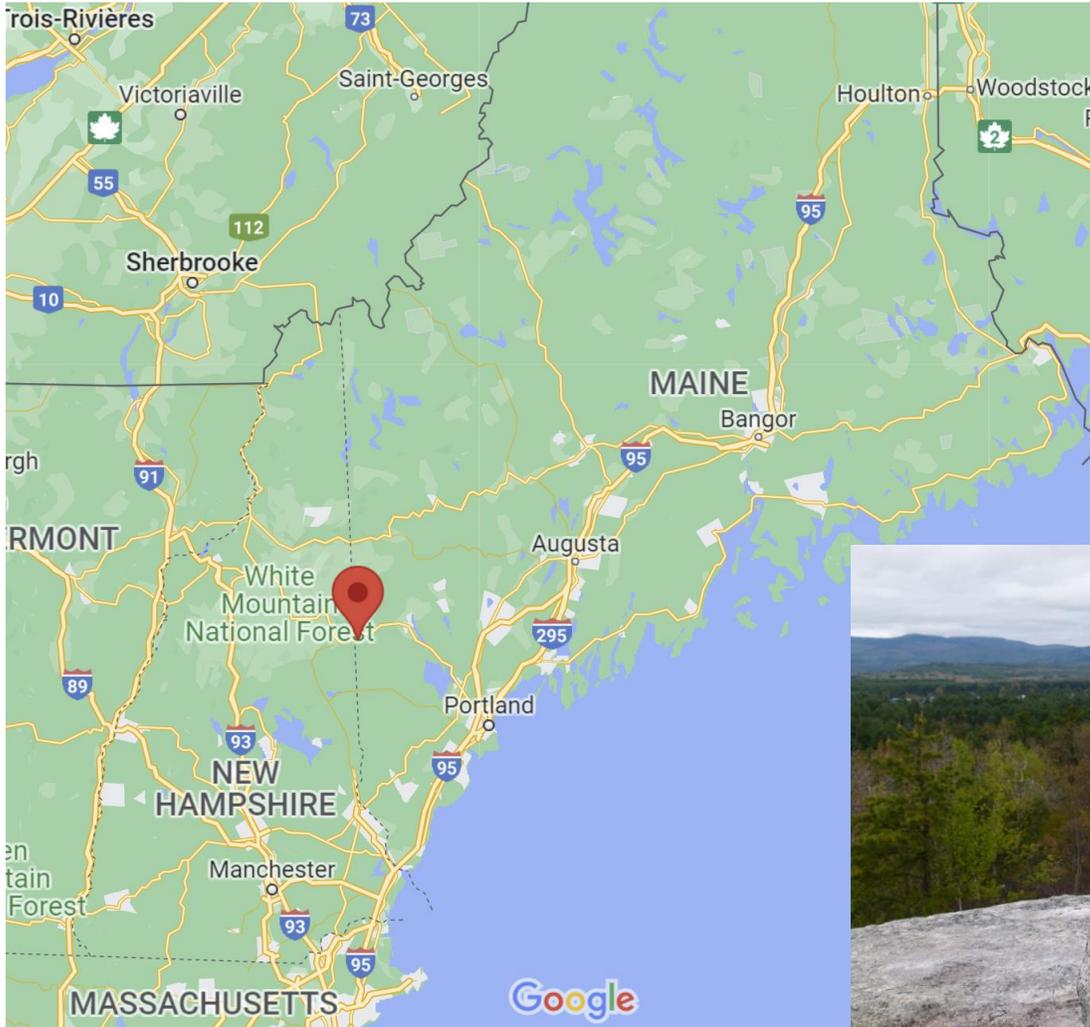
# Roles of RDOs

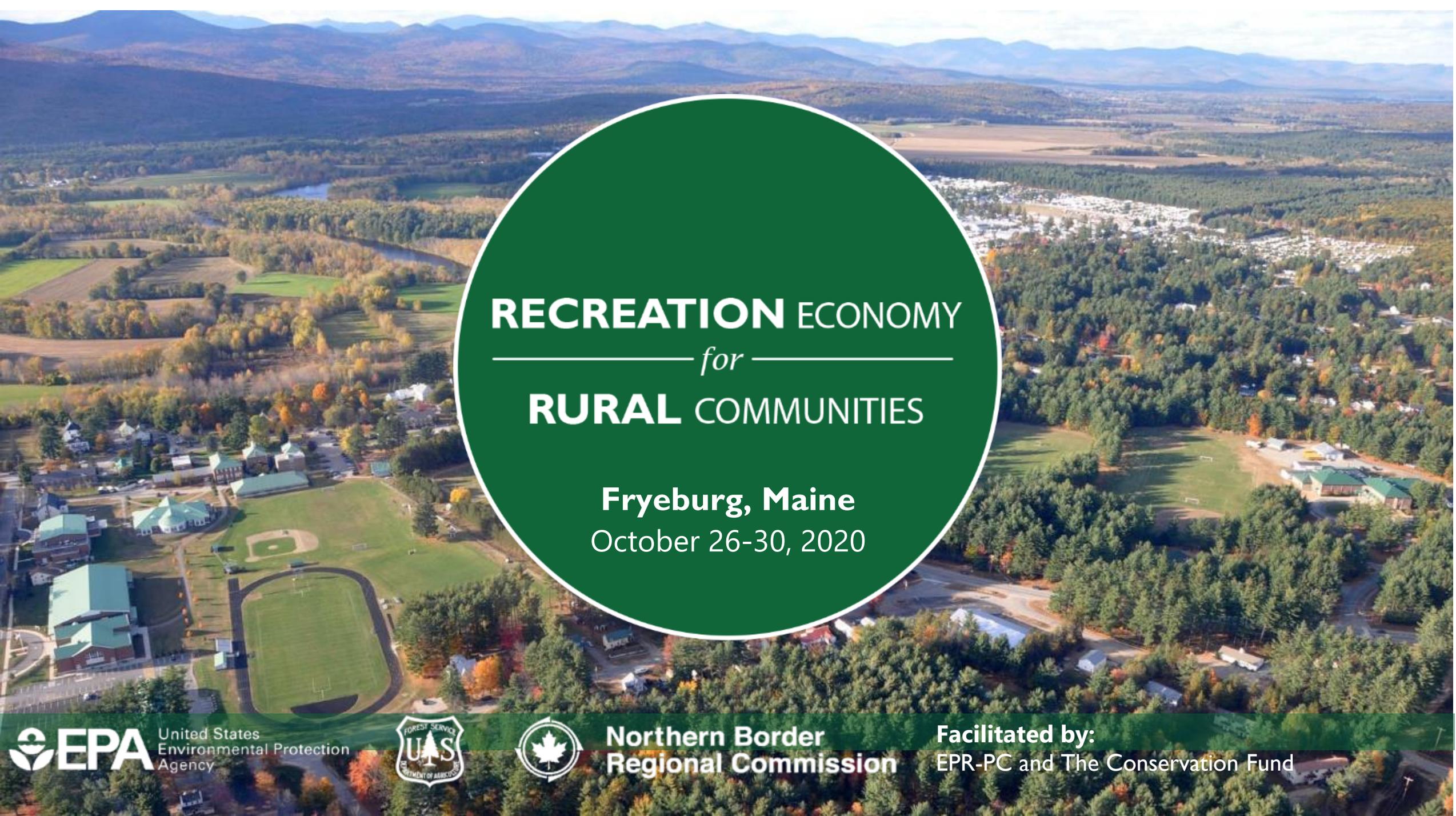
- **Convening steering committees** of regional leaders
- Building capacity and partnerships to **support regional collaboration**
- Strengthening regional capacity to understand the sector and **identify assets and gaps**
- Integrating visions, goals, and actions into **regional and local plans**
- Conducting **workforce development** activities
- Supporting **small businesses and entrepreneurs**
- Conducting **business retention and recruitment** activities
- Investing in **infrastructure** that supports outdoor recreation and tourism
- Supporting **main street revitalization**
- Leading **regional branding and marketing** campaigns
- **Securing funding** for high-priority projects
- Advocating on behalf of and engaging **underrepresented populations**

A person in dark winter gear is seen from behind, skiing uphill on a snowy slope. They are pulling a sled with a black and green bag. The skier is using poles and has tracks in the snow. The background features a dense forest of evergreen trees under a blue sky with light clouds. A white banner with green text is overlaid on the middle of the image.

**Peer inspiration**

# Fryeburg, Maine: A New England Recreation Hub





**RECREATION** ECONOMY  
*for*  
**RURAL** COMMUNITIES

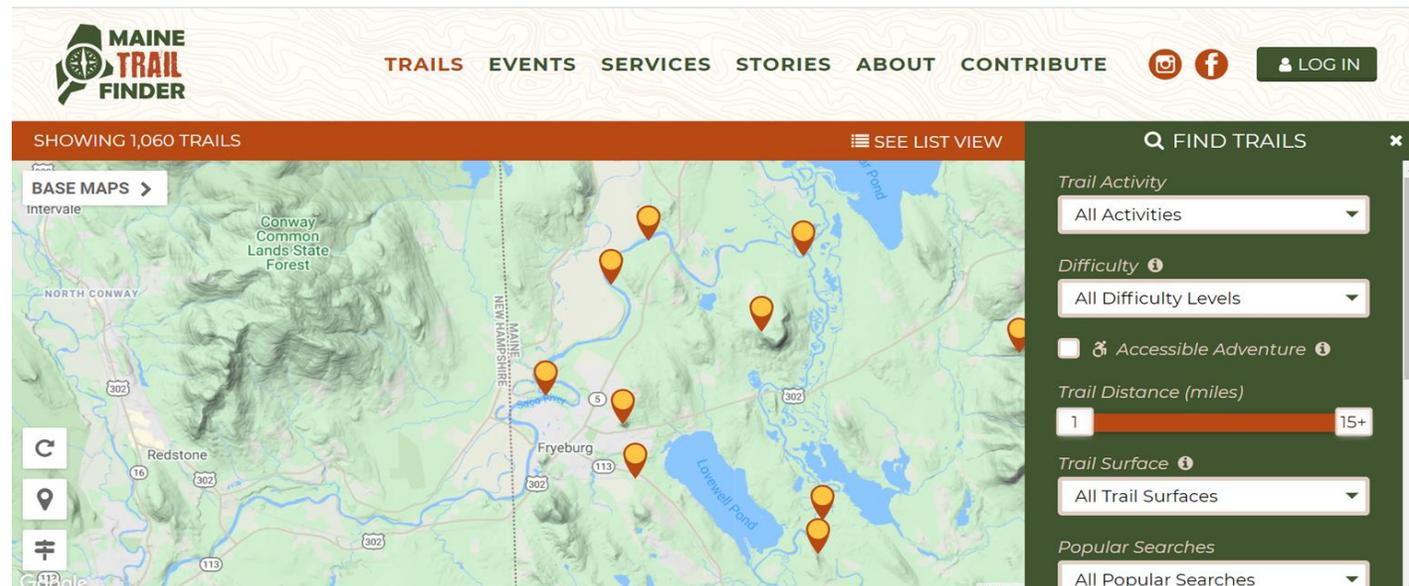
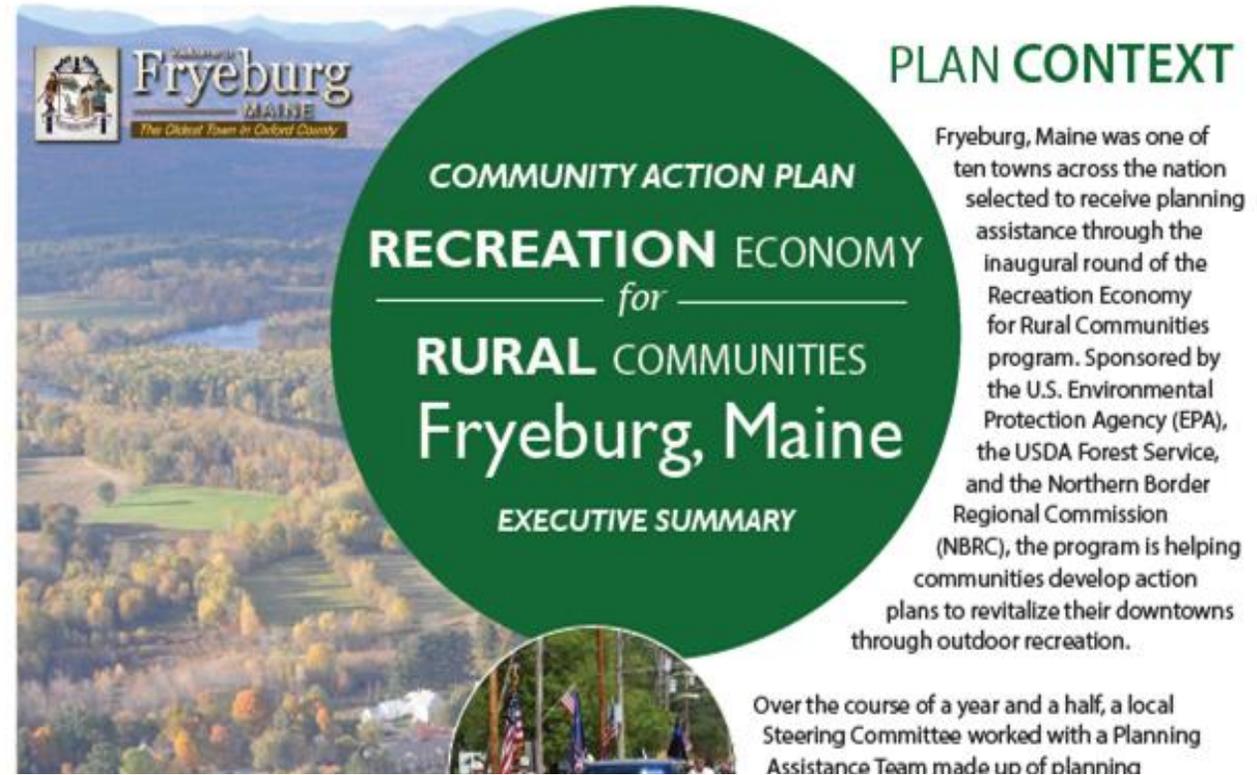
**Fryeburg, Maine**  
October 26-30, 2020

## WORKSHOP GOALS

- *Brand Identity*: Develop a brand identity for Fryeburg that connects, promotes, and sustains the region's unique natural, recreational, cultural, and historical assets.
- *Connectivity*: Improve physical connectivity among Fryeburg's Main Street, recreational assets, and other key destinations for people walking, cycling, paddling, and driving.
- *Sense of Place*: Make Fryeburg's Main Street a vibrant community center that attracts residents and visitors, supports businesses, and is grounded in the region's rural character.
- *Business Development*: Start and grow businesses that support the outdoor recreation sector, particularly in underutilized spaces downtown.

# Outcomes so far

- SMPDC received Outdoor Recreation Roundtable grant for asset inventory and mapping
- SMPDC used NBRC grant for staff time to identify projects for NRBC assistance
- Working group running with brand development process, guidance doc, focus groups, marketing plan
- Town Economic Development, Bike/Ped/Trails, Parks/Open Space/Beautification Committees created, filled, and active, with ongoing SMPDC support
- SMPDC is helping the Town apply for an NBRC grant to connect the Mountain Division Rail Trail to downtown via sidewalk/multi-use trail





# Four ways to support the rec economy with your CEDS

# 1. Build inclusive, active coalitions.



# Key partners to include

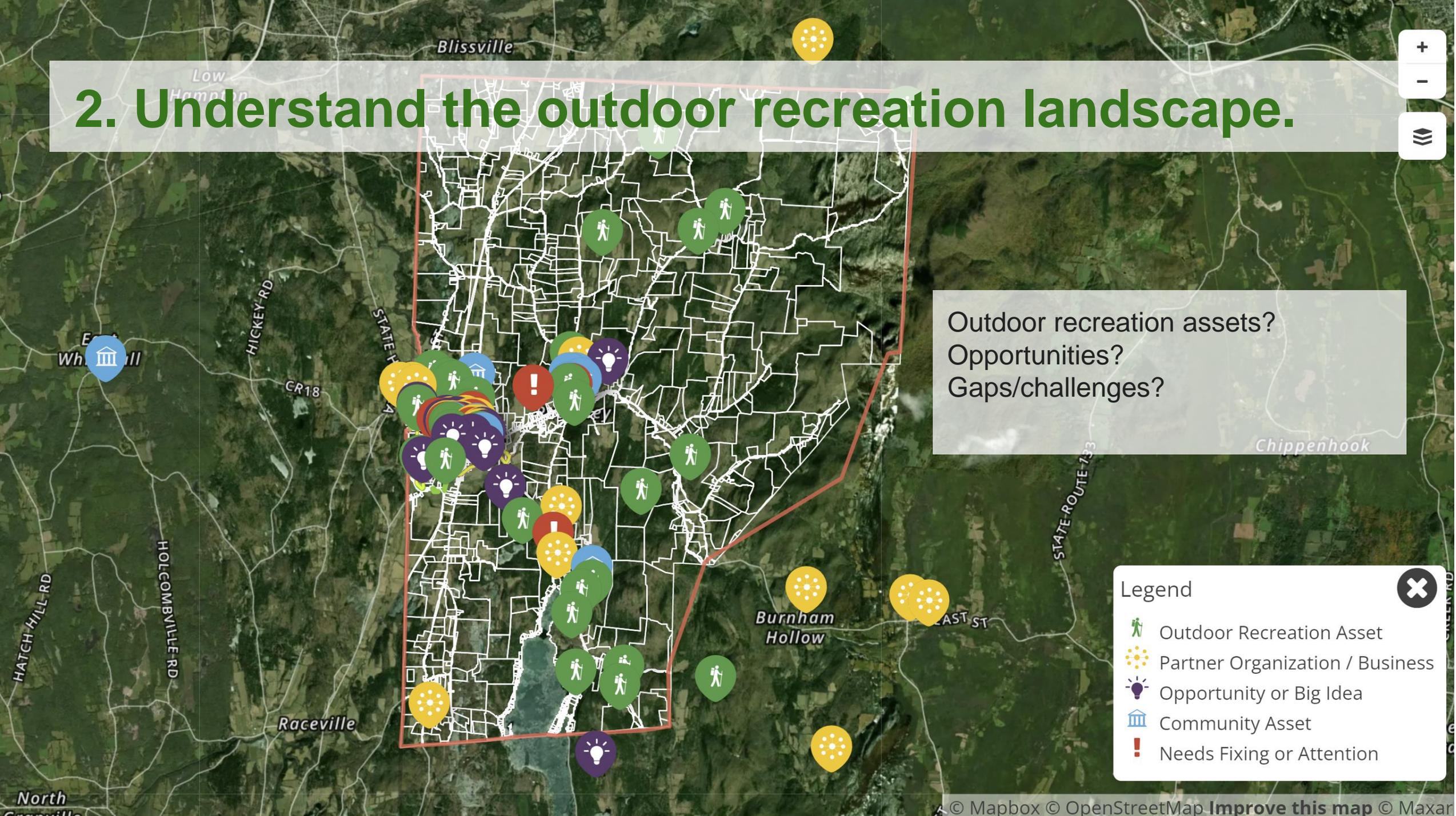
- Federal land managers (forest supervisors, district rangers, recreation staff)
- State land managers
- State offices of outdoor recreation
- Tourism organizations
- Local land trusts
- Conservation orgs
- Recreation clubs
- Youth conservation corps: <https://corpsnetwork.org/members-by-state/>
- Recreation-related businesses
- Private landowners

## 2. Understand the outdoor recreation landscape.

Outdoor recreation assets?  
Opportunities?  
Gaps/challenges?

### Legend

-  Outdoor Recreation Asset
-  Partner Organization / Business
-  Opportunity or Big Idea
-  Community Asset
-  Needs Fixing or Attention



# Sources of state/regional information

- BEA Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account:  
<https://www.bea.gov/news/2021/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2020>
- Headwaters Economics Economic Profile System:  
<https://headwaterseconomics.org/tools/economic-profile-system/about/>
- Headwaters Economics National Forest Socioeconomic Indicators Tool:  
<https://headwaterseconomics.org/tools/forest-indicators/>
- State Offices of Outdoor Recreation:  
<https://outdoorindustry.org/advocacy/state-local-issues/state-offices-outdoor-recreation/>
- National Forest plans
- State, regional, and local outdoor recreation, parks, trails, open space, watershed, and downtown plans and inventories

### 3. Include a few impactful goals and objectives.

- Business development (recreation and supportive)
- Physical connectivity (bike/ped, trails, wayfinding)
- Other infrastructure
- Equitable access, welcoming spaces
- Branding and marketing
- Regional connectivity/ collaboration



# Sample goals and objectives

- **Business development:** Support opportunities for business development in downtown Glenwood Springs, building on and expanding beyond the tourism economy and supporting entrepreneurship opportunities for residents.
  - Create affordable, co-op like downtown space for small and new businesses and artists.
- **Physical connectivity:** Improve physical connectivity among Fryeburg's Main Street, recreational assets, and other key destinations for people walking, cycling, paddling, and driving.
  - Develop and nurture private landowner relationships to improve land access and support stewardship and management.
- **Sense of place:** Make Fryeburg's Main Street a vibrant community center that attracts residents and visitors, supports businesses, and is grounded in the region's rural character.
  - Make progress toward a municipal septic system to remove barriers to entry for new businesses.

# Sample goals and objectives

- **Community for all:** How can we ensure that under-represented groups are involved in, able to access, and benefitting from the outdoor recreation economy, recognizing that we have a diversity of visitors and residents in our community?
  - Identify under-represented leaders and develop a pipeline to fill various leadership roles in community boards, commissions, and organizations.
- **Strengthen partnerships and improve area-wide promotion:** Coordinate area-wide marketing and promotion and explore how to fund a County-wide 'Main Street Coordinator' to work on behalf of all Towns in Giles.
  - Create Giles County travel packages or itineraries.
- **Regional connectivity:** Develop an understanding of the regional context of recreational assets, connection to other communities, and alignment of regional priorities for leveraging the unique outdoor recreation amenities in the area.
  - Gather inventory of cultural, historic, and natural resource assets in the region and convene stakeholders to discuss projects. Develop a professionally made map to highlight regional recreation opportunities.

# 4. Identify catalytic projects and get to work!



# Thank you!

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[NADO issue brief: Outdoor Recreation as a Rural Economic Driver](#)

[Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Rural Economic Development Toolkit](#)

[State Outdoor Business Alliance Network and Headwaters Economics: The Future of the Outdoor Recreation Economy](#)

[USDA Recreation Economy Resource Guide](#)

