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**UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM BOARD OF TRUSTEES
TO CONSIDER CENTER FOR RURAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

BANGOR—The University of Maine System Board of Trustees will consider the establishment of a Center for Rural Sustainable Development in northeastern Maine, when it meets on January 14 in Orono.

The proposed Center is a collaborative effort between the University of Maine System campuses in Fort Kent, Machias and Presque Isle. The Center would partner with communities, existing economic development organizations, and individuals, as well as with other entities within the University of Maine System, to improve the regional well-being through the development of the local economy; the preservation of identity; healthcare; educational opportunities; and cultural and recreational activities.

The conceptual model for the Center for Rural Sustainable Development creates synergy by embracing five, integrated dimensions (human, economic, environmental, technology and political) for working with rural communities towards sustainable development.

"This initiative utilizes the distinctive strengths and perspectives of our universities in eastern and northern Maine," said Richard L. Pattenaude, chancellor of the university system. "It's another example of how the three universities are working collaboratively to help meet rural Maine's educational, economic, social, and cultural needs."

The Center would be based on the University of Maine at Fort Kent campus. "The Center will be an important connection between our outstanding faculty and this region. The proposal is a natural outgrowth of the rural focus, which is at the core of our mission here at UMFK," noted UMFK President Dr. Richard W. Cost.

If approved by the UMS Board, the Center would provide data to support opportunities that promote economic development and other essential building blocks of a community, and which contribute to the retention and in-migration of people.

"UMM is keen to be a leader within Washington County through this new initiative," UMM President Dr. Cynthia Huggins said. "There is no shortage of organizations and agencies here ready for partnerships and action."

Each of the three institutions – UMFK, UMM and UMPI – would contribute to the Center in specific ways, as defined by the needs of its community. The common thread among the three is a rural environment and a strong commitment to their local regions.

"Economic and cultural development are a significant part of the role of all three campuses," UMPI President Don Zillman said. "We look forward to the contributions the new center can bring."

Established in 1968, the University of Maine System is the state's largest educational enterprise. It has an annual enrollment of more than 44,000 students. It features seven universities – some with multiple campuses – located across the state, as well as 10 University College outreach centers, a law school, and an additional 75 interactive distance learning sites. For more information, visit www.maine.edu.