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GrowSmart Maine Summit October 21, 2024, Waterville

“We Get What We Plan For: How Smart Growth Creates Community”

**Dr. Basil Gooden, USDA Rural Development Under Secretary,
and Hannah Pingree, Director, Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future,
Keynote Speakers at Day-long Conference**

WHO: **Dr. Basil Gooden**, United States Under Secretary for Rural Development
Honorable Hannah Pingree, Director, Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future
Rhiannon Hampson, State Director, USDA Rural Development
Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross, Maine State Legislature (District #118)
Rep. Traci Gere, Maine State Legislature (District #134)
Rep. Melanie Sachs, Maine State Legislature (District #102)
Randy Canwell, Select Board, Town of Mexico
Peter Merrill, Select Board, Town of Mexico
Samantha Horn, Director, Maine Office of Community Affairs
Nancy Smith, Chief Executive Officer, GrowSmart Maine
Harald Bredesen, Program Director, GrowSmart Maine
Sharon Campbell, Regional Representative and Director of Constituent Services, Office of U.S. Angus Senator King
Jeanne Christie, District Representative, Office of Congresswoman Pingree (ME 01)
Zach Schmesser, District Director, Office of Congressman Jared Golden (ME 02)
James Hafner, New England Regional Director, American Farmland Trust
Denise Barker, Economic Development Director, Calais
Ardis Brown, Town Manager, Danforth
Kate Cough, Editor, *The Maine Monitor*
Luke Dyer, Town Manager, Van Buren
Brian Kaenrath, City Manager, City of Waterville
Nancy Ketch, Economic Development Director, Houlton
Jeff Levine, AICP, Board Chair, GrowSmart Maine
Tim St Peter, Code Enforcement Officer, Presque Isle
Ben Torres, Code Enforcement Officer, Houlton
Raquel Welch-Day, Town Manager, Town of Mexico

WHAT: USDA Rural Development Maine State Director Rhiannon Hampson will announce the outcome of two highly competitive grant programs. She will announce a **grant for GrowSmart Maine** that will help it respond to disasters. Director Hampson also will congratulate the **Town of Mexico, recently selected to receive Community Facilities Program Disaster funding**. (Leaders from both communities to receive disaster relief support will be in attendance.)

The morning program will feature keynote speakers [Dr. Basil Gooden](#), USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development and the [Honorable Hannah Pingree](#), Director, Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. Following the keynotes and moderated discussion, eleven Maine towns and organizations will offer Community Spotlight demonstrations highlighting how building and conserving infrastructure and public places define their communities.

WHERE: Waterville Opera House (Paul J. Schupf Art Center)
93 Main Street, Waterville, Maine

WHEN: October 21, 2024, 8:30am-4:30pm
The Summit kickoff begins at 9:10am, keynote addresses begin at 9:30am, with Community Spotlight sessions to follow.

WHY: Senior agriculture official Dr. Basil Gooden will discuss issues that Maine’s rural communities are grappling with as they confront climate change and embrace economic development. Hannah Pingree brings deep understanding of the innovative policy solutions the State of Maine has developed to address these challenges. **Their keynote addresses and conversation will offer unique insight into how federal infrastructure investments and State and local policy initiatives can help Maine alleviate long-term challenges and plan for smart growth.**

In addition to the conference sessions, summit participants and the media will have a chance to meet with leaders from eleven Maine towns and organizations during their Community Spotlight presentations. This part of the program offers an opportunity to learn about innovative strategies local leaders are implementing across Maine.

Questions: **Joe Oliva**, Outreach and Communications Director, GrowSmart Maine,
joliva@growsmartmaine.org

GrowSmart Maine’s Building Community Strength Program:

At the 2023 GrowSmart Maine Summit, USDA Rural Development Maine State Director Rhiannon Hampson announced that USDA was awarding GrowSmart Maine (GSM) a [Rural Community Development Initiative](#) (RCDI) grant of \$304,636. With matching funds from American Farmland Trust, GSM has used the funding to implement a capacity-building program called “Building Community Strength,” providing training, technical assistance, and grants to ten rural communities across Maine. Trainees from each municipality are tackling issues such as climate resilience, economic development, farm viability and farmland protection, affordable housing, and equitable and inclusive community development. Participating communities are:

- Calais
- Danforth
- Enfield
- Houlton
- Machias
- Mexico
- Presque Isle
- Roque Bluffs
- Skowhegan
- Van Buren

GrowSmart Maine is Maine’s State Rural Development Council:

GrowSmart Maine supports communities in navigating change by convening to action, sharing thought leadership, and advocating, all in alignment with smart growth principles. The Summit will showcase work in rural communities across Maine, much of it facilitated by GSM through its new Building Community Strength program. In 2019, USDA designated GrowSmart Maine (GSM) as the [State Rural Development Council](#) (SRDC). In this capacity, GSM collaborates with local and state government agencies, as well as economic and community development organizations, to assist rural communities in managing change and accessing resources.

Keynote speaker: Dr. Basil Gooden, Under Secretary for Rural Development. Dr. Basil Gooden was confirmed by the United States Senate to serve as Under Secretary for Rural Development on Monday, February 26, 2024.

Prior to his confirmation as Under Secretary, Gooden served as Director of State Operations for Rural Development. In this role, he led and supported USDA’s team of 47 Rural Development State Directors who extend USDA’s state-level leadership and help ensure the department’s investments reach all rural communities. From 2016-2018, he served as the 3rd Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Prior to that, Dr. Gooden served as the Virginia State Director for Rural Development at USDA. Dr. Gooden holds a bachelor’s degree from Virginia Tech, a master’s degree in social work from Syracuse University, and a master’s degree in public health and a Ph.D. in Social Work from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a native of Buckingham County, Virginia, where he and his family still own and operate a cattle farm.



Keynote Speaker: Hannah Pingree, Director of the Maine Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF). Hannah Pingree was appointed as director of Governor Mills' Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) in 2019.

As director, Hannah leads cross-agency efforts to develop innovative policy solutions that address pressing long-term challenges for Maine, such as climate change, energy, housing, workforce and economic development, coordinating federal infrastructure investments, and supporting children and older Maine people. She was also appointed by Governor Mills in 2019 to co-chair the Maine Climate Council, which leads climate planning for the state. Hannah served four terms in the Maine Legislature from 2003 to 2010 and served as both Speaker of House of Representatives and House Majority Leader.



Community Spotlights:

Each Community Spotlight demonstrates local connection to the focus of this year's Summit; planning and investing in social and physical infrastructure to grow communities. to explore and learn more:

- [Maine CITE](#)
- [JustME for JustUS](#)
- [The Town of Houlton](#)
- [The Town of Danforth](#)
- [Maine Seacoast Mission Sunbeam](#)
- [Age-Friendly Saco](#)
- [Penobscot Nation Tribal Farm](#)
- [Natural Products and Agriculture Working Group, Auburn](#)
- [Fork Food Lab](#)
- [Maine Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum](#)
- [The Town of Van Buren](#)