

Tantramar communities will work together to develop 30-year sustainability plan for region

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Many tough challenges lie ahead for Tantramar residents in the face of climate change, economic uncertainty and social inequality.

And so it will be imperative for the communities within the region to come together and work collaboratively to address those concerns.

That's exactly what is hoped will happen as the first phase of a regional sustainability plan gets underway.

"What we need to do is to identify themes of common concern and to find ways to collaborate together to take action," says Tracey Wade, a planner with the Tantramar Planning District Commission.

The Tantramar 2040 initiative, which is being co-ordinated by EOS Eco-Energy in partnership with the planning commission, will gather the resources and imaginations of its communities to take concrete steps toward sustainability, ensuring the region's collective environmental, economic and social wellbeing.

"This will help us develop ways to adapt to the various challenges of climate change and move towards a sustainable future," says Kate Friars, executive director of EOS Eco-Energy.

To kick things off, EOS and the TDPC will host a series of workshops beginning this month, where participants will identify and prioritize regional issues, and then determine how to get from where they are today to where they want to be in 2040.

The first session, entitled Tantramar 2040: Issues and Opportunities workshop, will explore current issues and opportunities in the region, focusing on the top economic, environmental and social/cultural concerns.

"We'll be looking at what are the common issues and what are the areas we can collaborate on the best . . . and which should be priorities," says Wade.

The workshop will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 14 from 5:30-9:30 p.m. at the Cape Jourmain Nature Centre.

A dinner highlighting local food will be provided. Registration is free but participants are asked to complete the registration form on the EOS website (www.eosecoenergy.com) by Sept. 7.

The second workshop, tentatively scheduled for November, will provide participants with baseline data related to the discussed priorities from the previous session, which will help them determine if their top concerns are in tune with today's current reality.

The third, which will be held sometime in

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January, will "bring back all the players to hammer out the details "of an action plan," says Wade.

The idea of developing a regional sustainability plan came from an Adaptations and Actions conference held last spring at Mount Allison University, which started discussions around sustainability.

"We realized that we're going to have to learn to look to ourselves and to our neighbours to deal with the challenges we're facing," says Wade.

Because of the throwaway society they live in and the practices they continue to keep, "we need some alternatives and we need to work together to come up with solutions," she insists.

The workshops will hopefully get more people in the region talking about "the elephant in the room."

"We need to look at the way we live and reduce our impact at the local level. And if we're going to have a sustainable community, what do we do to get there?"

Friars says the Tantramar 2040 initiative is also helped along by the fact that several of the participating communities – including Memramcook, Sackville and Port Elgin – have already initiated or completed sustainability plans of their own.

"This way, we'll be able to bring together all the best of what's been learned so far," she says. "These three local initiatives can get worked into the regional plan."

Friars also pointed out that, by working collaboratively, this initiative will also lay the framework for other municipalities who may be interested in working together on common issues.

A Tantramar 2040 steering committee has already been established and includes the villages of Dorchester, Memramcook, and Port Elgin, the town of Sackville, Fort Folly First Nation, TPDC, Beaubassin Planning Commission, Enterprise SouthEast, the Greater Sackville Chamber of Commerce and the non-profit sector.