



## **WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS**

*Week ending October 30, 2009*

State law assigns four core duties to the State Planning Office that include: 1) conducting continuing economic analysis, including economic forecasting, 2) coordinating the development of the State's economy and energy resources with the conservation of its natural resources; 3) providing technical assistance to towns and regions; and 4) providing technical assistance to the Governor and Legislature by undertaking special studies and plans and preparing policy alternatives.

### **POLICY AND MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**RFQ for Persons Qualified to Prepare Comprehensive Economic Impact Studies.** The State Planning Office is requesting qualifications from individuals interested in qualifying to prepare comprehensive economic impact studies of large-scale, retail development proposals under Maine's Informed Growth Act. Maine's Informed Growth Act requires a comprehensive economic impact study that assesses the impact of large-scale retail development proposals before a municipality can issue a land use permit. The Act directs the State Planning Office to identify preparers who are qualified by education, training, and experience to conduct these economic impact studies. Persons interested in submitting qualifications may download the RFQ instructions [here](#). Submissions are due on November 20, 2009. **CONTACT: Jody Harris at 287-5424 or [jody.harris@maine.gov](mailto:jody.harris@maine.gov)**

### **LAND USE PROGRAM**

**SPO supports GPCOG regional comprehensive planning effort.** On October 14, Liz Hertz, Director, Land Use Planning met with the GPCOG Executive Committee to discuss GPCOG's proposal to develop a regional comprehensive plan for a group of towns within its geography. SPO is excited about this undertaking and opportunity to move toward regional land use planning especially around shared resources and infrastructure. After a brief period of discussion and questions, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to support an MOU with SPO to kick off the effort.

**CONTACT:** Elizabeth Hertz at 287-8061 or [elizabeth.hertz@maine.gov](mailto:elizabeth.hertz@maine.gov) or Neal Allen, GPCOG Executive Director, at 774-989 or [nallen@gpcog.org](mailto:nallen@gpcog.org) .

### **ECONOMICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

**The State Planning Office answers questions about tax reform.** In June, 2009 Governor Baldacci signed a tax reform bill (LD 1495) into law. The new law lowers the top income tax rate and reduces the tax burden on Maine residents by almost \$55 million. The law changes the current tax structure in a number of ways: it lowers the top income tax rate from 8.5 % to 6.5% for income up to \$250,000; lowers the top income tax rate for the portion of any income above \$250,000 from 8.5% to 6.85%; broadens the sales tax base, meaning more goods and services will be subject to the existing 5% sales tax rate; makes a portion of the Earned Income Tax Credit refundable for lower and middle income families; increases funding for tourism marketing; and is revenue-neutral, meaning it doesn't generate increased revenue for the State. Download the full document here: <http://www.maine.gov/spo/economics/>. **CONTACT:** Thomas Merrill at 287-1478 or [thomas.merrill@maine.gov](mailto:thomas.merrill@maine.gov) .

### **COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**Two Maine towns join the National Flood Insurance Program.** Staff of the Maine Floodplain Management program has assisted two Maine towns with joining the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The towns of Stockholm and Newburgh are the newest towns to join the federal flood insurance program, which allows residents access to flood insurance and makes the towns eligible for hazard mitigation grants and other resources. In the past several weeks, twenty-one out of the forty-six Maine communities who currently do not participate in the NFIP received outreach materials and courtesy phone calls to assist them in joining the program. **CONTACT:** Brigitte Ndikum-Nyada at 287-8932 or [brigitte.m.ndikum-nyada@maine.gov](mailto:brigitte.m.ndikum-nyada@maine.gov) .

### **GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY**

**Heating Oil Prices Rise.** The Governor's Office of Energy Independence and Security (OEIS) conducted its off season oil survey and has found that the current statewide average cash price for No. 2 heating oil to be at \$2.55 per gallon up 8 cents from last week. It is important to note that the price for heating oil is a statewide average and that prices in a given geographic region of the state may be considerably higher or lower than the statewide average. Within the OEIS sample, the lowest actual heating oil price of \$2.34 per gallon was found in the Southwestern region. The high-end price of

\$2.80 per gallon was found in the Northern region. The statewide kerosene price average is \$2.93 per gallon at this time. The statewide average for propane based on a using 600 gallon a year was 2.56 per gallon. At the time of this release the price of WTI crude oil, major driver of refined product prices, including heating oil was \$78.70.

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