

WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

February 26, 2010

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.

ECONOMICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Retail sales fall in 2009. Total taxable retail sales in December 2009 were down 2.2% from December 2008, and 2009 annual sales were 6.8% lower than 2008 annual sales. Restaurant sales were 2.5% higher in December 2009 than in December of 2008, but lodging sales were down 11.6%. Building supply sales were 7.1% lower in December compared to the same month the year before.

December 2009 Retail Sales:

	% Change Dec 2008 to Dec 2009	% Change 2008 YTD to 2009 YTD
Building Supply	-7.1%	-16.3%
Food Store	-3.8%	2.2%
General Merchandise	0.6%	-3.7%
Other Retail	-6.9%	-2.2%
Restaurant	2.5%	-0.8%
Lodging	-11.6%	-7.4%
Auto Transportation	5.2%	-6.8%
Total	-2.2%	-6.8%
Business Operating	-6.3%	-16.8%
Personal Consumption	-1.5%	-5.4%

Source: Maine Revenue Services

The taxable retail sales data is available for download on the State Planning Office website at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/economics/economic/retailsales.htm>.

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Governor issues proclamation for 2010 Census. On Friday, February 26, Governor Baldacci proclaimed 2010 as the year of the census. The Governor's proclamation was presented at a ceremony in the Hall of Flags to announce Maine's support for the 2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau Regional Director Kathleen Ludgate joined Speaker Pingree and local elected officials and community leaders to stress how important the census count is for Maine. The census count begins on March 15. For more information: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/index.php>. CONTACT: Amanda Rector at 287-1475 or Amanda.k.rector@maine.gov

MAINE COASTAL PROGRAM

SPO submits comments to improve federal study of marine spatial planning. Earlier in February, SPO provided comments to President Obama's Council of Environmental Quality about the proposed framework for marine spatial planning (MSP) in the United States. MSP is a process to collect and analyze ocean data and uses and to bring state and federal agencies together for proactive planning. SPO submitted comments jointly with the Department of Marine Resources. The remarks to CEQ included a copy of earlier correspondence from Governor Baldacci to President Obama regarding needed regulatory reforms for ocean energy siting. SPO's Maine Coastal Program staff are active participants in national and regional discussions about implementation of MSP in the region and the state. An Executive Order from the Obama administration in spring 2010 is anticipated to direct federal agencies to coordinate their activities for MSP at the regional scale (New England and other multi-state areas that have organized regional ocean councils.) SPO is actively involved with Maine's non-governmental organizations to help secure funding for additional monitoring, research and data management needed for the practice of MSP. CONTACT: Kathleen Leyden at 287-3144 or kathleen.leyden@maine.gov

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

State Planning Office recognized. Maine's public-private *Maine Recycles Week* steering committee presented SPO with a plaque in recognition of its support for the 2009 annual statewide, promotional week held in November. This year nearly 2,000 school

children drew posters to promote recycling in their schools. The winning entries became part of the 2010 *Maine Recycles* calendar. Over the last ten years, the Office has received over a thousand entries in the *Maine Recycles Week* school competition where school children establish in-school or classroom activities to encourage recycling. Between the poster and school competitions, over twenty thousand Maine students every year contribute to the state's recycling efforts. The MRW Steering Committee thanked SPO and the businesses and citizens of Maine that support recycling. **CONTACT: Bruce White at 287-8053 or bruce.white@maine.gov**

LAND USE PLANNING

Farmland preservation sample ordinances available. Preserving farmland is an important land use goal the comprehensive plans of many Maine municipalities. However, few towns take the next step, which is implementing that goal by modifying municipal zoning or land use ordinances. To assist municipalities that want to move forward with this second step, SPO has compiled a list of Maine municipalities that have modified their zoning or land use ordinances specifically to preserve farmland. We hope that other municipalities will begin adopting similar standards, armed with the knowledge that such regulatory language already exists in Maine. The ordinances can be found on our website:

http://www.maine.gov/spo/landuse/techassist/ag_ordinances.htm. **CONTACT: MacGregor Stocco at 287-4818 or macgregor.stocco@maine.gov**

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY

Heating oil prices stable. The Governor's Office of Energy Independence and Security's February 23 survey found that the current statewide average cash price for No. 2 heating oil is \$2.66 per gallon, unchanged from last week. The statewide kerosene price average is \$3.03 per gallon at this time. The statewide average for propane, based on a use of 600 gallons a year, is \$2.91 per gallon. At the time of this release the price of WTI crude oil, a major driver of refined product prices including heating oil, was \$79.85. **CONTACT: Jeffrey Marks at 287-8927 or Jeffrey.marks@maine.gov**