



WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

June 17, 2011

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**

**April 2011 retail sales down from last year.** Total taxable retail sales in April fell 1.1% from April 2010, mostly due to an 11.9% over-the-year decline in sales at building supply stores. The drop in sales at building supply stores was partly due to the end of the first-time homebuyer’s tax credit, which expired at the end of April of 2010. Total sales for the last three months, February through April, are 0.6% higher than the same three-month period a year ago. The taxable retail sales data is available for download on the State Planning Office website at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/economics/retail>.

**CONTACT: Joel Johnson at 624-6209 or [joel.d.johnson@maine.gov](mailto:joel.d.johnson@maine.gov)**

Maine Retail Sales	% Change Apr 2010 to Apr 2011	% Change last 3 months / 3 months year ago
Building Supply	-11.9%	-7.6%
Food Store	-1.7%	0.7%
General Merchandise	-1.0%	-3.0%
Other Retail	1.8%	2.5%
Restaurant	2.3%	1.0%
Lodging	3.6%	4.4%
Auto Transportation	2.0%	4.1%
Total	-1.1%	0.6%
Business Operating	-1.6%	4.2%
Personal Consumption	-1.1%	0.1%

Source: Maine Revenue Services

6/13/2011

**Amanda Rector featured on WCSH TV show “207.” Newly-named State Economist**

Amanda Rector, was interviewed by Rob Caldwell and Kathleen Shannon last night. Amanda spoke of how recently-enacted regulatory and tax reforms will help Maine's recovering economy. She also stressed that challenges Maine faces from an aging workforce will make initiatives to attract and retain young people and keep retired people engaged all the more important. To watch the segment: <http://www.wcsh6.com/life/programming/local/207/article/162768/50/State-Economist-Amanda-Rector>. CONTACT: Amanda Rector at 624-6206 or [amanda.k.rector@Maine.gov](mailto:amanda.k.rector@Maine.gov)

### MAINE COASTAL PROGRAM

**Maine coastal access guide project underway.** The Maine Coastal Program is developing a guide of coastal access sites to promote awareness of these sites and to potentially aid the tourism industry in areas that typically get overlooked. To conduct field work, the MCP has hired two interns, Melissa Anson of Scarborough and Ethan Pierce of Bar Harbor. CONTACT: Julia Noordyk at 624-6229 or [Julia.Noordyk@Maine.gov](mailto:Julia.Noordyk@Maine.gov)

**Shore and harbor planning grants recipients report progress.** Mid-point reports show progress on Maine Coastal Program's 2011 shore and harbor grants. Kittery has redesigned their commercial pier, making way for the addition of an adjacent recreational pier. The town of Harpswell initiated its bidding process to design an access ramp at their Mitchell Field Complex. And Topsham recently lauded the receipt of their grant award in an article in the *Brunswick Times Record*. To view the article: <http://www.timesrecord.com/articles/2011/05/31/news/doc4de51f0e75d6f060620316.txt>. The shore and harbor grants fund municipalities to improve public access and harbor planning and management. CONTACT Matt Nixon at 624-6226 or [Matthew.E.Nixon@Maine.gov](mailto:Matthew.E.Nixon@Maine.gov)

**Coastal data collection ongoing.** As part of its ongoing mission, the Maine Coastal Program has dedicated resources and staff to collect baseline coastal data to help inform and streamline decision-making for coastal and marine permitting and regulations. This week, the coastal program staff worked with the Schoodic Education and Research Center to place an Automated Information System (AIS) at their facility on Schoodic Peninsula in Acadia National Park. AIS computer systems collect traffic data from commercial and passenger vessels that will become part of a state, on-line repository to be called the Maine Coastal Atlas. CONTACT Matt Nixon at 624-6226 or [Matthew.E.Nixon@Maine.gov](mailto:Matthew.E.Nixon@Maine.gov)

## **COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

**State looks to improve mapping accuracy.** SPO is working to assist the Maine GeoLibrary Board establish a statewide ortho imagery acquisition program through a partnership between state, federal, and local agencies. The program would provide substantial savings in acquisition costs and improve efficiencies. In addition to these savings, the acquisition can be used as in-kind match for the Maine's floodplain management and other programs. Recent discussions helped acquaint partners with the program and its benefits. Ortho images are aerial photographs geometrically corrected such that the scale is uniform and has the same lack of distortion as a map. Because it is an accurate representation of the Earth's surface, it can be used to measure true distances. **CONTACT: Joseph Young at 624-6234 or [joseph.young@maine.gov](mailto:joseph.young@maine.gov)**

## **LAND FOR MAINE'S FUTURE**

**Yale study of the economics of land conservation completed.** Yale Berkley Scholars assessed the value of jobs, revenue, and watershed protection provided by the conservation of eight completed Land for Maine's Future projects. The study concludes that LMF projects provide substantial returns. To view the study, visit <http://www.maine.gov/spo/>. **CONTACT: Jody Harris at 624-6202 or [jody.harris@maine.gov](mailto:jody.harris@maine.gov)**

## **LAND USE PLANNING**

**Freedom comprehensive plan consistent.** Late last week, SPO notified municipal officials in Freedom that the town's proposed comprehensive plan is consistent with the Growth Management Act. The proposed plan, which was developed with the assistance of the Kennebec Council of Governments, is expected to be put before the voters at the next Freedom town meeting for adoption. **CONTACT: Phil Carey at 624-6216 or [phil.carey@maine.gov](mailto:phil.carey@maine.gov)**

**Chebeague Islanders adopt comprehensive plan.** On June 4, the Chebeague Island town meeting voted overwhelmingly to adopt the town's proposed comprehensive plan. The plan, which was recently found by SPO to be consistent with the Growth Management Act, is the first for the island since it became Maine's newest town on July 1, 2007. **CONTACT: Phil Carey at 624-6216 or [phil.carey@maine.gov](mailto:phil.carey@maine.gov)**

## **STAFF CHANGES**

**Amanda Rector named state economist.** After having served a short term as Acting State Economist, Director Darryl Brown appointed Amanda permanently to the state economist position. The state economist sits on the Revenue Forecasting Committee, provides data and economic information to policymakers, and analyzes economic impacts of policy options. Amanda also serves as the Governor's liaison to the Census Bureau, staffs the Consensus Economic Forecasting Commission, and works on special research projects. **CONTACT: Tony VanDenBossche at 624-6204 or [tony.vandenbossche@maine.gov](mailto:tony.vandenbossche@maine.gov)**

**Amanda Lessard resigns as building code training coordinator.** Amanda set up the state's training and certification program for the new Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC). She worked with the technical building code and standards board, local CEOs, and educators to establish the training content, develop training materials, write certification exams, and create systems to track certification status. In her short tenure, she oversaw the training of 400 municipal code officers and private, third-party inspectors. To date, 355 of those have become certified through the program's examination process. Amanda has accepted the position of code enforcement office/town planner in Rangeley. **CONTACT: Elizabeth Hertz at 624-6220 or [elizabeth.hertz@maine.gov](mailto:elizabeth.hertz@maine.gov)**

**New project manager joins LMF.** Sam Morris replaces Steve Brooke who retired in April from the Land for Maine's Future program. Sam transfers from SPO's waste management and recycling program and brings with him 14 years of natural resource policy and project management experience. Sam has developed, implemented, and administered grant programs. He has worked in the legislative arena, provided technical assistance to local volunteer groups and municipalities, conducted training workshops, and staffed committees. Sam will assume project management of a portfolio of LMF projects as well as provide support to the LMF board and its working committees. **CONTACT: Jody Harris at 624-6202 or [jody.harris@maine.gov](mailto:jody.harris@maine.gov)**

**Rhonda Carl leaves SPO.** Office Associate Rhonda Carl provided administrative support for SPO's waste management and recycling program since 2001. During her tenure, she also served as SPO's receptionist and librarian. Her last day was June 10. **CONTACT: George MacDonald at 624-6245 or [george.macdonald@maine.gov](mailto:george.macdonald@maine.gov)**