



WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

July 15, 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

May 2011 retail sales up 2.2% from May 2010 (not adjusted for inflation). Business Operating Sales (mostly out-of-state purchases by Maine businesses) led the way by growing \$16.7 million (12%) over the year. Auto Transportation sales also grew substantially (\$15.4 million or 5.4% over the year). Building Supply sales, a key indicator of the health of the all-important housing market, ticked up 3.1% over the year but this is likely due in part to the expiration of the first-time homebuyer tax credit on April 30, 2010. Total sales for the last three months, March through May, are 0.8% higher than the same three month period a year ago. Go to <http://www.maine.gov/spo/economics/retail/> for more information.

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MAINE COASTAL PROGRAM

Landowner's stream connectivity framework kick-off. Roads, culverts, and dams can impede fish from moving up and downstream. The term for the efforts to remove these barriers is called "stream connectivity." Effectively addressing thousands of such barriers in Maine requires approaches that are individually tuned to specific types of landowners. To that end, representatives of major timberland owners, the Maine Forest Products Council, and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative recently requested a

work session with the Private Landowner Coordination Committee of the Maine Stream Connectivity Work Group to discuss how best to tackle the challenges of re-connecting stream habitat on the state's millions of working forest acres. Participants at the meeting agreed that the emerging landowner's stream connectivity framework should focus on a variety of cooperative initiatives including data sharing, training, technical assistance, and funding.

The Maine Stream Connectivity Work Group is convened by Maine SPO's Coastal Program and the Maine Department of Marine Resources' Bureau of Sea Run Fisheries.

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COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Maine waste characterization study begun. SPO is conducting a study to find what's in Maine's waste. It's been nearly 20 years since the last study and waste composition has changed radically—from the types of packaging made today, to the increase in electronics, to the kinds of things that can be recycled.



It's important to know what's in the waste stream to be able to help communities identify changes needed in community recycling and solid waste management strategies. During the next three weeks, teams of UMO students will sort and weigh sample bags of trash in different communities and will repeat the process again in the fall. SPO selected 14 programs with varied approaches to recycling and waste management. The participating communities are: Orono, Boothbay, Old Town, Mid Maine Solid Waste (Dover-Foxcroft), Central Penobscot (Dexter), Hatch Hill Region (Augusta), Pittsfield, Pleasant River (Addison), Paris/Norway, Bath, Scarborough, Gorham, Ogunquit, and St. George.

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LAND FOR MAINE'S FUTURE

Maine to conserve working farms and outdoor recreation lands. The Land for Maine's Future Board selected 22 projects that will conserve 76,000 acres of undeveloped farm,

forest, and recreation lands. The Land for Maine's Future Board allocated \$1.4 million for six farmland projects and \$5.6 million for 16 conservation/recreation projects. Among others, the board funded an addition to one of Maine's oldest prehistoric archaeological sites in Dresden, a heritage trail corridor along the Androscoggin River, an addition to the state's most-visited park, Camden Hills State Park, the last remaining dairy farm in Fayette, and Atlantic Salmon spawning habitat in Burnham that also provides canoe and kayaking access to Twenty-five Mile Stream. The Board's action commits all of the available state funds for farmland and conservation/recreation. But \$1.2 million remains for future water access projects.

[View a list of all projects the LMF Board approved for funding on July 12, 2011](#)

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LAND USE PLANNING

Norway plan finding helps with grant bid. The State Planning Office recently found the 2011 Norway comprehensive plan update to be consistent with the Maine Growth Management Act. This marks the first time that Norway has enjoyed the benefits of having a "consistent" comprehensive plan. The good news arrived in time to make the Norway eligible for the Communities for Maine's Future Program and the town's application for a CMF grant has been accepted for review.

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