



WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

November 18, 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.

POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Part FF Working Group Finalizes Plan to Reorganize SPO. The working group created in part FF of the FY 12-13 Biennial Budget voted out its plan for reorganizing the State Planning Office. The plan makes recommendations for moving SPO's functions to appropriate line agencies. The recommendations will be submitted to the Legislature's Appropriations Committee by December 1, 2011. The recommendations are available on-line at: <http://www.maine.gov/spo/>.

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ECONOMICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

September 2011 Retail Sales Up 3.2% from September 2010. Total taxable retail sales in September 2011 grew 3.2% from September 2010 (not adjusted for inflation). Business Operating Sales, which mostly consist of out-of-state purchases by Maine businesses, grew 8.9% year-over-year in September. Building Supply Sales growth was 6.5% year-over-year in September, which marked the fourth consecutive month of month of strong retail sales growth in building supply stores. Total taxable retail sales for the last three months, July through September, are 3.6% higher than the same three-month period a year ago.

Maine Retail Sales	% Change from September 2010 to September 2011	% Change last three months / same 3 month period in 2010
Building Supply	6.5%	8.5%
Food Store	-1.0%	1.9%
General Merchandise	2.3%	0.5%
Other Retail	2.1%	3.8%
Restaurant	2.7%	3.3%
Lodging	2.6%	3.4%
Auto Transportation	1.7%	2.3%
Total	3.2%	3.6%
Business Operating	8.9%	7.7%
Personal Consumption	2.5%	3.1%
Source: Maine Revenue Services, 11-14-11		

Taxable retail sales information is available on the State Planning Office website at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/economics/retail> and data is available at econ.maine.gov
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MAINE COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

MCCS Staff and VISTA Members Provide Information at Job Fair for Veterans.

Volunteering is a bridge to employment, especially in challenging economic times. A “Hiring Our Heroes” job fair was held November 10 in Augusta to connect Maine’s unemployed military veterans and their spouses with employers. The event is part of a national initiative in partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. MCCS staff member Pam Zeutenhorst and AmeriCorps*VISTA members Jerry De Witt and Caleb Gilbert distributed information about volunteering and national service opportunities at the job fair. Veterans can engage leadership, teamwork, and communication skills they developed in the military in civilian volunteer opportunities while building career skills and contacts. De Witt is a retired U.S. Army veteran and Gilbert is currently active in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserves; both are serving with the Maine VISTA Project to help increase veterans and military families access to healthcare, employment, and education services and benefits.

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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY

Home Efficiency Improvements Critical to Combat Higher Heating Fuel Prices. The Governor's Office of Energy Independence and Security conducted its weekly heating fuel survey on November 14, 2011 and found that the current statewide average cash price for No. 2 heating oil to be \$3.66 per gallon, an increase of seven cents over last week. The statewide kerosene price average is \$4.06 per gallon at this time. The statewide average for propane based on a use of 925 gallons a year is \$3.09 per gallon. On November 14, the price of WTI crude oil, a major driver of refined petroleum product prices, including heating oil was at \$98.30 per barrel.

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