



## **WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS**

*Week ending January 9, 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.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**January meetings galore.** The start of the legislative session heralds a busy time. A number of boards and commissions have scheduled meetings in January. For a complete list of SPO meetings, view our web calendar at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/calendar.shtml>. **CONTACT: Linda Laplante at 287-6077 or [Linda.c.laplante@maine.gov](mailto:Linda.c.laplante@maine.gov) .**

### **SPO Director's Briefing – State and Local Government Committee**

January 12, 2009, 10:30 AM, Room 216, Cross Office Building  
Contact Tony VanDenBossche at 287-1474

### **Land for Maine's Future Board**

January 13, 2009 – 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM Pine Tree Arboretum, Augusta Maine  
Contact [Aline Lachance](#) or call (207) 287-1485

### **State Quality of Place Council**

January 14, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM State Planning Office, 184 State Street, Augusta  
Contact: Linda LaPlante or call 287-6077

### **Intergovernmental Advisory Commission**

January 14, 2009, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Room 216, Cross Office Building

Contact: Linda LaPlante or call 287-6077

### **Ocean Energy Task Force**

January 14, 2009 – 9:00 AM – 3:30 AM Pine Tree State Arboretum, Augusta

Contact [Lorraine Lessard](#) or call 287-1486

### **Maine Commission for Community Services Board Meeting**

January 16, 2009 – 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM *Cross Office Building, Room 105, Augusta*

Contact [Donna Bradstreet](#) or call (207) 287-5649

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

**Heating Fuel Prices Inch Up.** The Governor's Office of Energy Independence and Security (OEIS) conducted the weekly oil survey and has found that the current statewide average cash price for No. 2 heating oil to be at **\$2.28 per gallon** rising \$.01 since last week. Within the OEIS sample, the lowest actual heating oil price of \$1.87 per gallon was found in the Southwestern region . The high-end price of \$2.50 per gallon was found in the Eastern region. At the time of this release the price of WTI crude oil, major driver of refined product prices, including heating oil was \$47.12 up almost \$10 from last week. The statewide kerosene price average is \$2.76 per gallon at this time. Today's propane price survey found statewide average to be \$2.74 per gallon which is \$.05 lower than last week. The average price for propane represents the price per gallon for a 600-800 gallon domestic heating application. The next scheduled survey will be on Monday January 12, 2009. **CONTACT: Ian Burnes at 287-8927 or [ian.burnes@maine.gov](mailto:ian.burnes@maine.gov) .**

## **COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

**Oxford County towns notified by FEMA that new maps for their community's floodplains completed.** This marks the final step in the process of converting all the maps to digital products. The communities now have 6 months to adopt new ordinances to reflect changes in their maps and meet FEMA regulations for floodplain management. Oxford is the first county in to receive new digital floodplain maps. Other counties currently in process include Kennebec, Cumberland and York. It is expected that these three counties will be completed by the fall of 2010. Kennebec County has received preliminary drafts of its maps. FEMA staff and representatives from the mapping contractor, Camp, Dresser, McKee, will be available to discuss the new maps with local officials and the public at meetings, scheduled for January 28 in Augusta, and January 9, 2009. Invitational letters will be going out to local officials early next week notifying them of the times and meeting rooms. **CONTACT: Joseph Young at [joseph.young@maine.gov](mailto:joseph.young@maine.gov) or 287-8051.**

**Floodplain inquiries steady.** Requests from communities needing assistance with floodplain management continue unabated. As of the end of federal fiscal year, program staff documented five community assistance visits (CAV) and 19 community assistance contacts (CAC). CAVS and CACs provide an intense, one-on-one level of assistance and are a tool to gauge community compliance. In FFY08, staff also assisted 73 communities with developing and adopting floodplain ordinances, conducted a total of 46 environmental reviews of state and federally funded projects that have the potential to impact Maine's floodplains, and assisted the Governor, other state agencies, and many individuals as a result of the flooding disaster in northern Maine on April 30-May 1. Staff also fielded 1,408 general assistance calls involving 325 communities and LURC territories. **CONTACT: Sue Baker at 287-8063 or [sue.baker@maine.gov](mailto:sue.baker@maine.gov).**

## **DIRECTORS TEAM**

**Natural Resource Agency Task Force Report released.** The state's task force charged with looking for ways to eliminate duplication and create greater efficiencies to improve the delivery of services for Maine's natural resources sectors has submitted its final report to Governor Baldacci. The task force was co-chaired by Karin Tilberg and Representative Wendy Pieh. The report includes eight specific recommendations aimed at improving services in Maine's natural resources sector and the sectors of Maine's economy and society who derive such great value from those resources. Thanks to all the members of the task force and their hard work on behalf of Maine's citizens. Ron Beard, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, facilitated the task force and deserves special thanks. The full copy of the report can be found on-line at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/specialprojects/naturalresourcesagency/index.htm>.  
**CONTACT:** Linda LaPlante at 287-6077 or [Linda.c.laplante@maine.gov](mailto:Linda.c.laplante@maine.gov) .

**Skowhegan Wal\*Mart first project to trigger Maine's Informed Growth Act study requirements.** A planned 29,000 square foot expansion of the Walmart store in Skowhegan will be the first retail development proposal to comply with Maine's Informed Growth Act. The Act requires the developer to pay for the cost of a comprehensive economic impact study. Walmart's representative delivered a check for the cost of the study to SPO on December 30, 2008. SPO, in turn, gives the fee money to the Town of Skowhegan who administers the Act's study requirements. The Town and developer must agree to the selection of an independent consultant from a list of qualified preparers developed by SPO. The economic impact study must be completed within four months of the date that a complete application is filed with the town.  
**CONTACT:** Jody Harris at 287-5424 or [jody.harris@maine.gov](mailto:jody.harris@maine.gov) or Tony VanDenBossche at 287-1474 or [tony.vandenbossche@maine.gov](mailto:tony.vandenbossche@maine.gov) .

## **ECONOMICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Thomas Merrill joins the SPO Economics and Demographics team filling the position recently vacated by David Douglass.** Thomas is a geographer and computer scientist with an undergraduate degree from the University of Maine at Farmington. He will soon be defending a graduate thesis on renewable energy firms in New England to complete a Master's degree in Regional Economic and Social Development at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Thomas arrives with an interdisciplinary background spanning technology and public policy and is particularly interested in the physical and social landscapes of Maine. His most recent experience has been serving a non-profit collaborative of financial educators in Massachusetts dedicated to building wealth and financial independence in low-income communities. A native of Livermore, Thomas is especially happy to be back home in central Maine and close to family." **CONTACT: Catherine Reilly at [Catherine.Reilly@maine.gov](mailto:Catherine.Reilly@maine.gov) or 287-1479.**

## **COASTAL PROGRAM**

The Town of Harpswell preserves public access with the support of Coastal Program Right of Way Discovery Grants. Over a two year period and working closely with abutters, the Town was able to re-establish and re-furbish the public access way to Tide Mill Cove. The town also verified its ownership and bounds of public access at the Orrs Island Bridge, and to clearly mark the boundaries of the Giant Stairs property (a former gift to the town) and provide public access improvements. "The Town has been very fortunate to receive this grant for the past two years and has seen great accomplishments with preserving the Town's public access points." said Terri Sawyer, Deputy Town Administrator. **CONTACT: Jim Connors at 287-8938 or [jim.connors@maine.gov](mailto:jim.connors@maine.gov).**