



WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

Week ending February 20, 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.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY

Heating Fuel Prices Drop. 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 **\$2.29 per gallon** dropping \$.02 since last week. It is important to note that the price for heating oil is a statewide average and that prices in a given geographic region of the state may be considerably higher or lower than the statewide average. Within the OEIS sample, the lowest actual heating oil price of \$1.76 per gallon was found in the Southwestern region. The high-end price of \$2.55 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 \$34.45 down more than five dollars from last week. The statewide kerosene price average is \$2.75 per gallon at this time. Today's propane price survey found statewide average to be \$2.87 per gallon which is \$.03 higher than last week. The average price for propane represents the price per gallon for a 600-800 gallon domestic heating application. February's average natural gas price for the state is \$1.40 per therm for residential customers. That translates into \$14 per million btu's of energy for natural gas, compared with \$16.61 per MMBTU for heating oil and \$31 per MMBTU for propane at this week's price. The next scheduled survey will be on Tuesday February 23, 2009. **CONTACT: Ian Burnes at 287-8927 or ian.burnes@maine.gov .**

THE MAINE COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Maine Commission for Community Service seeks grant peer reviewers for its spring 2009 grant competition. Every three years the Maine Commission for Community Service conducts a major competition to determine which organizations will receive AmeriCorps funding. Awards go to applicants who submit strong proposals utilizing citizen service as a strategy to meet high priority community needs. Grant applications received are evaluated using a panel of volunteer experts. If you would like to serve as a grant peer reviewer please submit your application online at www.VolunteerMaine.org or www.MaineServiceCommission.gov by March 17th, 2009 to be considered. **CONTACT: Harold Shaw at 207.287.1588 or at harold.shaw@maine.gov .**

COASTAL PROGRAM

Scenic Assessment Handbook completed for the Maine Coastal Program. Perhaps the single most important quality of Maine is its scenic character. Consider how much of the Maine experience is described in terms of visual qualities. The Scenic Assessment Handbook provides an inventory of scenic resources, based on the science of visual analysis and a rigorous procedure documented with maps, data, and images. It was prepared for the State Planning Office/Maine Coastal Program by Terry DeWan, Terrance DeWan & Associates. The 50 page hand book is heavily illustrated with photo examples to augment the text and several appendices provide additional details and resources. The full document is available for down loading from the SPO/MCP website: <http://www.maine.gov/spo/coastal/downloadcenter.htm>. In a unique blending of program objectives the handbook also incorporates guidance for its use under the new Wind Power Law and is in turn incorporated by reference in new scenic resources rules promulgated by SPO to implement the wind power law. **CONTACT: Jim Connors, or jim.connors@maine.gov .**

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Twenty Kennebec County community officials representing thirteen towns participated in final map meetings held in Waterville and Augusta last week. These meetings sponsored by FEMA and the Maine Floodplain Management Team gave community officials a chance to meet with contractor representatives from CDM and to learn about the adoption process for incorporating new digital maps identifying FEMA designated floodplains into their floodplain management ordinances. Preliminary maps have been available for community reviews since July of 2008. FEMA will publish a notice in the Federal Register within the next few weeks and begin the official 90 day comment period for local officials. This is the final opportunity to appeal floodplain delineations and notify FEMA of errors in the maps. New engineering data or other technical information must be submitted to support any appeal.

This comment period is the first step in the post preliminary processing. If there are no appeals regarding floodplain delineation it is anticipated that a letter of final determination will be sent to Kennebec communities on approximately January 1, 2010. This will mark the beginning of a six month time period within which communities must adopt the new maps. If the maps are not adopted into their ordinances within that time period they will be suspended from the National Flood Insurance Program. Once suspended new insurance policies cannot be sold or renewed in the suspended community. **CONTACT: Joseph Young at 287-8051 or Joseph.Young@maine.gov .**

SPO Offers Special Assistance. SPO receives requests throughout the year from municipal recycling programs asking for financial assistance with education. To address some of those needs, the Maine Recycles Toolkit was created with downloadable resources that can be modified to be community-specific. Now for a limited time, SPO is offering support in the form of matching funds to help with recycling education and outreach and to promote toolkit use. Individual municipalities and regional programs are eligible. Deadline is March 27. For more information and a copy of the application, go to <http://www.maine.gov/spo/recycle/index.htm> . **CONTACT: Jetta Antonakos, 287-9074 or jetta.antonakos@maine.gov .**

Video Contest Voting a Success

Voting for the People's Choice winner in the Maine Recycles Video Contest is officially over. Nearly 2,000 Mainers voted online at www.yourtownscable.com, choosing a clear winner from four semi-finalists. Results will be officially announced and prizes awarded on March 14th at a special event honoring contest participants. The finalists had stiff competition – 127 entries from 35 schools. Students and their families are invited to the award ceremony to receive prizes and watch the 25 best entries of the competition. The celebration will be hosted in the Maine State Museum and Archives. CONTACT: Jetta Antonakos, 287-9074 or jetta.antonakos@maine.gov .