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State Planning Office and Land for Maine's Future
Program Prioritization for
the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee
submitted by Martha Freeman, SPO Director
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[CONTEXT—SPO lost: a GF land use planner position in FY09 (15% of land use planning staff); a GF policy position in FY10 (20% of staff assigned to policy work for the Governor and Legislature); a GF code enforcement officer training position in FY10 (50% of CEO staff); and a partially GF funded secretary associate in FY10 due to retirement incentive (20% of secretarial assistance for all of SPO and LMF)]

SPO list of programs, with highest priority denoted #1 and mission critical priorities following in descending order

Priority #1

Program 0082—Planning Office: State Planning Office (SPO) has 4 core statutory duties: coordinate the development of the State's economy and energy resources with the conservation of its natural resources; provide technical assistance to the Governor and Legislature through undertaking special studies and plans and preparing policy alternatives; provide technical assistance to local and regional planning groups; and conduct continuing economic analyses, including economic forecasting.

1. Policy and Economics is SPO's most critical and integrated mission. On the GF we have 1 director, 1 public service executive II, 3 public service executives I, 1 public service manager I, 1 public service coordinator I, 1 senior planner, and 2 economists. These positions oversee all office functions (including those supported by FF and OSR) listed in our core statutory duties. Every one of these positions also performs technical assistance and analysis for the Governor, Legislature, and numerous commissions, boards, councils, and task forces. SPO is also responsible for coordination with the U.S. Census Bureau on behalf of Maine in the upcoming 2010 census.
2. Match for the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) program leverages \$2.6 million in FF. SPO provides 1 fully GF funded secretary associate position, 1 fully GF funded public service manager I position, and 1 fully GF funded senior planner position on our land use team as required match for the NOAA grant which funds coastal activities in SPO, DMR, DEP, and DOC. (The latter 2 positions provide land use planning assistance to non-coastal municipalities; 3 FF planner positions provide this assistance to coastal towns and cities.)
3. Match for the Floodplain program leverages \$264,000 in FF. SPO provides GF for 66% of 1 planner II position as required match for the FEMA floodplain program grant. (This position and a FF senior planner position provide floodplain management for all of Maine.)
4. Technical assistance to municipalities by Regional Planning Councils (RPCs) could be curtailed. RPC GF grants (\$194,000 per year) are used for general technical assistance for municipalities in the implementation of state laws—shoreland zoning, subdivision, site, stormwater, Growth Management Act comprehensive planning, etc. If these RPC funds are lost, municipalities will be

without this regional assistance. SPO no longer has capacity to answer the number of assistance calls RPCs handle. Without other sources of funding, a couple of RPCs may not stay afloat. However, RPCs could seek to raise the lost GF funds elsewhere to continue providing technical assistance. SPO could try to provide more internet-based technical assistance through website FAQs on these land use laws.

Priority #2

Program 0060—Land for Maine’s Future: On behalf of the Land for Maine's Future Board (LMF), the State Planning Office solicits and reviews land conservation proposals and provides project support relating to conservation land and easement purchases, including funding, interagency coordination, and special publications.

- LMF project completion could be slowed. SPO has 1 GF funded senior planner position specifically created for the LMF program (FY10: PS \$79,015; AO \$5,000. FY 11: PS \$80,255; AO \$5,000). If this position were eliminated we could seek to expand, consistent with bond language and the constitutional use of bond funds, contract work in doing the due diligence for LMF projects. We would also slow down completion of LMF board-approved projects due to less project management. LMF is currently managing a record high of 95 individual land conservation transactions ranging from very small water access sites to several 20,000+ acre working forest conservation easements. This LMF position has an average ongoing workload of over 30 transactions. The average time from submission of application to completion of the transaction is between 12-16 months. Loss of this LMF position would extend the processing time for these transactions by at least 50%.

Overlapping programs?

LMF is the only GF program in SPO that some might see as overlapping with the LMF work of other natural resource agencies. However, the natural resource departments' LMF work entails partnerships with other proposal advocates. Each LMF proposal must have a sponsoring state agency which then helps prepare the proposal for LMF board submission, argues for the project before the LMF board, and oversees the project's implementation and management after the purchase of the land or easement is completed. SPO LMF staff ensures that the LMF board has all information necessary to decide upon a proposal and, if the board votes to fund a project, is responsible for overseeing the due diligence (title work, surveying, deed drafting, funds transfers) that must happen to complete the transaction.

Bottom line: SPO LMF staff acts as a neutral facilitator, other NR departments' staff act as LMF project proponents.