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# HCPC NEWSLETTER

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## PLANNING NEWS

*By Tom Martin*

### **Changes to the of DEP Shoreland Zoning Guidelines**

The DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) has made some amendments to Chapter 1000, the *State of Maine Guidelines for Municipal Shoreland Zoning Ordinances*. The changes are the most significant amendments since 1990. While, generally, the dimensional standards in the Guidelines have not changed, there are a few amendments that affect setback limitations. The Department has added a second General Development District to the Guidelines. This district is for newly established commercial and industrial sites that are not already heavily developed. In order to preserve vegetative buffers, the setback in the new General Development II District will be 75 feet, instead of 25 feet.

The DEP has updated the criterion for establishing Resource Protection zoning adjacent to moderate and high value waterfowl and wading bird habitat. The Guidelines no longer refer to the 1973 ratings produced by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The revised criterion is based on the ratings as of May 1, 2006. Because the new ratings address additional wetland areas, there will be some need to establish Resource Protection zoning where it may not have been required by the 1973 ratings. Another change addresses development adjacent to unstable coastal bluffs as mapped by the Maine

Geological Survey. The Department will require principal structures to be set back from the top of the bluff, rather than from the spring high tide. Most of the areas that have been mapped thus far are from Penobscot Bay to the Maine-New Hampshire border. Other changes include new state-wide timber harvesting standards, modifications to the "clearing of vegetation" standards and greater guidance for boards of appeals as they deal with appeals.

After the Board of Environmental Protection officially adopts amendments to the Guidelines, it will set a date by which all of the municipalities will be required to update their respective ordinances. That date will most likely be early in 2008. Feel free to call the HCPC if you have any questions. A full copy of the guidelines is available on the HCPC web site [www.hpcme.org/landuse](http://www.hpcme.org/landuse)

## **NEW HABITAT PROTECTION RULES ENACTED BY THE DEP**

In addition to the changes in the shoreland zone rules, the DEP has amended the rules on significant habitat protection. These rules will extend the jurisdiction of the Natural Resources Protection Act to currently unmapped vernal pools, as well as to deer wintering areas, habitats of endangered or threatened animal species habitats, and other significant habitats. Typically DEP protection of such resources has been covered during Site Law permit processes for big projects – but not usually for small subdivisions or development of individual homes or small commercial projects.

Additional information is available at: <http://www.maine.gov/dep/blwq/rule.htm>

## **RECENT SUPREME COURT CASE ON RULE 80-K**

### **CITY OF BIDDEFORD v. HOLLAND**

Decision: 2005 ME 121. December 9, 2005  
Summarized by Tom Martin

**Facts:** Rory Holland appealed a judgment dismissing his notice of appeal and demand for a jury trial de novo following a bench trial in the District Court in a land use enforcement action brought by the city of Biddeford pursuant to Rule 80-K. Holland argued that he had the constitutional right to a jury trial in the Superior Court and that he could not have removed this case to the Superior Court and received a jury trial prior to judgment in the District Court. This case began when the city filed a complaint against Holland in the District Court seeking relief, fines and attorney fees. The city alleged that Holland, the owner of rental property located in Biddeford, violated certain local codes by renting an apartment without a valid occupancy permit and by deactivating power to his tenants' apartment.

Holland filed, a motion to continue, pending removal to the Superior Court. The District Court denied Holland's request for removal. Specifically, the court found Holland's request to be incomplete because he did not pay the removal fee. Prior to trial in the District Court, that court denied Holland's further motion for removal to the Superior Court. Following judgment, Holland filed in the District Court a notice of appeal and demand for a jury trial de novo. The Superior Court dismissed Holland's appeal, concluding that it was without jurisdiction to hear an appeal of a Rule 80K action. The court also denied Holland's request for a jury trial de novo, concluding that there is no such procedure for Rule 80K actions.

**Discussion:** Holland contended that the court was not authorized to hear this action prior to a decision in the District Court because 30-A M.R.S.A. § 4452 "clearly indicates" that actions brought pursuant to it must be litigated in the District Court. Holland also argued that only after a decision of the District Court may the Superior Court conduct a jury trial. Holland further asserted

that because Rule 80K provides for the expeditious handling of land use enforcement actions in the District Court, this scheme would be frustrated if removal were allowed before judgment in the District Court.

Under Rule 80K, a municipal official, such as a municipal code enforcement officer, local plumbing inspector or building inspector, who is designated by ordinance or law may represent the municipality in District Court. Contrary to Holland's argument, the law cannot be construed to mean that land use enforcement actions must be litigated in the District Court. The clear import of this language is that a municipal official may, when specifically authorized by the municipality, represent the municipality in District Court if such an action has been brought in District Court. It does not divest the Superior Court of jurisdiction because it neither says anything about the jurisdiction of the Superior Court to hear a land use enforcement action, nor does it vest exclusive jurisdiction in the District Court.

The Supreme Court found unpersuasive Holland's argument that the Superior Court should not be allowed to entertain a section 4452 action because it would frustrate Rule 80K's enforcement scheme for the expeditious handling of land use enforcement actions. Although Holland's concerns for trial expedience may have some justification, his argument ultimately misconceives the nature of Rule 80K. Simply stated, Rule 80K is a rule providing a summary procedure for the enforcement of land use laws and ordinances in the District Court. Although Rule 80K, by its terms, applies only to proceedings in the District Court, its existence does not limit the continuing jurisdiction possessed by the Superior Court. The Supreme Court agreed that Holland had the constitutional right to a jury trial because the City was seeking a civil penalty.

## **OMISSIONS FROM *PLANNING AND LAND USE LAWS 2006***

In *Planning and Lands Use Laws for 2006*, there were two changes made to the state statutes that

were not included in the latest booklet. Title 30-A Section 4324(8) is a recent change in the statutes that allows shorter public notice for second, third and subsequent public hearings on a comp plan. Additionally, Title 30-A Section 4404(20) addresses provisions for lands subject to liquidation harvesting.

## **EVALUATION OF THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT**

Almost all towns involved in the comprehensive planning process have faced frustrations with the challenge of having a town adopt a plan that also meets the State Planning Office guidelines. As a result, the Legislature asked the SPO to conduct an evaluation of the entire comprehensive planning process. Here are some of the preliminary recommendations, which are excerpted from a SPO report and are subject to further revisions. Feel free to contact Tom Martin at the HCPC if you have any comments or questions.

### **1. Comprehensive Planning has had little effect on growth patterns**

Most evidence shows that growth is not being directed to "designated growth areas", as specified in local plans. In two fast growing towns for example, comprehensive plans call for 70% of growth to occur in designated growth areas. After 10 years, one of these towns reports 7% of growth has occurred in growth areas, in the other 2%. State planners say that on average, about 70% of the growth in the last fifteen years has occurred in rural areas. It should also be noted here that the vast majority of recent growth in Maine has been single homes, not subdivisions, and that subdivisions receive far more regulatory scrutiny than single home development.

### **2. Our current comprehensive planning program is focused on writing plans**

Most of the focus of the current Growth Management Program is on meeting the technical requirements of comprehensive plans, not on developing policy for managing growth. Data, inventories and analyses are carefully assembled

by each town and reviewed by the state. The State Planning Office estimates that local and state planners spend between two-thirds and three-quarters of their time (and funding) on the technical aspects of comprehensive plans. This emphasis is a reflection of what is required by the current Growth Management Act and rules. The Act requires that each town conduct its own data gathering, inventory and analysis.

### **3. Implementation of comprehensive plans is weak**

The central challenge and goal of planning is implementation. “Implementation” has two phases: *developing* local growth policy (“strategies”), and *following through* with ordinances, capital spending and other actions that support those policies. In order to affect growth, a town needs to agree on a vision and make decisions about where growth should and should not occur. Inherent in this task is a conflict between what people want for the community and what people want—or don’t want to give up—for the individual. The most often cited example is a community that wants to preserve its local character, but rural land owners who don’t want restrictions placed on how their land can be developed. These conflicts are what make planning inherently difficult.

### **4. There is a strong desire for improved tools and assistance for local planning**

There was strong consensus from participants that better tools and assistance for local planning and implementation are needed. Pre-packaged data and maps, model plans for different types of towns, menus of implementation strategies, graphics and software to show grow-out scenarios, and more personal contact with professional planners from the state or regional councils were all cited as important and needed improvements.

### **5. There is strong, statewide support for regional land use planning**

The SPO research showed strong support for regional land use planning. In every focus group, participants raised this issue spontaneously, before a question was asked. Further evidence of support

is the number of regional planning projects that are now underway. These include a regional plan initiative at Greater Portland Council of Governments, a project on Mt. Desert Island to bring together four towns to coordinate their planning, the Sagadahoc Initiative in southern Maine and DOT’s Gateway 1 project, which involves a coordinated approach to planning for 22 towns.

Finally, we found that in order for regional planning to succeed, regional plans must have “teeth”, meaning that they must have some meaningful authority and be supported by towns in the region. Regional plans on topics such as housing and economic development have been developed in the past, but have been largely ignored, because there has been little authority or local support for them.

### **6. There is need for the state to establish state and regional priorities**

Research participants indicated a desire for clearer state and regional goals. At the same time, participants had strong consensus that the state should be less involved in local issues. Towns don’t want to be told what local issues are important to them and most felt that the current law does this. While the distinction between what is a state or a local issue needs to be clarified, examining these two positions together suggests that the state needs to shift its focus from scrutinizing local plans to more clearly communicating to towns on matters of state and regional significance.

Further, our research showed a general understanding that state investments—particularly transportation, but also subsidized housing, economic development and land conservation investments all affect local planning. Many participants cited a lack of coordination and priority-setting at the state level that made it difficult for towns to do good planning. One participant put it this way: “if the state can’t get its act together, how can we expect to resolve these issues at the local level?”

## **7. There is a call for a regional planning approach to large capital projects with regional impacts**

Casinos, LNG terminals and the Plum Creek proposal have raised local awareness that Maine will continue to face large scale developments that have regional impacts. While regional environmental impacts are thoroughly reviewed, there is no similar regional review for economic, land use or other regional impacts. Nor are there any requirements to compensate for or mitigate the effects of regional impacts. Our research showed strong interest in pursuing legislation that would provide a framework for much broader regional review of large capital projects.

## **8. State oversight is an important tool in managing growth**

National research shows that programs that have some form of state oversight of growth management are far more effective than programs that do not. However, a majority of participants in this project disliked the way the state currently reviews comprehensive plans. At the same time, there was support for the state to play a more active role on planning issues of statewide and regional significance. In moving forward it will be important to balance these elements.

## **9. Property taxes are a driver in land use development**

Property taxes influence where development occurs in several ways. These include:

- high property taxes that make service centers less affordable and drive development to outlying areas;
- competition among towns for “desirable” development;
- avoidance of “undesirable” development, that drives development elsewhere.

# **GRANT NEWS**

## **ANOTHER ROUND OF PLANNING GRANTS EXPECTED THIS SPRING**

The State Planning Office has announced its intention to have another round of comprehensive plan, comprehensive plan update and implementation grants available this spring. Approximately \$150,000 of grant funds will be available. The anticipated grant deadline is April 14, 2006 with award announcements being made on May 12. *Please note that there may be some changes in the grant guidelines before they are finalized. Please contact Tom Martin at the HCPC for the latest information.*

The comprehensive planning grants for communities preparing their first comprehensive plan under the Growth Management Act. Individual first time comprehensive plan grant awards range between \$10,000 and \$26,000, based on a formula factoring in the size of the municipality (contact the HCPC to learn the grant amount for which your municipality is eligible). A local match of 33 percent of the state grant amount is required.

Implementation grants can be used to prepare zoning ordinances and other strategies to implement adopted, consistent comprehensive plans. If your town has previously received an implementation grant, it is not eligible for another. The maximum grant amount is expected to be \$10,000 and a 33 percent local match is required.

Comprehensive plan update grants are available to revise comprehensive plans to reflect demographic, economic and other changes. Plans should integrate smart growth principles that guide growth more effectively. The HCPC has publications on smart growth as part its library’s Smart Growth Tool Box. Information is also available at the State Planning Office web site: <http://www.state.me.us/spo/landuse/resources/sprawl.php> The anticipated maximum grant amount is \$10,000 and a dollar per dollar match is required.

In addition to these three competitive grants, the SPO is also continuing the non-competitive Regional Challenge Grant program. These grants presently have an open-ended deadline and require a dollar per dollar match. Applicants may apply to up to \$15,000 in state grant funds. Their purpose is to support promising regional

initiatives designed to establish new mechanisms for managing governmental affairs more efficiently while integrating transportation, economic development, natural resource protection, and land use management more effectively, consistent with smart growth principles.

The HCPC is available to help towns seek these funds. Specifically, we can explain program requirements, provide sample town meeting warrant articles necessary to accept state grant funds and raise the local match and assist in the application writing process. Feel free to contact Tom Martin if you have any questions.

## **SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL PROPERTY RIGHTS:**

### ***Striking a Balance in Hancock County***

*by Sherry Churchill*

Organizers have busy planning the next two forums of the on-going Striking a Balance forum series. The fifth installment has been scheduled for Thursday evening, March 30<sup>th</sup> at the VFW Hall on the Washington Junction Road in Ellsworth and will focus on the topics of non-point source pollution and neighborhood associations. Panelists include a Lamarr Cannon from the Non-point Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) program and attorney Dale Worthen. Time permitting, there may be a short video shown about the benefits of vegetative buffers. Mark your calendars for the sixth installment, tentatively planned for Wednesday, May 31 (more information to be provided at a later date).

The cost to attend the March 30 program is \$17 per person, which includes the cost of a light dinner and all printed material. Doors will open at 5:00 p.m. for registration and dinner; the program will begin at 6:00 and last no later than 9:00. The HCPC requests that those interested in attending register before the end of business on Friday, March 24. While last-minute registrations will be

accepted, dinner will only be available for early registrants.

Partners in this effort include the Down East RC&D, Gouldsboro Planning Board, and Union River Watershed Coalition. A donation from the Bar Harbor Banking and Trust helped make this event possible. For more information, please contact the HCPC at 667-7131.

## **CDBG NEWS**

### **Affordable Housing Tax Increment Financing**

*By Jef Fitzgerald*

Since 2003, Maine municipalities have had a new tool at their disposal for encouraging the development of affordable housing within their borders. It is called Affordable Housing Tax Increment Financing or a "Housing TIF" for short.

In general, a TIF is a vehicle for municipalities to help initiate needed projects by financing them with anticipated increases in property tax revenues. For example, a town designates a blighted area that is planned to be redeveloped as a TIF district. It then borrows against the expected increase in property taxes to improve infrastructure serving the area. The public improvements within the district are made to help generate the desired private-sector development.

This example embodies some of the original thinking behind TIFs. But, certainly not all of the possibilities now available. One outstanding feature of Housing TIFs is that they are very flexible. And with that flexibility comes a complex array of choices to be made. Those choices can be viewed through the basic requirements of a Housing TIF. They need to have:

1. A defined geographic boundary encompassing an area that is predominantly residential. The district's area must not exceed 2% of the municipality's and must meet other limitations for TIF composition.
2. A development program that supports local goals and objectives and includes at least 33% of the residential units in the district as affordable.

3. A financial plan that furthers the development plan and protects the interests of the community.

### **What can a Housing TIF do for a community?**

The Maine Legislature enabled Housing TIFs because it saw a need for the development of affordable, livable housing and containment of the costs of unplanned growth in the state. TIFs can also improve the general economy and broaden the future tax base of a town while guiding development into appropriate areas.

In order to qualify as an affordable housing TIF, at least 25% of the district must be “in need of rehabilitation, or blighted or suitable for residential use”. The district must be primarily residential and at least a third of these units must be maintained as affordable for at least 10 years if single-family dwellings and 30 years for rental units. Affordability is defined as households whose income does not exceed 120% of the median income for the area. Furthermore, a TIF shelters the increased (or captured) property value from state valuation so a municipality’s General Purpose Aid to Education (GPA), revenue sharing, and county taxes are not affected by a current TIF project.

An optional TIF Credit Enhancement Agreements (CEA) allows the municipality to return some increased tax revenues generated by the development directly to the developer for use in the project where desired. Benefiting private enterprises is one of several areas where TIFs can be controversial. The following is a list of some of the primary arguments for against TIFs.

#### **In Favor of TIFs:**

- TIF financing stimulates development where it is wanted, such as in blighted or depressed areas, and spurs additional development which does not rely on TIF financing
- TIF financing can cover the extra costs of developing a site where environmental

problems exist that inhibit traditional financing.

- TIFs give local governments more leverage with developers to create positive growth with an overall net benefit for the community.

#### **Opposed to TIFs:**

- TIF subsidies create new developments which are not paying full real estate taxes, but are putting additional pressure on infrastructure and services.
- TIF subsidies may give some businesses an unfair advantage over others and create an expectation among developers that they should be able to get TIF money.
- The over use of TIF financing in a market can create an office or housing surplus, which drives down rents and depresses property values.

In summary, TIFs can be a very beneficial tool for municipalities looking to spur development in specified locations. Pitfalls need to be avoided by carefully planning. TIF financing can also be combined with other funding opportunities such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).

### **CDBG Housing Programs**

CDBG funds are available to help towns with housing for lower income people in two ways. Both can be used within a TIF district, but need to benefit at least 51% low to moderate income people. CDBG Housing Assistance grants can help rehabilitate existing housing or build new units. CDBG Public infrastructure grants can help extend municipal services to affordable housing. Feel free to call Tom Martin or Jef Fitzgerald with questions about affordable housing and TIFs.

## **HEALTH NEWS**

### **How’s Your Health?**

The Hancock County Planning Commission is collaborating in the Community Care Project for

Mount Desert Island and the outer Islands that seeks to build stronger connections between health care providers, community organizations and people who are not getting all the health care services that they need. Community Care partners include MDI Hospital, the Maine Sea Coast Mission, the Harbor House in Southwest Harbor and Healthy Acadia. This project is funded by the Maine Health Access Foundation, a program dedicated to improving health care access for Maine citizens.

HCPC staffers are assisting by providing medical staff and outreach workers with information on social, demographic and health data to inform and evaluate this program.

So, how's your health? We are inviting readers to visit [hcpcme.org](http://hcpcme.org), [healthyhancock.org](http://healthyhancock.org) or [healthyacadia.org](http://healthyacadia.org) to learn more. Click on the "How's your health?" logo and take a ten minute online interview to evaluate your health and get some advice on addressing your concerns. Contact Jim Fisher at HCPC if you have any questions.

### **HCPC Hosts Common Health on WERU FM**

Tune into WERU 89.9 FM the third Wednesday of each month at 10:00 AM for Common Health, a program hosted by Jim Fisher and the Hancock County Planning Commission. Now in year three, Common Health has tackled issues related to public health and health care policy. Beginning January, 2006 we have taken the lead on this program with support from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. The program invites experts and activists to an on-air dialogue about issues that affect eastern Maine. Our January broadcast featured Dr. Dora Mills, director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Susan Young, a health educator with the Blue Hill Memorial Hospital to discuss infectious disease, particularly the H5N1 bird flu. This virulent disease has spread across Europe and a wide range of domestic and wild bird species. There is little doubt that this infection will reach Maine, but a ray of hope remains that it will not mutate to threaten human populations.

In February we featured homelessness in eastern Maine with guests Dennis Marble, director of the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter and Sister Lucille MacDonald, director of the Emmaus Center in Ellsworth and HOME in Orland. Homelessness affects many in eastern Maine, including intact families, people who are employed full time, veterans and people with disabilities. Rising prices for housing in Hancock County contribute to homelessness, as does our widely fluctuating seasonal unemployment rate.

The March 15 Common Health broadcast features a discussion of violence and society and considers how exposure to violence at the global scale and local and domestic levels can contribute to traumatic stress and other mental health problems. In April we will focus on locally grown food and the many ways that local farming and gardening supports our public health. You can learn more about past programs and hear audio archives on our website [commonhealth.org](http://commonhealth.org) and tune in to Common Health third Wednesdays at 10:00 AM on WERU.

## **SOLID WASTE**

*By Sherry Churchill*

### **Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and Universal Waste (UW) Collection Updates**

Two HHW and UW collection events are tentatively scheduled for 2006. One will be held in the greater Ellsworth region, with the other taking place on Mount Desert Island (MDI). Among the types of items that will be collected are common household cleaners, oil-based paint, used motor oil, mercury-containing items (such as thermometers, thermostats, fluorescent bulbs), and television and computer monitors.

The HCPC is partnering with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension to organize the Greater Ellsworth Regional Collection is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup> (with time and location to be announced as the date nears). Like previous collection events,

towns are asked to sponsor the event on behalf of residents. Sponsorship requires that a deposit be made to the HCPC that will go toward covering event costs; any amount of the deposit not used toward the final cost will be reimbursed to the towns. Sponsorship also requires that at least one person be appointed to participate in planning meetings and be available to assist on collection day. An informational meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place at the Hancock County Cooperative Extension on the Boggy Brook Road in Ellsworth on Tuesday, April 11 from 3:00 p.m. until 4:30. Those planning to attend this meeting should be sure to check the HCPC website to be sure that the schedule has not changed. Our office can also be contacted at 667-7131 or by e-mail at [hpc@hpcme.org](mailto:hpc@hpcme.org).

The HCPC is partnering with the Acadia Disposal District (ADD) to organize the greater MDI collection, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 30 at the MDI High School. Participating towns include Bar Harbor, Cranberry Isles, Lamoine, Mount Desert, Southwest Harbor, Tremont, and Trenton. Swan's Island may be a new participant in this year's collection – more information will be announced as it becomes available. More information can be obtained from the HCPC at 667-7131 or the ADD at 276-5743.

## **Compost Bin Sale**

The HCPC is again teaming up with the Maine Resource Recovery Association (MRRA) to promote a sale of backyard compost bins. Earth Machine™ bins are constructed of recycled materials and measure 31 inches high and 33 inches wide. A 31 page “how to” guide is included with each order and minimal assembly is required. The price of each bin (an \$80 value) is \$36.50, including tax.

Those interested in purchasing compost bins are encouraged to download an order form from the HCPC website at [www.hpcme.org](http://www.hpcme.org) and send payment for the full amount by Thursday, March 23. Please note that checks need to be made out to the Northeast Resource Recovery Association but mailed to the HCPC at 395 State Street, Ellsworth,

ME 04605. The HCPC will send an e-mail or postcard (for those without e-mail) notifying purchasers when and where bins may be picked up. Delivery is expected to be toward the end of April. For more information, please contact the HCPC at 667-7131 or MRRA at 942-6772.

## **Transfer Station Operator Training Announcement**

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has announced a new training session for the management and handling of televisions and computer monitors, also known as e-waste. The training is scheduled for March 28 (snow date: March 29, same time) and will be held at the Public Works Garage at 530 Maine Avenue in Bangor from 10:00 a.m. until approximately 12:00 p.m. Topics to be covered include mercury removal from appliances, storage and paperwork requirements, breakage and spills, and management strategies. There is no fee for the workshop and the DEP will accept registrations until Tuesday, March 21. To register, or for more information, contact Sandy Moody at the DEP: 207-287-7751.

## **TRANSPORTATION NEWS**

*by Jim Fisher*

### **The Downeast Circuit – Gateways, Crossroads, Byways and Trails**

So, exactly where does “Downeast Maine” begin? Opinions appear to be affected more by where you live than any clear historic or geographic precedence. The online Wikipedia notes “In the narrowest sense, Down East refers to the coast of the Maine from Penobscot Bay to the Canadian border.” This geographic definition takes in all of Hancock and Washington Counties. For many of us the real “Downeast” begins about where we live and continues to Eastport and Calais, indisputably downeast. For this transportation and economic development planner, a more advantageous perspective is to consider downeast as a direction rather than a place. The historic concept of downeast is related to prevailing south-west winds that assisted sailing

vessels to travel the coast of Maine, particularly crossing the Penobscot River and heading east from Castine to Calais. Geology drives these coastal currents and our human geography has been forever affected by our place in these currents. There is a notable economic advantage to using the name “downeast” to summarize a direction for travel for visitors, cutting through the growing number of competing brands, thematic trails, competing claims for authenticity and of course for tourism revenues.

Whether the new bridge crossing the Penobscot River is named the Downeast Gateway or not, it is in fact an important starting point for the Downeast trip. The HCPC is completing a transportation master plan for the Penobscot Narrows region that will provide the participating towns and state agencies with specific ideas for infrastructure and marketing initiatives to serve travelers in this part of western Hancock County. The planning documents, available on the HCPC website, suggest ways that we can leverage trails, rails, waterways and local attractions to increase economic activity while reducing sometimes unwelcome traffic congestion. The East Coast Greenway “Close the Gap” campaign is looking for ways to increase trails connecting Bangor, Bucksport, Fort Knox and Ellsworth.

Heading downeast from Ellsworth, our downeast crossroads, three routes are emerging in eastern Hancock County that provide visitors enough material to stay a week or more.

The Schoodic National Scenic Byway ([www.schoodicbyway.org](http://www.schoodicbyway.org)) and Blackwoods State Scenic Byway ([www.blackwoodsbyway.org](http://www.blackwoodsbyway.org)) provide visitors with coastal views, access to the sea, as well as mountains, lakes and historic villages. A scenic loop beginning in Ellsworth, continuing along the coast to Prospect Harbor and Cherryfield, then back along the Blackwoods, or Black’s Woods, road to Ellsworth provides visitors with dozens of recreational opportunities. HCPC is working to improve our infrastructure along these scenic routes to give residents and visitors more to do and more opportunities to learn about this region. The third corridor, the long-out-of-service Calais Branch Rail line, is perhaps the most ambitious

element of our Downeast triptych. Ellsworth is again a crossroads, with an excursion rail trip emanating north and the Downeast Sunrise Trail ([www.downeastsunrisetrail.org](http://www.downeastsunrisetrail.org)). The multi-use trail cuts through Hancock heading east to Franklin, Sullivan, Cherryfield, and goes past Machias to a point not far from Eastport. This 87 mile trail will be the longest of its kind in Maine and one of the most attractive sections of the East Coast Greenway that spans Key West, Florida to the Canadian Border. The trail crosses the Maine Public Reserve Lands, visiting Schoodic Mountain and Tunk Lake in Hancock County and wild salmon rivers and expanses of blueberry lands in Washington County.

Preservation and promotion go hand in hand. Without one the other suffers. HCPC staffers have been working with the towns, county and state agencies to build our infrastructure for these regional attractions. National and state grants have been secured for improving sidewalks, constructing rest areas and scenic turnouts, intermodal parking facilities, developing interpretive signage, printing visitor brochures and more. Readers interested in participating in building our downeast connections are encouraged to contact Jim Fisher at HCPC.

## **Maine DOT Municipal Project Request Survey Planned**

The biennial Maine Department of Transportation (Maine DOT) Municipal Project Request Survey is schedule to be mailed to town offices by March 10. Town governments are encouraged to complete this survey and return it to MaineDOT as quickly as possible. The survey requests information on priority corridors, requests for bridge and other infrastructure projects. This document is an important determinant of how MaineDOT prioritizes spending over the next six years. Towns that work together can have an even bigger impact by identifying corridors and project proposals of mutual concern. Contact Jim Fisher at [jfisher@hpcme.org](mailto:jfisher@hpcme.org) or 667-7131 if you would like additional information or assistance in completing this survey.

## **Safe Routes to School Grants**

Bicycle Coalition of Maine and MaineDOT are offering a free Safe Route to School Leadership Training on Monday, March 21, 2005 from 9-3pm at the Pine Tree State Arboretum in Augusta. Safe Routes to School is a statewide effort among Maine communities to increase bicycling and walking to school by improving transportation choices, safety and health. The training will focus on how to initiate and maintain a successful Safe Routes to School program in your community. It will also cover how to coordinate effective encouragement, education and engineering measures to support increased walking and bicycling to school.

A new request for proposals is anticipated for safe routes to school grants. Typical improvements include sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic signals, and separating children from traffic in school areas. This program is open to all Maine municipalities and school districts. Last year the town of Southwest Harbor won and award to build sidewalks accessing the Pemetec School. Additional information is available at [www.maine.gov/mdot/opt/srts.php](http://www.maine.gov/mdot/opt/srts.php) or contact Jim Fisher at HCPC.

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

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**Hancock County Planning Commission is a partner with local and county government to: protect our heritage and resources, plan for the future and promote a sound economy for the people of Hancock County.**

### **Maine Resource Recovery Association Annual Conference**

Place: Samoset, Rockland  
Date: April 24-25

### **HCPC Annual Meeting**

Place: Ellsworth Public Library  
Meeting Room  
Date: May 23, 2006 at 7:00 PM

### **Striking a Balance Workshops**

#### **NPS & Neighborhood Associations**

Place: VFW Hall, Ellsworth  
Date: March 30 6:00 - 9:00 (doors open at 5 for dinner)

### **Striking a Balance Workshops**

#### **Comprehensive Planning & Ordinance Development**

Place: VFW Hall, Ellsworth  
Date: May 31 6:00 -9:00 (doors open at 5 for dinner)