



HCPC NEWSLETTER

Hancock County Planning Commission

395 State Street

Ellsworth, ME 04605

phone 207-667-7131; fax 207-667-2099

E-mail: hpcp@hpcpcme.org Internet: www.hpcpcme.org

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HCPC Executive Board Fiscal Year 2009-2010

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HCPC Staff

Thomas E. Martin, Executive Director
tmartin@hpcpcme.org
James H. Fisher, Senior Planner
jfisher@hpcpcme.org
Sheri Walsh, Administrative Assistant
& Planning Technician
hpcp@hpcpcme.org

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PLANNING BOARD NEWS

By Tom Martin

GROUNDWATER: A STATUS REPORT

HCPC hosted a very informative workshop on groundwater on January 27, 2010. Assuring a safe and adequate water supply is very important to a rural area such as Hancock County. According to the U.S. Census, about 75 percent of year-round homes depend on private wells for their water supply. There are reports of wells facing salt water intrusion or other forms of contamination. Many home builders have had to drill several hundred feet deep in order to find a reliable source of water.

Does this Mean that Hancock County Faces Serious Groundwater Problems?

The answer from the workshop presenters is that while there may be isolated cases of wells failing, the county has an ample supply of groundwater. According to the Maine Geological Survey, annual use of groundwater accounts for about 2.5 percent of the average annual recharge from precipitation. Maine has an annual average rainfall of 42 inches. About 50 percent goes directly to runoff, 30-40 percent to evapo-transpiration and 10 to 20 percent to groundwater recharge.

The total annual volume of groundwater recharge statewide is about 2.5 trillion gallons. In 2008 about 8 billion gallons were consumed by public water systems. Irrigation accounted for about 1

billion gallons, bottled water 650 million gallons, and snow making 250 million gallons.

What About Groundwater Quality?

There are both naturally occurring and human-related threats to groundwater. These threats vary greatly in their level and may in many cases not reach a threshold of concern. The natural threats include hardness, radon, arsenic, and salt from buried seawater and saltwater intrusion adjacent to the coast. The human-made threats include salt from road usage, arsenic, phosphorus, nitrates, and microbes. The Maine Geological Survey is monitoring a few watersheds in the state that are at risk. The only watershed potentially at risk in Hancock County is Floods Pond in Otis. This pond serves the Bangor Water District and is not considered to be seriously at risk.

What is being done at the State Level to Protect Groundwater?

There are several state laws that regulate groundwater:

1. Site Location of Development Act: Any activity that triggers this regulation and includes groundwater withdrawal undergoes hydro-geologic review and monitoring.
2. Bulk Water Transport Law Bulk Water Transport Law: Transport of water across town lines in containers larger than 10 gallons is prohibited, unless exempted. Review criteria for exemption include: public health and safety and no adverse affect on existing uses.
3. Natural Resources Protection Act Significant
4. Groundwater Well Provisions: A significant groundwater well is defined as: any well producing 50,000 gallons per day, such wells require a permit, hydro-geologic review, and monitoring.

What can be done at the Local Level to Protect Groundwater?

If your town has areas shown as mapped aquifers (contact HCPC for the latest data on aquifer

mapping), you may want to regulate land uses that overlay them. For example, uses such as wood finishing, gasoline stations, dry cleaning operations, and other uses that involve hazardous substances are generally not appropriate for an aquifer. HCPC has sample aquifer overlay district standards that towns can adapt for use in their own zoning standards.

There are also protective measures that can be added to subdivision and site plan review provisions. These include requirements that regulate impervious surface ratio, stormwater runoff, well testing, and storage of hazardous materials. Here again, HCPC has sample standards.

Be sure that any measures in your land use standards are supported by your comprehensive plan. This would normally involve documenting ground water resources and identifying current and potential threats to ground water. You may also want to identify areas where there is a concentration of homes with failing or inadequate wells. These parts of town may not be suitable as designated growth areas in your future land use plan. They may also benefit from a well replacement grant program that assists homeowners in obtaining a safe and dependable water supply (*see related article under CDBG News*).

CENSUS NEWS

2010 CENSUS: THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATION

(article is adapted from the Maine State Planning Office Economics and Demographics Newsletter)

Census 2010 is right around the corner -- the next decennial census count will take place on April 1, 2010. Census forms will be mailed to households in mid-March, and hundreds of thousands of temporary Census workers will visit households that did not respond in the months that follow. Everyone is encouraged to take 10 minutes, answer the 10 questions on the form, and mail the completed form back to the Census Bureau.

Why participate in the Census? Aside from being required by law, the Census count helps determine three very important things: apportionment of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, local legislative districts, and the annual distribution of \$400 billion of federal funds. *Participation is particularly important for Hancock County since there appeared to have been some errors in the 2000 Census data.*

All responses to the Census are confidential and protected by law. No one can see the individual responses to the census for 72 years after the count is taken. Census workers swear an oath to protect the confidentiality of the responses. Failure to do so can result in a five-year prison sentence and/or a \$25,000 fine.

DEMOGRAPHICS: WHAT CHANGES ARE OCCURRING IN HANCOCK COUNTY?

The Local Economy

While normally December is a busy month for area businesses, this was less the case in 2009. Unemployment in the Ellsworth Labor Market Area was 10.2 percent in December 2009. This compares to a 8.9 percent rate in December 2008. According to the Maine Department of Labor, the December 2009 unemployment rate was the highest December rate recorded in this area.

Job losses were occurring in several sectors. Twenty-four percent of the insured unemployed were separated from accommodation and food services job, 18 percent from manufacturing and 8 percent from construction. Seventy-eight percent reported their layoff was temporary.

Population Trends Predict a Dramatic Increase in the Elderly

A recent analysis by the State Planning Office shows how much Hancock County's population is aging. The county has an estimated year-round population of 53,380 in 2010, which is marginally less than its 53,660 population in 2000. It is, however, projected to increase to 58,891 by 2030 (or 10.3 percent).

The rate of increase for those 65 years and older is projected to be 75 percent (from 9,480 in 2010 to 16,572 in 2030). By contrast, the 0-18 year age group is expected to decrease by 6.8 percent (from 10,952 to 10,202). This means that we need to plan for increased services for the elderly. We also can expect further decreases in school enrollment.

BROWNFIELDS NEWS

Work continues under the HCPC's Brownfields grant. Brownfields are abandoned or underutilized sites whose reuse potential may be restricted due to actual or perceived contamination. Campbell Environmental, the brownfields consultant hired by the HCPC, has just completed Phase I Environmental Site Assessments for two properties in Ellsworth. These assessments allow the property owner to know the extent of contamination on the site and if there are any environmental threats to human health. In some cases, the Phase I assessment produces a "clean bill of health" for a property. In other cases the consultant may recommend a Phase II assessment, which involves a detailed clean-up plan for the site.

As of now, HCPC still has funds under the current grant for two more Phase I assessments and up to three Phase II assessments. While the HCPC Brownfields Steering Committee, which recommends properties for the assessments, has a substantial list of candidates, we are still looking for additional sites. HCPC has also sought another round of brownfields funding which would allow us to conduct additional assessments. If you feel there is a site in your town that may qualify, please contact Tom Martin for details. There is no charge for this service.



ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

DEP Small Community Grants expected to be available

The Small Community Grant Program, which offers assistance to low to moderate income homeowners' assistance for replacing failing septic systems, has been unable to fund projects over the past year. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection is anticipating funds being made available to fund this program in June. The DEP expects to send notices in mid-March to each town requesting they identify funds needed to replace failing systems in their municipality. Over the past year several towns have contacted the HCPC inquiring about the availability of funds. This is your opportunity to request an allocation for your town. All municipalities need to identify systems in need of replacement and estimate the amount needed to replace them. When you receive the paperwork from DEP make sure that you fill it out and return it promptly. The program has been without funds for some time and many towns will have septic systems to be replaced. Make sure your town is being considered to receive funds.

ENERGY NEWS

Wind Energy Regulation Guidelines Available

Planning boards across Maine are facing large-scale wind generator developments. These are distinct from the small wind energy systems that serve a single household. While the DEP has its own review process for the large systems, some towns have chosen to develop their own ordinances to provide an additional layer of review. HCPC has electronic and hard copies of the State Planning Office Model Wind Energy Facility Ordinance and the guidebook that provides background information on the ordinance.

For more information contact Tom Martin or see <http://www.hpcme.org/landuse.html> We also have sample regulations for small wind energy systems.

CDBG NEWS

by Tom Martin

Well and Septic Replacement Grant: It's Not Too Late to Participate

As mentioned in previous newsletters, we are working with the Washington Hancock Community Agency to submit a multi-town Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for well and septic tank replacement. Qualifying homeowners must meet low to moderate income guidelines. If you know of anyone in your town who faces a serious well or wastewater disposal problem and may meet the income criteria, please contact Tom Martin at the HCPC. The more need for this grant we can document the better are our chances of receiving funding.

SCENIC VIEWSHEDS

Scenic Assessment Inventory Online - Another Pretty Picture: A Downeast Scenic Assessment

By Jim Fisher

The Hancock County Planning Commission and the Washington County Council of Governments (WCCOG) worked with the University of Maine-Machias GIS laboratory under the mentorship of Terrence DeWan and the auspices of the Maine State Planning Office to create a scenic inventory for coastal towns in Downeast Maine. The inventory catalogs over 240 scenic areas along the coast that can be seen from public places. Each assessment includes photographs, maps and numeric scores for a features like shoreline configuration, roadside character and elevation. This project pushed our technological envelope, employing a variety of database and GIS strategies to retain and publish scenic information.

Scenic inventories have a variety of uses, and the process and results need to be tailored to these ends. In our study we anticipated a wide range of applications.

- Scenic preservation by local land trusts and state programs like Land for Maine's Future consider scenic value of areas and rely on metrics to evaluate competing funding requests.
- Many of our local governments are adopting more sophisticated ordinances to recognize and preserve scenic vistas. They too must justify selection of scenic vistas for additional development review.
- Maine's coastal economy is bound inextricably with our capacity to preserve natural scenic beauty. The Maine Office of Tourism reports that the second most common information request they receive, and they receive many, is for information about scenic byways and touring. Our downeast region sports two national scenic byways and one state scenic byway and has been recognized by National Geographic for scenic touring. This inventory provides tour planners, local chambers of commerce and visitors with places to visit for great vistas.

We hope that you will visit the website to see the final report, maps and most of all the online maps that let you find views in your town and read the assessments.

www.hcpcme.org/environment/view

We hope that towns, business and voluntary organizations will consider strategies for preserving these views and using them as part of a sustainable economic development strategy. We will be happy to work with towns to consider your many options.

Scenic Area: Alamoosook Lake		View Point: Hatchery
County: Hancock	District: East Penobscot Bay	Subdistrict: Alamoosook

DESKTOP ANALYSIS		FIELD ANALYSIS	
Land Form: 100		Landscape Character: 1	
Elevation: 3		Land Use: 5	park, land trust
Slope: 2		Roadside: 4	
Open Land: 1		Settlement: 2	hatchery, museum
Shoreline: 5		Vegetation: 7	
Features: 9	Pond, mountain, beach	Effect: 8	
Scenic Quality of Water		Field Total: 34	
Duration: 8		Desk Total: 37	
Type: 6		Grand Total: 63	
Horizon: 5			

Description of Scenic Area:
 The US&W Alamoosook Fish Hatchery is located on Alamoosook Lake. It is about a ten-minute drive from Route 175 in Orland. There is a public swimming beach nearby with changing rooms and sanitary facilities. The hatchery itself features a small museum, picnic area and boat ramp. The site offers views of the lake and distant hillsides.

AlamoosookLakeFishHatchery220809.pdf Public picnic area next to Fish Hatchery museum.	FishHatchery (5).JPG Picnic Area looking out onto Alamoosook Lake.
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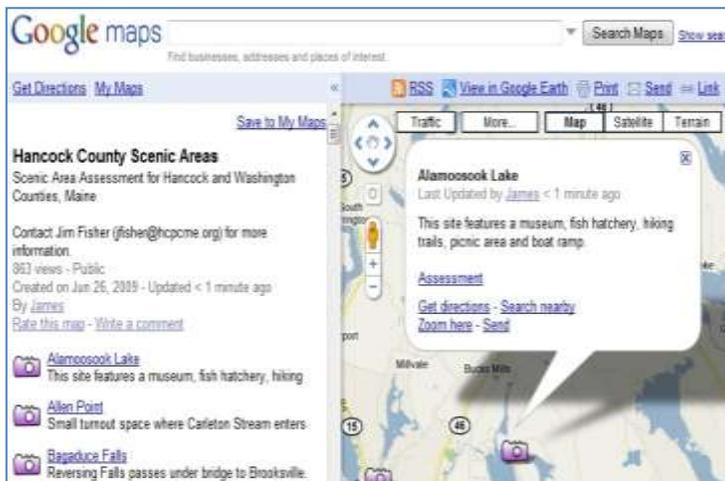

Downeast Coastal Scenic Assessment Page 1 12/31/2009

TRANSPORTATION NEWS

by Jim Fisher

MaineDOT Solicits Municipal Project Requests for Next Six Year Plan

MaineDOT places a high priority on municipal input when planning, designing and implementing transportation improvement projects. Although MaineDOT and HCPC continuously receive letters, requests and complaints leading to requests for capital transportation projects, we formally contact municipalities for transportation capital projects consistent with our budget cycle every two years. This is your opportunity to give us your priorities for MaineDOT's Biennial Capital Work Plan for Fiscal Years 2012-2013 and Six-Year Transportation Plan for Fiscal Years 2012-2017. You can request a range of services including road paving and reconstruction, bridge improvements,



bus and ferry services, small harbor improvements and more. Programs like the Small Harbor Improvement Program and Transportation Enhancements offer competitive funding opportunities. Use this survey to let us know what you want.

The Hancock County Planning Commission will gather input from Hancock County Towns to tabulate and forward to MaineDOT. We have created several means by which you can participate.

- Visit www.hcpcme.org and follow the links to an online form where you can provide your input. It only takes a few minutes.
- Visit www.hcpcme.org and follow the links to a form that you can download, fill-in, mail, fax or email to us. This approach is very convenient for working with a group.
- We can also mail or fax forms to towns that lack internet access.

We have posted additional information to our website including projects that are already listed in the 2010-2011 Biennial Work Plan and/or the 2010-2015 Six Year Plan.

Please call Jim Fisher at 667-7131 if you have any questions.

Quality Community Grants Program Ready to Go

The MaineDOT Quality Community Program Funding Application process is about to open. Quality Communities programs include Safe Routes to School, Transportation Enhancements, Small Harbor Assistance Program, Scenic Byways and more. If you think improvements such as sidewalks, bike lanes, traffic calming, crossings, piers, floats and village beautification would be beneficial for your towns, then we can help. Visit www.hcpcme.org where you will find a link to the Quality Community Program as soon as the program is launched, or contact Jim Fisher at HCPC with your ideas. The application deadline is July 1, 2010.

Last Chance - Go Maine Bike Rack Program

GO MAINE about to wrap up the Bike Racks for ME Program, providing bicycle parking for Maine. The MaineDOT and GO MAINE Commuter Connections, in partnership with the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, support and encourage bicycling as an important mode of transportation. Bike Racks for ME are available to communities, organizations, workplaces and private businesses across Maine to help expand bicycle parking opportunities. You can purchase a bike-dock for as little as \$41.00.

This is a statewide program open to communities, organizations, workplaces and private businesses across Maine. Prices are good through March 2010. The program will remain in effect until the number of requests exceeds availability. The racks are all black. Applications must be printed and signed along with a check. They cannot accept orders electronically. Please send any questions about the application or program to Jim Fisher at HCPC. Applications are available online at www.gomaine.org.

School Travel Plans

The Hancock County Planning Commission is working with the Maine Department of Transportation and the Bicycle Coalition of Maine to encourage every school in Hancock County to promote active transportation, giving all of our children a chance to walk and bike to school or to bus stops. We will be visiting many schools this year to create "School Travel Plans" using our on-line template found at:

www.hcpcme.org/transportation/schooltravel.

Completion of a School Travel Plan provides a competitive advantage for MaineDOT sidewalk and shoulder paving grants.



DATES TO REMEMBER

HCPC Annual Meeting

Ellsworth Public Library
Downstairs Meeting Room
Tuesday, May 25th
7:00 – 8:30 PM

Striking a Balance Workshop

Lake Watershed Protection
Thursday, May 27th
VFW Hall Washington Junction Road, Ellsworth
6:00 – 8:30 PM



March

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.

Spring 2010 Newsletter



Change Service Requested