

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TO: Local Media Contacts
FROM: Sunrise County Economic Council
DATE: December 2, 2011
RE: Economic Council Holds Annual Meeting

The Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC) held its Annual Meeting and Reception at the Washington County Community College (WCCC) in Calais December 1. Council officials -- joined by economic and community development professionals, business leaders, policymakers from all levels of government, and members of the general public -- outlined plans for a new collaborative between economic development, education, and workforce development involving Aroostook and Washington counties.

“It’s always nice to get out into different areas for our annual meeting, but what makes it special this year is that SCEC recently opened a satellite office here in this building,” Executive Director Harold Clossey said. “What this will do is help bring together workforce development, economic development, and education. We’re trying to make those connections. It’s been a pleasure to not only work with WCCC, but the University of Maine at Machias and other partners. That’s why it’s important for us to be here -- our colleagues from the Maine CareerCenter are here; the Downeast Business Alliance is here also. We have these business and workforce development clusters here in Washington County – we have one in Machias, and now one in Calais.”

WCCC President Joyce Hedlund welcomed the partnership saying that it is important for Washington County residents to have the skills needed both to compete for traditional and emerging employment opportunities in the region.

“When I accepted this position, I was told that change can happen. And change can happen if there are partnerships. Harold described a little bit of what we’re trying to forge here by bringing some key players for economic and community development together in one place.” Hedlund said. “We’re offering the very training, the very skills that are needed in the workforce. We have to create pathways so people can continue their education once they leave our doors. That’s why relationships and partnerships are so important. We’re good for business, and we’re good for the economy.”

NMDC Executive Director Bob Clark said that Aroostook and Washington counties are integral to Maine’s economy as a whole.

“We are very pleased to be working with Harold and SCEC. It’s our commitment to build capacity at Sunrise County so that we can work together,” Clark said. “In the few short months we have been working together, we’ve brought in a little over \$3.5 million, which is going to be spent in Aroostook and Washington counties. Part of that is through the Housing and Urban Development Sustainable Communities grant that we’re working with SCEC and also with Judy

East at Washington County Council of Governments. We're also working on a Jobs Accelerator Grant – one of 20 in the nation and the only one in New England. SCEC has given us a lot of support in that effort, and we really want to kick things off after the first of the year.”

SCEC recognized members of its loan committee which have helped distribute and leverage over \$1.3 million in investments and create or retrain 78 jobs during 2011. Sunrise Loan Committee members include Sean Daye of Machias Savings Bank, Shirley Erickson of the Maine Educational Loan Authority, Washington County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald, Blaine Jones of Bangor Savings Bank, and Joe Perkins of the Washington Hancock Community Agency.

SCEC Board Chair Josh Bragg also recognized Machias Savings Bank as SCEC's 2011 Partner of the Year; newly appointed Board members Joyce Hedlund of WCCC and Joyce Maker of Calais; outgoing Board members Darin McGaw of WCCC and David Morang of Cooke Aquaculture. Bragg and Clossey also presented Assistant Director Jennifer Peters with a plaque commemorating fifteen years of service to the organization. Refreshments for the evening were prepared by Weibley Dean and WCCC's Culinary Arts program.

For more information about SCEC, visit www.sunrisecounty.org, or find them on Facebook. The Council can also be reached by phone at 255-0983 or by email at wtuell@sunrisecounty.org. SCEC is a private, nonprofit organization that initiates and facilitates the creation of jobs and prosperity in Washington County.

###