Realigning Maine's Economic Development Districts

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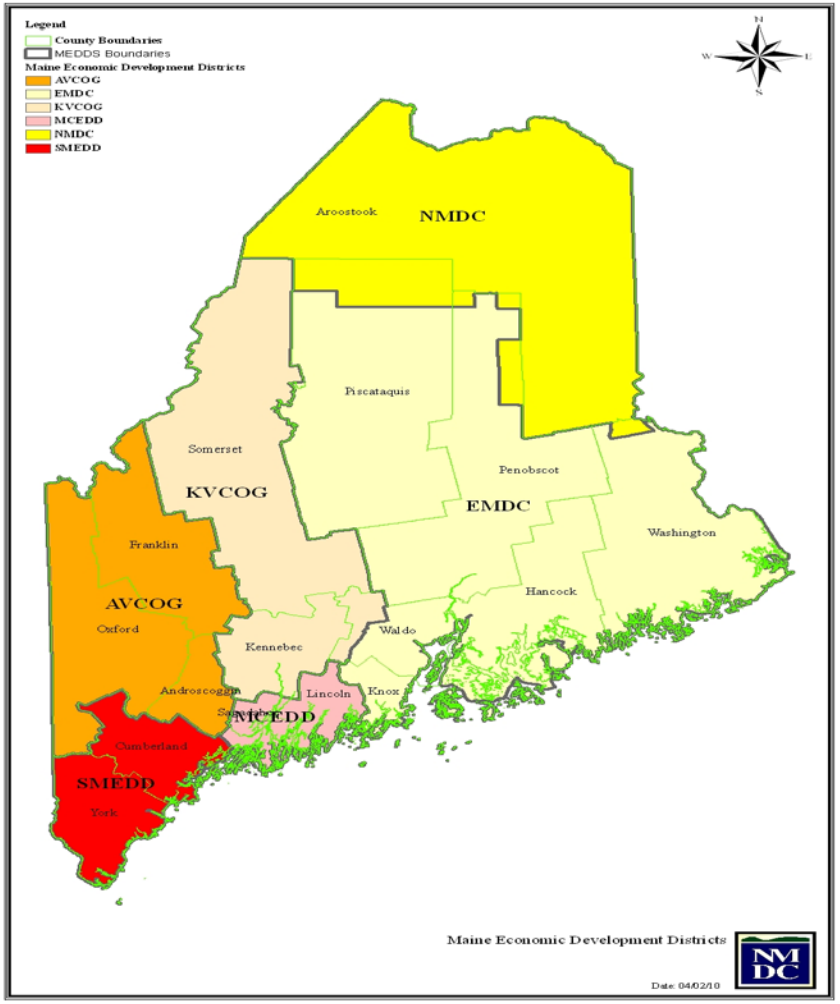
What's an Economic Development District (EDD)?

- An area with:
  - sections with high unemployment or low incomes
  - at least several economic regions
  - sufficient size to generate adequate local economic development resources
  - a regional economic plan (CEDS)
  - OK from majority of local governments
  - OK from Governor
  - OK from EDA

What are the current districts?

- Northern Maine
- Eastern Maine
- Kennebec Valley
- Androscoggin Valley
- Southern Maine
- Midcoast



What benefits accrue to Regional Districts (EDDs)?

- Annual EDA funding for economic planning
- Partnership with EDA
  - Treatment as a governmental entity for economic development grants
  - Sole source contracting for grant administration
  - Leadership role in implementing EDA-approved regional plans

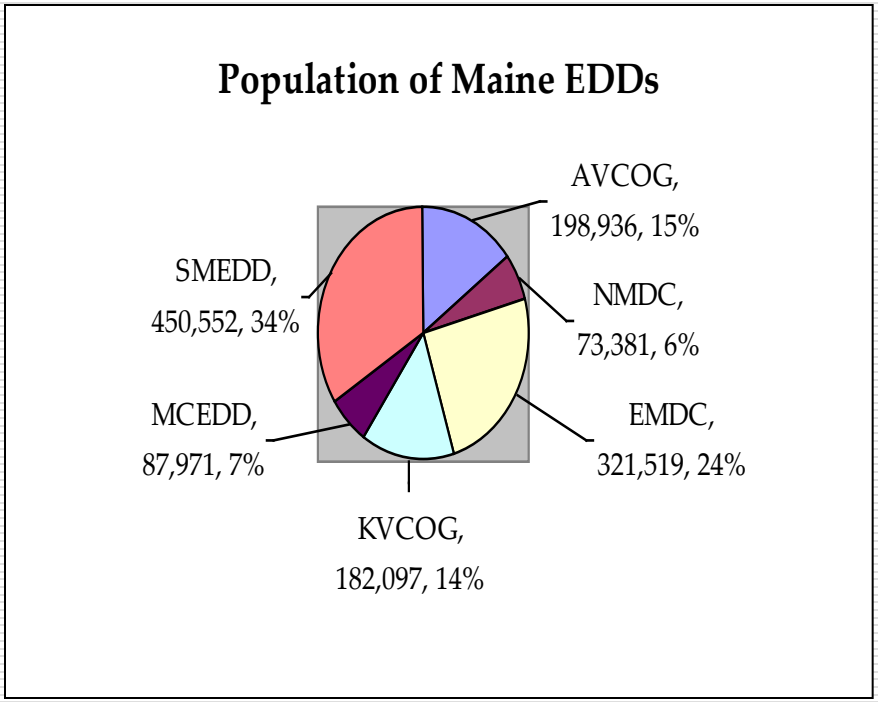
What benefits accrue to EDD member municipalities and counties?

- The EDD creates and maintains a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- The EDD provides technical assistance to members for economic development planning, grantwriting, and project development

EDA role in Maine

- Promotes job creation and private investment through grants for such things as:
  - business parks
  - key infrastructure such as roads, sewers, water
  - business incubators
  - R & D facilities
  - redevelopment of existing facilities

Why update the current configuration?



EXPLOIT OPPORTUNITY

- Economic and workforce development at the top of the public agenda, good time to organize for success

ADDRESS PROBLEMS

- It's decades old, not current with economic reality
- Some districts too big, with access issues, others too small, with capacity issues
- Not closely connected to workforce regions

How this proposal is being developed

- GOAL: one comprehensive proposed change to EDA, not dozens of small ones

- PROCESS:
  - EDA/DECD-sponsored planning group
  - Machias and Belfast consultations
  - DECD to make recommendation to Governor
  - Governor to send letter to EDA

- TIME FRAME: by the end of the summer

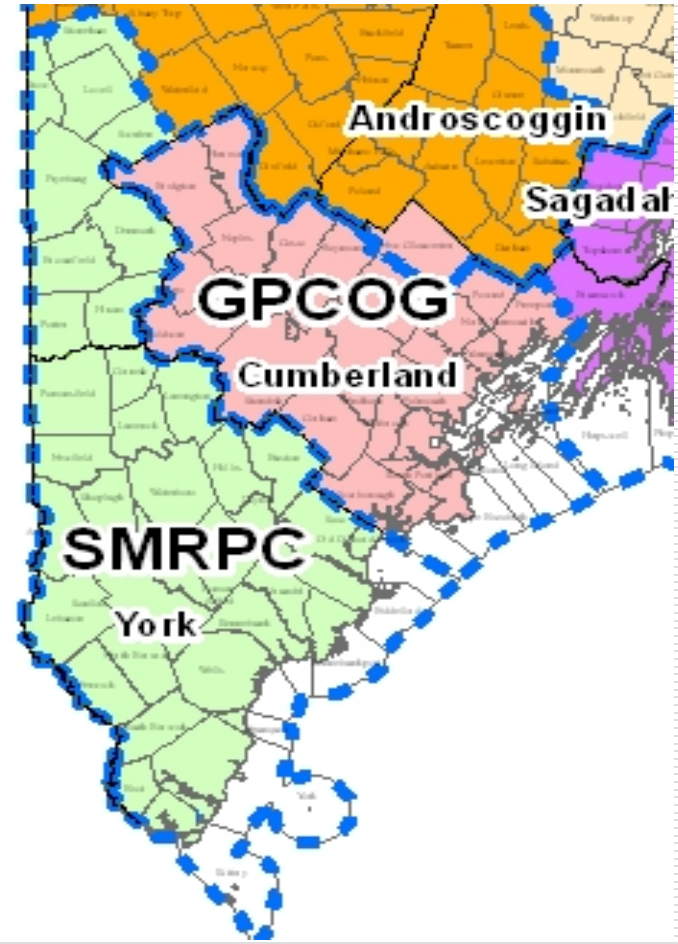
Draft Recommendations for Review

1. Split the southern district into two
2. Reconfigure eastern Maine to align workforce and economic development
3. Enlarge the midcoast district
4. Make minor modifications to reflect local wishes and align counties

1. Split the southern district

Benefits

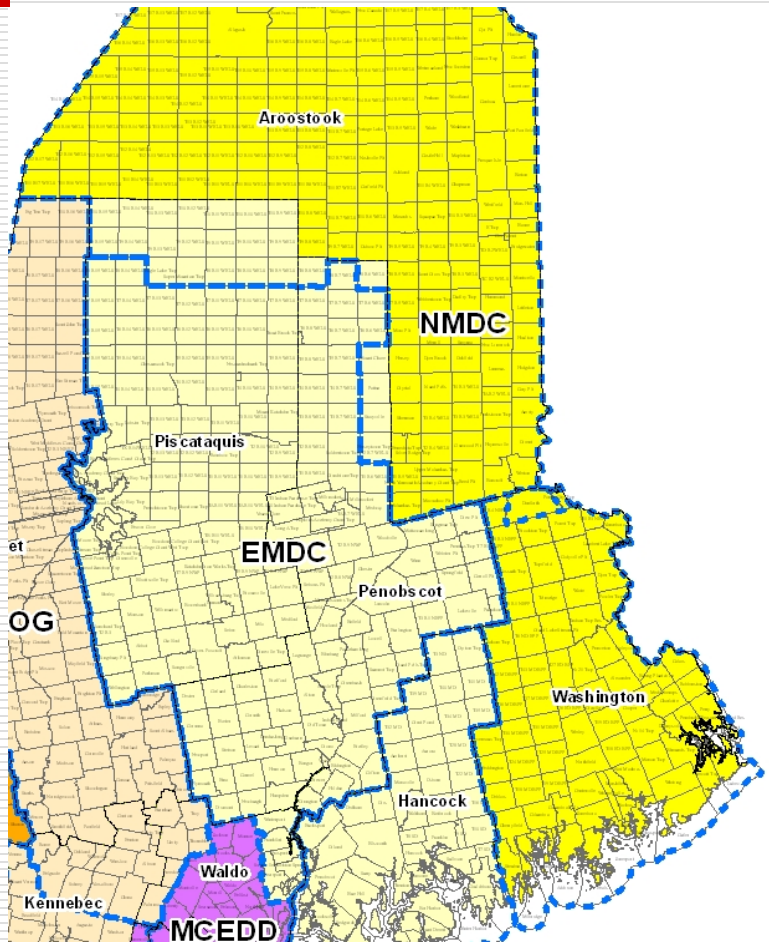
- Requested by GPCOG and SMRPC
- Lines up Fryeburg, New Gloucester area with planning district
- More accessible – from district of 450,000 to two of around 200,000



2. Reconfigure eastern Maine to align workforce and economic development

Benefits

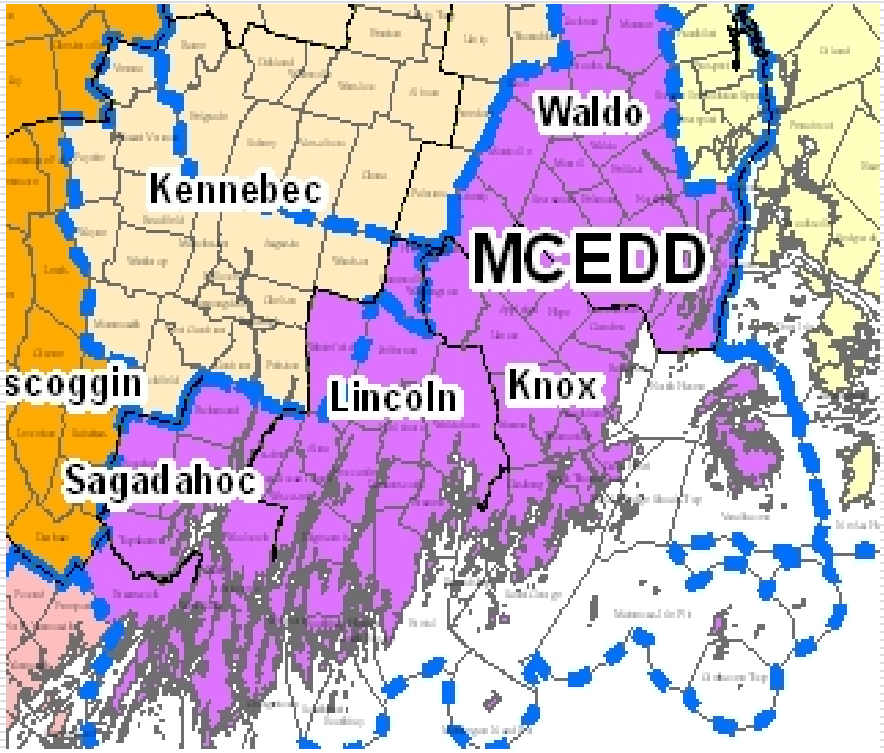
- Creates 2 perfectly aligned workforce and economic development districts in EMDC and Aroostook-Washington
- For Aroostook-Washington
  - Common economic issues Canadian trade, natural resources, population loss
  - Increased population base from 73,000 to 104,000



3. Unify the midcoast district

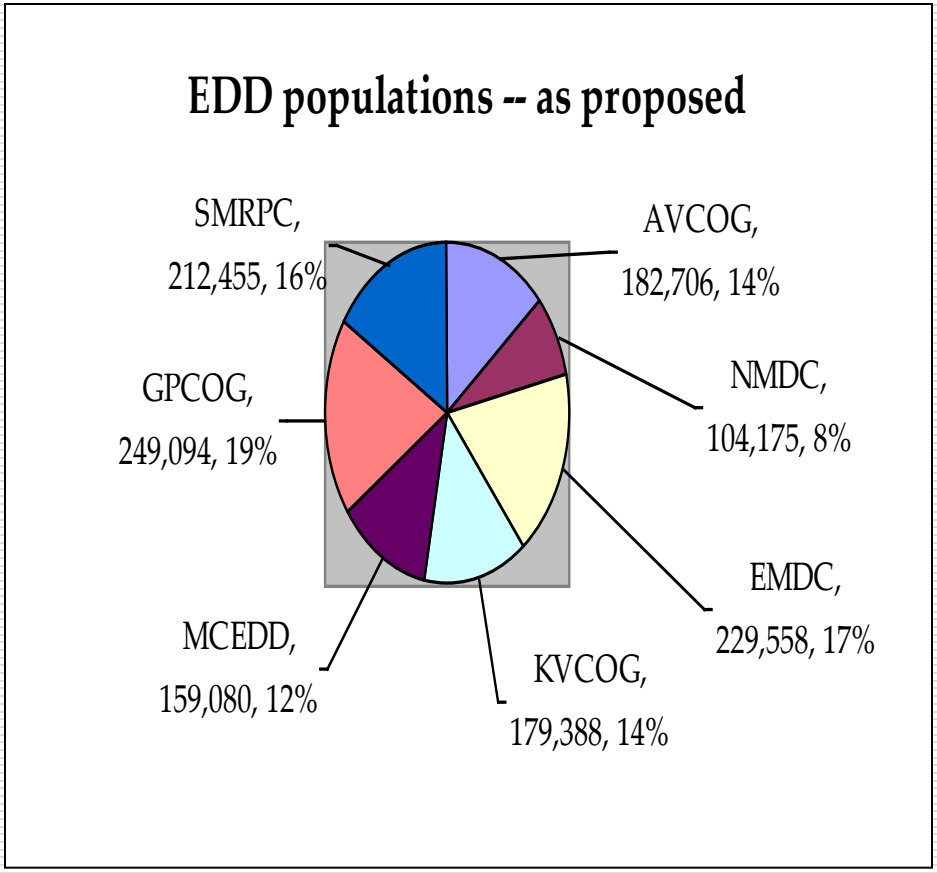
Benefits

- Common coastal issues from Belfast to Brunswick: tourism, marine, transportation (Gateway 1), arts, food, education
- Increase district base from 88,000 to 159,000



Overall benefits of reorganization

- Districts now range from 100,000 to 250,000 people – not 75,000 to 450,000
- 2 districts fit with workforce development programs
- Minor changes align with county lines, and with current town practices
- May be of use for other planning programs



What we're looking for now

- Questions about changes
- Comments about changes
  - what you like
  - what you don't
  - what you're not sure about
- Suggestions for improvements
  - fit county lines, economic lines whenever possible
  - no districts under 100,000 in population

Next step

- DECD will consider feedback
- Will consult with regional and state agencies
- Will recommend a final package of changes to the Governor's office this summer

Further comments and suggestions

Send by June 11 to:

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THANK YOU!