

E. EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY

Cooper has traditionally relied on the land for its livelihood. Land for farming and timber for harvesting drew people here. Our rocky soil and cool climate, plus the promise of better land elsewhere caused some to leave. Out-migration was prompted by the California gold rush, Civil War, depletion of the marketable white pine, the development of the mills in Woodland, and by the lure of a better life off the farm. Cooper's population dropped steadily after a high of 657 in 1840 until in 1970 we had but 88 residents. Because of recent development of the second home market and those who can commute to surrounding towns for employment the population has rebounded to 145 year residents and another 300 seasonal residents in the summer months.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan examines several economic indicators, such as employment, labor force, income, and sales to assess the economic health of the community. The goal of the section is to develop policies which promote an economic climate in Cooper that improves job opportunities for local residents and encourages overall economic well-being.

Cooper Business and Employment Today

Blueberry production is the most significant economic activity in Cooper and forestry remains a viable economic activity especially as wood fiber is used for more fuel uses, eg. pellets, hog fuel. The Domtar mill in Woodland is a significant employer of town residents. Other significant employers include the Department of Homeland Security, educational institutions, and nearby hospitals and social service agencies. In recent decades camp development along the shores of the lakes is spurring growth and demand for recreational use of the land and lakeshores.

EMPLOYERS

The State of Maine Department of Labor reports that there are two local employers in the town of Cooper. However neither of the two employers reported by the Department of Labor are in fact located in Cooper. The Cooper Comprehensive Plan committee has indicated several local employers in addition to the inaccurate data provided by the Department of Labor. Cooper is a small community so the list of employers may under-represent actual employment. Many residents in Cooper are self-employed and operate home-based businesses particularly in blueberry-, and construction-based businesses. With the increasing value of timber some landowners are also conducting timber harvests. Seasonal employment is higher in the summer months associated with the blueberry harvest.

Table E-1 LOCAL EMPLOYERS

Employers in Cooper	Industry/Type of Business	Location	Approx # or range of Employees
Viselli Masonry	Masonry Contractor	Cooper Hwy	1-4
Cathance Lake Services	Construction	Cooper Hwy	1-4
Cherryfield Properties	Farm	Grove Pond Rd.	1-4 >10 seasonally

Employers in Cooper	Industry/Type of Business	Location	Approx # or range of Employees
Cousins Construction	General Contractor	Camp Rd.	1-4
Community Caring Collaborative	Social Services	Camp Rd.	1-4
Justin Day	Blueberry Farming	Cooper Hwy	1-4 >10 seasonally
Tim Ketchen	Contractor	Cooper Hwy	1-4
Chris McCormick	Carpentry, plowing	Vining	1-4

Source: Maine Department of Labor, 2009, Cooper Comprehensive Plan Committee, 2009

Recent Economic Trends

Cooper is increasingly serving as a bedroom community for neighboring employment centers of Baileyville, Calais and Machias. Properties formerly used seasonally are being converted to year round residences and new year-round construction is occurring as well. This trend supports employment in construction, well drilling, site work, landscaping, caretaking and other services.

There are more visitors and seasonal residents in Cooper and they are staying longer than in the past. For much of the economic base, seasonal fluctuations of employment are significant for businesses in blueberry harvesting and wreath brush production. Self-employed individuals often have several jobs over several seasons and are not the same as those employed in traditional wage employment.

Recent closures of the Louisiana Pacific plant and staff cutbacks at the Domtar mill, both in Woodland, affected many Cooper residents. Some are retraining and doing other related work; very few have left the area.

Regional Economy

Cooper is tied into the regional economy of Washington and Hancock counties. Because of it's reliance on service center communities like Calais, Machias and, to some extent, Bangor for the majority of goods and services it residents use, fluctuations in the region's economy directly affect the economy of Cooper.

Cooper is part of the Calais Labor Market Area¹. According to the Eastern Maine Economic Strategy, prepared by the Eastern Maine Development Corporation in 2002, the Calais Labor Market Area (LMA) lost population in the last 20 years (-9.7% 1980-2000; -7.3% 1990-2000). This decline was greatest among two age groups - the school aged, and those aged 25-44 - who could contribute to the regional economy now and in the future. This out migration is reflected in drastically declining school enrollment figures in Washington County (-26.2%) as well as an increase in the dependency ratio within households. The dependency ratio is a figure that essentially adds the elder and youth population together and then divides that sum by those of

1 Note that the Calais Labor Market Area (LMA) boundaries were adjusted in 2005 as a result of Census information about commuting patterns. The information summarized here refers to the form LMA boundaries.

working age. It is a rough measure of a community's ability to generate income to support its needs. The ultimate impact of this decline in a working age population is a poverty rate in the Calais LMA of 16.9% in 2001 representing an increase of 1.5% since 1990.

Economic sectors in the Calais LMA that saw the largest growth in employment from 1998-2000 were Eating and Drinking Places, Educational Services and Food Stores. All three saw employment growth of greater than 10%, however average weekly wages were low (less than \$378/week). There are three sectors with high wages (greater than \$492/week) including Lumber and Wood Products, Paper and Allied Products and Trucking and Warehousing; however all three experienced stable or declining growth in employment. Likewise the Health Services sector has moderate wages (between \$379 and \$491/week) but experienced stable or declining growth in employment. Two other sectors, Automotive Dealers and Service Stations and General Merchandise Stores have low wages and are also experiencing stable or declining growth in employment.

Some of the major Washington County regional employers are shown in Table E-2.

Table E-2 REGIONAL EMPLOYERS

Business	Industry	Location	Approx. # of Employees (or range of employees)
Domtar (formerly Georgia Pacific)	Paper Mill	Baileyville	~300
Calais Regional Hospital	General Medical and Surgical Hospital	Calais	203
Atlantic Rehab and Nursing Cent	General Medical	Calais	75
Calais School Dept.	Public School	Calais	136
Thomas Di Cenzo, Inc.	General Contractors	Calais	100-249
Eastern Maine Electric Co-op	Electric Services	Calais	100-249
Calais Children's Project	Groups Homes and Counseling	Calais	100-249
Calais IGA	Grocery Store	Calais	50-99
Washington County Community College	College	Calais	50-99
Wal-Mart	Dept. Store	Calais	181
Shop 'N Save	Grocery Store	Calais	100-249
Mardens	Dept. Store	Calais	50-100
Department of Homeland Security	Border Patrol, Immigration, Customs, Security	Calais	50-100
Downeast Federal Credit Union	Banking	Calais, Machias	20-49
Machias Savings Bank	Banking	Calais, Machias	20-49
Bangor Savings Bank	Banking	Calais, Machias	20-49
The First	Banking	Calais	20-49
Eastport Port Authority, Federal Marine Terminals, Northeastern Longshoreman's Association	Marine Port	Eastport	85
City of Eastport	Municipal / School Department	Eastport	84
Creative Apparel	Clothing Manufacture	Eastport	77
Heritage Salmon	Aquaculture	Eastport	70

Business	Industry	Location	Approx. # of Employees (or range of employees)
USCG Search & Rescue	National Security	Eastport	24
Tex Shield	Clothing Manufacture	Eastport	20
Eastport Nursing Home	Skilled Nursing Facility	Eastport	20
Eastport Healthcare, Inc	Medical Facility	Eastport	20
Marine Technology Center	Jr College & Technical Institute	Eastport	13
Cooke Aquaculture USA	Sea Farming	Eastport	50-75
R&M IGA Foodliner	Grocery Store	Eastport	10
Down East Community Hospital	General Medical and Surgical Hospital	Machias	249
Machias School Dept.	Public School	Machias	137
Regional Medical Center in Lubec	General Medical and Surgical Hospital	Lubec	50-99
School Union 107	Public Schools	Baileyville	100-249
Maine Wild Blueberry Co	Food Processing	Machias	100-249
Marshall's Health Care Facility	Skilled Nursing Care	Machias	250-999
Shop 'N Save	Grocery Store	Machias	100-249
University of Maine at Machias	University	Machias	163

Source: Maine Dept. of Labor (4th Quarter of 2000), and Maine 2001 Manufacturing Guide; input from Cooper Comprehensive Plan Committee and local research, 2009

Many Cooper residents commute to jobs located in surrounding communities. With a mean travel time to work of 39.2 minutes Cooper residents are traveling further than Washington County average (19.2 minutes) and their commuting times have increased in the past decade (mean commuting time to work in 1990 was 28.6 minutes). Comprehensive Plan Committee members indicate that this reflects a couple of changes since 1990. With improvements to Route 9 since 1990, some residents are commuting to Bangor. Others are commuting to the Downeast Community Hospital in Machias and others are now working in Baileyville who formerly worked in Cooper, Eastport or other Washington County towns.

Table E-1 WORKPLACE OF COOPER RESIDENTS IN 1990 AND 2000

Workplace	Count of Residents 1990	Count of Residents 2000
Baileyville	3	14
Calais	12	10
Eastport	3	0
Machias	0	12
Cooper	8	3
Other Washington County Towns	12	8
Other locations	13	13

US Census 1990 and 2000

According to the 2000 Census, Cooper's workforce overwhelmingly commutes by private vehicle. The second largest segment of the workforce commutes by carpools, the third largest walks to work or works at home.

Table E-3 COMMUTING TO WORK: 2000

COMMUTING TO WORK: 2000	Cooper		Washington County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Workers 16 years and over	60	100.0	13,743	100.0
Drove alone	55	87.0	10,444	76.0
In carpools	3	7.9	1,657	12.1
Using public transportation	2	0.0	64	0.5
Using other means	0	1.9	162	1.2
Walked	0	0.9	722	5.3
Worked at home	0	2.3	694	5.0
Mean Travel time to work (minutes)	39.2	--	19.2	--

Source: US Census

LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

The labor force is defined as all persons who are either employed or are receiving unemployment compensation. Table E-4 shows the distribution of those aged 16 and above who are in or out of the workforce for Cooper and Washington County. Cooper has a slightly higher percentage of residents who are not in the workforce than does the county. Table 4 also shows that in 2000, almost 8% of the town's residents were unemployed, while countywide 8.5% were unemployed.

In September of 2009, the unemployment rate in Cooper had increased to 8.8% and in Washington County to 10.4%. In the Calais Labor Market, of which Cooper is a part, the September 2009 unemployment rate was 13%.

Table E-4 LABOR FORCE STATUS: 2000

Labor Force Status: 2000	Cooper		Washington County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Persons 16 years and over	116	100.0	27,214	100.0
In labor force	65	56.0	15,500	57.0
Civilian labor force	65	56.0	15,354	56.4
Employed	60	51.7	14,042	51.6
Unemployed (% of Civilian Labor Force)	5	7.7	1,312	8.5
Armed Forces	0	0.0	146	0.5
Not in labor force	51	44.0	11,714	43.0

Source: US Census

The employed population for Cooper and Washington County is described in Table 5 by industry. The top three sectors of employment according to the US Census for Cooper are 'Education, health and social services'; 'Construction; and 'Manufacturing'. The top three sectors in Washington County in order of economic importance are 'Education, health and social services', 'Manufacturing', followed by 'Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, mining'.

Manufacturing jobs have historically provided a base for Washington County residents. But the entire manufacturing sector has declined steadily over the past three decades throughout the nation, the region, and the town.

Table E-5 EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS: 2000

Employment Characteristics: 2000	Cooper		Washington County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
INDUSTRY				
Employed persons 16 years and over	60	100.0	14,042	100.0
Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, mining	2	3.3	1,531	10.9
Construction	14	23.3	944	6.7
Manufacturing	8	13.3	1,968	14.0
Wholesale trade	0	0.0	384	2.7
Retail trade	5	8.3	1,521	10.8
Transportation, warehousing, utilities info	6	10.0	581	4.1
Information	0	0.0	146	1.0
Finance, insurance, and real estate	2	3.3	433	3.1
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	0	0.0	438	3.1
Education, health and social services	17	28.3	3,694	26.3
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	0	0.0	779	5.5
Other services (except public administration)	0	0.0	642	4.6
Public administration	6	10.0	981	7.0
CLASS OF WORKER				
Private wage and salary workers	43	71.7	9,225	65.7
Government workers	15	25.0	2,882	20.5
Self-employed workers	2	3.3	1,886	13.4
Unpaid family workers	0	0.0	49	0.3

Source: US Census

There are many Cooper residents with wage-based employment who earn additional income through seasonal self-employment. The number of self-employed workers in the Census likely undercounts those in this category. In addition there are also likely more residents who earn income from agriculture and forestry than the 2 counted in the 2000 census.

The lack of public transportation in rural areas inhibits employment for many residents living at or near the poverty level. Residents of larger service centers can more readily walk or carpool to work. Without a car, most residents of Cooper would not be able to get to work, and when unemployed or underemployed in a minimum wage job, some cannot maintain a vehicle particularly for severe winter conditions.

The lack of reliable high speed Internet access also inhibits development of other sources of income. Those who do have high speed access use the service to tele-commute to their employment in Bangor and out of state in the areas of publishing, legal research and writing, and other professional work.

INCOME

Cooper's median household income increased considerably (52.3%) between 1989 and 1999 surpassing the median household income of the county but not the state. The relative difference has continued until 2002 according to data from the Maine State Housing Authority. The median household income projection for 2015 is for more modest increases than between 1989 and 1999.

Table E-6 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

	U.S. Census			2008	Forecast ²
	1979	1989	1999		2015 Projection
Cooper	\$15,972	\$21,750	\$33,125	n/a	\$58,878
Calais LMA	-	-	-	\$31,482	-
Washington County	\$10,443	\$19,967	\$25,869	\$31,395	\$36,984
Maine	\$13,816	\$27,896	\$37,240	\$46,321	\$61,534

Source: U.S. Census, Maine State Housing Authority, 2009

Table E-7 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME CHANGE

	1979-1989	1989-1999
Cooper	36.17%	52.3%
Washington County	91.20%	29.6%
Maine	101.91%	33.5%

Source: U.S. Census

While the median household income for Cooper is higher than that for Washington County, the per capita income in Cooper is only slightly higher than in Washington County.

Table E-8 INCOME IN 1999: 2000 CENSUS

	Cooper		Washington County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Households	58	100.0	14,119	100.0
Less than \$10,000	11	19.0	2,515	17.8
\$10,000 to \$14,999	6	10.3	1,745	12.4
\$15,000 to \$24,999	4	6.9	2,579	18.3
\$25,000 to \$34,999	11	19.0	2,156	15.3
\$35,000 to \$49,999	10	17.2	1,833	13.0
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14	24.1	668	4.7
\$75,000 to \$99,999	2	3.4	318	2.3
\$100,000 to \$149,999	0	0.0	74	0.5
\$150,000 or more	0	0.0	120	0.8
Median household income (dollars)	33,125	-	25,869	-
Per capita income (dollars)	14,353	-	14,119	-

Source: U.S. Census

Sources of income for residents of Cooper come primarily from wages and salaries with a greater contribution of retirement income compared to Washington County as a whole. Wage and salary

2 *2015 Estimates are based on a twenty-year period (1980-2000 or 1979-1999) using linear regression analysis. These estimates are not based on percent growth per year (% GPY). Longer trend analysis should be conducted for comparison and to provide a range of possible projections that might better account for unique local circumstances.

income includes total earnings received for work performed, i.e. wages, salary, commissions, tips, piece-rate payments, and cash bonuses earned before tax deductions were made. Wage and salary employment is a broad measure of economic well-being but does not indicate whether the jobs are of good quality. In the 2000 Census, 3.3% of Cooper residents report self-employment income compared to 13.4% in the county as a whole (see Table 5). However, as indicated above self-employment in Cooper is likely higher than what is reported in the Census.

Fewer residents in Cooper collect social security income (17.2%) than do residents of the county (34%). Social Security income includes Social Security pensions, survivor's benefits and permanent disability insurance payments made by the Social Security Administration, prior to deductions for medical insurance and railroad retirement insurance from the U.S. Government. There are proportionately more Cooper residents receiving public assistance than in the County. Public assistance income includes payments made by Federal or State welfare agencies to low-income persons who are 65 years or older, blind, or disabled; receive aid to families with dependent children; or general assistance. In sum, the income types for Cooper show a lower percentage of wage and salary income and a higher percentage of residents on public assistance than is seen for the county as a whole. Percentages are somewhat deceiving however given that Cooper has a very small population and the absolute numbers are also very small.

Table E-9 INCOME TYPE IN 1999

Income Type in 1999 (Households often have more than one source of income, as seen here)	Cooper		Washington County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Households	58	100.0%	14,119	100
With wage and salary income	41	70.7%	10,162	72.0
With Social Security Income	10	17.2%	4,795	34.0
With Supplemental Security income	4	6.9%	949	6.7
With public assistance income	4	6.9%	910	6.4
With retirement income	13	22.4%	2,382	16.9

Source: U.S. Census

In 2000, the average poverty threshold for a family of four persons was \$17,050 in the contiguous 48 states (U.S. DHHS). The Bureau of Census income criteria to determine poverty status consists of several thresholds including family size and number of family members under 18 years of age. In 1999, and reported in the 2000 Census, there were 12 individuals and 2 families with incomes below the poverty level in Cooper (see Table E-10).

Table E-10 POVERTY STATUS IN 1999

Poverty Status in 1999	Cooper		Washington County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Below poverty level				
Individuals	12	100.0	6,272	19.0
Persons 18 years and over	12	100.0	4,524	17.8
Persons 65 years and over	2	16.2	1,076	19.2
Families	2	100.0	1,319	14.2
With related children under 18 years	0	0.0	861	20.3
With related children under 5 years	0	0.0	312	23.5

Source: U.S. Census

SALES

Taxable sales are one of the few available indicators of the actual size, growth, and character of an economic region. The Maine Revenue Services does not provide information on taxable sales disaggregated by retail sector at the municipal level for all sectors for Cooper because of the town's small size. As a result the total figures do not reflect quarterly activity in some sectors that are not reported in the table. All figures in Table E-11 are in real dollars, not adjusted for inflation.

According to the data provided by Maine Revenue Services, Cooper had a significant decrease in total taxable sales for the period of 2004 to 2008. This is a reflection of the closure in 2007 of the only food store in the town. Consumer sales constituted approximately 99 percent of total taxable sales for Cooper in 2008. At the county level, total consumer sales constituted more than 92 percent of total taxable sales.

Table E-11 TAXABLE SALES IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS

Selected Retail Sectors	Washington County			Cooper		
	Annual Total Sales 2004	Annual Total Sales 2008	2004-2008 % Chg	Annual Total Sales 2004	Annual Total Sales 2008	2004-2008 % Chg (decrease)
Business Operating	15,146.0	17,569.4	16.0%	0.2	0.3	0.5%
Building Supplies	30,582.4	34,668.3	13.4%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food Store	32,315.3	41,373.9	28.0%	64.2	0	(100%)
General Merchandise	55,988.7	56,432.9	0.8%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other Retail	12,868.7	14,415.6	12.0%	0.3	3.2	9.66%
Auto Transportation	29,088.9	27,496.4	-5.5%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Restaurant/Lodging	25,311.8	31,334.3	23.8%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Consumer Sales	186,155.8	205,721.3	10.9%	64.5	3.2	(95.0%)
Total Taxable Sales	201,301.8	223,290.7	10.5%	64.7	3.5	(94.6%)

Source: Maine Revenue Service 2009

Below are the definitions of each retail sector:

Consumer Retail Sales:	Total taxable retail sales to consumers.
Total Retail Sales:	Includes Consumer Retail Sales plus special types of sales and rentals to businesses where the tax is paid directly by the buyer (such as commercial or industrial oil purchase).
Building Supply:	Durable equipment sales, contractors' sales, hardware stores and lumberyards.
Food Stores:	All food stores from large supermarkets to small corner food stores. The values here are snacks and non-food items only, since food intended for home consumption is not taxed.
General Merchandise:	In this sales group are stores carrying lines generally carried in large department stores. These include clothing, furniture, shoes, radio-TV, household durable goods, home furnishing, etc.
Other Retail:	This group includes a wide selection of taxable sales not covered elsewhere. Examples are dry good stores, drug stores, jewelry stores, sporting good stores, antique dealers, morticians, bookstores, photo supply stores, gift shops, etc.
Auto Transportation:	This sales group includes all transportation related retail outlets. Included are auto dealers, auto parts, aircraft dealers, motorboat dealers, automobile rental, etc.
Restaurant/Lodging:	All stores selling prepared food for immediate consumption. The Lodging group includes only rental tax.

PUBLIC OPINION

In the public survey, conducted in early 2009, home based businesses were strongly supported. Also supported were professional business and some retail uses. All of the development associated with recreational facilities, recreational equipment sales and services, guiding and seasonal camping were strongly favored. Casino and gaming facilities were not favored, nor were adult entertainment facilities. Consistent with this sentiment, respondents favor low scale tourism developments rather than large operations like resorts. One of the most strongly disfavored activities was salvage and junk facilities. Particularly supported was a gas station and convenience store. The written comments speak to a desire for small scale operations in keeping with the quiet rural nature of the town as did the responses to different types of agriculture.

SUMMARY

Cooper is a small community primarily dependant on regional sources of employment. Most residents rely on wage and salary income and retirees compose a larger part of the population compared to the county as a whole. The top three sectors of employment for Cooper are 'Education, health and social services'; 'Construction; and 'Manufacturing'. The residents of Cooper have income levels that are higher than residents of Washington County as a whole. However, with the aging of our population, the size the workforce continues to decrease. Living in a rural area limits employment opportunities and increases the costs of commuting to

the service centers where many of the newly created jobs are located. Our local government should strive to encourage and maintain appropriate development that will better employ residents. Growth needs to be channeled to areas of town capable of handling development while incurring minimal cost to the municipality.