

Maine Environment

SPECIAL EDITION


Natural Resources
Council of Maine
Winter 2009

2009 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES for protecting Maine's environment

The state and national economic downturn will make 2009 a challenging year at the Maine State Legislature. Yet this also will be a time when significant progress can be made to protect Maine's environment, promote clean energy, increase energy efficiency, and create green jobs.

Out of the nearly 1,600 bill titles introduced by Maine lawmakers as of mid-January, NRCM has identified 240 that deal with the environment, energy policy, or sustainable economic development in some fashion. In this special report, we describe many of the most important of these measures, including a bill to that would improve energy security through increased energy efficiency, legislation to create a safe and comprehensive recycling system for compact fluorescent light bulbs, a bond proposal for the Land for Maine's Future program, a bill requiring notification about pesticide spraying, and improved protections for important stretches of Maine's rivers.

As the bill titles are printed as actual bills, we will carefully examine each and every one to determine which need NRCM lobbying, focused attention, and grassroots action. NRCM staff likely will focus on several dozen pieces of legislation during the course of the year. Our goal, as always, will be to build on Maine's record of success in protecting our natural resources, and to defeat legislation that would weaken the environmental safeguards so important to our economy,



natural systems, and quality of life.

As the legislative session progresses, we encourage you to participate. The legislative process works best when Maine people get involved. Legislators tell us over and over that the voices of their constituents have a big influence on how they vote. If you are not part of NRCM's "Action Network," then we encourage you to sign up today at www.nrcm.org. You'll receive legislative updates and information about ways that you can help ensure success on our environmental priorities.

We also encourage you to consider coming to Augusta on March 17th to participate in our annual Citizen Action Day. Please mark your calendar and contact us for more information. Citizen Action Day will provide you with an opportunity to learn about major pieces of environmental legislation, meet with your elected representatives, and play a part in the protection of Maine's environment. You'll also have a good time!

With your help, we will continue to protect what's special about Maine.

—Pete Didisheim
Senior Director, Advocacy

How a Bill Becomes Law

If you've ever wondered how a bill becomes law, visit our website to find out at www.nrcm.org/project_statehousewatch.asp.

DON'T MISS IT!

Citizen Action Day

March 17 2009



George Gee of Baileyville speaks with Governor Baldacci, Citizen Action Day 2008

Citizen Action Day is March 17! Please join us here at NRCM headquarters (3 Wade Street, Augusta, just one block from the State House). Come hear firsthand about NRCM's priority legislation and how you can help make sure this session's priority bills become laws. You'll be able to meet with others who share your values, and will have the chance to urge your elected officials to vote in favor of legislation that reflects these values. Mark your calendar now and contact Beth Dimond to sign up or for more information at (800) 287-2345 ext. 206 or by emailing beth@nrcm.org. Last year's Citizen Action Day drew an overflow crowd, so sign up now. See you March 17!

Visit our website: www.nrcm.org


Natural Resources
Council of Maine

3 Wade Street
Augusta, Maine 04330-6317

CHECK YOUR LABEL!

Please call NRCM with
address corrections
or duplicate mailings!

NON-PROFIT
U.S.-POSTAGE
PAID
BRUNSWICK, ME
PERMIT NO. 65

Natural Resources Council of Maine 2009 Priority Bills in the Legislature



Increase Maine's Energy Security

Most Maine homes are woefully energy inefficient. To help Maine families avoid financial calamity when heating oil prices rise again, we must improve weatherization programs to help residents stay warm while saving money. Doing so will keep money flowing in the Maine economy—we now send \$2.5 billion out of state each year for heating fuels. Tackling the issue will also create jobs in the emerging clean energy sector.

“The Maine Energy & Economic Security Act” broadens energy efficiency and weatherization programs to reduce heating bills for all Mainers and Maine businesses, regardless of heating fuel type or income level. It also simplifies state programs by establishing “one-stop-shopping” for energy efficiency incentives and programs to reduce Mainers’ heating and electrical costs. And, it better positions Maine to use and benefit from many energy funding sources, including federal investments.

“This bill would give Maine’s economy a needed boost,” says Dylan Voorhees, NRCM Clean Energy Project Director. “This will save Mainers over \$1 billion in the first 10 years and put builders and contractors back to work.”



Establish a Climate and Energy Plan to Help Maine People and Wildlife

When growth is badly planned and sprawling, people drive (and pollute) more. Costs increase for schools, local governments, and fire and ambulance districts, and wildlife habitat is needlessly destroyed. Climate change and energy costs are two of the greatest challenges confronting our state, yet Maine does not require their consideration in state permitting or land-use planning. That means with every new project, we risk locking in high energy costs and pollution for decades to come.

The “Maine Climate and Energy Planning Act” would guide new planning to ensure that new public and private development is as clean and energy-efficient as possible. In doing so, it would help meet Maine’s goals to substantially reduce, by the year 2050, the use of fossil fuels that contribute to global warming. It would also direct Maine’s growth to protect large areas of habitat, allow streams to flow naturally so that fish and other wildlife flourish, and integrate bike and walking paths into transportation projects.

“Because new buildings last 50 years or more, what, where, and how Maine builds over the next 10 years will determine how much habitat we are destroying, energy we’re using, and pollution we’re creating by the middle of the century,” says Dylan Voorhees, NRCM’s clean energy project director. “We must plan wisely today.”



Fund Land for Maine's Future

The Land for Maine’s Future (LMF) program, which has conserved land in all 16 counties of the state, guarantees public access to lands and waters; preserves working farms and forests, and protects beautiful mountains, shorelines, lakes, and rivers, ensuring that future generations will be able to enjoy what we love today.

Land prices have fallen, and sprawl continues, but LMF is out of money. Now is a good time for funding Maine’s popular land conservation program, which garnered 63 percent of the vote at the 2007 election. The quality of place that is Maine’s calling card, and on which our way of life depends, relies on conservation of our natural areas. More than 235 organizations, including NRCM, have come together to support a land bond that provides the funding needed for LMF to continue its good work.

“Maine’s quality of life and our natural resource-based economy are protected by LMF,” says Cathy Johnson, NRCM North Woods Project Director. “We strongly support a land bond this legislative session.”



Recycle Light Bulbs to Protect People, Save Taxpayer Money

Maine lawmakers have an opportunity this session to protect families and save taxpayers money by limiting how much mercury can be contained in bulbs sold in Maine, and by requiring bulb manufacturers to share in the cost and responsibility for safe collection and recycling.

“An Act to Provide for the Safe Collection and Recycling of Mercury-Containing Light Bulbs” is especially needed now, because the inefficient incandescent light bulbs are largely slated to be phased out by 2014. Fluorescent lights provide excellent light and save energy, money, and help reduce global warming pollution from power plants. But because they contain small amounts of mercury, they need to be safely collected and recycled.

Surprisingly, the amount of mercury in fluorescent bulbs varies widely: there is 30 times more mercury in some CFLs than others, while some tube (LFL) lights contain 80 times more than others. Setting limits on the amount of mercury that bulbs contain, as California has done, will reduce mercury use and potential problems. “Maine needs an ongoing program to ensure fluorescent bulbs are safely collected and recycled,” says Matt Prindiville, NRCM Toxics Project Director. “The approach we are supporting builds on the success of Maine’s electronic waste and mercury thermostat recycling laws, to ensure that manufacturers share in the responsibility for collecting and recycling these bulbs.”



Protect Maine's Rivers— A Good Investment

Maine’s rivers are the lifeblood of our state and our towns. They provide beauty, recreation, plant and wildlife habitat, drinking water, and business opportunities for Mainers. Every few years, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) makes recommendations to the Legislature to ratchet up improvements in water quality by “reclassifying” specific rivers. This year’s bill, “An Act to Change the Classification of Certain Waters of the State,” would increase protections for (among others):

- The Crooked River, which provides the vast majority of spawning habitat for Sebago Lake’s famed landlocked salmon. It also provides 35 percent of the water to Sebago Lake, the drinking water supply for 200,000 Maine people.
- Alder Stream, an ecological gem amid heavily forested areas featuring potential future spawning habitat for Atlantic salmon.
- The Basin, a coastal waterbody in Phippsburg that provides some of Maine’s best clam flats (yielding about 53 bushels per acre) and is a recreational boating mecca, offering a beautiful, sheltered harbor surrounded by one of the largest unfragmented forests in the Midcoast.

“Clean, vibrant rivers help boost Maine’s economy and protect our natural heritage and way of life,” says Nick Bennett, staff scientist for NRCM. “We urge the Legislature to increase protections for these and other waterbodies in this bill.”



Protect Neighbors from the Dangers of Pesticide Spray

Imagine your children playing out in the yard on a summer day when a helicopter appears overhead, spraying the field next door with an unknown mix of chemicals.

“An Act to Require Citizen Notification about Powered Outdoor Pesticide Applications” would establish a simple, clear, and comprehensive notification system to help landowners inform neighbors about their intended spray plans. It would require land managers to notify occupants, farmers, and owners of properties nearby if they intend to apply outdoor pesticides using power equipment. It would also create a registry for people who wish to receive detailed information about powered outdoor pesticide applications taking place within a quarter mile of their property.

“This is an opportunity for Maine to be a leader in developing common sense policies to protect human health and the environment,” says Matt Prindiville. “All Maine people should be informed about pesticides that could drift onto their properties, affect the health of their families, create an economic burden from loss of crops, or poison their environment.”

Other Legislation of Interest

Over the course of the 2009 Legislative Session, NRCM staff members will be tracking hundreds of bills. Here are just a few:

Green Jobs Lawmakers from Washington, D.C., to Augusta are focusing on boosting “green jobs” in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable businesses. Several legislators have introduced “green jobs” bills, including Rep. Henry Beck (D-Waterville), Rep. Seth Berry (D-Bowdoinham), and Senator Phil Bartlett (D-Gorham). Some are designed to increase workforce development in areas such as weatherization; others focus on sustainable energy and transportation. The common purpose of these bills is to promote economic recovery with jobs that also contribute to our energy security and sustainable communities.

Energy Maine lawmakers have introduced nearly 100 different bills dealing with energy and created a new Committee for Maine’s Energy Future to handle some of these. A number of bills would provide tax incentives for renewable energy systems. Sen. Larry Bliss (D-Portland) introduced a bill to increase the requirement for renewable energy as a portion of total electricity sold in Maine. Rep. Bruce MacDonald (D-Boothbay) and Rep. David Van Wie (D-New Gloucester) have bills to improve the economics of community-based renewable energy systems. Sen. Bill Diamond (D-Windham) has introduced legislation to promote geothermal energy systems, and bills from Reps. Jon Hinck (D-Portland), Beck, and Berry, and Sen. John Nutting (D-Leeds) each would promote solar energy in Maine through a variety of legislative approaches.

Coal, Tar Sands, and Offshore Oil

Maine currently is highly dependent on energy sources that cause significant environmental harm. To help bring attention to this, Rep. Elsie Flemings (D-Bar Harbor) has introduced legislation to reduce the use by Maine people of oil extracted from Canadian tar sands and coal, especially coal extracted through mountain-top removal in Appalachia. Rep. John Martin (D-Eagle Lake) has introduced a bill to ban drilling of oil off Maine’s coast.



A bill this session would curb Maine’s use of coal from mountain-top removal mining.

Toxic Pollution Maine has been a leader in legislation to get toxic chemicals such as mercury and lead out of consumer products. Important provisions to build on those laws will be debated this year. Sen. Seth Goodall (D-Topsham) has proposed a bill to phase out the use of lead wheel weights, used to balance car wheels. Rep. Hinck has proposed a bill to expand the state’s electronic waste (e-waste) recycling program, and Rep. Sharon Treat (D-Hallowell) is advancing a bill that addresses the threat of mercury. Several bills have been introduced to limit pesticide use.

Consolidate Natural Resource Agencies Governor Baldacci has expressed a strong interest in consolidating Maine’s natural resource agencies and created a task force to evaluate options. That Task Force, of which NRCM was a member, did not reach consensus. The Governor is expected to introduce legislation that would consolidate four natural resource agencies (the departments of Inland Fish & Wildlife, Agriculture, Conservation, and Marine Resources) into one. Rep. Wendy Pieh (D-Bremen) has introduced a bill supported by agriculture and forestry interests that would reshuffle these four agencies but not reduce the number. Rep. Tom Watson (D-Bath) has a bill to combine the departments of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and Marine Resources. NRCM wants to make sure that any consolidation does not weaken the abilities of these agencies to perform their missions.

Bonds In addition to three bond bills that would provide funding to the Land for Maine’s Future program, bond measures also have been introduced across a broad range of other topics, from research and development to education to health care. In the area of energy and the environment, proposals have been submitted to invest in energy-efficient, low-income housing (Rep. Hannah Pingree, D-New Haven), wastewater treatment facilities (Rep. Pat Flood, R-Winthrop), state parks (Rep. Goodall), sustainable downtowns (Sen. Libby Mitchell, D-Vassalboro), and home weatherization (Sen. Bartlett).

STOPPING BAD BILLS

NRCM closely watches for bills that would weaken Maine’s environmental laws. A number have already surfaced. Several appear to be aimed at blocking careful planning to protect Maine’s unorganized territories from scattered development. NRCM will oppose legislation that would prevent Maine’s Land Use Regulation Commission from developing an updated comprehensive plan based on sound planning principles and designed to protect the core of Maine’s North Woods from scattered development. We also are concerned about legislation introduced by Rep. Henry Joy (R-Crystal) to eliminate the State Planning Office, a bill by Rep. Richard Cebra (R-Naples) to repeal Maine’s Clean Elections Act, and a bill by Sen. David Hastings (R-Fryeburg) that would repeal the Informed Growth Act. Other bill titles have raised red flags for NRCM staff, for which we are waiting to see final bill language before establishing a position.

To stay informed of our efforts in the Legislature this session, including when and how you can take action, join our Action Network at www.nrcm.org.

Maine Businesses Urge Congress to Lead Fight to Help Stop Climate Change

On February 4, Maine business leaders gathered at the State House to release a letter written to Maine’s congressional delegation urging swift and effective action to address the threat of climate change.



Left to right: Nancy Gray (Harraseeket Inn), Jim Wellehan (Lamey Wellehan Shoes), Brownie Carson (NRCM), Adam Lee (Lee Auto Malls), Tom Tietenberg (Colby), Jack Parker (Reed & Reed), and Bill Cohen (Verso Paper).

The letter, signed by more than 100 leading Maine businesses including Hannaford Bros. Co., Lee Auto Malls, Oakhurst Dairy, and Mattson Development, says, in part: “As business men and women in Maine...[we] specifically urge that you make passage of a strong and effective climate security bill one of the top priorities for action in 2009.”

“Maine businesses recognize the significance of our energy and climate change problems, the responsibility of businesses to help address it, and the economic opportunities in solving it,” Brownie Carson, executive director of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, said at the press conference. “Investing in clean and efficient solutions builds Maine jobs and our economy, and helps to ensure a healthier future for our children and grandchildren.”

Carson was joined at the press conference by Adam Lee, President, Lee Auto Malls and NRCM board member; Nancy Gray, innkeeper and co-owner of the Harraseeket Inn in Freeport; Jim Wellehan, owner and CEO of Lamey Wellehan Shoes; Bill Cohen of Verso Paper Corporation, and Jack Parker, President & CEO, Reed & Reed, a builder of wind turbines in Maine. They spoke of the need to protect the special character of Maine and how investing in clean energy and efficiency is good for Maine’s economy and will provide good-paying jobs.

Tom Tietenberg, Mitchell Family Professor of Economics, Emeritus, at Colby College and NRCM board member, also spoke at the press conference. “When it comes to climate change, inaction is the most expensive and risky path forward for our society,” he said.

The best scientific data suggest that global warming could cause significant sea-level rise along Maine’s lengthy coastline, jeopardizing property, wildlife habitat, and infrastructure. Climate change also could result in more severe weather, increased smog and asthma, and significant harm to our natural resource-based economy. NRCM has made working for clean energy and efficiency initiatives a high priority. To stay informed, join NRCM’s Action Network (see page 4).

We're Your Direct Line On Issues You Care About Most

Questions? Comments? Need more info? NRCM's outreach staff are available to help you take action to protect Maine's environment. Whether you need tips for your testimony, help with a letter-to-the-editor, or just a friendly word of encouragement, our outreach staffers are here for you.



Diano Circo
North Woods Policy Advocate &
Outreach Coordinator
diano@nrcm.org
(800) 287-2345 ext. 218



Emmie Theberge
Clean Energy Outreach Coordinator
emmie@nrcm.org
(800) 287-2345 ext. 205



Matt Prindiville
Toxics Project Director &
Federal Issues Advocate
mattp@nrcm.org
(800) 287-2345 ext 244



Activists at a press conference show their support for LD 2048, the "Kid-Safe Products Bill." The bill passed, in large part because concerned citizens made their voices heard!

Your voice is the most important one lawmakers need to hear.

Stay up-to-date and ready-for-action on issues threatening Maine's environment. Join NRCM's Action Network today. You can

- ⚡ Influence crucial decisions at the State House.
- ⚡ Receive email alerts informing you when legislation is pending and your legislators need to hear from you.
- ⚡ Participate in special events.
- ⚡ Join with friends, neighbors, and others who share your values in protecting the nature of Maine.

You choose how and when to help.

- ⚡ Write letters, make phone calls, or send emails to your legislators and other decision-makers.
- ⚡ Write letters to the editor of your local paper.
- ⚡ Submit comments, attend hearings, or testify at public hearings on issues that are most important to you and your family.

Join online today at www.nrcm.org, email takeaction@nrcm.org, or by calling Beth Dimond, public affairs coordinator, at (800) 287-2345 ext. 206. **Make your voice heard!**

NRCM Turns 50 Join the Celebration!



To celebrate NRCM's 50th anniversary protecting Maine's environment, we'll be celebrating with 50 special events and activities for you and your family to participate in around Maine—hikes, music events, My Maine This Week photo exhibits, bird walks, film showings, river paddles, and much more! We've created new web pages for this special occasion, including our timeline of successes and special events, at www.nrcm.org/50_years.asp. Visit often to see what's going near you!

Do It Yourself Activities!



For a list of Do It Yourself Activities in celebration of our 50th anniversary — hikes on Land for Maine's Future lands, stays at sporting camps offering discounts to NRCM members, and more—visit www.nrcm.org/50_years.asp.

Brownie Points!



For every action or event you participate in, you earn Brownie Points that qualify you for drawings for raffle prizes donated by Maine businesses, including a kayak package from L.L. Bean! Find out more at www.nrcm.org/50_years.asp.

facebook Get in our face(book)! and become a Fan of NRCM

NRCM is on Facebook! Are you? Log on to your account, type "Natural Resources Council of Maine" in the Search box, go the NRCM page, and select "Become a Fan." It's a fun way to stay informed of NRCM goings-on by joining with our online community of people who want to protect the nature of Maine.



Natural Resources
Council of Maine

3 Wade Street, Augusta, Maine 04330-6317
(800) 287-2345 • FAX (207) 622-4343
www.nrcm.org

Editor / Allison Childs Wells
Design / bright red bicycle design
Contributors / Judy Berk,
Pete Didisheim,
Allison Childs Wells

Copyright 2009. All rights reserved.