

CLIMATE CHANGE COMMENTS

By Bill Townsend

Good morning. My name is Bill Townsend. I am glad to see familiar faces here, as well as some that are new to me, but who are not new to protecting the environment.

I have served on the boards of most of Maine's environmental groups, and as president or chairman of many.

I have been hunting and fishing in Maine for more than 50 years.

I have seen directly and first hand the changes to habitat which have taken place in that time. The evidence for climate change is everywhere we look.

Cold water fish such as brook trout and salmon are already under severe pressure as the result of low and warm water conditions in the summer. If we do not act immediately, we are going to lose a lot of habitat for these treasured species.

We learned just last week that the important in-shore ground fisheries in the Gulf of Maine are being impacted by climate change.

Climate change is a political issue, but it is not a partisan issue.

Just last week a poll of Maine citizens found that more than three-quarters of them, 77% to be exact, want Senator Olympia Snowe and Senator Susan Collins to vote for federal climate legislation.

It did not matter whether they were Republicans, Democrats or independents, they were and are concerned citizens who care about the world they live in.

This is not just a local issue. Moose in Minnesota are in decline because of habitat loss attributable to climate change. Polar bears and walrus in Alaska are dying because the summer sea ice that they inhabit is disappearing before our very eyes.

As a consequence, just two months ago more than 600 national and regional organizations, including a dozen from Maine like NRCM, Maine Audubon and Chewonki, and such national groups as The Nature Conservancy, the National Wildlife Federation and the Izaak Walton League, signed on to a letter addressed to every Senator requesting their support for climate change legislation, and most importantly, for funding to help federal, state and local agencies take on the legal, technical and construction challenges which climate change presents.

This will create jobs, and will be good for both the economy and the environment. Good stewardship will be good business.

The United States Senate needs to act now to address the issue, by building on the bill passed in the House of Representatives last June, and supported by our own Representatives Mike Michaud and Chellie Pingree.

The world is watching. We cannot wait any longer. We must act now.

Clinton B. "Bill" Townsend