

Remarks by Pete Didisheim
NRCM Advocacy Director
Roundtable on Maine People and the Environment
January 20, 2011

Good afternoon. On behalf of this large audience of more than 500 people, and the 27 organizations that are hosting this forum, I would like to thank you, Governor LePage, for joining us today. I also would like to welcome our presenters seated at the roundtable, your staff members Dan Demerit and Kathleen Newman, and Tom Saviello, who serves as Senate Chair for the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, and Jim Brooks, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection.

We have a great program lined up for you, featuring a broad and diverse sampling of Maine people who will describe the importance of a clean and healthy environment to our economy, jobs, quality of life, and Maine's future.

We'll hear from Mainers who make their living directly from sustainable management of our natural resources – including lobstermen, fishermen, clambers, and loggers. We'll hear from companies that depend on a strong Maine brand, and from businesses working to improve energy efficiency and provide clean renewable power.

We'll also hear from the Tribal Chief of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and from an Olympic Gold Medalist, wilderness guide, college student, 11th generation Mainer, a Catholic priest, and others.

Our program, as I said, is a sampler of the many people who would like to be heard on this topic. Everyone in this room could easily deliver a compelling statement about the importance of Maine's environment to your life. I know, because many of you wanted a place at the big table, and we had to turn you down.

The title of our program was offered by the Governor. "Maine People and the Environment." The most important word in that title is "and" We really should have underlined it. Because Maine people and our environment are tightly linked. It's not one or the other. Both are critical for Maine's future.

I know that many in this room are worried about recent reports about how the initiative to reduce red tape and regulations may result in a weakening of our environmental safeguards. We hope that's not true, and we urge our policymakers to proceed with extreme care – so that we protect what is so unique and special about Maine while also strengthening our economy.

So, here's how our program will proceed. Our presenters will speak, from left to right, each providing brief remarks. They know that they need to be brief. If they go too long, I'm going to cut them off. Starting with Bucky Owens.