



Maine Sportsmen Speak Out on Climate Change
Press Conference at Penobscot County Conservation Association Clubhouse
Brewer, Maine
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My name is Greg Ponte, and I am representing the Maine Council of Trout Unlimited.

Here in Maine, Brook trout are the most widespread, sought after and overall favorite fish of anglers. Brook trout face a lot of challenges right now in the form of increased development, habitat fragmentation, and stream connectivity problems at road crossings, invasive fish species and most importantly looking towards the future, the threat by climate change.

If water temperatures in Maine continue to rise due to climate change the rivers and streams will be too warm to support brook trout populations year round. At the same time, the coal-fired power plants that are heating up our climate are also harming all of our waters in the state of Maine.

Acid rain is a major problem, due to the smokestacks at all of the coal plants upwind from us that are constantly poisoning our rainclouds with mercury. We have all read the health warnings against eating freshwater fish on page 4 of the current Maine Fishing Regulations lawbook.

Fortunately, these are problems that we have a chance of solving but only if we are able to enact strong legislation to support new clean energy sources and cap greenhouse gas emissions. Change needs to happen as soon as possible to reverse this trend which is growing in momentum.

During the end of June the Maine Trout Unlimited Council sponsors a week long Trout camp on the Kennebec River at Solon, Maine. As the director of the Trout camp we use fly-fishing as the medium to teach fishery biology, water quality and conservation to the students. Introducing younger generations to these life-long outdoor skills and instilling a strong conservation ethic are essential to continuing Maine's fine recreational fishing heritage.

We are not just teaching students how to tie and cast flies but are trying to instill a sense of stewardship for Maine's natural resources. Getting them out into a stream and river is a great way to do it: teenagers have this fascination about fishing whether they try it for the first time or have fished for years.

I believe in the good work we are doing, but climate change is threatening to undo it all. Brook trout as a cold water indicator species are similar to the canary in the coal mine. If they are at risk, then the entire river ecosystem is at risk and so is our long-standing angling heritage.

We will all be doing a profound disservice to future generations of anglers if native wildlife species like the brook trout can no longer survive in our state.

Time and time again, Senators Snowe and Collins have come to the defense of Maine's sporting heritage and traditions. Now we need their leadership more than ever, to enact a strong climate and clean energy bill.

