

Ruth McLaughlin

Governor LePage. My name is Ruth McLaughlin, and my husband and I have owned and operated Blarehill Inn at Moosehead lakes since 1997. Maine is a unique state, set apart by its beautiful appointments of natural brilliance. It remains relatively unspoiled in an overdeveloped and overcrowded world. Maine is rare; and rare things are valuable. Our environmental asset is the differentiating factor that defines our state. It is the reason that people come from all over the world to see us, and to experience Maine and why most people choose to live here.

The idea that Maine cannot flourish economically while sustaining and protecting our bounty of natural places is incorrect and shortsighted. The two can work hand-in-hand, which in the long-run is the most sustainable and healthy economic formula possible. Our state needs to capitalize on that environmental asset rather than disregard it. The abundance of our natural resources is our calling card. It is our low-hanging fruit if you will. Tourism is the largest revenue producing industry in the state. The number one growing segment of the tourism industry in the world is eco-tourism, and we have that in spades. Yet tourism is among the least funded industries in our state, and protecting our natural resources which draws tourists from around the world continues to be a battleground. It is time for our natural resources, the lifeblood to sustainable business, and the fabric of life for those who choose to live here, to be given respect.

I challenge you to find ways to embrace our natural assets rather than disregard them as impediments to financial success. For example, day in and day out, and as a testament to be here today, small, nature-based businesses are carving out sustainable livings in towns across Maine. Why not spend time looking at and promoting these successful models? The devastation left behind in communities across the country from manufacturing plants closing, or from overbuilt subdivisions that sit empty is evident all around us. The old paradigm of attracting large industrial giants to set up shop in Maine has proven unsuccessful. But with a new model, one in which each community simply looked to add a few more small businesses and grow existing ones, Maine would sustain itself as a whole for the long-term, and for reasons that at the end of the day, matter most.

Remarks at "Maine People and the Environment" roundtable with Governor LePage
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