

Statement by NRCM Outreach Coordinator Todd Martin

March 17, 2016

Good morning and happy St. Patrick's Day. My name is Todd Martin, I am the outreach coordinator at the Natural Resources Council of Maine, and a proud Mainer of Irish decent. NRCM is Maine's largest environmental advocacy organization with more than 16,000 members and supporters statewide. We are gathered here today on this warm, wet March morning to acknowledge the devastating impact climate change is already having on Maine's traditional outdoor winter activities, its impact on our state's recreation economy, and the need for immediate action to combat the worst impacts of climate change.

Now I know that it's technically still winter, but it sure doesn't feel like it. This past winter was the warmest on record in the Lower 48 according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This is due in large part to climate-changing emissions fueling global warming coupled with the El Nino effect. Globally, 2015 was the warmest year on record. Here in Portland, February was the second warmest February on record by one-tenth of a degree. It has been a warm and wet winter.

These warm and wet conditions led to less snow accumulation and thinner ice statewide. We also saw a later start and earlier end to snow and ice coverage. This had a devastating impact on our beloved winter recreation traditions like skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and snowmobiling, among others, that families have enjoyed for decades. Included in your press packets is a long list of cancelled events from this past winter like ice fishing derbies and ski and dog sled races. These cancellations have a major impact on our local economies. People travel far and wide to participate in these events. While they are here they stay in local hotels, eat at local restaurants, and gas up at our convenience stores. Therefore, a cancelled ski, snowmobile, or sled dog race does not just affect the participants. It affects the local towns and communities where those events are hosted. We need to act quickly to combat climate change to save our beloved Maine winter traditions.

Here to speak about the impact this warm, wet winter has had on their industries and them are municipal officials, business owners, pro athletes, outdoorsmen, and conservationists. First, let me introduce Portland Mayor Ethan Strimling.

As you have heard today, climate change is having a huge impact on our traditional outdoor winter activities and our recreation economy. To save our winters and ensure a hospitable planet for our children and our grandchildren, we need urgent action at the federal, state, and local level to combat climate change.

Thankfully, President Obama and the Environmental Protection Agency have introduced the Clean Power Plan, which sets the first ever limits on carbon pollution from domestic power plants and encourages investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Power plants are the nation's largest source of carbon pollution, generating 40% these climate-changing emissions.

The Clean Power Plan sets flexible and achievable standards to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 32 percent from 2005 levels by 2030. This will provide significant public health benefits by cleaning up our air of toxic pollution that exacerbates respiratory diseases like asthma. As the tailpipe state of the nation with the highest rate of childhood asthma in the country, the Clean Power Plan is good news for Maine. Furthermore, Maine will easily meet its carbon reduction goals set in the Clean Power Plan thanks to our participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative or RGGI. It is a win-win for Maine.

We thank Maine Senators Susan Collins and Angus King for continuing to support and defend the Clean Power Plan from attacks in Congress. They understand that we have a moral obligation to leave our children a healthy and hospitable planet with plenty of snow to play in. Thank you and we are happy to answer any questions at this time.