



# MAINE Environment

## 2017 Legislative Priorities for Maine's Environment

**MARCH 2017**

### CONNECT TO PROTECT

Be a part of Maine's most effective and exciting "social scene" of people like you who care about our land, air, waters, and wildlife— like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter and Instagram to stay up to date on the latest news and events.



Natural Resources  
Council of Maine

[nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org)

Non-Profit Org  
U.S. Postage PAID  
Augusta, ME  
Permit No. 249

Natural Resources  
Council of Maine  
3 Wade Street  
Augusta, ME 04330  
(207) 430-0106

The 2017 legislative session is well underway. New lawmakers are settling into their roles. New bills are being printed every week. Staff members here at NRCM are preparing fact sheets and testimony for some issues that will be considered for the first time this year, like reducing food waste and creating recycling programs for old carpets and mattresses. We're also focused on issues that have been around for a while, like protecting Maine from weak mining rules, and pushing for a sensible solar energy policy that will create jobs and increase energy independence.

Another thing that's new this year is the intense citizen engagement across Maine and the nation. We have never witnessed anything quite like this: thousands of Mainers are contacting elected officials, marching in the streets, speaking out at events, and following the latest developments. This is impressive, heartening, and strongly needed.

The Maine environment that we love today is the result of hard work over the past 50 years, carried out by countless organizations, individuals, lawmakers, business leaders, government officials, and others. These efforts have helped protect Maine's lakes, removed toxic pollution from our rivers, cleaned our air, promoted efficient energy, established pioneering efforts to reduce waste, conserved public land, and sustained our fish and wildlife.

To protect Maine's environment, we need to work on the state and federal level, and press to preserve our environment and create jobs in burgeoning fields like solar energy, and that help our state reduce the threat of climate disruption. Maine's environment and economy are connected, and we will continue to fight for economic prosperity that's in harmony with our natural world.

We couldn't do our work without you—thank you! If you want to help more, please contact us. The back page of this publication describes some ways you can get involved, including joining the NRCM Action Network via the Action Page on our website ([nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org)). Action Network members receive updates about legislative priorities, and learn when and how to help make a difference. Also, please visit our website throughout the legislative session for further updates.

Also, please register for our Citizen Action Day in Augusta, Tuesday, April 4, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Come to speak with your elected officials about legislation that matters to you! You can make a big impression while learning about top issues and meeting others from across the state who share your values. We'll provide a free breakfast and lunch. Your elected representatives hear plenty from industry lobbyists, and they need to hear from you, too! So please join us, and please stay engaged. As always, thank you for your support.

*-Pete Didisheim, NRCM Senior Director, Advocacy*

## Join NRCM for Citizen Action Day

**Tuesday, April 4, 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM**

There's no better time to take action! Come hear from NRCM's experts about our priority bills and get tips for speaking with your legislators. Then we'll take a short walk to the State House where you can meet with your elected officials. Light breakfast and lunch provided. Register now at [nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org).



NRCM members with  
Rep. Charlotte Warren (D-Hallowell).

Rachel Merfian

## Boost Solar Power in Maine



Solar panels in Aroostook County

A solar power revolution is underway around the world—last year in the U.S., the #1 source of new power was solar, exceeding new wind and natural gas capacity. However, Maine needs to play catch up. Maine has an excellent solar resource, but we are missing out on the jobs and clean energy it could bring because we don't tap the sun as much as we should. Solar in Maine lags far behind other states in our region. In fact, Vermont and Massachusetts each have *10 times* more installed solar per capita than Maine does! Right now, Maine doesn't have good policies in place to promote access to solar energy, create more good-paying solar jobs, and reduce pollution that threatens our air, waters, and climate. Last year, a strong bipartisan majority in the Maine House and a unanimous Maine Senate voted to pass a comprehensive solar bill that would have created more than 600 jobs and increased solar statewide for homeowners, businesses, farms, and communities. Governor LePage vetoed the bill, and the House fell just a couple of votes short of overriding his veto.

Since then, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has taken drastic action by adopting an extreme rule that would gut net metering, which is the only policy sustaining Maine's meager solar industry and making it possible for thousands of Maine homeowners and businesses to own and produce their own power. The PUC rule contains some of the most anti-solar provisions in the country, including a requirement that solar customers pay utilities for solar power they produce and consume themselves on site. Property owners would be forced to buy an additional meter and pay utilities for every kilowatt of solar electricity generated, even those that never enter the power grid, and even during blackouts, when the grid goes down. The PUC's rule will slow growth of solar in Maine by making it less economical to install, moving it even further behind surrounding states. The PUC ignored the overwhelming number of comments filed by members of the public and diverse stakeholders in opposition to the draft proposal. Now that the PUC has completed its flawed process, the Legislature must step in and craft a sensible policy that will nullify and supersede the PUC's rule before they take effect at the end of 2017.

Several legislators have introduced solar bills. We strongly support legislation developed by Rep. Seth Berry (D-Bowdoinham) that would restore net metering; eliminate barriers for community solar projects; reestablish a solar rebate program that could benefit 300 small businesses and 3,000 homeowners over the next six years, and create hundreds of new solar jobs, lower energy costs, and provide clean, local energy for Maine people.

### Support Our Work: Become a Member!

Now more than ever, your membership is vital in helping us stop attacks on our environment, coming from the State House and Washington, D.C. Join at [nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org) or use the enclosed postage paid envelope. Membership makes a huge difference!

## Protect Maine from Mining Pollution



Fish River, important for brook trout, is one of many places threatened by proposed mining rules.

Metal mining is one of the most damaging industrial activities conducted anywhere, with a worldwide legacy of environmental contamination. Maine has its own legacy of poor mining at the former Callahan mine in Brooksville. Shuttered 40 years ago, it's still causing water pollution and has already cost Maine taxpayers more than \$8 million in cleanup costs—and the biggest part of the cleanup has not even started.

Canada-based Irving Corporation, which is interested in digging a 600-acre open-pit mine at Bald Mountain in Aroostook County, started the current mining controversy five years ago. To help pave the way for this mine, Irving pushed through a bill in 2012 that directed the DEP to develop new, weaker rules for metal mining in Maine. Since that time NRCM and many others have worked hard to defeat these rules because they would not protect water quality or Maine taxpayers from mining pollution. Although the Legislature overwhelmingly defeated the weak rules in 2014 and 2015, the LePage Administration has brought those rules back—and lawmakers need to defeat them once again.

The proposed rules would expose Maine's rivers, lakes, streams, and groundwater to toxic mining pollution that could persist for hundreds of years and could cost Maine taxpayers millions of dollars. We will work to defeat the weak mining rules, and to urge lawmakers to pass a new mining bill (LD 820) introduced by Sen. Brownie Carson (D-Cumberland County) that would ban mining in, on, or under floodplains, public lands, rivers, lakes, and coastal waters; require mining companies to pay enough money up front to cover major environmental disasters so taxpayers don't have to, and that would curb groundwater pollution from mines.

## Reduce Food Waste and Help Address Hunger



Twenty-eight percent of garbage is wasted food, much of it still edible.

At a time when many Mainers do not have enough to eat, too much food is being wasted. Maine ranks first in New England in food insecurity, with one of every four Maine children not getting enough to eat on a regular basis. At the same time, about 28 percent of what is in our garbage bags is wasted food, much of it still edible, costing municipalities and businesses millions of dollars in disposal fees. Wasted food ends up in landfills, using up limited space and producing methane gas, which is 20 times more powerful in changing our climate than carbon dioxide. Although



Maine farmers, restaurants, grocery stores, and large facilities like schools and hospitals currently do a lot to direct food waste toward useful purposes, much more can be done—and these entities would like to do more. But Maine policies do not provide the right incentives or liability protections to ensure that less food is wasted, and more useable food is diverted toward composting or hunger relief programs. Other states are doing a better job than Maine is.

Representative Craig Hickman (D-Winthrop) has introduced a bill that includes policies that have been proven to work elsewhere. *An Act to Address Hunger, Support Maine Farmers, and Reduce Waste* strengthens liability protections for donors of food, and establishes additional protections for businesses that sell directly to consumers at a discount. The bill also provides a tax credit to Maine farmers who donate food to help fight hunger, and creates a commission made up of businesses, institutions, and state agencies that will develop recommendations for a statewide strategy to reduce food waste. The bill also will create guidance for homeowners, businesses, municipalities, and large institutions like K-12 schools to set up food recovery and composting programs that save money.

## Protect Maine's Public Forests



Kathy Maxsimic

Bigelow Preserve

Maine has an outstanding resource in our Public Reserved Lands, which consist of approximately 600,000 acres of forests in more than 30 separate parcels across the state, including the Bigelow Preserve, Kennebec Highlands, Tumbledown, and Cutler's Bold Coast. These Public Reserved Lands are enjoyed for their outstanding hiking, camping, birding, fishing, and hunting opportunities. For much of the past six years, however, Governor LePage has tried to drastically increase timber harvesting of our Public Reserved Lands. His administration has introduced bills repeatedly to divert timber harvesting funds away from managing these lands, and toward energy projects that have nothing to do with our forestlands. In 2015, the Legislature established a bipartisan study commission to take a look at the fund that the governor had repeatedly attempted to raid, and to develop general recommendations for sustainable management of the Public Reserved Lands.

In 2016, members of the study commission introduced legislation to implement the group's unanimous recommendations. Despite receiving a unanimous vote of support at the committee level and initial unanimous adoption by both the Maine House and Senate, Governor LePage vetoed the bill. The House was not able to override the governor's veto, so the bill died. This year Sen. Tom Saviello (R-Franklin County) has reintroduced the legislation, and we will be working to secure its passage.

The bill would ensure that our public forests continue to be managed to preserve and enhance their ecological, recreational, and economic values. The bill requires a detailed forest inventory every five years, a report on forest growth and harvest levels for each Public Reserved Land unit, and a prioritized list of recreational infrastructure needs.

## Other Important Issues

As of March 10, only about half of the 1,900 bills submitted this year were printed. NRCM staffers evaluate each bill to determine whether or not it will have an impact on Maine's environment. We will likely testify on more than 75 bills this session. These bills will be listed on the Bill Tracking page on NRCM's website, with regular updates posted through the legislative session.

**Sea-level Rise Impacts** Lawmakers are considering a bill introduced by Rep. Mick Devin (D-Newcastle) to direct the DEP to develop a regulatory standard to address sea-level rise impacts when issuing permits or licenses within a coastal zone. Rep. Devin also introduced a bill (LD 467) to provide a \$5 million bond to improve sea level monitoring and mapping in coastal areas through enhanced modelling. Rep. Lydia Blume (D-York) is sponsoring a bill (LD 540) to encourage coastal communities to consider the impacts of sea-level rise on buildings, sewage treatment facilities, roads, and other infrastructure, when drafting comprehensive plans.

**Biomass Energy** Last year lawmakers and the governor approved a huge taxpayer-funded subsidy for biomass-burning power plants. These old, highly polluting plants are so inefficient they cannot compete in energy markets. NRCM is concerned about efforts to continue subsidies for these dirty, wasteful plants, and sees opportunities for lawmakers to instead focus on modern, high-efficiency use of wood chips and pellets for heating our schools, businesses, and other institutions.

**Disposable Plastic Bags and Styrofoam Containers** Rep. Devin also introduced a bill (LD 57) to ban single-use plastic shopping bags, starting in 2020. Rep. Stanley Zeigler (D-Montville) proposed a bill (LD 103) to prohibit the sale, distribution, or use in Maine of disposable food containers made of polystyrene foam, starting in 2018. The Environment and Natural Resources Committee combined these two issues into one bill that encourages communities to adopt ordinances promoting reusable shopping bags and phasing out foam food packaging.

**Product Stewardship** Senator Tom Saviello (R-Franklin County) introduced three bills to improve recycling and product stewardship for used rechargeable batteries (LD 385), used mattresses (LD 349), and old carpets (LD 375). Other states have developed successful policies that get these items out of the waste stream.

**Arsenic in Drinking Water** Rep. Karen Vachon (R-Scarborough) is sponsoring a bill (LD 454) to reduce the health risks from naturally occurring arsenic found in well water across Maine. More than one in eight wells in Maine is contaminated with levels of arsenic that exceed federal safe drinking water standards. Arsenic is linked to cancer and learning disabilities. The bill would expand arsenic testing in private drinking water wells, and improve education and outreach regarding arsenic in drinking water.

**Expanding the Bottle Bill** Rep. Anne-Marie Mastraccio (D-Sanford) proposed a bill (LD 56) to reduce litter by adding small liquor bottles (less than 50 milliliters) to Maine's successful bottle bill. Liquor stores sold more than eight million of these mini-bottles (called "nips") last year, with projections growing to 12 million this year. A majority of members of the ENR Committee voted to approve the bill, with House and Senate votes pending.

## Tips for Citizen Engagement

Democracy is not a spectator sport: It's a contact sport, and NRCM needs your help to succeed and protect Maine's environment. A few suggestions:

**Learn the Issues** Knowledge is power. Visit [nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org) to read about the top environmental issues in play in Augusta and Washington, D.C. Voters equipped with facts can have a tremendous impact if they share their personal stories, point of view, and some facts with their elected representatives.

**Contact Lawmakers** Know your legislators. Your state representative, state senator, and members of Congress need to hear from you. Keep their contact information in or near your phone and computer. Send them letters and emails, and call them. Explain how an issue affects you, your family, Maine, and future generations.

**Meet Up** The best way to convince your legislators is to meet with them. In Maine, NRCM can help you set up a meeting where you and several friends and neighbors meet your state legislators to discuss important environmental issues. You can also meet them in Augusta on days when the Legislature is in session. For members of Congress, you can ask their staff in Maine to set up a meeting.

**Encourage Others** There's power in numbers. Now more than ever, as many people as possible need to participate in the policy-making process. Through Facebook, emails, conversations in your community, or a meeting in your home, encourage others to become engaged. Together, we can all play a part in defending the laws that protect our environment, and press forward on clean energy and enhanced stewardship of Maine's precious natural resources.



### Working for You at the State House and Beyond

Our advocacy staff works long hours throughout the session for laws that protect Maine people, places, and wildlife. Throughout the session—and every day—we're there for you!

Nick Bennett, **Staff Scientist and Healthy Waters**  
 Dylan Voorhees, **Climate and Clean Energy**  
 Eliza Donoghue, **Forests and Wildlife, Land for Maine's Future (LMF)**  
 Pete Didisheim, **Advocacy Director**  
 Cathy Johnson, **Senior Staff Attorney, Forests and Wildlife, LMF**  
 Sarah Lakeman, **Sustainable Maine**  
 Emmie Theberge (not pictured), **Federal Project Director**

## AVEDA EARTHMONTH2017

April is Earth Month, when Aveda salons across Maine will be holding cut-a-thons and other special events to raise funds in support of NRCM's work protecting Maine's clean waters. Visit our website to learn about what's happening at an Aveda salon near you:

**Acapello Salons** *Falmouth, Freeport, Saco, Scarborough, Yarmouth*  
**Amy's Salon and Spa** *Ellsworth*  
**Apollo Day Spa** *Waterville*  
**Aveda Institute of Maine** *(Capilo) Augusta*  
**Green with Envy salons** *Rockland, Camden, Augusta, Belfast*  
**Mensroom Salon & Lounge** *Portland*  
**Naviina Salon and Day Spa** *Wells*  
**Roberto Hostins Salon** *Bar Harbor*  
**Sereni Salon and Wellness Center** *Hudson, MA*

## State Lawmakers

### State Representative Contact Information:

[legislature.maine.gov/house/townlist.htm](http://legislature.maine.gov/house/townlist.htm)

### State Senator Contact Information:

[legislature.maine.gov/senate-home-page/find-your-state-senator](http://legislature.maine.gov/senate-home-page/find-your-state-senator)

## Members of Congress

### Senator Susan Collins

D.C.: (202) 224-2523 Caribou: (207) 493-7873  
 Augusta: (207) 622-8414 Lewiston: (207) 784-6969  
 Bangor: (207) 945-0417 Portland: (207) 780-3575  
 Biddeford: (207) 283-1101

Email Senator Collins: [www.collins.senate.gov/contact](http://www.collins.senate.gov/contact)

### Senator Angus King

D.C.: (202) 224-5344 Presque Isle: (207) 764-5124  
 Augusta: (207) 622-8292 Scarborough: (207) 883-1588  
 Bangor: (207) 945-8000

Email Senator King: [www.king.senate.gov/contact](http://www.king.senate.gov/contact)

### Rep. Chellie Pingree

D.C.: (202) 225-6116 Waterville: (207) 873-5713  
 Portland: (207) 774-5019

Email Congresswoman Pingree: [pingree.house.gov/contact/email-me](http://pingree.house.gov/contact/email-me)

### Rep. Bruce Poliquin

D.C.: (202) 225-6306 Lewiston: (207) 784-0768  
 Bangor: (207) 942-0583 Presque Isle: (207) 764-1968

Email Congressman Poliquin: [poliquin.house.gov/contact](http://poliquin.house.gov/contact)



## WIN THIS ELF!

Get your raffle tickets (\$40 each) by May 5th! You could win a free energy audit (by The Breathable Home or Penobscot Home Performance), books and DVDs, maybe even this ELF solar and pedal hybrid electric vehicle! Proceeds will support our clean energy work in Maine and beyond. <https://nrcm.salsalabs.org/energyraffle>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

No. of tickets: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$40 = \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed

### EDITOR

Allison Childs Wells, Senior Director, Public Affairs

### WRITERS

Pete Didisheim, Allison Childs Wells

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lisa Pohlmann

### NRCM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**President**, Russell B. Pierce, Jr.

**Vice President**, Patricia Hager

**Treasurer**, Marion Freeman

**Secretary**, Karen Herold

Phil Bartlett

Elisa Boxer

Tom Carr

Sahan Dissanayake

Jeanne Gulnick

David Kallin

Dennis King

Susan MacKenzie

Didi Manns

Bill Meserve

Sally Oldham

Tony Owens, M.D.

Jeff Pidot

Kate Rush

Sarah Short

Anne Winchester



Natural Resources  
Council of Maine

3 Wade Street,  
Augusta, ME 04330

[nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org)