



Photo by Richard Flanagan

# Benefits and Threats to Clean Water in Maine

## Benefits of Clean Water to Maine

Maine has more than 6,000 lakes, 30,000 miles of rivers and streams, and 5,000 miles of coastline. Clean, healthy waterways are vital to our day-to-day lives. They help ensure safe drinking water, suitable habitat for fish and other wildlife, and recreational opportunities that make Maine a special place to live, work, play, and visit.

**The full value of clean water to Maine is incalculable, but here are some economic indicators:**

- Maine's 6,000 lakes generate \$3.5 billion for Maine's economy annually and sustain 52,000 jobs.
- Maine has more cold water brook trout habitat than the rest of the Eastern U.S. combined. These prized waters draw anglers from around the country to Maine.
- Sebago Lake, the drinking water supply for one in six Mainers, has such outstanding water quality that it is one of only six municipal reservoirs in America not required to have its water filtered or treated.
- Maine's fishing industry, which depends on clean water, brings more than \$700 million to Maine's economy.

## Threats to Maine's Clean Water from the Trump Administration

### Weakening Water Protections

The Androscoggin, Kennebec, Penobscot, and other Maine rivers are cleaner today than they were 40 years ago, thanks to the Clean Water Act of 1972, which forced polluting industries and towns to treat waste and sewage before discharging it. The primary author of this law, Maine's U.S. Senator Edmund Muskie, acted in response to the horrible pollution he saw growing up along the Androscoggin River in Rumford, Maine. Now, these basic safeguards are under attack.

#### Weakening/Attacking the Environmental Protection Agency

Trump's EPA budget proposes the elimination of non-point source pollution grants, which states like Maine depend on to reduce polluted runoff that includes pesticides, fertilizers, and other nutrients. This type of runoff represents the largest pollution threat to Maine's lakes. Trump's EPA budget also proposes deep cuts to state grants for water monitoring, assessment, and management.

#### Repealing the Clean Water Rule

Scott Pruitt's EPA is leading an attack on the Clean Water Rule, which extends Clean Water Act protections to smaller waterways, tributaries, and wetlands. One-third of Mainers get their drinking water from sources that rely on small streams protected by the Clean Water Rule.

#### Repealing the Stream Water Protection Rule

Led by the Trump Administration, Congress repealed a rule that had prevented mining companies from dumping debris into local streams.

#### Postponing limits on toxic discharge from power plants into public waterways

Utility and fossil fuel industry groups opposed a rule that limits the amount of toxic metals like arsenic, lead, and mercury that power plants could release into public waterways. Pruitt's EPA has postponed the rule until 2020.

## Abandoning Action to Address Climate Change

Climate change is warming Maine's waters. For our lakes and streams this means more algae blooms, which can harm Mainers' health and property values, too. Warmer waters also mean less habitat for cold water fish, like Maine's treasured brook trout and lobster.

### Repealing the Clean Power Plan

Trump's EPA has proposed to repeal the Clean Power Plan, the United States' signature climate policy, which set protective limits on carbon emissions from existing coal- and gas-fired power plants.

### Stopping EPA efforts to address climate change

EPA's work to understand and reduce the risks of climate change is set to be eliminated under Trump's proposed EPA budget. Current EPA climate programs target the largest sources of climate-changing carbon pollution, promote voluntary reduction strategies, support research and data gathering, provide technical assistance and public education, and promote international activities to reduce climate-changing pollution around the world.

### Withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement

Trump plans to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement, under which the United States had pledged to cut emissions by 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. The Trump Administration has formally notified the United Nations of its intent to withdraw, but it cannot complete the process until late 2020.



## Increased Mercury and Other Air Pollution

The Maine Bureau of Health warns people to limit eating fish from all of Maine's inland waters due to mercury contamination, which primarily comes from out-of-state air pollution. Maine depends on strong federal laws and the Environmental Protection Agency to limit pollution coming from other states.

### Delaying multiple rules that reduce airborne mercury and other air pollution from power plants

By "reviewing" a number of air pollution rules, Trump's EPA is delaying setting limits to reduce the amount of mercury and other air pollutants power plants can emit. Mercury is a neurotoxin found in Maine's lakes, rivers, fish, and wildlife, primarily due to power plant pollution from other states.

### Reopening a review of fuel-efficiency standards for cars and trucks

Trump's EPA and Department of Transportation are reopening a review of fuel-efficiency standards for new cars and trucks, to which automakers have previously agreed. Rolling back these standards would create more air pollution for Maine, driving climate change and air pollution that lands in our waterways.

**NRCM is working tirelessly to defend these important federal clean water safeguards that protect Maine. We need your help. Please contact Senators Collins and King today.**

#### Sources:

- NRCM. "Damaging Maine: The Impacts of Proposed Cuts to the EPA Budget." April 2017. <[www.nrcm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2017EPAreportDamagingMaine.pdf](http://www.nrcm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2017EPAreportDamagingMaine.pdf)>
- New York Times. "52 Environmental Rules on the Way Out Under Trump." October 6, 2017. <[www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/05/climate/trump-environment-rules-reversed.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/05/climate/trump-environment-rules-reversed.html)>

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