



# MAINE Environment

## 2018 Legislative Priorities for Maine's Environment

### Follow Our Priority Legislation

*NRCM reviews every bill under consideration at the State House to determine which ones need our support and which we must oppose, based on their potential impact on Maine's environment.*

*Our Bill Tracking webpage provides updates on the priority bills that we are following during the 2018 legislative session.*

**[www.nrcm.org/projects/state-house/legislative-bill-tracking/](http://www.nrcm.org/projects/state-house/legislative-bill-tracking/)**

David Preston

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**Natural Resources Council of Maine**  
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The 2018 legislative session is well underway. This is the “short session” of the Legislature, which means the pace is fast as lawmakers attempt to adjourn by the end of April. It is also an election year for every House and Senate seat, and it is Governor Paul LePage’s final year in office, adding an extra layer of partisanship and drama to the mix.

NRCM staff members are tracking more than 40 bills this year, with top attention focused on six bills that comprise the common agenda of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC), a group of 34 organizations that come together each year around a set of priority bills. With our EPC partners, we announced our agenda in mid-January at a briefing and news conference at the State House.

One of our top priorities this year, as in the past two years, is to pass a solar energy bill. This year’s legislation would block the worst provision of an anti-solar rule adopted by Maine’s Public Utilities Commission (PUC). The PUC is poised to impose a radical and unfair new fee on solar customers, charging them for power they generate and use on site—electricity that never touches the electrical grid. The bill also would help spur larger community solar projects, allowing up to 50 people per project to participate.

We also strongly support passage of a \$50 million clean water bond proposed by Maine’s Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Maine has made significant progress over the past 20 years in treating and cleaning up wastewater before it flows into our rivers and coastal waters, but we still have a long way to go. This bond would improve water quality in Maine waters and leverage \$71 million in additional funds. Right now there is a \$1 billion funding backlog for water infrastructure, which affects 120 Maine towns.

Working closely with legislators, we are aiming to pass a bill focused on reducing food waste in Maine. Carried over from last year, the pending bill likely will be amended to focus primarily on state agencies and to reduce the estimated 75,000 pounds of food waste produced each year in Maine schools.

As in prior years, NRCM staff members are devoting considerable attention to the task of defeating “rollbacks”—bills that would move Maine in the wrong direction on the environment and clean energy. Since January 2011, when Governor LePage entered office, with your help, NRCM has helped defeat more than 100 rollback bills.

This year, the governor supports a bill that would tax owners of electric and hybrid vehicles, penalizing them for reducing their dependence on fossil fuels, and thus reducing gas tax payments. Hence, the new tax. We will work to defeat that bill and other proposed rollbacks, including bills to block upstream passage of alewives, weaken Maine’s Bottle Bill, subsidize old and inefficient biomass plants, and weaken Maine’s renewable energy portfolio standard.

We greatly appreciate your help with establishing state policies that protect our environment. We couldn’t do our work without you. If you are interested in becoming more involved than you’ve been in the past, please contact us. We are here to help. The back page of this publication describes some ways you can get involved. If you have not already done so, please join the NRCM Action Network at the Take Action Page on our website ([nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org)). As a member of the Action Network, you’ll receive updates about progress on legislative priorities, and learn when and how you can help make a difference. As always, please be sure to visit our website throughout the legislative session for further updates. Thank you again for all you do to help protect Maine’s environment! —Pete Didisheim, NRCM Senior Director, Advocacy



### Join NRCM's online Action Network

Sign up to receive e-updates on issues that matter to you as they happen. We'll also share ways that you can take action. Sign up today!

[www.nrcm.org/about/nrcm-action-network/](http://www.nrcm.org/about/nrcm-action-network/)



Jym St. Pierre

NRCM staff members joined colleagues in Maine’s Environmental Priorities Coalition on January 25 to host a breakfast for state lawmakers. The event is an opportunity to educate them about the EPC’s focus areas for the current legislative session. (Cathy Johnson, third row, left; Dylan Voorhees, top row, left; Nick Bennett, second from top, right; Ryan Parker, in front of Nick; Lisa Pohlmann, in front of Ryan; Pete Didisheim, in front of Lisa)



## Boost Solar Power in Maine

Once again, Mainers from throughout the state are trying to convince the Legislature to pass a bill to help Maine get out of last place in solar energy installations in New England. A solar power revolution is underway around the world, and Maine is barely participating. 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: Vermont and Massachusetts each have 10 times more installed solar per capita than we have here Maine!

For the past two years, a strong bipartisan majority in the House and Senate have passed constructive solar bills, only to see those initiatives defeated by Governor LePage. In 2016 and 2017, lawmakers fell just a few votes short of the two-thirds needed to override the governor's vetoes.

This year's legislation (LD 1444) would strike down the worst provision of a Public Utilities Commission (PUC) rule that is slated to begin on May 1. LD 1444 also would allow as many as 50 people to participate in a community solar project by lifting the current nine-person limit.

Under the PUC's anti-solar rule, utilities would charge solar customers for power they produce and consume themselves on site. **Mainers who own solar arrays would be forced to install an additional meter and pay utilities for every kilowatt of solar electricity generated,** even when it never enters the power grid, and even during blackouts, when the grid goes down.

Central Maine Power (CMP) would raise electricity rates for all Mainers by millions of dollars to cover its cost for installing the systems and equipment required for this new, unfair tax. The additional profits made by the company, which is a monopoly utility, would go primarily to its shareholders overseas.

We are extremely concerned that the PUC is putting utility earnings ahead of hard-working Maine people. The PUC has failed to consider these costs and is stepping on the rights of Mainers to generate their own power. This anti-solar provision needs to be blocked, and we need to increase the number of people who can participate in community solar projects.

**SUPPORT LD 1444 for solar energy.**



Kennebec River, by Emmie Theberge

## Protect Maine Waters

Maine's economy depends on clean water. Our lakes generate more than \$3.5 billion in economic activity annually and help sustain 52,000 jobs. More than 650,000 Mainers depend on clean lakes for their drinking water, and clean water is essential for Maine's fishing and tourism industries—two of Maine's largest economic sectors.

Maine has come a long way in the last 50 years in cleaning up our inland and coastal waters. Through strong, bipartisan policies and investments, we have drastically reduced direct discharges of pollution to rivers, lakes, streams, and the ocean. But we still have plenty of work to do. That's why NRCM strongly supports a \$50 million clean water bond that would help replace aging wastewater infrastructure that allows far too much water pollution to enter Maine's waters.

Maine communities continue to rely on outdated wastewater systems that, in some cases, have century-old pipes. In 2016, 25 communities discharged more than 470 million gallons of untreated stormwater and sewage into our waters because of overwhelmed sewer overflows. This pollution went into Casco Bay and Frenchman Bay, and into the Androscoggin, Kennebec, Machias, St. Croix, and Saco Rivers.

Some communities have drastically reduced, or even eliminated, the discharge of untreated sewage during storm events. But Maine still has a \$1 billion backlog of known wastewater upgrade projects. These projects need steady attention and investment, yet Maine has not provided funding for such projects since 2010.

LD 1510 would provide a \$50 million water bond, which would leverage an additional \$71 million in state and federal funds, and support or sustain more than 2,100 jobs. We also support a \$5 million bond proposal (LD 178) to protect lakes, streams, and coastal waters from polluting runoff from poorly designed camp roads. This bond would leverage \$10 million in additional funding and create jobs, too.

**SUPPORT LD 1510 and LD 178 for clean water.**



## Working for You at the State House and Beyond

Advocacy staff at the Natural Resources Council of Maine work long hours throughout the session for laws that protect Maine people, places, and wildlife—and against attempts to weaken protections. Meet our State House advocates:

Nick Bennett, **Staff Scientist and Healthy Waters Project Director**

Sarah Lakeman, **Sustainable Maine Project Director**

Pete Didisheim, **Senior Director of Advocacy**

Sue Ely, **Climate and Clean Energy Policy Advocate and Staff Attorney**

Dylan Voorhees, **Climate and Clean Energy Project Director**

Cathy Johnson, **Forests and Wildlife Project Director and Senior Staff Attorney**

Ryan Parker, **Sustainable Maine Policy Advocate**



## Reduce Food Waste and Help Address Hunger

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 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.

Other states are doing a better job than Maine is, and we would like to change that. Last year, Representative Craig Hickman (D-Winthrop) introduced a bill that proposed many changes to Maine law as a way to help address the food waste problem in Maine. An “Act to Address Hunger, Support Maine Farmers, and Reduce Waste” was carried over to 2018 to allow lawmakers more time to consider the provisions.

As an initial step this year, members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee are interested in focusing on food waste reduction by state agencies and in schools. If these measures are enacted, there appears to be interest in considering further measures next year, including legislation that would help farmers harvest more of the food that is left on their fields.

**SUPPORT LD 1534 to reduce food waste.**

### NRCM: Teaming with You on Federal Issues

Threats from the Trump Administration and Congress are coming fast and often without warning. Our Federal Project team will keep you informed and ready for action. Find the latest federal threats to Maine’s land, air, waters, and wildlife at the Washington Watch section on our website:

[www.nrcm.org/projects/federal/](http://www.nrcm.org/projects/federal/)



**NRCM Federal Project Staff:** Kristin Jackson, Federal Outreach Coordinator (left) and Emmie Theberge, Federal Project Director

## Other Important Issues

We are closely tracking 40 bills this session; below are a few more of them. For additional information, visit NRCM’s Bill Tracking page at [nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org), where we post regular updates throughout the legislative session.



**Climate Action** NRCM strongly supports a bill (LD 1657) to continue Maine’s involvement in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) through 2030, with stronger limits to reduce carbon pollution from power plants. Maine is one of nine states currently in RGGI, a successful regional program that generates funding for energy efficiency through the sale of carbon pollution credits. So far, Maine has used \$54 million in RGGI funds to leverage \$88 million in private investment to achieve \$277 million in energy savings for Mainers.



**Bottle Bill Rollback** Opponents of Maine’s successful beverage container redemption law (the “Bottle Bill”) just won’t give up. Every year, they try to weaken this landmark and extremely popular law. This year, the threat comes from a bill (LD 1703) that would reduce the deposit on wine and spirits containers from 15¢ to “not more than 5¢”—which means the deposit for such containers could be reduced to zero cents and removed from the program entirely. This would be the first time in the U.S. that a deposit charge for a recyclable container was reduced. If cut to 5¢, the return rate for these containers could drop by 50 percent, causing a wide range of problems.



Bangor Daily News

**Biomass Energy** In 2016, lawmakers and the governor approved a \$13.4 million taxpayer-funded subsidy for biomass-burning power plants. These old, highly polluting plants are so inefficient they cannot compete in energy markets. NRCM is working to defeat several bills that would provide even more subsidies. Governor LePage testified against two bills that he called “corporate welfare at the worst.” We agree.



**Electric Vehicle Tax** The governor has proposed a bill to charge an extra tax for owners of electric and hybrid vehicles, although this tax would contribute next to nothing to help fund Maine roads. The bill appears to be part of a national effort supported by the oil industry, including the Koch Brothers and American Legislative Exchange Council, to punish people who reduce their fossil-fuel use. Ten states have enacted fees on electric vehicle owners (including Wyoming, Missouri, North Carolina, and Georgia). NRCM will work hard to make sure that Maine never joins that list.



Alewives, by David Small

**Fish Passage** For decades, Maine’s Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has been blocking native sea-run fish from reaching Sheepscot Pond, in Palermo, based on some people’s mistaken belief that alewives (river herring) and eels might harm freshwater game fish. We oppose a bill (LD 1667) that would put this flawed policy, based on false information, into law. We support allowing alewives into Sheepscot Pond to help rebuild populations of this species, which Maine scientists have determined are critical for restoring healthy ocean fisheries.



**Renewable Energy Policy** Maine’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) is designed to promote the development of new, local, renewable energy resources that stimulate jobs, increase tax revenues, and strengthen Maine’s economy with low-polluting energy sources. But this year, we face a bill (LD 1699) that would allow older, existing renewable resources to be included in the RPS, thereby suppressing investment in new renewable generation. We’re working to defeat this bill.

# Tips for Citizen Engagement

Democracy is not a spectator sport: It's a contact sport, and we want to encourage you to participate! Every action can help make a difference, from sending an email or making a phone call to your elected officials to attending a meeting with your legislators, writing a letter-to-the-editor, or testifying at a hearing. We welcome your help to protect Maine's environment! Here are a few suggestions:

**Learn the issues** Visit NRCM's website [www.nrcm.org/projects/state-house/legislative-bill-tracking/](http://www.nrcm.org/projects/state-house/legislative-bill-tracking/) to learn more about the top environmental issues being considered in Augusta and Washington, D.C. Develop your position on the issues and stay informed. Knowledge is power. Facts matter. Personal stories make your point. Equipped with this information, you can make a big difference by sharing your view with your elected representatives in government.

**Contact lawmakers** Know who your state representative and senator are. Write down the contact information for all of your elected representatives, including members of Congress, some place handy to your phone or computer. Contact them with letters, emails, and phone calls. They are supposed to work for you; to do so they need to hear from you. Make sure you explain how the issue of concern affects you, your family, Maine, and future generations.

**Host or attend a meeting** There's no better way to influence your legislator than by meeting with him or her. With state legislators, you can set up a meeting near your home, where you can get together with friends and neighbors to discuss important issues. You can also come to Augusta to meet with your state representatives on days when the Legislature is in session. For members of Congress, you can request a meeting with their in-state staff.

**Encourage others to engage** There's power in numbers. Now more than ever, we need as many people as possible to help protect the nature of Maine. 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 Maine's environment, and press forward for clean energy and better stewardship of our precious natural resources.

## RAFFLE!

### Win a Stay at Mt. Chase Lodge in Maine's Spectacular North Woods



You could win a two-night stay for two near Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument! This dream vacation includes two nights, two dinners, two breakfasts, and a picnic lunch, courtesy of beautiful Mt. Chase Lodge, located near Maine's new National Monument. Bring your own bikes or skis and the rest will be provided,

including maps and expert advice. Tickets are \$40 each—get yours quickly, only 300 will be sold. The winner of the grand prize (valued at \$450) will choose from several dates throughout 2018. The second place winner will receive original artwork of the Allagash River Waterway (valued at \$750) by Nancy Keenan Barron. Three runner-up prizes include a book of Neil Welliver prints, a Tom Hennessey print of Katahdin Country, and a DD Tyler wildlife print. All proceeds from this raffle will be used to support NRCM's work to protect our treasured North Woods. Tear off and return the slip below by Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018, for the May 11<sup>th</sup> drawing, or purchase your raffle ticket online: [www.nrcm.org](http://www.nrcm.org).

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

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

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

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

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

*Per IRS regulations, raffles are not tax-deductible.*

# Important Contact Information

## State Lawmakers

### State Representative Contact Information:

<http://legislature.maine.gov/house/townlist.htm>

### State Senator Contact Information:

<http://legislature.maine.gov/senate-home-page/find-your-state-senator>

## Members of Congress

### Senator Susan Collins

Washington, DC: (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	

### Senator Angus King

Washington, DC: (202) 224-5344	Presque Isle: (207) 764-5124
Augusta: (207) 622-8292	Scarborough: (207) 883-1588
Bangor: (207) 945-8000	

### Rep. Chellie Pingree

Washington, DC: (202) 225-6116	Waterville: (207) 873-5713
Portland: (207) 774-5019	

### Rep. Bruce Poliquin

Washington, DC: (202) 225-6306	Lewiston: (207) 784-0768
Bangor: (207) 942-0583	Presque Isle: (207) 764-1968

**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.

## SUPPORT OUR WORK: BECOME A MEMBER!

Attacks on our environment come from all directions, at the state and federal level. Your support is needed more today than ever. Help leave a legacy of clean air and waters, vibrant forests, and healthy wildlife populations by donating in support of our work. Your gift today will go a long way!

[www.nrcm.org/donate/membership/](http://www.nrcm.org/donate/membership/)



We've just launched our "Maine's Environment: Hot News Now" podcast to bring you the latest on our high-priority environmental issues, direct from NRCM staff. Episode 1 features Senior Advocacy Director Pete Didisheim providing the scoop on actions at the State House, while Federal Project Outreach Coordinator Kristin Jackson shares what's happening with federal challenges that could have an impact on Maine.

Tune in at [www.nrcm.org/our-maine/podcast/](http://www.nrcm.org/our-maine/podcast/)

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