



J.Berk/NRCM

MAINE Environment

2019 Legislative Priorities: Getting Back on Track

Bookmark Our Bill Tracking Webpage

Follow us as we follow our priority bills through the legislative process. Our bill tracking page keeps you updated and ready for action.

www.nrcm.org/projects/state-house/legislative-bill-tracking/

David Preston

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage PAID
Portland, ME
Permit No. 454

What a difference a year makes. The 2019 legislative session is well underway, and already we are seeing progress on bills addressing plastic pollution, land conservation, clean energy, and climate action that have been stalled for years. In many ways, 2019 is a whole new ballgame for those of us working to protect Maine’s environment. It’s an exciting time to get Maine back on track as an environmental leader.

Of particular note, fewer bills have been introduced this year than over the past eight years to rollback safeguards. This is great news and suggests that lawmakers understand that Maine people do not support efforts to weaken the laws that protect our waters, air, land, wildlife, and climate.

We have many priorities this year. We are particularly excited about the opportunity to make up for lost time on bills that promote local clean energy projects and the jobs they support. Lawmakers already have passed a bill (LD 91) to overturn the anti-solar “gross metering” rules that imposed a penalty for those who generate and use solar power within their home. Unlike the previous governor, who vetoed a similar bill twice, Governor Mills will sign the gross metering repeal. After years of inaction on policies to address the threat of climate change, we are confident that the Legislature will enact one or more climate bills.

The Land for Maine’s Future (LMF) program is out of money, but this year looks very promising for passage of a bond package with funding for LMF projects and State Park infrastructure. Many lawmakers have introduced bills to address various forms of plastic pollution, from polystyrene food packaging to single-use plastic bags, and several such bills could be adopted. We also will be working to secure passage of a bill that increases protections for more than 400 miles of Maine’s rivers and streams, and we hope to pass bills that protect lake water quality.

To improve influence at the State House, we are working closely with the 34 organizations that participate in Maine’s Environmental Priorities Coalition, and we’re building coalitions with business owners, young leaders, municipal officials, policy experts, Maine people statewide, and you—our members and supporters. You provide us with the inspiration and people power that help us win.

We greatly appreciate your help, support, and participation in our work. If you are interested in becoming more involved in the policy process than you have been in the past, please contact us. We are here to help. The back page of this publication describes a variety of ways you can get involved. If you have not already done so, please join the NRCM Action Network at our website (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. Also, please visit our Facebook page and website throughout the legislative session for further updates.

As always, thank you for your support. —Pete Didisheim, NRCM Senior Director, Advocacy

Take Action for Maine’s Environment

Join NRCM’s online Action Network to receive e-updates on issues you care about and to learn how and when you can take action.

www.nrcm.org/take-action/nrcm-action-network/

Subscribe to Our Podcast

NRCM’s podcast, “Maine Environment: Frontline Voices” covers the most pressing issues facing our state’s land, air, waters, and wildlife—and our Maine way of life. Host Carly Peruccio talks with NRCM experts, state agency heads, elected officials, and others on the frontlines working to protect the nature of Maine. Available on iTunes, Google Play, and Spotify.



CJ Johnson

NRCM is a member of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC), a group of more than 30 diverse organizations working together during the legislative session to protect Maine’s environment. In January, the EPC hosted a breakfast at the State House as an opportunity for State Legislators to learn about our priority work. Staff from all five of NRCM’s advocacy project areas attended.



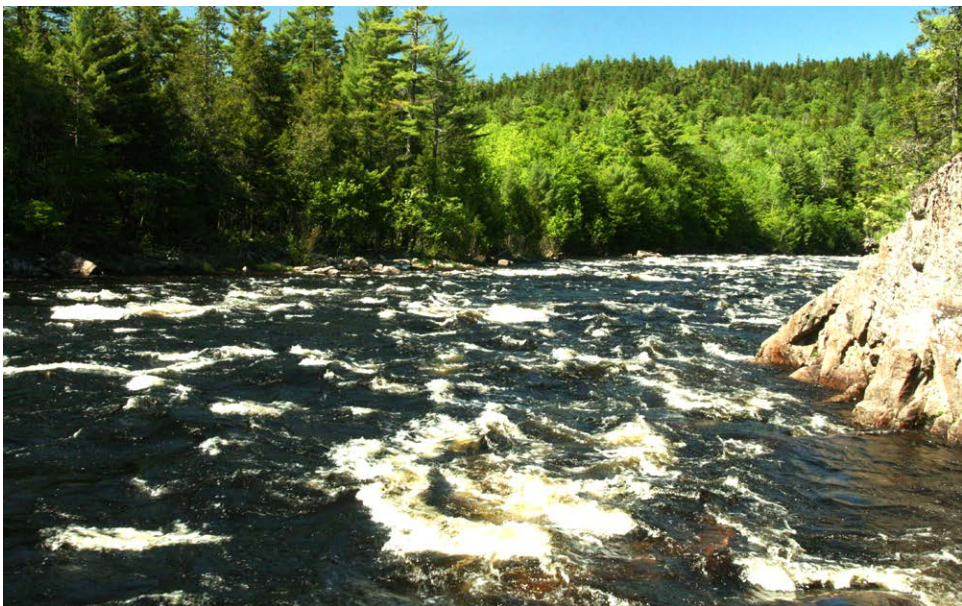
J. Berk/NRCM

Boosting Solar Energy

Lawmakers already have taken an important initial step on solar energy—enacting a bill (LD 91) to overturn the anti-solar “gross metering” rule the Public Utilities Commission implemented to replace net metering. Now our eyes are set on a more comprehensive approach to boosting solar and clean energy jobs that will benefit Mainers in every corner of the state.

Lawmakers will consider a bold pro-solar bill titled *An Act to Benefit Consumers, Businesses, and Communities through Expanded Renewable Energy*. Introduced by Senator Dana Dow (R-Lincoln), the bill will facilitate at least 300 megawatts of new solar projects for communities, municipalities, and businesses; increase community solar projects by raising the current 10-person limit to 200; provide businesses and municipalities the ability to overcome barriers to solar investment; and use competitive markets to capture low-cost opportunities for deploying solar systems.

Importantly, it will also increase access to community solar by low- and moderate-income families, with specific targets for involvement in these multi-party projects.



Penobscot River by MissingLynn/NRCM

Protecting Maine's Rivers

For the first time since 2009, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is proposing a package of increased protections for important segments of Maine's rivers and streams. According to state and federal law, DEP is supposed to submit such recommendations every three years, but that has not happened.

This year's “river reclassification” will put us back on track by increasing safeguards on more than 400 miles of waterways, including important stretches of the Penobscot River, Fish Stream, and tributaries to Webb Lake. The Penobscot River upgrades are particularly significant to the Penobscot Indian Nation, and they will help protect the investment (about \$60 million in public and private funds) in the highly successful Penobscot River Restoration Project.

Last fall, Maine's Board of Environmental Protection approved a river reclassification package and submitted it to the Legislature. It will come forward as an agency bill sponsored by the DEP. Passage of river classification upgrades like these are vital for locking into place water quality improvements to help guard against backsliding. This mechanism is a central tenet of the federal Clean Water Act, helping ensure continued progress toward the goals of eliminating the discharge of pollutants into the nation's waters and achieving water quality levels that are fishable and swimmable.



NRCM file

Reducing Plastic Pollution

Lawmakers have introduced nearly a dozen bills to tackle single-use plastics—with most of the attention so far on bills to ban polystyrene foam food packaging and plastic shopping bags. Legislation on both of these pollution sources has failed to gain traction at the State House in prior years, but this year may be very different.

Mainers use and dispose of about 256,868,000 polystyrene foam cups, plates, bowls, platters, and trays each year—and each piece becomes waste or litter after only a single use. To address this problem, Rep. Paige Ziegler (D-Montville) introduced *An Act To Prohibit the Use of Certain Disposable Food Service Containers* (LD 289), which, beginning January 1, 2020, would prohibit the sale or distribution of disposable food service containers made from polystyrene foam.

Globally, about one million plastic shopping bags are distributed per minute and only 1 percent are recycled. Since 2014, 21 Maine towns, home to about 20 percent of the state's population, have passed ordinances to limit single-use plastic shopping bags. Rep. Holly Stover (D-Boothbay) has introduced a bill that would ban plastic carry-out bags statewide. *An Act To Eliminate the Use of Single-use Plastic Bags* would become effective April 22, 2020, and would further require most retail stores to charge a fee of no less than five cents for recyclable paper bags, except for purchases using Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards or vouchers from supplemental nutrition programs.



Ogunquit by Beth Comeau

Acting on Climate Change

Climate change poses serious risks to our economy, environment, and quality of life, yet we are woefully behind in taking the actions necessary to address our climate crisis. Maine's 2004 Climate Action Plan is outdated, even as the Gulf of Maine and our inland lakes are warming rapidly, we're experiencing frequent extreme weather events, sea-level rise is eroding our coastline, and scientists warn that we face an urgent need to act.

This year lawmakers will consider a crucial bipartisan bill (LD 797) introduced by Representative Ralph Tucker (D-Brunswick) and Senator Robert Foley (R-York) to get Maine back on track. *An Act to Limit Greenhouse Gas Pollution and Effectively Use Maine's Natural Resources* will strengthen Maine's commitment to climate action by enacting a long-term goal of reducing carbon pollution 80 percent by 2050. The bill requires the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to develop a new comprehensive plan to achieve that goal. It will also set interim goals, through an inclusive broad-based planning process. The bill recognizes and encourages natural solutions such as farming and forestry practices that help reduce carbon pollution.



Birch Point State Park by Allison Wells

Investing in Land Conservation and State Parks

The time has arrived to get land conservation in Maine back on track. Maine people and visitors love our protected lands, which provide opportunities for inspiration, outdoor recreation, water access, and wildlife watching. Land conservation helps Maine's farming, fishing, and forestry sectors, through conservation easements and working waterfront protection. But the highly popular Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program has not received any new funding since 2012—and it is out of money.

Over the past year, a diverse stakeholder group, under the auspices of the Land Conservation Task Force, analyzed land conservation efforts in Maine, and future needs. The group issued an excellent final report, with recommendations that provide a framework for moving forward.

Senator Cathy Breen (D-Cumberland), a Task Force member, has introduced a bill (LD 911) to provide \$75 million in new bond funding for LMF and \$20 million for infrastructure in Maine's State Parks—which face a \$50 million backlog in needed investments.

If this bond is passed by the Legislature, it would appear on the November 2019 ballot. Mainers have consistently voted by strong margins for LMF bonds in the past, so we are confident that they would do so again if given the chance.



Tune in to our three-part podcast featuring members of the stakeholder group as they share the insider view on why funding for LMF and our State Parks is so important:

www.nrcm.org/our-maine/maine-environment-frontline-voices-podcast/



Working for You at the State House and Beyond

When it comes to our priority legislation, NRCM's advocacy staff members are right there at the State House working for you!

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**

Learn more about them at www.nrcm.org/contact/staff-directory/



Moosehead Lake by J. Monkman/NRCM

Protecting the North Woods from Poorly Sited Development

Maine's 10.4 million acres of North Woods in the so-called Unorganized Territories (UT) are a unique and diminishing resource. Maintaining the integrity of this highly intact landscape of forests, mountains, streams, and wildlife is an ongoing challenge, and a top priority for NRCM. Towns near the UT face the prospect of losing new and existing businesses, and the property taxes they represent, if development is allowed to sprawl outward.

To support regional planning in the North Woods, Sen. Brownie Carson (D-Cumberland) has introduced *An Act to Amend the Land Use Planning Commission and Enhance the Economic Vitality of Neighboring Communities*. The bill requires an alternatives analysis for development proposals in the UT to assess whether alternative sites for development are suitable and available within towns, requires the State to conduct a land-use inventory, and increases the number of commissioners on the Land Use Planning Commission that would be appointed by the governor from one to four.



Beth Comeau

Requiring Climate Analysis for CMP Corridor

Central Maine Power (CMP) has made unsubstantiated claims that its highly controversial electricity corridor project that would bring electricity from Canada to Massachusetts would provide benefits for the climate. The 145-mile transmission corridor, which faces growing local opposition, would have major impacts on the forests and communities of Western Maine.

Maine people deserve to know all of the evidence and facts about CMP's corridor project, especially whether or not it would actually result in real greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Senator Brownie Carson (D-Cumberland) has introduced a bill (LD 640) that would require the DEP to conduct an independent investigation of CMP's claims that the project would reduce greenhouse gas emissions.




Tune in to our podcast, Episode 10, in which NRCM Clean Energy Staff Attorney Sue Ely walks you through our concerns, shares updates about the review process, and lets you know how to get involved: soundcloud.com/nrcmenvironment/10-cmp-transmission-line-proposal-bad-for-maine

Tips for Citizen Engagement

Democracy is a contact sport, and the more people who participate in the process, the better. Here are some suggestions—we welcome your help:

- 1 Learn the issues.** Visit NRCM's website 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. Voters equipped with information can make a big difference by sharing that information and point of view with their elected representatives in government.
- 2 Contact lawmakers.** Make sure you know who your state representative and senator are. Write down the contact information for all of your elected representatives, including members of Congress, on a piece of paper that can be posted on or near your phone, computer, or refrigerator. Then contact them, with letters, emails, and phone calls. They need to hear from you. Make sure you explain how the issue of concern affects you, your family, Maine, and future generations.
- 3 Host or attend a meeting.** There's no better way to influence your legislator than to meet with him or her. You can set up an in-district meeting with state legislators where you and several friends and neighbors meet to discuss issues of importance. 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.
- 4 Encourage others to engage.** There's power in numbers. Now more than ever, we need as many people as possible 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 Maine's environment, and press forward for clean energy and enhanced stewardship of Maine's precious natural resources.



Count on our Federal Project Team to keep you informed and ready for action in response to threats to Maine's environment resulting from harmful proposals at the federal level.

www.nrcm.org/projects/federal

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

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. Jared Golden

Washington, DC: (202) 225-6306	Lewiston: (207) 241-6767
Caribou: (207) 492-6009	

Other Important Issues

Lawmakers introduced more than 2,000 bill titles this year. As of March 15, about 1,200 had been printed. NRCM staff members evaluate each bill as it is released, and we will be closely tracking close to 200 bills this session. Below are a few additional bills that we're following. Those and many others will be listed on NRCM's Bill Tracking page on our website, with regular updates posted through the legislative session.



Allison Wells

Protect Maine Lakes Rep. Jessica Fay (D-Raymond) has proposed a bill (LD 216), already heading toward enactment, that will protect Maine lakes by requiring septic system inspections for property sales within the shoreland area statewide. Presently, such inspections are only required along the coast. Rep. Dennis Keschl (R-Belgrade) has proposed a bill (LD 959) that would provide \$100,000 in funding to both the Lake Smart program which certifies lakefront property owners that have implemented measures to reduce runoff pollution, and the Lake Stewards program that supports a statewide network of volunteer lake water quality monitors.

Require More Renewable Energy Sen. Eloise Vitelli (D-Sagadahoc) has introduced a bill to increase the amount of renewable energy that electricity companies would have to provide as a portion of their electricity sales to Maine ratepayers. Currently, Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) requires that 30 percent of electricity sold in Maine come from existing renewable energy sources, and 10 percent come from new and refurbished renewables. Senator Vitelli's *An Act To Reform Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard* would increase the current 10 percent requirement to 50 percent by 2030, for a total of 80 percent. The bill also includes provisions for large-scale renewable energy projects that will benefit electricity consumers and make it easier to reach this goal.

Increase Renewable Energy for Towns and Schools Sen. Louis Luchini (D-Hancock) has proposed a \$10 million bond fund (LD 1119) that would provide grants to towns and schools for investments in solar energy, heat pumps, and high-efficiency wood heat systems.

Prepare for Sea-level Rise Rep. Lydia Blume (D-York) has introduced a bill (LD 563) to encourage coastal communities to include an analysis of the potential effects of sea-level rise within their comprehensive land use plans. Similar bills have been adopted in the past few years, but defeated by vetoes by the former governor.



Promote Electric Vehicles Rep. Henry Ingwersen (D-Arundel) is sponsoring LD 614 to establish an incentive program at Efficiency Maine to encourage the purchase of new or used electric vehicles. Rep. Tina Riley (D-Jay) has also submitted a bill entitled *An Act to Encourage Beneficial Electrification* to launch utility-oriented pilot programs for smart car charging, public education, and other elements that advance electrification of vehicles.

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.

EDITOR / Allison Childs Wells, Senior Director, Public Affairs
DESIGN / brightredbicycle design
CONTRIBUTORS / Pete Didisheim and Allison Childs Wells
BANNER IMAGE / State House from Howard Hill, by J.Berk/NRCM
CEO / Lisa Pohlmann
NRCM BOARD OF DIRECTORS /
President, Patricia Hager
Vice President, Maria Gallace
Treasurer, Bill Meserve
Secretary, Karen Herold

Emily Beck	Dennis King	Tony Owens, MD	Stephanie Smith
Tom Carr	Buzz Lamb	Russell B. Pierce, Jr.	Anne Winchester
Charles Culbertson	Peter Millard	Liz Rettenmaier	Bonnie Wood
Marcia Harrington	Sally Oldham	Sarah Short	
David Kallin	Kathryn Olmstead	Edward Simmons	

Natural Resources Council of Maine
 3 Wade Street,
 Augusta, ME 04330
 (207) 622-3101
 (800) 287-2345
nrcm.org