

WINTER 2020



A. Wells/NRCM

MAINE Environment

2020 Legislative Priorities

Stay Up to Date on Priority Legislation



Bookmark our [Bill Tracking](#) page to follow our priority legislation.

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

The Legislature is in high gear with hearings, work sessions, briefings, and initial votes. This is the short session, so lawmakers have fewer bills to address than last year, when they enacted a record number of new laws to protect Maine's environment. Between now and mid-April, the Legislature will make important decisions that could affect land conservation, clean water, recycling programs, and more. Among the pending bills are several that are high priorities for NRCM.

NRCM staff are working with a broad, bipartisan coalition of lawmakers, organizations, businesses, and community leaders to secure passage of a bill (LD 911) to invest in the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program and Maine state parks. In 2019, legislators failed to act on this important issue. We need a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate to send an LMF and state parks bond to the November ballot. Please contact your legislators today and urge them to support new funding for the LMF and our treasured state parks.

We are excited about the possibility of a first-in-the-nation bill to require manufacturers of packaging materials to pay for the cost of recycling packaging waste. Last year, the Legislature directed the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to develop a draft bill that would shift this cost to manufacturers. Such programs exist in 47 jurisdictions around the world. Maine is poised to join those countries, and five Canadian provinces, where programs like this are reducing waste disposal and recycling costs for taxpayers, increasing recycling rates, and spurring innovations in packaging that reduce waste.

As of this writing, legislators are on track to support increased funding for DEP staff who help implement the Clean Water Act. We also are optimistic that lawmakers will enact a law that will help protect public health by classifying so-called "forever chemicals," PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), as hazardous substances for remediation purposes.

NRCM is working on many other bills, and we are closely coordinating our efforts with 28 organizations that participate in Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition. In addition, we are building coalitions with business owners, young Mainers, 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, then please contact us. We are here to help. Consider coming to Augusta on March 10 for our annual Citizen Action Day. If you have not already done so, please join our online Action Network at the Take Action page on 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, Senior Director, Advocacy

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JOIN US FOR CITIZEN ACTION DAY! MARCH 10, 2020 AT 8:00 A.M.

Come hear from NRCM experts about legislation affecting Maine's environment and tips for effectively communicating with legislators. Then we'll escort you to the State House and help connect you to your legislators so you can talk with them face to face. Breakfast and lunch provided. Please join us!



NRCM members speaking with Senator Brownie Carson (D-Cumberland) at last year's Citizen Action Day.

Natural Resources Council of Maine
3 Wade Street
Augusta, ME 04330
(800) 287-2345

L. Hahn/NRCM



Improving Recycling in Maine

Municipalities and taxpayers currently bear the full cost of managing waste and recycling programs in Maine. Although Mainers want to do the right thing and recycle as much as possible, municipalities are facing tough financial decisions about whether to continue to support their local recycling programs. Markets for recyclable materials are generating less revenue, and towns face an ever-growing volume of packaging waste from e-commerce that they have no control over.

Many countries around the world have adopted a solution to this problem. They have enacted Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Packaging laws that require large corporations such as Amazon, Procter and Gamble, and Walmart to help finance recycling programs. EPR programs shift the financial burden of recycling packaging from taxpayers to the producers, who would reimburse Maine municipalities for the costs of recycling the materials they create.

These large companies should help finance effective recycling programs in Maine, like they are in five Canadian provinces, the European Union, and in many other countries. EPR for packaging can reduce taxpayer costs, increase recycling rates, and help Mainers retain access to recycling programs through market fluctuations in recyclable commodity prices.

The DEP has drafted a bill, and the Environment and Natural Resources Committee will hold a public hearing in late February or early March. Passage of this bill is a top priority for the Maine Environmental Priorities Coalition.



Big Spencer Mountain Public Reserved Land by Karen Folsom

Protecting Public Lands

Maine has more than 500,000 acres of public land, prized for a broad range of natural resource values, including deep woods, recreation opportunities, and significant wildlife habitat. Maine's public lands are some of the best managed lands in the state, and Maine people want them to stay that way. In November 1993, more than 72 percent of Maine voters supported an amendment to the State Constitution to require that uses of our public lands cannot be "substantially altered except on a vote of 2/3 of all the members elected to each House" of the Legislature.

This important protection for Maine's public lands is in the spotlight because the controversial CMP corridor would cross public land leased by CMP from the State, yet lawmakers have not voted by a two-thirds majority in each chamber to approve this lease.

Senator Russell Black (R-Franklin) introduced a bill (LD 1893), which has been amended, to require approval of any lease of public lands by the two-thirds votes required by the Maine Constitution. The CMP project should not cross public land unless appropriately authorized. This is an important precedent. If the massively disruptive CMP corridor doesn't qualify as a substantial alteration of public land, then nothing would.



Reid 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 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. Yet the highly popular Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program has not received any new funding since 2012—and it is out of money.

Last year, Senator Cathy Breen (D-Cumberland) 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 2020 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.



Ida Koiler Chapman

Protecting Maine's Waterways

Clean water is a vital part of living and working in Maine, supporting commercial fishing, tourism, high-tech industries, recreation, and waterfront communities. Residents and millions of visitors alike spend time and money enjoying Maine's rivers, lakes, streams, and coastal waters, providing Maine jobs and supporting our economy. Without clean water, Maine would be a very different place.

Although we cherish our clean waterways, we must not take them for granted. Key staff at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection perform vital roles protecting clean water in Maine. DEP's technical staff oversee hundreds of facilities that discharge pollution into state waters. Through the Maine Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program (MEPDES), DEP staff process licenses, monitor compliance, provide technical assistance, and monitor and model water quality. For many years, funding for this program has been stretched to the limit. DEP has not increased the fees for wastewater discharge licensees since 2008.

This year, DEP has requested a necessary fee increase for facilities that directly discharge into state waters. LD 1832 will help keep the MEPDES program solvent through at least Fiscal Year 2026. We strongly support this investment in protecting Maine's clean waters and are pleased that it is receiving strong legislative support so far.



L. Hahn/NRCM

Defeating the Central Maine Power Corridor

The project would include a 53-mile-long new corridor through Western Maine forestlands and brook trout habitat, with no clear evidence that it would do anything to benefit our climate and concerns about harming Maine-made renewable energy. The Central Maine Power (CMP) corridor is a bad deal for Maine's environment, economy, and people. Public opinion polls show that Maine people overwhelmingly oppose the CMP corridor proposal that would deliver electricity from Hydro-Quebec across Maine to Massachusetts. Maine citizens recently announced that they have gathered enough signatures from registered Maine voters to qualify for the November ballot.

Assuming that the Secretary of State certifies that more than 63,067 qualified voters have signed the petition to block the CMP corridor, then the measure will be considered by the Legislature. The Legislature could adopt the bill, but we expect it to send the measure to the voters instead, following a public hearing by the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee.

This citizen-run campaign would provide Maine people the opportunity that many have been waiting for to cast a vote to defeat the CMP corridor by overturning the Public Utilities Commission's certificate of approval that was issued for the project in spring 2019.

Tips for Citizen Engagement

Democracy is not a spectator sport, it's a contact sport, and we encourage you to participate in the process. 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 legislator, 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:

- 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.



Bigelow by Emmie Theberge

Other Important Issues

NRCM staff members are tracking close to 50 bills this session. Below are a few additional bills that we're following.

Maine Public Utility Rep. Seth Berry (D-Bowdoinham and Energy committee co-chair) introduced a bill (LD 1646) last year to create a public power authority to own and operate the transmission and distribution grid instead of corporately owned CMP and Emera. This bill would end the decades-long destructive opposition to clean energy and help restore the public interest at a time when Maine is trying to get back on track toward a clean, local, affordable energy future.

Electric School Buses Sen. Eloise Vitelli (D-Sagadahoc) introduced a bill (LD 1894) to encourage the Department of Education to transition all state school buses to 100% electric buses by 2040. Lawmakers are considering amending the date to 2045, adding a goal of 75% reduction in school bus emissions by 2035, and creating an inter-agency working group to develop a plan by January, 2022 to reach these goals.

Product Stewardship for Batteries Rep. Jessica Fay (D-Raymond) introduced a bill (LD 1594) to create a product stewardship program for recycling all single-use consumer batteries. Battery manufacturers would be responsible for funding the system for convenient, statewide collection of discarded batteries.

Energy and Water Appliance Standards Rep. Bill Pluecker (D-Warren) proposed a bill (LD 1750) that would establish new energy and water standards across a range of appliances. The bill provides an extremely cost-effective way to lower utility bills for consumers, reduce waste and total energy costs by millions of dollars per year, and decrease air and climate pollution for our environment. Several other states have adopted or are considering the same standards.

Clean Energy Investments for Businesses Sen. Heather Sanborn (D-Cumberland) introduced a bill (LD 1748) to help businesses finance energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements on commercial properties. Through Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) loans, property owners could finance the cost of energy improvements and pay them back through their property tax bills, at no public expense. This bill removes many barriers for clean energy investment, and commercial PACE loans (C-PACE) are working in many other states.

Safe Disposal of Prescription Drugs Sen. Geoff Gratwick (D-Penobscot) sponsored a bill (LD 1460) that would require prescription drug manufacturers to create a drug take-back stewardship program to collect and dispose of unwanted prescription drugs.

Preventing Political Interference by Hydro-Quebec Rep. Kent Ackley (I-Monmouth) is sponsoring a bill that would prohibit a government-owned utility, such as Hydro-Quebec, from trying to influence the outcome of a citizen-initiated ballot question in Maine through use of a political action committee (PAC). The bill would close a loophole in Maine ethics law. Hydro-Quebec currently has a PAC aimed at trying to defeat the citizen-initiated effort to block the CMP corridor project.

Recycled Content for Plastic Bottles Rep. Vicki Doudera (D-Camden) introduced LD 102 that would ensure that all plastic beverage containers in Maine meet a minimum requirement of using 25% post-consumer recycled (PCR) content by 2025 and 30% by 2030. The bill would strengthen recycling programs by increasing demand for recycled plastic. Currently, only about 7.5% of plastic in beverage containers is recycled content.



THE BROOKIE AWARDS
Honoring Maine's young environmental leaders

Nominations Now Open!

Six environmental changemakers between the ages of 15 and 30 will be honored for their outstanding leadership, perseverance, and positive impact on Maine's environment. Each Brookie Award winner receives

- **\$1,000 cash prize**
- A professionally shot promotional video showcasing their environmental leadership
- The opportunity to attend a nature-based retreat where they will participate in skill-building sessions and engage with other environmental and political leaders
- An all-expenses paid trip to the spring 2020 award ceremony

Winners will be selected based on individual applications, **due by March 15, 2020**. Apply directly or, if you know someone who you think should be a Brookie, please **nominate** them; we'll contact them with a request to apply. To learn more visit www.BrookieAwards.org or contact BrookieAwards@nrcm.org.

This program is made possible by the founding partnership of the Quimby Family Foundation.

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NRCM: Teaming with You on Federal Issues

As the Trump Administration continues to attack landmark laws protecting clean water, clean air, and wildlife, NRCM's federal team will keep you informed of when and how you can take action.



NRCM Federal Staff: Climate Outreach and Maine Brewshed Alliance Coordinator Bonnie Barclay and Federal Director Emmie Theberge



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 Director**

Sarah Nichols, **Sustainable Maine Director**

Pete Didisheim, **Senior Director of Advocacy**

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

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

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

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

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	Caribou: (207) 492-6009
Bangor: (207) 249-7400	Lewiston: (207) 241-6767

EDITOR / Allison Childs Wells, Senior Director, Public Affairs

DESIGN / brightredbicycle design

CONTRIBUTORS / Pete Didisheim, Fiona Gordon, and Allison Childs Wells

BANNER IMAGE / State House by Allison Childs Wells

CEO / Lisa Pohlmann

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Natural Resources Council of Maine

3 Wade Street
Augusta, ME 04330
(207) 622-3101
(800) 287-2345
nrcm.org