



Photo by MissingLynx/NRCM

Climate Change Threatens Maine Hunting & Fishing Tradition

Maine’s outdoor traditions are at risk due to warming waters and more extreme weather linked to climate change. Unless we act now to curb pollution, our children and grandchildren won’t be able to enjoy the same hunting and fishing traditions Maine people and visitors have experienced for generations—and many Maine communities that depend on revenue from these seasonal activities may suffer.

Threats to Fishing

- **Warming waters threaten freshwater fish**

- Freshwater fishing contributes more than \$300 million to Maine’s economy annually, but Maine’s lakes, streams, and rivers are warming at a faster rate than our oceans or atmosphere. This is causing increased pollution, algal blooms, invasive species, and disease that threaten freshwater fish.



BROOK TROUT, USFWS

- **Impact on Maine’s prized brook trout**

- Maine is home to 97% of the country’s wild brook trout waters, with nearly 1 in 10 of our 6,000 lakes and ponds featuring wild and native brook trout. But as air temperatures increase, cool water continues to warm and oxygen levels decline, threatening brook trout’s survival. More frequent droughts lead to reduced stream flow and kills vegetation that provides shade to help keep streams cool.

- **Ice fishing days fewer and farther between**

- Rising temperatures are causing earlier and earlier ice-outs each spring, which shortens the ice fishing season for anglers.
- Ice-outs are now happening at Moosehead Lake one month earlier than in the mid-1800s. Other lakes such as Rangeley, Mooselookmeguntic, Richardson, Sebago, Grand, Cobbosecontee, and Damariscotta Lakes are on average icing-out two to four weeks earlier than they did in the late 1800s.
- If temperatures continue to rise, ice fishing derbies could be at risk of being cancelled in communities throughout Maine that rely on the economic benefit provided during the winter months.

“Brook trout must have cold clean water. They gather in spring holes in our lakes in the summer or travel up brooks and streams or to rivers to escape warmer lake water when they can. Considering all of the challenges of protecting our brook trout, officially designated this state’s Heritage Fish, we must do all we can for this fish.” - George Smith, former executive director of the Sportsman’s Alliance of Maine

¹ “Fishing in Maine in 2013” Maine Office of Tourism and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. January 2014. <https://www.maine.gov/ifw/docs/fishinginmaine-013.pdf>

² Maine Council of Trout Unlimited. <http://www.tumaine.org/brooktrout.htm>

Threats to Hunting

- **Big game vulnerable to increasing diseases**

- Populations of northern mammals, like moose, that thrive in cooler climates, are in jeopardy due to rising temperatures that have allowed ticks and tick-borne diseases to expand into Maine. In 2014 moose hunting permits in Maine were cut by 25% because of the explosion of tick infestations. In 2015, they were cut another 10 percent.

- White-tailed deer are vulnerable to hemorrhagic disease, which often leads to death. Prevalence of this disease is expected to increase as climate change brings warmer summers, longer droughts, and more intense rain events. In Maine, losses can be anywhere from 25-50% of the local deer population.

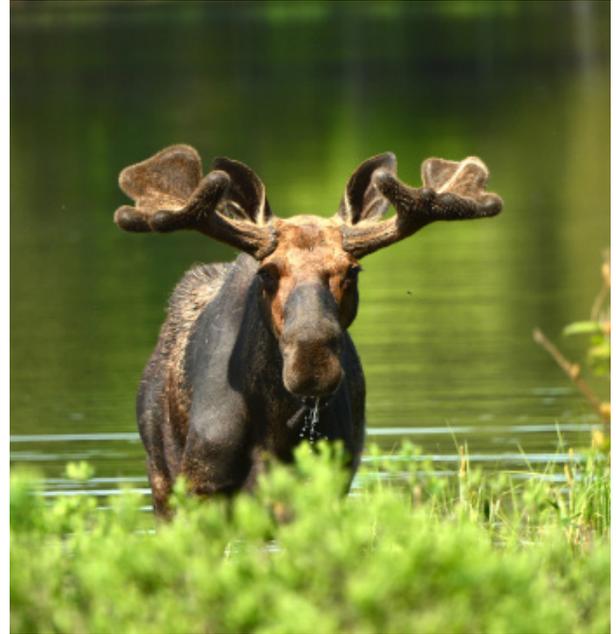
- **Duck breeding sites drying up**

- Ducks are losing much of the habitat they use for breeding every spring. The Prairie Pothole Region, which produces 50% of the ducklings found across the North American continent, are expected to dry more rapidly and have lower water volumes, thereby decreasing the chances of successful breeding.

- **Animal habits not matching hunting and trapping seasons**

- Due to earlier-than-normal seasonal temperature changes, animal patterns that hunters and trappers have come to expect no longer match the official hunting and trapping seasons. The Maine Legislature is currently considering a bill to alter beaver trapping season in response to this climate-related mismatch.

- Duck migration patterns are being altered due to warming temperatures. The duck hunting season now starts later, and there are fewer birds coming to Maine's bays from the north.



GERARD MONTEUX

“Usually by December, the large lakes and rivers start to freeze and then coastal duck hunting becomes excellent. Diving ducks, Canadian red legs, and even the Mallards head for the salt water when things really freeze up inland. This year, this great, rhythmic movement of ducks just never quite materialized during the season because of the incredibly warm temperatures. The way I see it, global warming wrecked my duck season.”

- Nick Bennett, Hallowell resident, on the duck hunting season in 2012

For more information contact us at nrcm@nrcm.org or (207) 622-3101 or visit www.nrcm.org/programs/federal



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