

**INSIDE!
EXPLORE
MAINE
2023**

Maine Guide tips,
books by members,
Maine Trails staff picks,
wildlife puzzle,
& more

Lazy Tom Bog and Big Spencer Mountain in background Kokadjo by NRCM member Steve Cartwright

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

MAINE Environment



Our Maine Environment Frontline Voices podcast keeps you in-the-know about Maine's latest news and environmental issues, like these:

- Maine's Solar Successes
- Modernizing the Bottle Bill
- Poetry in Nature with Pulitzer Prize winner Richard Russo
- Building a Better Network of Maine Trails
- Amphibians on the Move

If you're not tuning in, you're missing out! Follow the link at nrcm.org.

Modernizing Maine's Bottle Bill

BY COLIN DURRANT AND SARAH NICHOLS

Step into your local redemption center and what you will see is the heart and soul of Maine's most effective recycling and litter prevention program.

At Patman's Redemption Center in Windham, hard-working employees are in a constant state of motion, hand-sorting thousands and thousands of bottles and cans brought in by a seemingly endless flow of customers.

Redemption centers are often beloved parts of local communities, but those that bring in containers to redeem probably have little sense of what it takes to keep Maine's Bottle Bill successfully running.

In a recent visit to Peter Welch's redemption center in Portland, he emphasized in the "anatomy of labor, sorting is only one of the things we do." It's customer service. It's running the cash register. It's cleaning. It's fixing self-sorting machines when they break. And they *will* break.

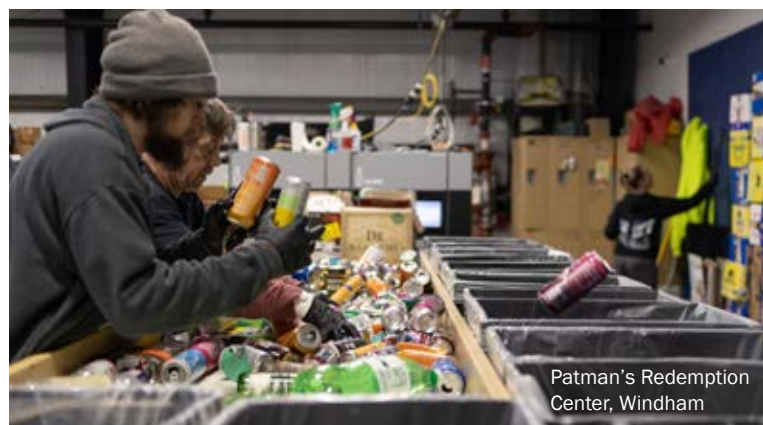
Ensuring a Strong Market for Recyclables

The work done within the walls of these local businesses ensures a strong, successful market for recycling glass, metal, and plastic. It also results in more than \$2 million a year in donations to local charities.

But Maine's local redemption centers are struggling to survive. Inflation and labor shortages have forced some to close and many others to operate at a loss. You may have witnessed these stresses first-hand if you've had trouble redeeming bottles and cans, or seen bags of returnables piled up at CLYNK depots in Hannaford parking lots.

Local photographer Justin Smulski, who joined us to document the experience at these two redemption centers, reflected on the visit perfectly in a recent Instagram post: "The story we all watched unfold that morning was one of unexpected laboriousness: far more of the sorting is undertaken manually than we could have imagined. Even where machines are involved—crushing cans and smashing glass—ample opportunities for injury arise. Most jarring, though, was just how many consumer items

Story continued on page 2



Patman's Redemption Center, Windham

J. SMULSKI/NRCM

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage PAID
Newcastle, ME
Permit No. 11



Canada Lynx

Where the Gray Ghost Roams

BY NATHANIEL CHILD

This spring, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) was reintroduced in the U.S. Senate to provide funding that would help protect 370 Maine species including Atlantic Puffins, moose, Arctic char, and Canada lynx. We created a photo blog series with Maine photographer Nathaniel Child highlighting some of Maine's threatened and endangered species and their habitat. Here is an excerpt from one of his blogs:

Fifty years ago in 1973, Congress passed the Endangered Species Act to protect imperiled species and help their populations recover. More than 1,300

species have been listed so far, and although many species are still declining, there have been some high-profile national success stories, such as the recovery and delisting of Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons.

Maine passed its own Endangered Species Act in 1975 and has listed 51 species as threatened or endangered. Thanks to extensive recovery efforts, Maine has not lost a single species since that time and has played a vital role in the recovery efforts of species like Piping Plovers and Atlantic Puffins.

Many of Maine's endangered and threatened species can be hard to find. The Canada lynx is perhaps the most elusive of all. A resident of dense spruce-fir forests, it's entirely possible to walk within a few feet of a lynx and be none the wiser. Despite an estimated 750 to 1,000 lynx roaming Maine's woods, sightings are incredibly rare, which is why it is known as the "gray ghost."

With the challenges of finding a Canada lynx in the front of my mind, I set out to the forests of western Maine with a pack full of camera gear in hopes of photographing this fascinating feline. Even though I knew my chances were slim, I was comforted by the fact that even if I didn't find a lynx, there's always something interesting to be seen in Maine's wild woodlands. *To read the full essay visit nrcm.org/blog/where-the-gray-ghost-roams.*

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• CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY •

Listening to Aroostook County Voices

I believe in the fundamental right to a thriving and beautiful environment. For everyone. Everywhere.

We are so fortunate in Maine to be greeted each morning with birdsong and beautiful vistas. For more than 60 years, NRCM has been powered by people across the state who take action to protect our healthy lands, waters, and air. And there's more work for us to do!

The power of NRCM lies in our connection to community voices.

Every year, NRCM directly connects with more than 25,000 people, representing all of Maine's legislative districts, who take action with us for Maine's environment. We saw this power in action at our State House Action Day in May. Nearly 100 people joined us to connect to their elected officials in the halls of the State House, advocating for the future that they envision for Maine's communities and natural resources.

That day was a reminder that sometimes it's important for NRCM to step back and let others lead the conversation. As experts on the bills we are working hard to pass, that can be difficult for us to keep in mind. Listening takes time and trust, and legislative sessions move quickly.

To truly represent all Mainers, NRCM must broaden our relationships across our state's diverse geography so that we can reflect their needs and interests in our work in the State House and beyond. So as another glorious Maine summer begins, I've packed my bags and will be traveling around the state to listen and learn from you.



NRCM Board member Kathy Olmstead (left) and CEO Rebecca Sanders (right) recently met with Shannon Hill, Environmental Director at Mi'kmaq Farms & Fish Hatchery in Caribou

In early June, my first trip took me to Aroostook County. Over the course of several days, I met with the dedicated volunteers that power important community resources like the Four Seasons Trail Association in Madawaska and the Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge in Limestone. I was grateful to be welcomed to Mi'kmaq Farms, where the harvest not only supports the Mi'kmaq Nation but also provides fresh produce to food pantries throughout the County. At each place I visited, people expressed a deep love of place and fierce commitment to the economic and environmental future of Aroostook County.

I look forward to seeing many of you during these summer travels. Your voices are important to shaping our collective future. We're ready to listen.

—Rebecca Sanders, CEO

Your Returnables Can Benefit NRCM!

Did you know that NRCM is an eligible charity through CLYNK to Give? CLYNK to Give is a recycling program that allows you to donate your bottle deposits to registered nonprofits. You can support NRCM two ways by returning eligible bottles and cans at a designated CLYNK drop-off site.

- Got your own bags? Contact NRCM at support@nrcm.org to request five bag tags by mail. Simply place one of our tags on your full bag and drop off at a CLYNK location. Proceeds go directly to NRCM!
- Have money in your existing CLYNK account? Using your web browser, log into your account and select "Donations." Then search for Natural Resources Council of Maine to donate part or all of your balance.

Bottle Bill - from Page 1

marked as recyclable are actually not, which means these redemption centers not only use bottle deposits to pay their staff, but also to pay for trashing all those non-recyclable items."

Maine's Bottle Bill is a big part of our culture and environmental ethic. Hundreds of Mainers have built their lives and small businesses around bottle redemption. It helps cities and towns reduce waste and save money.

But during the 45 years since the Bottle Bill began, there have been many new types of beverages brought to market, advancements in technology, and a growing consumer demand to return to refillable containers.

Working in Partnership for Change

Local redemption center owners, groups like the Natural Resources Council of Maine, and others who care about the future of the Bottle Bill have joined together this year to call on Maine lawmakers to take swift action to help redemption centers stay in business and ensure that Mainers have places to redeem their bottles and cans.

The Legislature quickly passed the first bill (LD 134), which became an emergency law in May 2023 to provide immediate relief by increasing the handling fee paid to redemption centers by big beverage companies for each container that is redeemed.

In an emotional public hearing on LD 134, redemption center owners made clear that action is sorely needed.

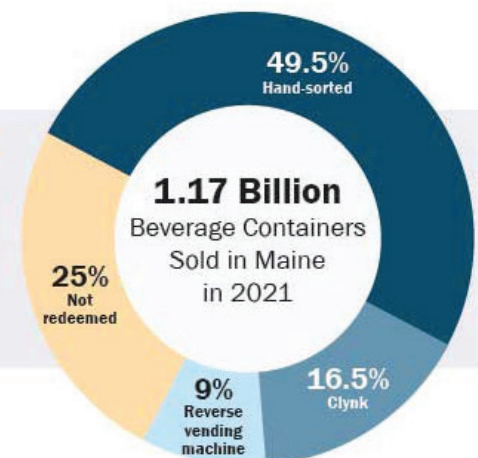
"The distributors, they raised their prices because of food, fuel, everything went up. We can't, and you're the ones who can help us," said Don Cook, who was forced to close his South Portland redemption center last summer.

"I've been in business 42 years, and this is the first year that I've had to borrow money to keep my doors open," said Melodie Zale, who owns a redemption center in Wilton.

The second bill (LD 1909), sponsored by Rep. Allison Hepler of Woolwich, would modernize the Bottle Bill to make it more efficient, effective, and resilient for the future. The bipartisan legislation, which was passed out of committee with a unanimous vote, would streamline the program for hard-working redemption centers by reducing the amount of tedious sorting that needs to be done.

Please Redeem Your Containers!

- An estimated \$16.7 million in "unclaimed deposits" are being funded annually by consumers when containers aren't redeemed.
- About 80% of this money stays with big beverage companies that are in a commingling group, and about 20% is remitted to the State General Fund by smaller companies that don't commingle.



"We are overwhelmed with bags every day," Shandra Rubchinuk, co-owner of Jansel Redemption Center in Winthrop, told WMTW in an interview after a public hearing for Rep. Hepler's bill. Rubchinuk also joined NRCM Sustainable Maine Director Sarah Nichols at our 2023 State House Action Day, along with other supporters to meet with lawmakers about this year's priority bills.

She told the TV station that 80% of her four employees' time is spent sorting 325 different brands. "So, the same water bottle, exact same material, with a different label, has to go into a different sleeve. There are currently 12 water bottles that have to go into 12 different sleeves," Rubchinuk said.

Hepler's bill also redirects the deposits paid by consumers that never redeemed their containers to support much-needed improvements that will increase consumer convenience and reduce trucks on the road. Looking toward the future, the bill proposes investments in new programs that could help us shift away from some disposable containers toward more reusable options.

Making the Bottle Bill Stronger for the Future

These two bills work together to support redemption centers while we work to make the Bottle Bill stronger for the future.

As individuals, one of the best ways people who care about Maine's environment can get involved is to redeem our containers. Twenty-five percent of beverage containers sold in Maine aren't being returned, and that money stays with big corporate brands like Coke or Pepsi. Redeeming your containers brings in more revenue for redemption centers, and ensures the money goes back to you or to whatever local charity you're supporting.

"No other program can deliver the environmental, economic, and social benefits of the Bottle Bill. And local redemption centers mean so much to the communities they serve," says NRCM CEO Rebecca Sanders. "Modernizing the Bottle Bill will build on Maine's legacy of showing that strong local economies and a healthy environment go hand-in-hand."

Colin Durrant is NRCM's Advocacy Communications & Media Relations Director. Sarah Nichols is our Sustainable Maine Director.

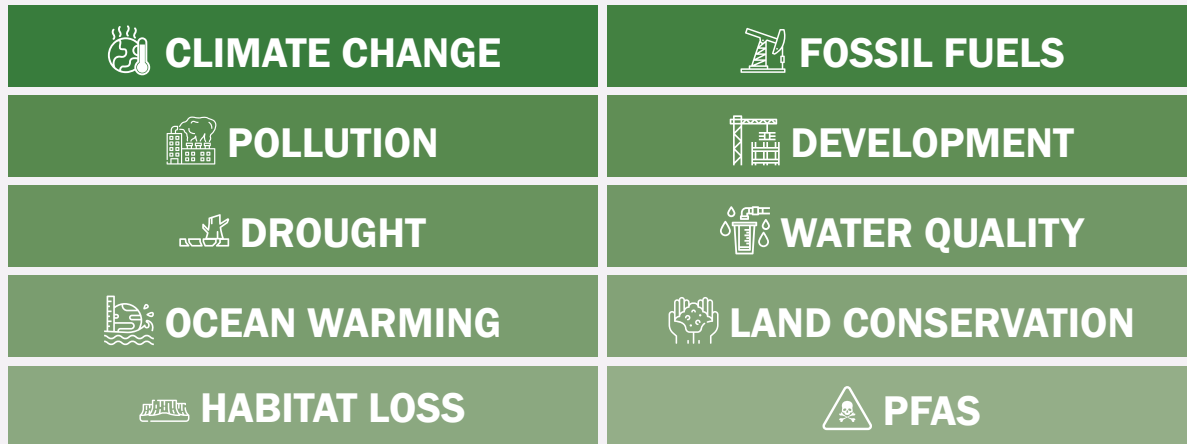
NRCM's Members Have Spoken

5,498
Surveys
Sent

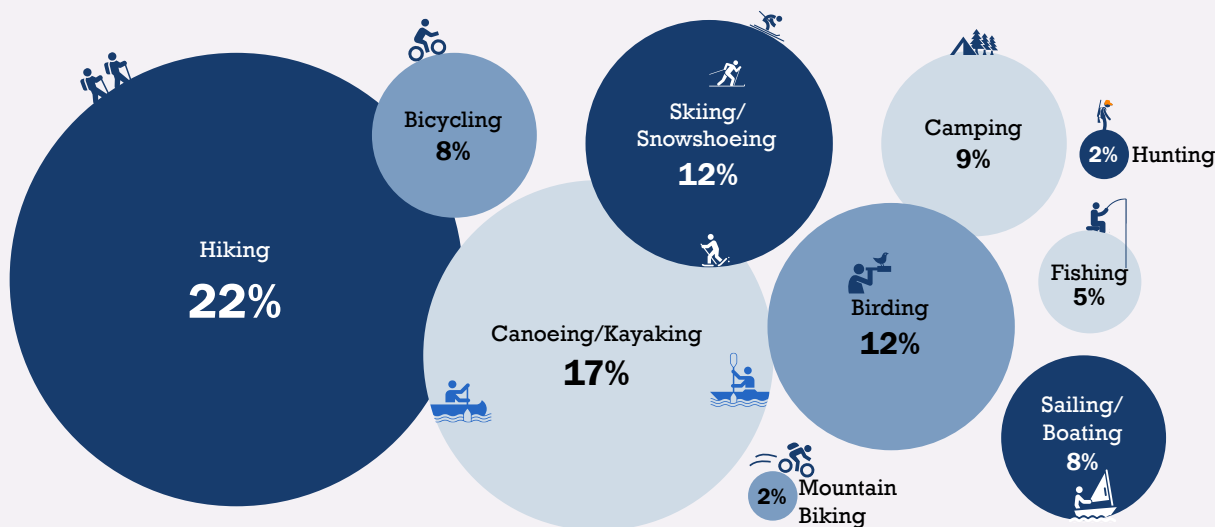
9.5%
Response
Rate

We are thankful for the members who shared information and input with us in response to our latest Membership Survey. Here are a few examples of what we learned from the results.

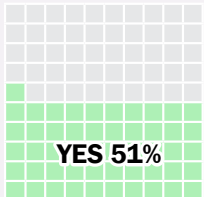
Top 10 Pressing Issues Facing Maine Today



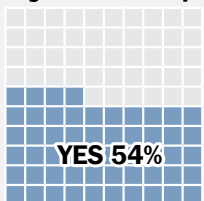
How Members are Interacting with Maine's Outdoors



Are you considering investing in solar power?



Are you considering investing in community solar?



How Members are Saying YES to Energy Efficiency

Do you have a heat pump in your home? **45%**

Do you have solar panels on your house or business? **26%**

Do you have a plug-in vehicle? **14%**

Spring 2023 Tribute Gifts

Among gifts received from November 1, 2022-April 30, 2023

IN HONOR OF:

- Alex Bailey from David Collins
- Nick Bennett from Oren Helbok
- Joanna Benoit & Taylor Jacobson from Rachel Jacobson
- Bram from Elske Smith
- Carol Cole from Andrew Cole
- Beth Comeau from Jennifer E. Dimond
- Sarah T. Farrand from David C. and Tyler H. Farrand
- Louis and Leon Johnson from Joel Johnson and Emmie Theberge
- Barbara Kasabian from James Kaplan
- Buzz Lamb from Rebecca Lamb
- Berto Marquina from David And Betsy Gardiner
- Janet Mills from Ann MacEachern
- Catherine Morse from Samuel C. and Anne N. Morse
- Lisa M. Pohlmann from:**
 - Ellen T. Asherman
 - James L. Dahlberg and Deirdre E. Donahue
 - Ian Ryan from Jason and Carrie Cianchette
 - Elizabeth V. Wheeler from Mary Wheeler

IN MEMORY OF:

- My beloved brother Buck from Eve Sawyer
- Joel Cartwright from Steve Cartwright
- Clee from Give Lively Foundation Inc.
- Lori Dombek from Anonymous

Edward "Ted" Gillispie Foden IV from:

- Gerry Bober
- Jane M. Dipietro
- Michael Emmons
- John and Joan Everett
- Jane P. Foden and Kevin McDonald
- Richard Gold
- Jane Harnden
- Gayle Hichborn
- Jay Knowlton
- Bruce McCarthy
- Anne Mitchell
- Caroline Newcomb
- Pamela A. Perkins
- Fred Poulin
- Alicia Rea
- John Runyon
- Nick Sampson
- Scott Samuelson and Joan Benoit Samuelson
- Leonard G. Sauter
- Katherine H. Wooten
- Marcia Goldfarb from Fred R. and Jennifer A. Aronson
- Roger B. Gorham from Barbara Fields
- Anne Harwood from Molly M. and Daniel Meyer
- Robert Elwood James from David James and Jon Kimbell
- Melissa A. Laser from Peggy Smith
- Arthur L. LeBrun from Patricia LeBrun
- Will and Margaret Manter from Berry Manter
- Deanna J. Martin from Jack Hannon
- Marty and Fritz from Esther Mechler
- Adam McAllister from:**
 - Patrick Gilligan
 - Karen N. Jones
 - Kristen and Dan King
 - David A. and Dorthy R. McAllister

- Laurette Laverdiere McCobb from Michael A. and Celine P. Wells
- Donald Sarles from Carolyn F. Bryant
- Scraper from Saren Goldner
- Roger S. Talbot from Joe Marine

Would you like to honor or memorialize someone with your next gift? Include "In honor of" or "In memory of" alongside their name in the check memo line or online gift notes.



Looking for an Easy Way to Support Our Work? Designate NRCM Through Payroll Deduction

If you are employed in Maine, ask your Human Resources contact if your employer participates in MaineShare. With MaineShare, you can designate a recurring gift to NRCM through payroll deduction. When you participate in workplace giving through MaineShare, you can Choose Your Change!

New at the NRCM Blog

- **The Season of Newness:** Spring Rowing in Belfast Bay, by Nicolle Littrell, owner/operator of DoryWoman Rowing, a partner in our Outdoor Recreation discount program for NRCM members
- **Birding with Jeff and Allison:** Mysterious Migration of Blue Jays What secrets do Blue Jays hold, and why did they have birders all a-twitter this past week? Find out in this month's Birding with Jeff and Allison blog.
- **What You Should Know about Maine's Solar Success** What are Maine's solar energy policies? How does solar impact our electricity bills? Learn more in this briefing by NRCM Senior Advocate Rebecca Schultz.
- **Critter Chatter:** Fox News (and I Don't Mean the Channel), NRCM member Jayne Winters shares her adorable photos of a recently rescued fox kit being cared for by Don Cote at the Duck Pond Wildlife Center
- **Redemption Centers are the Beating Heart of Maine's Bottle Bill** Take a look behind the scenes to learn about the tireless work they do and how we're working with them to modernize the Bottle Bill.
- **Powering the Future of Maine-made Offshore Wind** NRCM Climate & Clean Energy Director Jack Shapiro shares more about the bill to boost responsible offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine by setting strong standards for good-paying jobs and protecting wildlife and fisheries.

Read more at nrcm.org/blog



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

Looking for a One-Stop Shop for the Latest Environmental News?

Read our easy-to-digest news feature where we highlight the top stories from across the state.

nrcm.org/news/news-noteworthy



Patricia Williams

MY MAINE THIS WEEK

NRCM member Patricia Williams of Pelham, Massachusetts, shares her beautiful, peaceful photo of Nahmakanta Lake.

Do you have a photograph of Maine you'd like to share? A short poem? Send your submissions to beth@nrcm.org. Visit "My Maine This Week" online at www.nrcm.org for guidelines and more photos.

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Frontline Voices podcast



Follow us! @NRCMenvironment



Now Accepting Nominations for NRCM's 2023 People's Choice Award

Would you like to honor someone who has gone above and beyond to protect the environment in your community? NRCM is currently accepting nominations for our 18th annual People's Choice Award! Perhaps you know someone who has helped safeguard a special place, or worked to stop pollution from contaminating our state—a volunteer who has devoted their time and effort to helping ensure future generations will enjoy the kind of Maine we know and love today.

Make your nomination by Monday, August 14

We'll compile the nominations and post finalists on our website by Tuesday, August 22. Then, through noon on Monday, September 18, you, your friends, and family (and everyone else) can vote for the person of choice. Note that we cannot consider someone currently sitting on a regulatory board or who is in the Legislature, or who is or was serving in a paid position while carrying out the work. The People's Choice Award honors volunteers. NOTE: If you nominated someone in the past and they were not selected, please feel free to nominate them again. The winner will be honored at an event this fall. Send us your nomination today!

Your name, phone number, & email address: _____

Candidate's name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Please describe why you believe this person deserves the 2023 People's Choice Award (include any of the nominee's organizational affiliations related to the work). Please be as specific as possible and use a separate sheet if needed. Mail to the attention of Beth Comeau, NRCM, 3 Wade St, Augusta, ME 04330. You can also email your nomination to beth@nrcm.org or nominate online at www.nrcm.org



Green Tip of the Month

BLOWING IN THE WIND Save up to \$25 per month by drying your clothes outside on a line or inside on a drying rack. For more money-saving tips to reduce your energy use, download or request a copy of our brochure, *Bright Ideas: Tips for Home Energy Savings* www.nrcm.org/our-maine/publications.

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