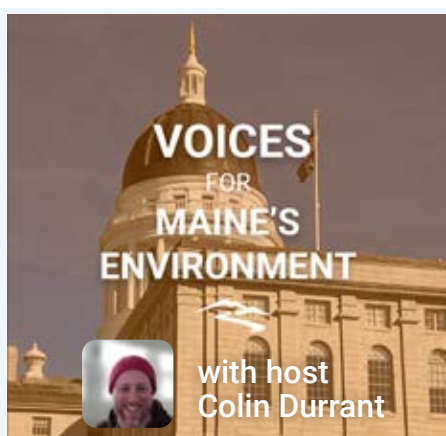




MAINE Environment

2025 Legislative Priorities for Maine's Environment



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Natural Resources
Council of Maine
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(800) 287-2345

The 132nd Legislature is well underway, with nearly 1,400 new bills printed and referred to legislative committees for public hearings, and another 600 bills yet to be printed. Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) policy experts already are tracking more than 175 pieces of legislation; as of early April, we have testified on more than 60 bills that could affect the future of Maine's environment.

The legislative process is a whirlwind of activity that can be challenging to keep up with. On some days this session, multiple NRCM experts have testified at almost the exact same time in different committee rooms. If you're trying to stay up-to-speed on important bills, we encourage you to visit the Legislative Bill Tracking page on our website, which provides up-to-date links to legislation, factsheets, and our testimony.

This year, we are working with partners to defeat a long list of rollback bills that would weaken Maine's climate, clean energy, and environmental laws. We also are working to pass new bills that would advance progress on climate action, land conservation, and a healthy environment. With growing uncertainty at the national level, our work at the State House is more important than ever.

One of our top priorities is to help pass legislation requiring the state to receive 100% of its electricity from clean energy sources by 2040. This goal was established as a top recommendation in the December 2024 update of Maine's Climate Action Plan, *Maine Won't Wait*. We also are working on bills to expand transportation options and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

Working with a broad coalition of allies, we're urging lawmakers to renew funding for the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program, which will run out of money next year if action isn't taken. We're advocating for legislation to help protect undeveloped lakes in Maine's 10.5 million acres of unorganized territories (UT), and to create a strategy for helping manage and conserve some of Maine's last remaining older growth forest stands—which once comprised 70% of Maine's North Woods but are now down to only three percent.

We've added our voice in support of legislation to phase out firefighting foam containing PFAS, spurred by the large accident involving firefighting foam last summer at Brunswick Landing.

Clean water is a priority for the people of Maine. We also are working in support of several bills this year that would help protect water quality, including a bill to create a study commission on stormwater pollution, a clean water bond, a bill to curb lake pollution from septic systems, and a bill that would provide funding for communities to restore lakes that are experiencing significant algal blooms.

Lawmakers this year will once again have an opportunity to pass legislation that would recognize the sovereignty of tribes in Maine, a long-overdue change in Maine law that could help address the state's tragic history in relation to the Wabanaki Nations who have inhabited these lands for time immemorial. We will again testify in support of this legislation.

As we continue to immerse ourselves in the legislative process, NRCM staff works closely with other members of the Environmental Priorities Coalition. We also work in partnership with local business owners, youth activists, organized labor, municipal officials, community leaders, issue experts, Maine people statewide, and you—our members and supporters. You provide us with 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, please contact us. We are here to help. If you have not already done so, please sign up for NRCM email updates on the Take Action page at nrcm.org. You'll learn about progress on legislative priorities and find out when and how you can help make a difference. Also, please visit our social media accounts and website throughout the legislative session for further updates.

As always, thank you for your support.

—Pete Didisheim, Senior Director of Advocacy



HARRY & LYSS/NRCM

Our Experts are Working for You

NRCM's knowledge of the issues you care about runs deep. Right now, our team of issue experts is working hard for you at the Maine State Legislature and beyond. Learn more about our advocacy team at nrcm.org.



Jack Shapiro
Climate & Clean Energy Director



Rebecca Schultz
Senior Advocate for Climate & Clean Energy



Luke Frankel
Woods, Waters, & Wildlife Director and Staff Scientist



Pete Didisheim
Senior Director of Advocacy



Josh Caldwell
Climate & Clean Energy Policy Advocate and Outreach Manager



Vanessa Berry
Sustainable Maine Program Manager



Rumford Whitecap, by Linda Woods

Continue Funding for Land for Maine's Future Program

The Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program is Maine's most popular and successful land conservation program. Part of what makes LMF so popular is that it is designed to benefit all Mainers regardless of where they live, what they do for work, or how they choose to spend their free time. LMF has funded projects across all 16 counties that conserve land directly in support of local forestry, farming, outdoor recreation, and fishing industries.

Since its establishment in 1987, LMF has helped conserve more than 650,000 acres across Maine. This includes more than 330,000 acres of working forests; 9,884 acres of farmland; 158 miles of recreational trails; more than 1,200 miles of shoreline on rivers, lakes, and ponds; and 30 commercial working waterfront properties.

LMF will soon run out of money, which has spurred lawmakers to explore a range of legislative strategies for continuing the program. Sen. Russell Black (R-Franklin) has introduced a bill (LD 593) that would provide an ongoing \$10 million general fund appropriation to LMF. He also has introduced a \$50 million LMF bond. Other strategies may emerge, but the important message to lawmakers is to urge them to support additional funding for the LMF program this year, through whatever strategy will succeed.

Action Needed: Contact your legislators to urge their support for legislation that will provide new funding for the Land for Maine's Future program.



Colin Durrant

Achieve 100% Clean Electricity by 2040

High energy costs in Maine are primarily driven by our heavy dependence on out-of-state oil and gas, and low-income families bear the heaviest energy burdens. Right now, about 60% of New England's electricity is produced from natural gas. Maine should be on a clear path to phasing out our dependence on fossil fuels, which would save money for electricity customers and reduce air pollution.

The pathway to achieving 100% by 2040 has been mapped out. Multiple recent stakeholder and planning processes have demonstrated that this goal is achievable. The strategy for doing so will be contained in a bill sponsored by Sen. Mark Lawrence (D-York), which will increase Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) to 90% by 2040 and create a new class of Clean Energy Sources (CES) to provide the remaining 10% of required clean electricity by 2040. The Department of Environmental Protection will conduct a rulemaking to define eligible Clean Energy Sources.

NRCM supports legislation to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2040 because it is a practical path forward to a lower-cost energy future, a more diverse energy supply, and a strong economy. The 2025 Maine Energy Plan shows that reaching 100% clean electricity by 2040 could lower average household energy costs by about \$1,300 per year.

Action Needed: Contact your legislators and urge them to support legislation that would require Maine to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2040. As of this writing, the bill has not been printed, but updates will be provided on the Legislative Bill Tracking page at nrcm.org when the bill becomes available.

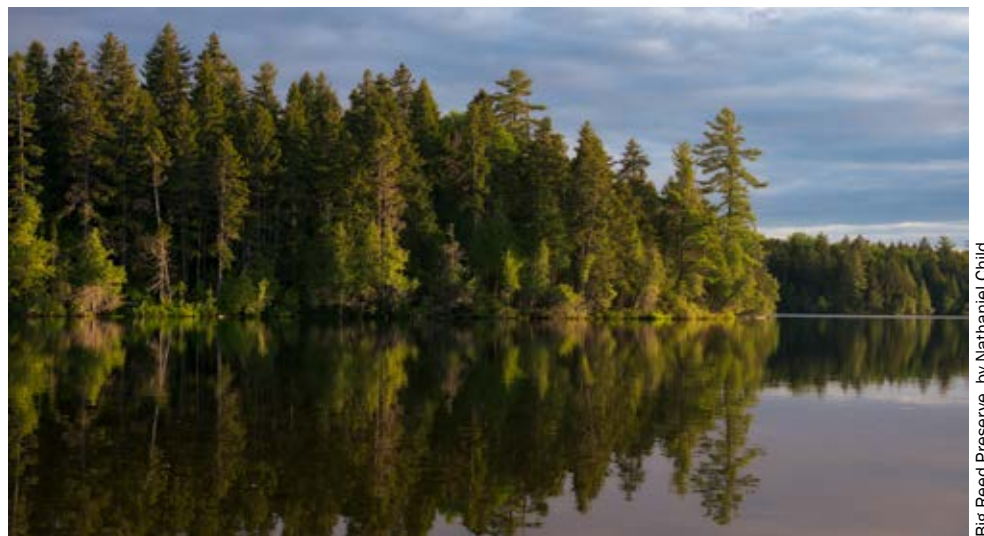


File photo

Eliminate Firefighting Foam Containing PFAS

Last summer, Brunswick Landing experienced the largest spill of toxic firefighting foam in Maine's history, releasing 1,450 gallons of aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) concentrate mixed with 50,000 gallons of water. This spill contaminated nearby water sources, impacting local drinking water, soil health, and wildlife, with long-term consequences still unfolding. This event served as a stark reminder of the urgent need to assess and manage our existing stockpiles of PFAS-containing foam in a safe and responsible manner. Rep. Dan Ankeles (D-Brunswick) has introduced two bills (LD 222 and LD 400) to identify storage sites, mitigate risks, and ensure the responsible management of PFAS-containing AFFF foam. NRCM supports passage of both bills.

Action Needed: The Environment and Natural Resources Committee voted to support both LD 222 and LD 400, so now these bills will go to the House and Senate. Please contact your legislators to vote in support of both bills.



Big Reed Preserve, by Nathaniel Child

Protect the Unique Character of Maine's North Woods

Maine is unique in the entire eastern United States in having a North Woods landscape that comprises half the state. Maine's North Woods, generally synonymous with the 10.4 million acres of unorganized territories (UT) overseen by the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC), is a vital part of Maine's identity. These forestlands are the largest contiguous undeveloped area east of the Rocky Mountains and provide Maine with economic assets, outdoor recreation opportunities, and natural resource features of statewide, regional, and national significance.

More than 90% of the North Woods is working forest, owned and managed by private landowners and forest product companies. The LUPC is the planning and zoning authority for these lands, which face growing pressure from development, climate change, and fragmentation. This year, lawmakers will have an opportunity to support three bills to enhance conservation in Maine's North Woods. Sen. Rick Bennett (R-Oxford) has introduced a bill to help protect remote, undeveloped lakes in the UT that are known to have resources of statewide significance. It also directs the state to develop a strategy for conserving older growth forest stands, which now comprise only 3% of the North Woods.

A bill introduced by Sen. Russell Black (R-Franklin) would create a study commission on the future of recreational access in the unorganized territories. Preserving access is vital for Maine's \$3 billion outdoor recreation economy. Rep. Bill Bridgeo (D-Augusta) has introduced a bill (LD 870) to enhance the LUPC by updating the qualifications for commissioners and expanding the Commission to 13 members by providing the Governor with four additional appointments. Currently, eight commissioners are appointed by county commissioners and only one is appointed by the Governor.

Action Needed: Contact your legislators and urge them to support bills that would help protect Maine's North Woods, including a bill dealing with lakes and older growth forests introduced by Sen. Bennett, a bill to study outdoor recreation introduced by Russell Black, and a bill (LD 870) to enhance the Land Use Planning Commission introduced by Rep. Bill Bridgeo.



City of Bangor

Invest and Plan for Clean Transportation Choices

Tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks are the largest source of climate pollution in Maine. That's why it's critical to focus on policies, planning, and funding that promote cleaner, healthier options that provide Maine people with more choices that meet transportation needs while also reducing air pollution. NRCM is working with several lawmakers and coalition partners to support legislation that will help create a more modern transportation system that serves Maine people. We strongly support a bill (LD 1138) introduced by Sen. Stacy Brenner (D-Cumberland) that requires the Maine Department of Transportation and Maine Turnpike Authority to develop a plan to reduce transportation-related emissions. The bill also establishes a process for conducting impact assessments for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for any new projects aimed at expanding capacity on Maine roads. The bill calls for mitigation measures if GHG and VMT are projected to increase. We also support legislation introduced by Rep. Lydia Crafts (D-Newcastle) that would implement the recommendations of the Public Transit Advisory Council to invest in more reliable public transportation service statewide.

Action Needed: Contact your legislators to urge them to support LD 1138, which would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from new transportation projects.



File photo

Study of Storm Water Pollution

Maine is known for its clean water. In 2023, our lakes, rivers, and beaches helped to attract more than 15 million visitors to the state who contributed more than \$9 billion to Maine's economy. Maintaining high water quality is essential for the livelihoods of Mainers who rely on clean water to support jobs in the shellfishing, outdoor recreation, and real estate sectors, among others. However, as Maine's population continues to grow, the pressures facing our waters will only increase, making protection ever more important. Storm water is one of the leading sources of pollution to Maine's waters. When it rains, water that flows off our streets, buildings, and lawns collects pollutants such as bacteria, nutrients, sediment, and toxic chemicals. When these pollutants eventually enter our waterways, they can cause issues like the closures of beaches and shellfish areas, the growth of harmful algae, and the contamination of drinking water sources.

Rep. Art Bell (D-Yarmouth) has introduced a bill (LD 646) to establish a commission to study unregulated storm water pollution. NRCM supports this study commission to holistically evaluate the storm water pollution problem and recommend potential regulatory and non-regulatory solutions.

Action Needed: Urge your elected representatives to support LD 646, Resolve, Establishing the Commission to Study Unregulated Storm Water Pollution.



J.Caldwell/NRCM

Recognize Tribal Sovereignty

Over the past several years, lawmakers have considered multiple bills that would recognize the inherent sovereignty rights of the Wabanaki Nations in Maine by implementing consensus recommendations of the 2019 Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.

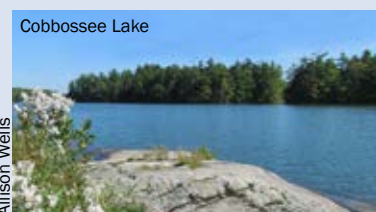
This year, House Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross (D-Portland) has introduced a bill (LD 785) that has the strong support of the Wabanaki Alliance, the advocacy organization led by the Mi'kmaq Nation, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Passamaquoddy Tribe, and Penobscot Nation. NRCM supports the tribal sovereignty bill, which would implement recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. We will be working alongside countless other organizations and individuals to secure passage of this bill. Hundreds of Maine people have submitted testimony in support of tribal sovereignty legislation. The time is long past due to address injustices toward Wabanaki Nations by recognizing their tribal sovereignty.

Action Needed: Contact your Representative and Senator to urge their support for tribal sovereignty.

Other Bills NRCM Supports

Below are a few of the many additional bills NRCM is supporting this session.

Pollution from Septic Systems Sen. Henry Ingwersen (D-York) has introduced a bill to reduce nutrient pollution from entering Maine's waterways from septic systems located in poor soils. The bill would require new septic systems installed in these poor soils to meet certain standards that would facilitate the natural removal of nutrients at little to no additional cost.



Allison Wells

Lake Water Quality Rep. Bill Bridgeo (D-Augusta) has introduced a bill (LD 296) that would provide \$2 million annually for the next two years for a Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund to address algal blooms in Maine lakes.

Wastewater Treatment Bond Sen. Stacy Brenner (D-Cumberland) has introduced a bill (LD 25) for a \$50 million bond that would provide grants to towns to facilitate the management and disposal of wastewater sludge containing PFAS.

Reduction of Food Waste Sen. Stacy Brenner (D-Cumberland) has introduced a bill (LD 1065) that would reduce food waste and promote composting of organic material in the waste stream. The bill initially focuses on diverting food waste from facilities that generate two or more tons per week of food waste and are located within 20 miles of an organics recycler with available capacity.



Beth Comeau

Brunswick Landing

Active Transportation Trails Several bills have been introduced that, together, would authorize more than 70 miles of multi-use trails separated from vehicle traffic connecting cities and towns in Maine with a combined population of more than 150,000 people. These bills include recommendations from Rail Use Advisory Committees for a trail between Brunswick and Gardiner (LD 29), Portland and Yarmouth (LD 30), Portland and Auburn (LD 511), and Pembroke to Calais (LD 956).

Bills NRCM Opposes

NRCM is working to defeat many rollback bills, including the following:

Rollback of Maine's Bag Ban NRCM opposes two bills related to Maine's ban on single-use plastic bags: LD 56, introduced by Rep. Michael Lemelin (R-Chelsea) would weaken the program by removing the five-cent fee for plastic or paper bags at the point of sale. LD 69, introduced by Rep. Barbara Bagshaw (R-Windham), would repeal Maine's law that promotes the use of reusable bags.



B.Comeau/NRCM

Moratorium on Dam Removals

Representative Dick Campbell (R-Orrington) has introduced a bill (LD 430) that would prevent the Maine Department of Environmental Protection from providing permits to remove hydropower dams. We

oppose this bill because it would prevent continued progress in restoring upstream passage for sea-run fish through projects such as removal of the Edwards Dam in Augusta and dam removals on the Penobscot River that have been among Maine's most important environmental successes in the past 30 years.



Judy Berk

Attacks on Rooftop and Community Solar

As in past years, multiple bills have been introduced this year that would undermine or terminate Maine's Net Energy Billing program that has spurred solar energy in Maine. These bills would

effectively bar Maine homes and businesses from putting solar on their roofs.

Blocking Offshore Wind Power Port Two bills (LD 226 and LD 735) introduced by Rep. Reagan Paul (R-Winterport) would limit Maine's choices for the site of an offshore wind port in Searsport, forcing Maine to miss out on a once-in-a-generation economic opportunity and potentially ending Maine's chances of meeting our climate goals using offshore wind, Maine's most abundant renewable resource.

Repealing Clean Energy Goals Rep. Laurel Libby (R-Auburn) introduced LD 444 aimed at slowing Maine's transition to renewable energy. Eliminating our renewable energy goals would maintain our over-reliance on out-of-state fossil fuels and disrupt Maine's path to creating new jobs and replacing higher-cost fuels with lower-cost renewable electricity.

Promoting Nuclear Power NRCM opposes three bills introduced by Rep. Reagan Paul (R-Winterport) promoted by the Nuclear Energy Institute with the goal of creating the impression that Maine supports nuclear power—which remains one of the most expensive energy sources in the world. One bill (LD 342) would include nuclear power in Maine's renewable energy portfolio; another (LD 343) would direct the Public Utilities Commission to begin a process to attract nuclear power to Maine; and a third (LD 601) would eliminate Maine's existing requirement that voters must approve construction of any new nuclear power plant.

Increasing Fossil Fuel Dependence Fossil fuel companies worked with Sen. Matthew Harrington (R-York) to introduce LD 556 aimed at blocking communities from pursuing policies that reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. The bill is not about protecting energy choice; it's about taking it away. It would strip away the ability of Maine cities and towns to set policies that work best for their residents, preempting local decision-making in favor of the clear self-interest of the fossil fuel industry.

Rollback of Maine's Mining Laws A bill introduced by Sen. Joseph Martin (R-Oxford) would exempt certain mineral deposits that pose environmental risks from key provisions within Maine's Metallic Mineral Mining Act. We strongly oppose this bill that would weaken protections for clean water and the environment.



Stoomey/NRCM

How You Can Get Involved

Maine's environmental laws exist because of the work and involvement of people like you who value our natural resources. NRCM's goal is to encourage as many people as possible to participate in the process. Every action can help make a difference.

Visit NRCM's website at nrcm.org to:

- Sign up for one of our **Take Action Tuesdays**, a new weekly opportunity to join us in Augusta to take action on the issues you care about! We'll provide breakfast, a short training, and guidance at the State House for you to speak to your legislators on active bills. No prior experience is necessary.
- Get tips and resources for participating in the legislative process in our **Take Action Toolkit**, including:
 - ✓ How to find your Maine state legislators
 - ✓ Tips for contacting your legislators
 - ✓ Video on how to testify via Zoom
 - ✓ Video on how to write and deliver testimony
 - ✓ Tips on writing a letter-to-the-editor

Congressional Contact Info 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) 618-5560
Biddeford: (207) 283-1101	

Senator Angus King

Washington, DC: (202) 224-5344	Biddeford: (207) 352-5216
Augusta: (207) 622-8292	Portland: (207) 245-1565
Bangor: (207) 945-8000	Presque Isle: (207) 764-5124

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

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

EDITOR / Allison Childs Wells

WRITERS / Pete Didisheim, Allison Childs Wells

PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE / Beth Comeau, Colin Durrant

BANNER IMAGE / Maine State House, by Beth Comeau

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / Todd Garth

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Our Legislative Bill Tracking page on our website provides links to our priority legislation, information on NRCM's position on the issues, links to factsheets and NRCM testimony, and updates on the status of the bills.