



SPECIAL EDITION

MAINE Environment

2025 Report Card for Maine's Environment

Get our Insider's Take!

TUNE IN to our podcast, "Voices for Maine's Environment," where host Colin Durrant gets Pete Didisheim's take on the legislative session

WATCH our webinar in which NRCM advocacy staff share their own inside scoop on the issues.

VOICES for MAINE'S ENVIRONMENT



with host
Colin Durrant

On June 25th, after a long and contentious session, the Maine Legislature adjourned for the year. Lawmakers are not expected to return to Augusta until the first week of January 2026. Overall, the session was a success for Maine's environment—with many high priority bills signed into law, and most of the bills that would have weakened or eliminated important environmental and climate laws soundly defeated. That said, lawmakers did pass a few bills that NRCM and many of our coalition partners strongly opposed.

We're particularly pleased about new laws that will advance clean energy, help conserve Maine's North Woods, protect water quality, and reduce food waste.

One of our top priorities this year was to pass a bill that requires Maine to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2040. Many coalition partners worked with us throughout the session to secure passage, which happened in the final days of the session. Lawmakers also enacted an important companion bill to create a new cabinet-level Department of Energy Resources that will streamline clean energy procurements with a focus on innovation and efficiency.

Another top priority was to pass legislation related to the protection of high-value natural resources and recreational experiences in Maine's 10.5 million acres of unorganized territories—generally referred to as Maine's North Woods. One of the bills will help conserve older growth forests and undeveloped lakes in the North Woods; another creates a working group to study the future of recreational access to public and private land. Both were signed by the Governor.

A third North Woods-related bill, which we anticipate will become law in 2026, will strengthen the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) through updated statutory qualifications for commissioners, addition of a tribal member selected jointly by tribes in Maine, and a new at-large member appointed by the House Speaker and Senate President.

We also are pleased with new laws to help protect vernal pools, support climate resiliency projects in local communities, create a new food waste reduction program, encourage public transportation options, and approve development of three active transportation trails.

This year lawmakers introduced the highest number of rollback bills that we've seen in more than a decade. Fortunately, most of these bills were defeated, including proposals to terminate Maine's ban on single-use plastic bags, repeal the state's clean energy goals, weaken our mining laws, delay our extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging waste law, create a loophole in Maine's Bottle Bill, block development of an offshore wind port, tax electric vehicles, prevent lawsuits against oil companies, add nuclear power to Maine's renewable energy portfolio standard, and more. In all, we testified against 54 rollback bills.

In the loss column are bills that will weaken Maine's net energy billing (NEB) program, limit local municipal control over decisions to reduce the polluting impacts of fossil fuels, and delay Maine's ban on out-of-state waste at Juniper Ridge Landfill. Lawmakers also failed to pass a bill to expand clean transportation options, which was a disappointment. A number of high priority bills, including funding for the Land for Maine's Future program and legislation to recognize Tribal Sovereignty, were carried over to next year.

As in the past, NRCM worked closely this year with our colleagues in the Environmental Priorities Coalition, comprised of 39 environmental, conservation, and public health organizations, as well as with many other conservation partners and allies.

As always, thank you for your support and engagement throughout the session. Nearly 3,000 people across all 16 counties—and every legislative district—got involved in some way. Your letters, emails, and testimony on priority bills were invaluable and helped deliver another successful year at the State House. Together, we helped protect the Maine we all love.

—Pete Didisheim, Senior Director of Advocacy

HIGHLIGHTS

GOAL	OUTCOME
100% Clean Electricity by 2040	++
Department of Energy Resources	+
Conserve Older Growth Forests	+
Protect Water Quality	+
Reduce Food Waste	+
Protect Net Energy Billing	-
Land for Maine's Future	TBD
Tribal Sovereignty	TBD
Defeat Rollback Bills	+



Harry & Lyss/Nrcm

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





Positive Outcomes

Revision Energy



100% Clean Energy by 2040 + +

High energy costs in Maine are primarily driven by our heavy dependence on out-of-state oil and gas. Every year, we spend close to \$5 billion on fossil fuels. That's why it is so important to continue Maine's transition to clean energy. We took a big step in that direction this year when the Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law a bill (LD 1868) to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2040. A recent study by the Governor's Energy Office titled "Pathways to 2040" shows that the new goal could lower average household energy costs by about \$1,300 per year by replacing expensive fossil fuels with more efficient, clean energy technologies.

New Department of Energy Resources +

For decades, Maine has been more dependent on home heating fuel than any other state in the nation. Energy costs, dependence on fossil fuels, the imperative of reducing carbon emissions—these are among Maine's most important policy challenges—yet our energy office does not have a seat at the Governor's Cabinet table. That will change this year with enactment of LD 1270, which creates a new cabinet-level Department of Energy Resources with the mission of helping achieve a more diverse, local, reliable, and affordable portfolio of energy resources for Maine.

Nathaniel Child/NRCM



North Woods Conservation +

Maine boasts some of the most undeveloped areas in the Northeast, comprising half of the state. The North Woods is generally synonymous with the 10.4 million acres of unorganized territories overseen by the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC). This year, lawmakers passed a bill (LD 1529) introduced by Sen. Rick Bennett (R-Oxford County) that directs the State to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy to conserve older growth forests—which now comprise only three percent of Maine's North Woods. The new law also directs LUPC to review the State's lake management classification system, including consideration of how to conserve remote, undeveloped ponds in Maine's North Woods.

NRCM File



Food Waste Reduction +

Food waste accounts for a significant volume of the solid waste that goes to our landfills and waste-to-energy facilities, reducing landfill capacity and contributing to climate change. To help reduce food waste, lawmakers passed a bill (LD 1065) introduced by Sen. Stacy Brenner (D-Cumberland County) that requires

Maine's largest food waste generators to divert food waste from landfills, aligning with Maine's climate and recycling goals. The bill creates a new Food Waste Reduction and Recycling Program that will begin in 2030 to reduce food waste generated by large generators, increase donations of edible food to hunger relief organizations, and facilitate food waste recycling.

JCadwell/NRCM



Tribal Member for Land Use Planning Commission +

LUPC serves an important role as the planning and zoning authority for Maine's unorganized territories. This year, Rep. Bill Bridgeo (D-Augusta) introduced a bill (LD 870) to expand and strengthen LUPC. The amended bill will add a tribal member to the LUPC and also an at-large member appointed by legislative leaders. The bill is still on the Governor's desk, but we understand that it will become law next year. We are particularly pleased about the tribal appointment, since 80% of the land owned by tribes in Maine is located within the unorganized territories. They deserve to have a seat at the table.



"Lawmakers this year worked on a bill to strengthen the qualifications and selection of members of the Land Use Planning Commission. As a resident of the Unorganized Territory, it was important to me to participate in the deliberations and speak in support of having knowledge, expertise, and representation on this important Commission. I am gratified that this effort will become law next year."

—Sally Farrand, Beaver Cove

David Small



Vernal Pool Protections +

Through passage of a bill (LD 497) introduced by Rep. Vicki Doudera (D-Camden), legislators strengthened protections for state-recognized "Significant Vernal Pools," which serve as essential breeding habitat for many amphibians, insects, spiders, and crustaceans. The law creates a 100-foot "no disturbance" zone and closes a loophole that had allowed development to encircle significant vernal pools.

Debb Dawson



Active Transportation Trails +

Lawmakers passed two bills (LD 29 and LD 30), both introduced by Sen. Mattie Daughtry (D-Cumberland County), that authorize the state to build trails within unused rail corridors between Brunswick and Augusta, between Pembroke and Calais, and between Portland and Auburn. In each case, the development of trails in these corridors was recommended by a Rail Use Advisory Committee. Studies, engineering, and funding will all still be needed, but securing legislative authorization to proceed to these next steps is essential.



Harmful Outcomes



City of Bangor

Expanding Public Transit Options +

Lawmakers took a small step toward improving public transit options by passing a bill (LD 1451) introduced by Sen. Mike Tipping (D-Penobscot County) requiring the Maine Department of Transportation to create a working group charged with developing an implementation plan for recommendations made in this year’s Public Transportation Advisory

Council report. The report calls for increasing state operating funding for transit systems and dedicated funding so that service expansion can be implemented.

Progress on PFAS at Brunswick Landing +

Lawmakers representing the Brunswick area this year introduced multiple bills to help prevent another pollution event like the August 2024 spill of 1,450 gallons of firefighting foam containing PFAS, also known as “forever chemicals.” One that reached the Governor’s desk and has been signed into law (LD 407), introduced by Rep. Dan Ankeles (D-Brunswick), prohibits the use or storage of PFAS-containing firefighting foam starting January 1, 2026.



Allison Wells

Kennebec flooding in Augusta

Community Preparedness and Resilience +

The Governor signed a bill (LD 1) that she introduced that will help make Maine communities, homes, and infrastructure more resilient to extreme weather events and flooding that are becoming worse due to climate change. The bill provides \$39 million in the areas of home resilience and enhanced mitigation resources and communications, and it creates a state resilience office and Flood Ready Maine program.



Beth Comeau

Long Lake, Harrison

Protecting Water Quality +

Maine homeowners utilize septic systems more than almost any other state, but some of these systems do a poor job in sandy soils removing nutrients that cause water pollution. Sen. Henry Ingwersen (D-York County) introduced a bill (LD 1550) to help address this issue by reducing pollution escaping to waterways from septic systems in poor soils. The Department of Health and Human Services will be required to amend septic design standards so that systems installed in sandy soil promote nutrient removal through natural processes, like what already occurs in fine-grained soils.



“NRCM was a great partner this session working with me to pass a bill to protect clean water from septic system pollution. As with so many environmental issues at the State House, NRCM brings together the technical knowledge and legislative strategy needed to win—and on this bill, we won.”

—Senator Henry Ingwersen (D-York County)



ETheberge/NRCM

Solar array, Arrostook County

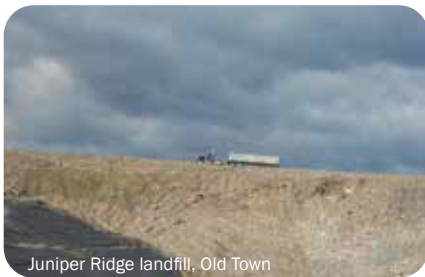
Net Energy Billing Program Weakened -

Lawmakers missed an opportunity to adopt a reasonable compromise in reforming Maine’s rooftop and community solar programs. Instead, they passed a bill (LD 1777) introduced by Rep. Sophie Warren (D-Scarborough) that goes too far with

its changes to our Net Energy Billing program. The law retroactively reduced compensation for existing solar projects, jeopardizing project finances and contracts, and will reduce or eliminate the monthly savings for as many as 100,000 community solar subscribers. The law leaves rooftop solar in place but will sharply limit solar access for future community solar subscribers.

Clean Transportation Bill Defeated -

A majority of the Transportation Committee voted to support a bill (LD 1138), introduced by Sen. Stacy Brenner (D-Cumberland County), to reduce transportation-related emissions through an increase in clean transportation options. Yet it ultimately was defeated in the House and Senate. The bill would have helped reduce congestion and pollution by facilitating greater investments in public transit and safer walking and biking paths, but the Department of Transportation opposed the bill and worked hard to defeat it. We are committed to continuing the conversation about strategies to reduce climate impacts of transportation.



NRCM File

Juniper Ridge landfill, Old Town

Out-of-state Waste Ban Delayed

Lawmakers passed a bill (LD 297) introduced by Rep. Bill Bridgeo (D-Augusta) that provides another two-year delay on the ban on out-of-state waste that was enacted in 2022. Casella Waste Systems once again

claimed that it continues to need out-of-state waste to stabilize PFAS-containing municipal sludge at the State-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill (JRL) in Old Town, which Casella manages. NRCM and others, including the Penobscot Nation, testified against the delay.

Fossil Fuel Protection Bill Advances

The Legislature passed a misguided and unfortunate bill (LD 556), introduced by Sen. Joe Baldacci (D-Penobscot County), designed by fossil fuel companies to block efforts by communities to move away from fossil fuel dependence. Developed by the natural gas industry and supported by oil dealers, the bill prohibits towns from limiting energy choices, for example, by limiting natural gas hookups for new homes. The bill was introduced in Maine as part of a national campaign by the fossil fuel industry to pre-empt municipal decisions that might curb fossil fuel use.

Carried Over to Next Year

Land for Maine’s Future Funding Multiple bills were introduced this year to provide additional funding to the Land for Maine’s Future (LMF) program, which is running out of money. No action was taken either to provide an appropriation for LMF or send a bond proposal to the voters. All of the bills will be carried over to next year.

Unregulated Storm Water Pollution Although the House and Senate passed a bill (LD 646) to create a commission that would study sources of storm water pollution to Maine waterways, the costs for the study were not funded by the Appropriations Committee. As a result, the bill has been carried over to next year.

Tribal Sovereignty Over the past several years, lawmakers have considered multiple bills that would recognize the inherent sovereignty rights of the Wabanaki Nations by implementing consensus recommendations of the 2019 Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. This year, lawmakers had the option of acting once again on such a bill (LD 785) but decided to carry it over to next year. NRCM will continue to support efforts by the Wabanaki Alliance to achieve full sovereignty for the tribes in Maine.

Wastewater Treatment Bond The Department of Environmental Protection supported passage of a bill (LD 25) that would have sent a \$50 million bond proposal to the voters to facilitate the management and disposal of wastewater sludge containing PFAS. The money would have been distributed through grants to municipalities, but the bill was carried over to next year, along with many other bond proposals.



Defeated: Bills Attacking Existing Safeguards

Legislators proposed more than 50 rollback bills this year that would weaken climate and clean energy laws, environmental protections, rulemaking authority of Maine agencies, the Bottle Bill, and more. We were pleased that nearly all of these bills were rejected. Here are a few that we worked hard to defeat.



NRCM File

Rollback of EPR for Packaging Law

Lawmakers effectively defeated a bill (LD 1423) introduced by Sen. Joe Baldacci (D-Penobscot County) that would have delayed and weakened Maine's extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging law. An amended version of the bill was

passed that provides minor clarifications to Maine's first-in-the-nation law enacted in 2021, and those changes replaced the original bill.



NRCM File

Rollback of Maine's Bag Ban

NRCM helped defeat two bills related to Maine's ban on single-use plastic bags. LD 56, introduced by Rep. Michael Lemelin (R-Chelsea) would have weakened the program by removing the five-cent fee for plastic or paper bags at the point of sale;

and LD 69, introduced by Rep. Barbara Bagshaw (R-Windham) would have repealed Maine's law that promotes the use of reusable bags.

Rollback of Maine's Mining Laws

Legislators amended a bill (LD 795) introduced by Sen. Joseph Martin (R-Oxford County) that would have exempted certain mineral deposits that pose environmental risks from key provisions within Maine's Metallic Mineral Mining Act. The amended bill simply directs the development of rules for recreational or hobby gem extraction.

Blocking Offshore Wind Power Port

Lawmakers defeated two bills (LD 226 and LD 735), introduced by Rep. Reagan Paul (R-Searsport), that would have limited Maine's choices for the site of an offshore wind port in Searsport. If passed, we would have missed 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.



Judy Berk

Belfast Harbor

Repealing Clean Energy Goals

The Legislature defeated a bill (LD 444) introduced by Rep. Laurel Libby (R-Auburn) aimed at slowing Maine's transition to renewable energy by eliminating the State's clean energy goals.

Promoting Nuclear Power

Legislators rejected two bills introduced by Rep. Reagan Paul (R-Winterport) aimed at reviving nuclear power in Maine. Nuclear energy remains one of the most expensive energy sources in the world, with waste disposal issues that continue to be unsolved. One bill (LD 342) would have included nuclear power in Maine's renewable energy portfolio; another (LD 601) would have eliminated Maine's existing requirement that voters must approve construction of any new nuclear power plant. A third bill (LD 343), directing the Public Utilities Commission to begin a process of attracting so-called "small modular nuclear reactors" to Maine, was carried over to next year.

Must-Read Blogs from the Legislative Session:



Rooftop Solar Keeps Lights On and Costs Down During Heat Waves

www.nrcm.org/blog/rooftop-solar-keeps-lights-on-costs-down-heat-waves/

By Rebecca Schultz, NRCM Senior Advocate, Climate & Clean Energy



Protecting Maine's North Woods: Explore What's at Stake

www.nrcm.org/blog/protecting-maines-north-woods-explore-whats-at-stake/

By Luke Frankel, NRCM Woods, Waters, & Wildlife Director

Thanks to everyone who took action to help make this legislative session so successful! Whether you wrote a letter to the editor, testified on a bill, contacted your elected official, or joined us for State House Action Day, you made a difference!

Thank you!

State House Action Day, by Stoomey/NRCM



Become a dues-paying member of NRCM!

Whether you're already a member or thinking about joining, you're part of a community that cares deeply about Maine's future. Thank you!

Financial support from our members strengthens our ability to protect the woods, waters, and wildlife that make Maine so special.

If you're not yet a member, we invite you to deepen your connection by joining us.

Member benefits include:



Discounts at Maine sporting camps



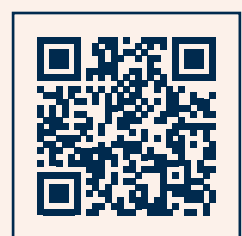
Savings at Islandport Books



Invitations to special events

and more!

Joining is easy — just use the enclosed envelope or scan the **QR code** to get started. We look forward to welcoming you into our community!



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

EDITOR/ Allison Childs Wells, Senior Director, Communications

DESIGN/ brightredbicycle design

WRITERS/ Pete Didisheim, Allison Childs Wells

PROJECT ASSISTANCE/ Beth Comeau, Colin Durrant

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / Todd Garth

NRCM BOARD OF DIRECTORS /

Chair, Norton H. Lamb, Jr.

Treasurer, Kevin Kobel

Secretary, Lucy Abbott

Sarah Cotton

Sam Day

Anthony Eames

Maria Gallace

Francesca Galluccio-Steele

Marcia Harrington

Nancy Hasenfus

Sam Lavalley

Al Manville

Peter Millard

Liz Rettenmaier

David Schylling