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Nahmakanta Ecological Reserve, Penobscot County, by Nathaniel Child/NRCM

**SPRING/SUMMER 2025**

# MAINE Environment

## Get Involved

Visit [NRCM.org](https://www.nrcm.org) to sign our petition to protect the North Woods or learn how you can support the bills we are supporting.



Follow us! @NRCMenvironment

## Protecting Maine's North Woods

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

**M**aine's North Woods is a vast and beautiful place—the largest undeveloped forest left in the eastern U.S. that spans more than half the state. It is a vital ecological resource, providing habitat for a diverse array of plants and wildlife, and serving as a valuable carbon sink that absorbs climate pollution from the air.

Traditions, memories, and livelihoods are made here thanks to broad access to land, and thanks to Maine's outdoor recreation businesses and heritage industries like forestry that it supports. But pressure on the region is growing—new vacation homes and sprawling developments are popping up. Air and water pollution are growing threats. The impacts of climate change are taking a toll. Now more than ever, we need to have a conversation about how we can work together to protect the future of this iconic landscape before it's too late.

### Why is the North Woods Special?

The North Woods is one of the last remaining primarily unfragmented temperate forests in the eastern United States. This wild landscape is filled with life including species of conservation concern. The region features major rivers and thousands of streams, remote lakes, and pristine ponds. Beyond its ecological importance, the North Woods also plays a major role in sustaining Maine's economy and supporting local jobs in outdoor recreation and forestry.

The North Woods is primarily located within Maine's Unorganized Territories—more than 10.4 million acres that have no local, incorporated municipal government. In place of local government, all land use planning and zoning decisions in these areas are carried out by Maine's Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC). The agency, its hard-working staff, and the appointed Commissioners that ultimately vote on these decisions play a critical role in determining what resources get protected and how and where development happens.

*Story continued on page 2*



Little Spencer and Big Spencer Mountains,  
First Roach Pond, Piscataquis County

Kathy Maximic



Visit our new North Woods online interactive storymap to view the data from this story and a video about land conservation in Maine.

## Standing Up for Maine

**I**n its first 100 days, the Trump Administration has focused on increasing the use of expensive fossil fuels; undermining bedrock environmental laws; eliminating diversity, equity, and inclusion programs; and attempting to override the role of Congress to decide how the budget of the United States will be spent. These actions have caused widespread concern here in Maine and across the nation. NRCM is standing up with so many of you to push back. Here are some ways we've been partnering with people across all 16 counties to take on attacks on our fundamental rights, including our right to clean air and water.

### Highlighting Harm to Maine People and Businesses

With nonprofit partners, we organized a powerful roundtable discussion in Brewer where Mainers shared stories of how the Trump Administration's unlawful actions and funding cuts are disrupting lives across the state. The Executive Director of the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce highlighted the economic impact of inadequate national park staffing, and the Maine Coast Fisherman's Association spoke about how sweeping cuts could be devastating to fishing and seafood businesses. A wildlife biologist, mental health specialist, and veteran—all unfairly fired—spoke about the losses that will happen without the important roles their positions provided.

### Protecting Cost-Saving Clean Energy Investments

We're fighting to protect the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which Congress passed to support cost-saving clean energy projects for local farmers, towns, businesses, and homeowners. Freezing and rescinding grant funding that saves hard-working

*Story continued on page 2*



Chris L'Abbe

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



## A Note from Todd

To win on an issue takes many voices. It requires flexibility. Responsiveness. Clarity. NRCM has learned this well during the course of its 66 years. Started in 1959 as a small group of Mainers wanting to protect the Allagash, NRCM has now grown to nearly 20,000 supporters strong, with members from across Maine and beyond. We have blazed trail together by achieving dozens of successes that have helped keep Maine a special place.

But there is still much work to be done, more trails to blaze.

On Earth Day, we launched a refreshed logo that is grounded in our history while incorporating the vibrancy of our future. We are excited that it highlights natural features intrinsic to Maine's identity: forested mountains, flowing waters, iconic wildlife, a rising sun that inspires hope every day.

Just as NRCM has expanded over the years into new ways to communicate and reach new audiences, our refreshed logo allows us increased flexibility for email, social media, web, and print, through the use of rich new colors and marks that appeal to broad audiences. This is especially important as we seek to elevate all voices.

We invite you to visit our online store for the opportunity to wear your passion for Maine's environment on T-shirts, hats, and more. Meanwhile, as we continue our work in the Maine Legislature and at the federal level, we hope the new logo will inspire you, reminding you of hikes through a forest, kayaking on a river or sailing along the Maine coast, and seeing your first moose or other iconic Maine wildlife.

Our mission isn't changing, and we're still driven by the same commitment to safeguarding the nature of Maine. The fresh, new visual look, we believe, reinforces that commitment while centering us in the beauty and features that make Maine special. We hope you agree and feel as motivated as ever, like we do, to protect our lands, waters, air, and wildlife.



## North Woods - from Page 1



Zoe Keller

Arctic charr, Deboullie Ecological Reserve, Aroostook County

### Ecological Importance

Maine's North Woods is home to some of the last remaining stands of older-growth forest in the eastern US. A recent report published by researchers at Our Climate Common and Tufts University mapped the locations of Late-Successional/Old-Growth Forest (LSOG) across Maine's unorganized territories (UT). The study used LiDAR data of tree canopy height and a random forest algorithm to identify four forest classes across the Unorganized Territories. These ranged from recently cut to forests with trees between 100-200 years old.

The research group found that older-growth stands now comprise only 3% of the forest in Maine's UT. This compares to an estimate of 6% in 2003 and 70% in pre-colonial times. If current trends continue, most of Maine's remaining older forests will disappear within 35 years.

Unique in the eastern US, the Unorganized Territories are home to remote lakes and ponds that lack any development along their shorelines. The pristine water quality found in these waterbodies supports one of the last remaining strongholds of wild, self-reproducing eastern brook trout and Arctic charr in the country.

To categorize the resource values of the more than 1,500 lakes across the UT, the state conducted a study in 1987 to guide land use planning decisions. NRCM's analysis of the study found that the majority of lakes and ponds (1,186) were placed in Management Class 7, which lacks any associated protective zoning. Of the 167 Class 7 waterbodies that were identified as having "outstanding" natural resources, 52 currently are undeveloped. Because undeveloped, high-value lakes and ponds are increasingly rare, NRCM is taking steps to protect them from pollution and development.

The North Woods also provides a safe home for many species of birds, mammals, fish, and insects that rely on the unfragmented nature of this region for their continued survival.

The entire North Woods region in Maine is considered a globally important bird area by the National Audubon Society, supporting hundreds of species of birds including 24 that are considered rare in the state. It also provides habitat for iconic animals like the Canada lynx, black bear, and moose. As the world faces catastrophic losses in biodiversity, protecting places like the North Woods is more important than ever to ensuring a rich diversity of plants and animals can exist for future generations.

### A Region Under Threat

As Maine's year-round and seasonal populations continue to grow, more and more people are looking to the Unorganized Territories for new development. By mapping the locations of new dwelling permits issued by the LUPC from 2009-2022, NRCM has been able to identify hotspots of development pressure.

The analysis found that the following regional outdoor recreation hubs saw some of the greatest growth in development: Rangeley Lakes, Moosehead Lake, Mount Chase, and greater Bethel. The Town of Lakeville ranked 4th in new dwelling permits, which can largely be attributed to "the expansive use of land divisions that were exempt from subdivision review." This legacy land division, performed without oversight from the LUPC, continues to impact land use today.

As an active participant in the LUPC's regional planning processes, NRCM has consistently pushed for economic growth in the region that focuses on strengthening existing communities and business areas. Making smart development decisions helps to support the area's recreation and tourism-based economy without sacrificing its scenic beauty and ecological importance. Holding fast to this principle will be important when LUPC soon launches an update of its Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the region.

### Protecting the North Woods for Future Generations

Climate change is harming delicate ecosystems and the rich biodiversity that thrives in Maine's North Woods. Rising temperatures are disrupting growing seasons and reducing snowfall that many species have adapted to and depend on for survival. Our forests, particularly the old-growth areas, are feeling the strain and face increasing threats that could upend the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

Maine's North Woods can be a part of the solution. Old-growth forests, remote ponds, and wetlands play a vital role in pulling carbon pollution out of the air—a climate solution called carbon sequestration. Expanding land conservation opportunities and protecting the region's ecological value is not just about protecting a beautiful place, it's about ensuring the future of the region and what it provides to the planet.

NRCM is working with scientists, lawmakers, and regional leaders to protect the unique character of the North Woods. This session, we advanced a bill that would assign additional protections to high-value remote ponds that have not yet been developed and develop a strategy to conserve older-growth forest stands. By protecting Maine's North Woods, we not only protect all the rich biodiversity it supports, but also its ability to act as a buffer against climate change. Together we can ensure that the North Woods remains intact for us and for future generations.

## 100 Days - from Page 1

business owners and working families money does nothing to reduce the nearly \$5 billion that Mainers spend annually on dirty, out-of-state fossil fuels. We're also opposing attempts to slow down research and investments in homegrown clean energy, especially offshore wind, that will diversify our energy supply.

### Opposing Drastic EPA Rollbacks

We are taking a strong stand against drastic rollbacks to clean air and water protections. It is deeply alarming that the EPA is now advocating to weaken rules that were put in place to stop toxic air pollution from power plants in the West and South from being carried by the jet stream to upwind states, including Maine, where it harms fish and people, especially those with respiratory diseases.

### Speaking Out Against Attempts to Remove Endangered Species Protections

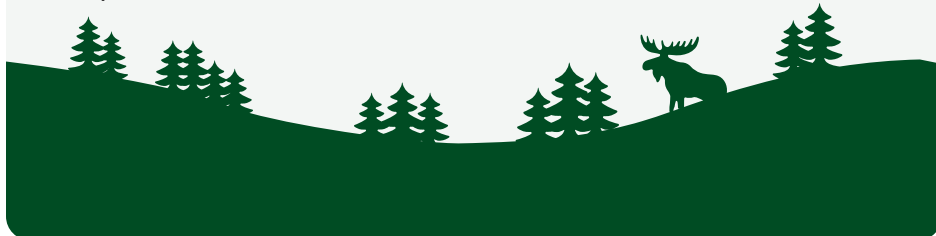
We're working with our national partners to speak out against a proposal to change the longstanding definition of "harm" to a species. This change in a critical Endangered Species Act (ESA) legal definition would severely weaken the ability of this law to protect endangered and threatened species by allowing "incidental take" to include preventable deaths of birds, wildlife, and other creatures of conservation concern.

### Unifying the Nonprofit Community

To help ensure coordination among organizations with similar concerns, NRCM has convened more than 30 local nonprofit organizations dedicated to helping Maine people. As part of this work, we are reaffirming our commitment to diversity and inclusion because the environmental movement must play a role in advancing equity and justice throughout our society.

"I believe in our democracy even when I do not agree with the outcomes, but we have to focus on our most vulnerable disenfranchised people for everyone to come from the same strength of power and opportunity. Otherwise, what are we serving?" wrote Penobscot Chief Kirk Francis in a March 2025 *Bangor Daily News* op-ed.

We know it's hard to read the news these days, to see our neighbors hurting, to watch local businesses and farmers struggle to stay afloat. We're here to help you navigate this challenging time with the tools and actions to make a difference. Coming together as a community who loves Maine's environment can give us power and hope.





Pumpkin Island Light, by M. Leonard



Join Us **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18**

### Join Us for a Cruise on the Penobscot from Bar Harbor to Bangor:

*A Celebration of Fall Foliage and River Restoration*  
**Saturday, October 18**

Cruise the Penobscot River aboard a comfortable catamaran for stunning lighthouse views with Bar Harbor Whale Watch

The Penobscot River once teemed with migratory fish and nourished the Penobscot people for thousands of years. But industrialization brought dams and pollution that devastated fish populations. Thanks to the visionary work of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust (PRRT), its waters now flow freer than they have in centuries. NRCM is proud to be a founding member of this groundbreaking collaboration, and we're thrilled to invite you aboard a one-of-a-kind event celebrating the river's renewal on October 18.

Join NRCM and fellow members of the PRRT for a stunning cruise from Bar Harbor to Bangor, tracing the Atlantic salmon's path home through Maine's largest river. We'll stop at 10 iconic lighthouses, surrounded by peak autumn colors. This trip is perfect for foliage lovers, lighthouse enthusiasts, nature photographers, and others.

Our staff and colleagues from the other PRRT founding organizations—the Penobscot Nation, American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Maine Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, and Trout Unlimited—will be on hand to share more information about the history of our conservation efforts.

Naturalist Zack Klyver and Bob Trapani Jr., President of the American Lighthouse Foundation, will serve as guides, sharing stories of wildlife, river history, and the lighthouses that have watched over these waters for generations. Professional photographer Michael Leonard will be onboard to help aspiring photographers capture stunning shots, while B&H Photo staff will offer expert gear advice and let you try out professional lenses during the cruise.

The trip is hosted by Bar Harbor Whale Watch Co. and will depart and return to Bar Harbor with a one-and-a-half-hour lunch break in Bangor.

Active NRCM members receive a 25% discount on tickets for you, family members, and friends. The regular ticket price is \$229. If you would like to receive a discount code, please email Ella Tabasky at [etabasky@nrcm.org](mailto:etabasky@nrcm.org) to confirm your membership status.

#### Featured Lighthouses:

Bear Island • Bass Harbor Head • Blue Hill Bay • Pumpkin Island  
Dyce Head • Fort Point • Eagle Island • Deer Island Thoroughfare  
Burnt Coat • Great Duck

#### Additional Sights:

Fort Knox • Deer Isle Bridge • Penobscot Narrows Bridge • Bucks Ledge Day Beacon

To learn more about this trip, scan the QR code above or visit [www.barharborwhales.com/penobscotriverfoliagelighthousecruise](http://www.barharborwhales.com/penobscotriverfoliagelighthousecruise)



### Turn Your Bottles into Action for Maine's Environment

Your bottles and cans can do more than pile up, they can help protect Maine's environment! NRCM is a registered nonprofit with CLYNK to Give, a recycling program that lets you donate your bottle and can deposits to support causes you care about. There are two ways you can support NRCM by returning eligible bottles and cans at a designated CLYNK drop-off site:

**1. Have your own bags?**

Request five free NRCM bag tags by emailing [support@nrcm.org](mailto:support@nrcm.org). Tag your full bags, drop them off, and NRCM receives the proceeds. Simple as that!

**2. Donate your CLYNK balance online:**

Log into your account at [CLYNK.com](http://CLYNK.com), go to "Donations," and search for Natural Resources Council of Maine to donate part or all of your balance.

**Every bottle and can counts. Turn your recycling into impact!**

## Spring 2025 Tribute Gifts

Among gifts received from October 1, 2024 through April 30, 2025

#### IN HONOR OF

John Alsop and Janice Stuver from Corinne Alsop  
The Bower/Stebbins Family from Ethan Stebbins  
Sarah T. Farrand from David Farrand  
Charlotte Fullam from Katharine Harris  
Jim Jarosz from Anonymous

#### IN MEMORY OF

Owen Haskell from GP Holdings Inc.  
Kenneth D. Hoch from Ruth and Gary Greenberg  
Ophelia D. Lepore from Giovanna Lepore  
Elliot D. Lobel from Anonymous  
Dr. Raymond McLain from Mary Ann Lamanna  
Scraper from Saren Goldner  
James Waples from Anonymous

#### Nancy Bliss from:

Kevin Carbin Jr.  
Barbara and Glenn Fernald  
Madonna Chapter OES No. 144  
Charlotte H. Kirkpatrick  
Anna Van Heeckeren and Edward Baker

#### Bart Hague from:

Elizabeth Hague and Libo Liu  
William and Mary Jean Holt

#### Ralph M. Leach from:

Ken Gornstein  
Melanie Lovell

#### Ellen Patz from:

Bonny Bernstein  
Margot Heller  
Stephen Hecht  
Michael Moser  
Melissa Cordish  
Norine Andrew

#### Ralph T. Perry from:

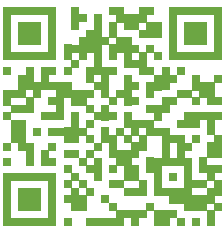
Susan and Brian Lesperance  
Caroline Kurrus  
California Community Foundation

#### Constance Pike Zdenek from:

Debora Smith  
Patricia P. Parker

## NRCM: A Legacy Member of MaineShare

Do you care about equity, justice, and a healthier world? You're not alone! NRCM is a proud legacy member of MaineShare, a giving platform that makes it easy to support Maine-based groups making real change happen every day. Check out MaineShare's new website to learn more about the amazing organizations advancing racial and gender justice, environmental health, animal welfare, and more. One simple platform. Countless ways to make a difference. Scan the QR code or visit [maineinitiatives.org/maineshare](http://maineinitiatives.org/maineshare) to learn more.





## NRCM Awards Sustainability Grants to Organizations Across Maine

**Next Deadline: July 18**

Each year, NRCM's Sustainable Maine team awards grants to Maine schools and organizations for sustainability projects. Last year, grantees received funding for projects ranging from composting services for a school in Bangor to a portable sewing machine for Maine GearShare in Brunswick to a Blue Hill beach cleanup on Earth Day. Ten groups received grants totaling \$10,000. The City of South Portland was one of this year's grantees. Julie Rosenbach, South Portland's Sustainability Director, says, "Our inaugural repair fair was such a hit! People came with lamps, small electronics, clothes, and other household items they needed help repairing. On a cold January day, it created a real sense of community. It didn't take much funding to organize the event; our small grant from the Natural Resources Council of Maine was easy to apply for and covered all the costs."



South Portland bike repair event

photo courtesy City of South Portland

Does your community library want to kick-start a sustainability project? NRCM is pleased to announce the launch of the Sustainable Maine Libraries program, which will support investments for repair events and creation of more lending libraries for household items. Communities interested in funding these projects can learn more at [nrcm.org/programs/sustainability/sustainability-grants](http://nrcm.org/programs/sustainability/sustainability-grants) or email Sustainable Maine Program Manager Vanessa Berry at [vberry@nrcm.org](mailto:vberry@nrcm.org). Grants will be awarded on a rolling basis with the first deadline on July 18, followed by two additional deadlines of September 12 and December 5.—Beth Comeau, Web & Communications Manager



Barbara Heap

### MY MAINE THIS WEEK

NRCM member **Barbara Heap of Readfield, Maine**, shares her photo titled, "Pondering Life," which she took while visiting Little Lyford Lodge in Greenville.

Do you have a photograph of Maine you'd like to share? Send your submissions to [beth@nrcm.org](mailto:beth@nrcm.org). Visit "My Maine This Week" online at [nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org) for guidelines and more photos.



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## NRCM's 19th Annual People's Choice Award!

Help us honor someone (or a group) who has volunteered their time and gone above and beyond to protect one of Maine's special places, or helped pass a particular safeguard for the environment, or worked to stop polluting companies from contaminating our state. Someone who has devoted their time and effort to making sure future generations will enjoy the kind of Maine we know and love today.



We're accepting nominations for our People's Choice Award through **Friday, July 11**, so get your nomination in today! NRCM will compile the nominees and post finalists on our website, where, from **Monday, July 21** through noon on **Thursday, August 14**, you, your friends, and your family can vote for the person you think most deserves this year's People's Choice Award. (Please note that we cannot consider someone who currently sits 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 for which you feel they should be nominated. The People's Choice Award honors volunteers.)

To nominate someone, visit our website at [nrcm.org](http://nrcm.org) or send your nomination to Beth Comeau, NRCM, 3 Wade St, Augusta, ME 04330. Include your name and contact information; the name and contact information for the person you are nominating; and then in 200 words or less, tell us about why you think they deserve the award. The winner will be presented with the award at a special event this fall. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Beth Comeau at [beth@nrcm.org](mailto:beth@nrcm.org) or (207) 430-0106.



### NRCM Green Tip

**SUN SAFETY** The best way to protect yourself from the sun's harmful rays is to stay out of them, or wear long sleeves, pants, and a brimmed hat. If those aren't options, be careful about which sunscreen you choose. Check out the EWG Guide to Sunscreens to find the sunscreens that are best for you and your family at [ewg.org/sunscreen](http://ewg.org/sunscreen).

### NRCM Member Puffin Cruise

Join us aboard the Hardy Boat on Wednesday, July 30 from 6-8 PM for your chance to see one of Maine's favorite summer visitors, Atlantic Puffins! Dr. Steve Kress, founder of Project Puffin, will join us as our naturalist/narrator on the boat.

Tickets are \$60 and sell quickly.

To see if there are tickets still available, contact Beth at [beth@nrcm.org](mailto:beth@nrcm.org) or 207.430.0106.



Russell Regnery



**Join us for a weekend of recreation and learning at Weatherby's sporting camp in Grand Lake Stream**

**September 26-29, 2025**

If you are interested in learning more or signing up for the trip, please contact [events@nrcm.org](mailto:events@nrcm.org).