



Damaging Maine:

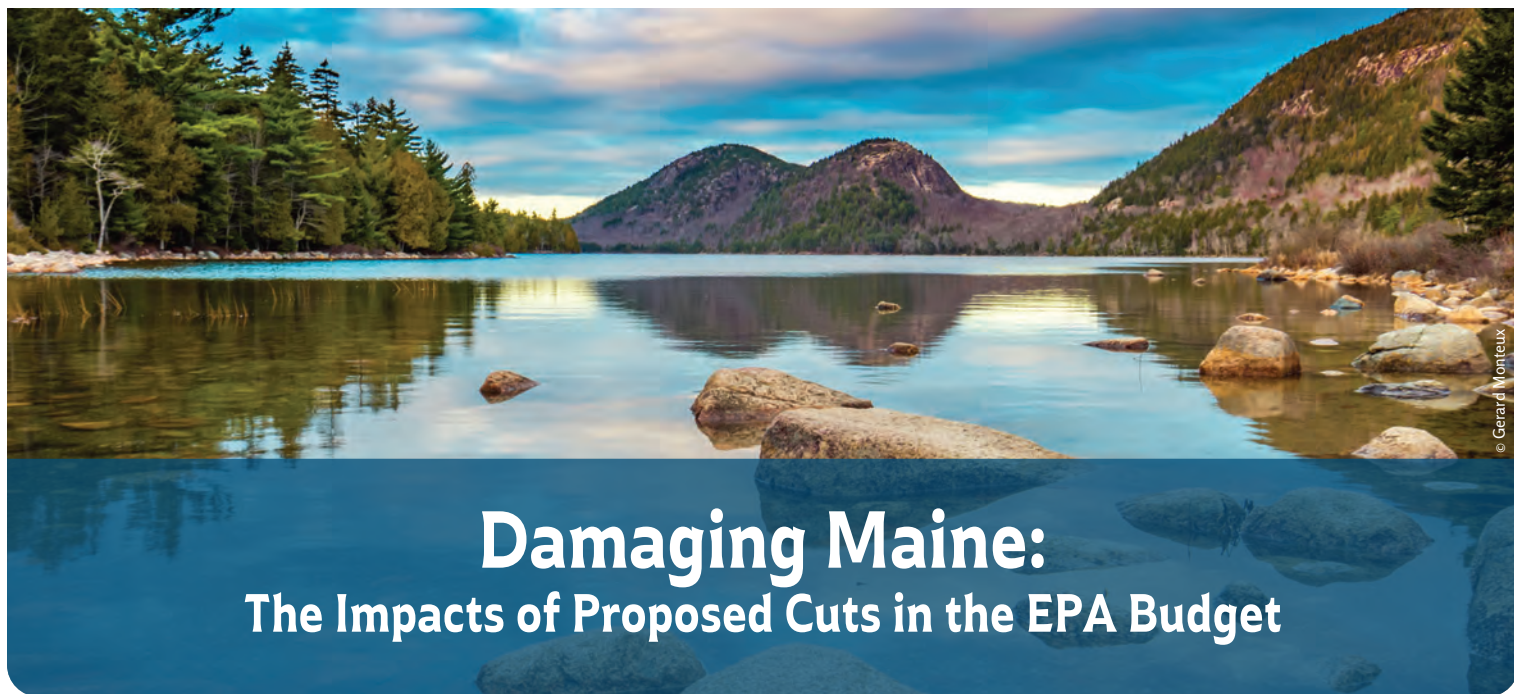
The Impacts of Proposed Cuts in the EPA Budget





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Damaging Maine:

The Impacts of Proposed Cuts in the EPA Budget

The House proposed FY26 budget risks undoing decades of progress and could leave a legacy of environmental harm that would negatively impact Maine's environment and communities for generations to come.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Maine is facing unprecedented cuts in federal funding that would undermine efforts to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink.

Proposed reductions to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s budget represent the most extreme rollback of environmental funding in decades. If enacted, they would significantly erode EPA's capacity to work with states like Maine in safeguarding public health and the environment. These burdens would be especially felt by low-income families, individuals with respiratory difficulties, and communities of color across our rural state. Far from empowering the states, proposed budget cuts would jeopardize the ability of states, including Maine, to provide clean air and clean water and protect the environment and public health.

On July 14, 2025, the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee released its proposed FY26 budget, which the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee later advanced in a party-line vote. The budget proposal targets the EPA for some of the deepest cuts of any domestic agency, cutting its budget by \$2.1 billion (23%) from the current levels, and its workforce by 1,274 (23%). The House budget would slash EPA programs that reduce pollution, save lives, strengthen our economy, and protect our communities and quality of life.



We analyzed the House budget's proposed cuts to the EPA and found they would have the following impact on Maine people, communities, and environment:

- 1. Put Maine's Clean Water At Risk.** The proposal would cut funding for key programs that help upgrade aging water infrastructure throughout the state. This includes wastewater treatment facilities, stormwater pipes, drinking water facilities, and various water pollution control measures. These cuts would effectively stall current progress toward cleaning our waterways and ensuring that Mainers have access to safe drinking water.
- 2. Increase Air Pollution and Threaten Public Health for Our Most Vulnerable.** The House proposal cuts funding for EPA Clean Air programs by more than 43% and eliminates the Atmospheric Protection program and Environmental Justice programs entirely. The impact of these drastic cuts would be amplified by a slew of policy riders that would block implementation of numerous clean air regulations that monitor, limit, and tax the release of harmful pollutants by large producers.
- 3. Limit the Clean-up of Contaminated Brownfield and Superfund Sites.** The proposed cuts would greatly reduce the funding available to clean up hazardous and toxic waste sites across Maine. These include large-scale efforts to rehabilitate former industrial areas and run-down mills across the state. They also leave behind small projects aimed at ensuring areas like former gas stations and auto repair facilities are free of substances that harm people and the environment. This reduction in funding would severely restrict the ability to redevelop these areas, thereby limiting progress toward economic revitalization in many communities across Maine.
- 4. Stopping EPA Efforts to Protect Communities from Climate Change.** The House proposal eliminates EPA funding for most of the agency's climate programs, including climate science, climate policy and economics, and greenhouse gas reporting. Maine is already experiencing the impacts of climate change, and by eliminating these programs, EPA would be abandoning important work that can help reduce the threats from sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and ocean acidification.

5. Halting Important Scientific Research. The House proposal slashes EPA's Science and Technology budget by 31%, which would cripple EPA's ability to provide the facts and analysis that policymakers, including Maine lawmakers, need to make sound decisions about public health and environmental protections. Additional deep cuts to the National Science Foundation would mean reduction of grants that fund research and development projects in Maine.

The draconian budget proposals being made by the Trump Administration and its allies in Congress have made it abundantly clear that the Administration cares more about protecting polluters than protecting the public, prefers to save money than save lives, and is eager to invest in fossil fuel production instead of investing in communities.

Maine voters understand the importance of the environment to their economy and quality of life and do not support measures that result in more pollution, fewer environmental safeguards, or a retreat from our shared responsibility to combat climate change. Yet, the House FY26 proposal would move the nation and Maine in exactly that direction. It risks undoing decades of progress and could leave a legacy of environmental harm that would negatively impact Maine's environment and communities for generations to come.



OVERVIEW

In March 2025, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced his plan for the “biggest deregulatory action in U.S. history” with a pledge to roll back 31 environmental and health regulations. He also detailed his intention to cut the EPA budget by at least 65%.

In May 2025, the Trump Administration released its FY26 Discretionary Budget Request to Congress, revealing a proposed 54% cut to the EPA with major reductions to programs and staff, including draconian cuts to enforcement (-32%), research (-45%), climate and environmental justice programs (-100%), and state and local funding (-88%).

The House’s 2026 Budget proposal targets the EPA for some of the deepest cuts of any domestic agency, cutting its budget by \$2.1 billion (23%) from the current levels, and its workforce by 1,274 (23%). This includes a proposed 29% cut to its environmental programs and management of the environment, a 31% cut to science and technology at the EPA, and a 47% cut to the Hazardous Substance Superfund.

The proposed budget includes major cuts to programs supporting state and local environmental infrastructure, including significant reductions to water infrastructure funding and the elimination of climate research and programs that regulate greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.

These cuts would cause serious harm nationwide and would be particularly damaging for states like Maine where our environment and economy are tightly intertwined.

The House’s proposed FY26 budget for the EPA, adjusted for inflation, would be cut to levels not seen since the 1970s. The radical staffing cuts would be unprecedented in the 55-year history of the agency. Because much of EPA’s budget supports initiatives carried out at the state level, the severity of these cuts would cripple the ability for Maine and other states to protect our air, water, and health. In fact, the cuts would set the states up for failure. And failure within individual states would mean more cross-border pollution to neighboring states – a serious concern for Maine.



Over the past decade, EPA funding has played an increasingly important role in protecting Maine’s environment. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) depends greatly on EPA funding. In 2024, DEP received \$10.69 million in dedicated grants from EPA, which amounted to more than 21.5% of the Department’s budget and paid for 102 personnel.¹ This money supports nearly every aspect of DEP’s work, including licensing, permitting, enforcement, resource assessment, mitigation, and compliance with the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, hazardous waste laws, and other environmental laws.

The cuts proposed by the Trump Administration and Congress would harm Maine’s economy – particularly our efforts to redevelop sites with contaminated soils and buildings—impede the permitting process for new developments, slow progress on understanding and addressing the impacts of greenhouse gas pollution, and increase conflict about the protection of Maine’s natural resources.

Without question, these cuts would create widespread damage, undermining DEP’s ability to ensure that our water is clean, our air is healthy, and our communities and Maine people are protected from toxic hazards.

¹ Maine Department of Environmental Protection, email message to Natural Resources Council of Maine, September 8, 2025

I. Putting Maine's Clean Waters at Risk

AT STAKE: Maine is home to more than 32,000 miles of rivers and streams, 6,000 lakes and ponds, 2 million acres of freshwater wetlands, and 1.8 million acres of coastal waters statewide.² In addition to being foundational to the quality of life of Mainers, these waterbodies are vital to Maine's economy – supporting the state's \$9 billion tourism industry and \$3 billion fishing sector.^{3,4} Lakes provide safe drinking water to nearly half of Maine's 100 water districts and are particularly important in maintaining the high property values that support municipal budgets in rural parts of the state. In total, the net economic value of lakes is estimated to be more than \$14 billion statewide.⁵

Cuts in water quality protection. The current FY 2026 House EPA appropriation proposes deep cuts to EPA programs that are vital for protecting and restoring Maine's rivers, lakes, wetlands, and coastal waters. Of particular concern are proposed cuts in the following two areas:

- **Grant programs to support development of clean water infrastructure. DEEP CUTS.** The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) is a federal-state partnership that provides municipalities with low-cost financing to develop infrastructure that supports clean water. Projects eligible for funding within the program include upgrades to wastewater treatment facilities, implementation of nonpoint source pollution controls, stormwater infrastructure improvements, targeted protection of estuaries, and water reuse. Funds distributed under the CWSRF program are key to addressing both large, centralized pollution sources like municipal sewage as well as smaller, distributed pollution sources such as runoff from asphalt, lawns, and agricultural fields. One of the major benefits of the CWSRF program is that it has specific state and local match requirements that incentivize local investment in water infrastructure, multiplying the overall impact of the funding. The current House EPA appropriation cuts 26% of the funding for the CWSRF program.

IMPACTS ON MAINE: Through the years, the CWSRF program has been vital in funding major water infrastructure projects across Maine. During the last two fiscal years (2024-2025), Maine received approximately \$59 million from the CWSRF program.⁶ These CWSRF dollars are being placed toward wastewater treatment plant upgrades in Sabattus,

Lubec, and South Berwick; Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) separation projects in Rockland, Westbrook, and Winslow; and stormwater management projects in Peru, Bath, and South Portland to name a few. The proposed funding cut to this program will significantly slow down the much-needed progress Maine has been making toward upgrading and replacing aging water infrastructure. To meet the growing challenges spurred by climate change, we should be increasing federal funding for critical water infrastructure, not decreasing it.

- **Grant programs to support development of drinking water infrastructure. DEEP CUTS.** The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) is a federal-state partnership that provides municipalities with low-cost financing to upgrade and develop drinking water infrastructure. Projects eligible for funding within the program include improvements to drinking water treatment facilities,



2 Maine Department of Environmental Protection, 2018/2020/2022 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report, (Augusta, Maine: DEP, 2022), 219.
3 Maine Office of Tourism, 2023 Maine Office of Tourism Highlights, (Augusta, Maine: MOT, 2024), 2.
4 Seafood Economic Accelerator for Maine, The Economic Impacts of the Maine Seafood Sector (Portland, Maine: SeaMaine, 2023), <https://www.seamaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/FINAL-SEAMaine-Economic-Impact-Analysis-Report-2.pdf>.
5 Maine Lakes, "Valuing the Economic Benefits of Maine's Great Ponds in the 21st Century," last modified April 1, 2024, <https://www.lakes.me/valuing-lakes>.
6 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Annual Allotment of Federal Funds to States, Tribes, and Territories (Washington DC: EPA, 2025), 21.

repair of leaking or old pipes, protection of public water supply sources, and construction of water storage tanks. Like CWSRF, the DWSRF program has specific state and local match requirements that incentivize local investment in drinking water infrastructure. The current House EPA appropriation cuts 21% of the funding for the DWSRF program.

IMPACTS ON MAINE: As communities across Maine work to address the many challenges caused by aging drinking water infrastructure and emerging issues like PFAS contamination, cyanobacteria blooms, and climate change, the DWSRF program has been vital in funding many of the engineered solutions. During the last two fiscal years (2024-2025), Maine received approximately \$79 million in DWSRF funds.⁷ These DWSRF dollars are being placed toward water main replacements in Vinalhaven, Gray, and Dover-Foxcroft; water treatment plant upgrades in Ellsworth, Berwick, and Boothbay; and well replacements in Brunswick, Moscow, and Arundel. The proposed funding cut would have a direct impact on public health by limiting the number of projects that help keep our drinking water clean across the state. As a state with abundant water resources facing growing pressures, we should continue to value and prioritize clean drinking water rather than take it for granted.

To meet the growing challenges spurred by climate change, we should be increasing federal funding for critical water infrastructure, not decreasing it.



II. Increasing Air Pollution and Threats to Public Health

AT STAKE: Maine has one of the highest rates of asthma in the nation, with an estimated 162,000 who suffer from asthma symptoms. These health complications are further exacerbated by poorer air quality. Maine is geographically located in the “tailpipe” of the nation, with prevailing winds bringing pollution to Maine from upwind states. Increased air pollution causes more emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and premature deaths for those with asthma, other respiratory difficulties, and older populations.

Cuts in Air Quality Programs. The EPA sets limits on dangerous air pollutants from factories, power plants, vehicles, and other sources. These limits protect public health by helping prevent asthma attacks, birth defects, cancer, and respiratory and cardiovascular disease. EPA and Maine rely on DEP to implement and enforce the Clean Air Act within the state, reducing pollution generated within Maine, and to work regionally to curb pollution from upwind sources. The House budget proposal could reverse progress achieved in recent years to reduce air pollution problems that damage the health of Mainers, including through the following cuts.

- **Funding to regulate air pollution and uphold the Clean Air Act.**

DEEP CUTS. Much of the EPA’s budget goes to ensuring that polluters are abiding by the laws and regulations that minimize the release of harmful emissions and keep our air clean. Under the Environmental Programs and Management section, the House proposal cuts funding for Clean Air programs by more than 43%, Compliance Monitoring by nearly 33%, and Enforcement by nearly 48%. These programs are vital to the EPA’s ability to regulate air pollution through planning, permitting, inspection, and enforcement, and cuts in this area would also impact data and resources that the Maine DEP relies on to implement the Clean Air Act in Maine.

- **Specific clean air, climate, and environmental justice programs. ELIMINATED.** The proposal includes the elimination of funding for the Atmospheric Protection Program, a key component of the EPA’s work on air quality and encompasses much of the agency’s work on climate change. Additionally, the bill proposes eliminating all environmental justice initiatives, which would leave communities already overburdened by toxic pollution to continue to bear the brunt of these impacts. These proposed cuts come on the heels of the Administration granting dozens of coal power plants and other large polluters a two-year exemption from following regulations for several toxic air pollutants.
- **Policy riders limiting implementation of Clean Air Act rules.** In addition to funding cuts, the House bill contains policy riders specifically aimed at blocking the implementation of several environmental regulations, including certain Clean Air Act rules. Many of these provisions would prohibit the use of funding to implement pollution-limiting programs and regulations, including:
 - o Greenhouse Gas and Multipollutant emissions standards for light-, medium-, and heavy-duty vehicles
 - o Federal “Good Neighbor Plan” for the 2015 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards
 - o Clean Power Plan and Greenhouse Gas Reporting Rule for new and existing power plants and the Crude Oil and Natural Gas sector
 - o Regulation of methane emissions under the Clean Air Act and methane emissions fees for oil and natural gas sectors

IMPACTS ON MAINE: Slashing funding for clean air programs and enforcement nationally would allow more out-of-state air pollution to flow to Maine, harming the health of both people and wildlife. Cuts to the broader clean air management programs would slow DEP’s ability to reduce air pollution in Maine. Meanwhile, losing funding in areas of compliance monitoring and enforcement could mean that polluters who are not following the law could go unnoticed for longer, or not be held accountable at all.



III. Limiting the Clean-up of Contaminated Brownfield and Super Fund Sites

AT STAKE: Maine has many former industrial and business sites that contain hazardous pollutants that must be cleaned up before those properties can be reused for other economic development. Communities with run-down mills and factories are eager to redevelop these sites so that they can once again be sources of employment, business activity, and property taxes. The EPA, through their Brownfields and Super Fund programs, plays a key role in these redevelopment efforts.

Cuts in programs to clean-up sites with hazardous and toxic waste. The current FY 2026 House EPA appropriation includes deep cuts to programs that help communities in Maine bring economic vitality back to industrial sites that have been contaminated with hazardous materials. Of particular concern are proposed cuts in the following two areas:

- **Grants for redeveloping brownfield sites. DEEP CUTS.**

A “brownfield” is defined by EPA as a property where expansion, reuse, or redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived environmental contamination. Pollutants commonly found at brownfield sites include asbestos, petroleum, pesticides, herbicides, PCBs, VOCs, PAHs, lead, and other heavy metals. The purpose of the Brownfields Program is to provide funds that help communities speed up the economic redevelopment of these sites where the contamination is not nearly as serious as those that require clean-up under the Superfund program. Since its creation in the mid-1990s, Maine has received more than \$187 million in Brownfields funding.⁸

- o Some example projects that this money has gone towards in recent years include the transformation of a former railroad yard into the Children’s Museum & Theatre of Maine at Thompson’s Point in Portland, the redevelopment of the former Great Northern Paper Mill site into a recycled aquaculture system in East Millinocket, and the creation of a public water supply and open green space for the Passamaquoddy Tribe on an old farm site in the Town of Perry. The current House EPA appropriation cuts funding for Brownfields grants by 9% and other Brownfields programs by 20%.

IMPACTS ON MAINE: As communities across the state look to transform old mills and industrial areas into new economic opportunities and residential homes to alleviate the current housing crisis, Maine needs the Brownfields Program to

facilitate this redevelopment. In 2024, Maine received \$33 million in Brownfields funding to support projects across the state. This included large remediation projects at industrial sites as well as projects at smaller contaminated sites like former gas stations and auto repair facilities which account for 46% of the brownfields in Maine.⁹ Many current remediation projects could be stalled, and future opportunities may never come to fruition, if funding for EPA’s Brownfields Program is cut.

- **Grants for Superfund hazardous waste site clean-ups.**

DEEP CUTS. EPA’s Superfund Program is responsible for protecting communities by cleaning up hazardous and contaminated sites that have particularly complex clean-up challenges. Of the 16 hazardous waste sites in Maine that have been placed on EPA’s Superfund Program National Priority List (NPL), only six have been deleted following successful remediation (Table 1). The current House EPA appropriation would cut funding for the Superfund program by 59%.



⁸ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Maine Brownfields Funding History,” last modified December 20, 2024, <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/maine-brownfields-funding-history>

⁹ Maine Department of Environmental Protection, “DEP Issue Profile: Brownfields Program,” last modified March 2018, <https://www.maine.gov/dep/spills/brownfields/ipbrownfields.html>.

The current House EPA appropriation would cut funding for the Superfund program by 59%.

IMPACTS ON MAINE: Superfund clean-ups are notoriously complex, challenging, slow, and expensive. The proposed budget cuts would slow clean-up work at the 10 active NPL Superfund sites even more. By slowing down Superfund clean-up activities, the budget cuts will extend the period of time that Mainers and our environment will be exposed to pollutants from these sites and postpone the day when these sites may be reused for other purposes, revitalizing communities and enabling economic development.

Superfund Site	Municipality	Year Deleted
Brunswick Naval Air Station	Brunswick	—
Callahan Mining Corp.	Brooksville	—
Eastern Surplus	Meddybemps	—
Eastland Woolen Mill	Corinna	—
Keddy Mill	Windham	—
Leeds Metal	Leeds	—
Loring Air Force Base	Limestone	—
McKin Co.	Gray	2022
O'Connor Co.	Augusta	2014
Pinette's Salvage Yard	Washburn	2002
Portsmouth Naval Shipyard	Kittery	2024
Saco Municipal Landfill	Saco	—
Saco Tannery Waste Pits	Saco	1999
Union Chemical Co., Inc.	South Hope	2018
West Site/Hows Corners	Plymouth	—
Winthrop Landfill	Winthrop	—

Table 1. List of Superfund NPL sites in Maine, the municipality where they are located, and the year that they were removed from the NPL list if applicable.



IV. Stopping EPA Efforts to Protect Communities from Climate Change

AT STAKE: Climate change has arrived in Maine. It is caused largely by the burning of fossil fuels and is one of the biggest threats to Maine's woods, waters, wildlife, coasts, and communities. This is the overwhelming scientific consensus, both globally and among Maine's experts in climate science. Climate change is already damaging human health, property, and businesses, in Maine and on a global scale. Maine's nature-based economy is already experiencing costly disruptions from climate change.

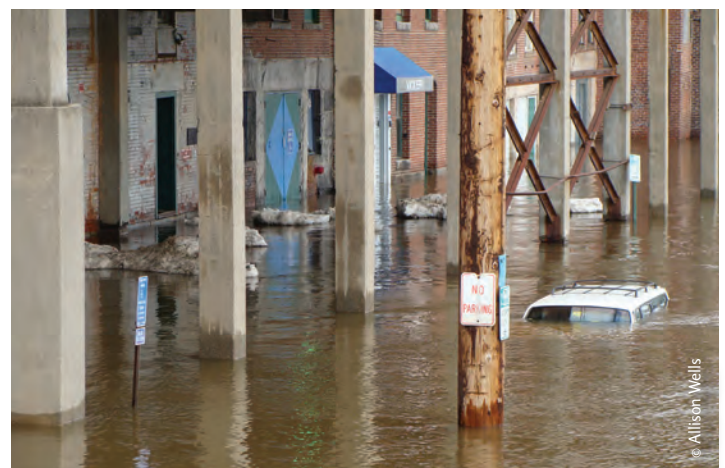
An extraordinary attack on EPA's climate programs. The House proposal eliminates EPA funding for most of the agency's climate programs, including climate science, climate policy and economics, and greenhouse gas reporting.

- **Setting standards for major sources of greenhouse gas pollution. ELIMINATED.** EPA's current programs include those setting standards that keep polluters from emitting unlimited amounts of greenhouse gases, including from major sources like power plants, car and truck tailpipes, and methane plumes from oil and gas wells and pipelines. So-called policy riders included in this budget proposal would ban these cost-effective and common-sense limits on climate pollution.
- **EPA programs to understand and reduce the risks of climate change. ELIMINATED.** Current EPA climate programs target the largest sources of climate-changing carbon pollution, promote voluntary reduction strategies, support research and data gathering, provide technical assistance and public education, and promote international activities to reduce climate-changing pollution around the world. The Maine DEP receives only a small amount of EPA funding for climate work, but Maine has a large stake in efforts by the US government to address the threat of climate change. The House budget eliminates most EPA climate programs, including international climate programs, climate research, and tools for accounting for and reporting greenhouse gases that are used widely by states, local governments, and the private sector.

IMPACTS ON MAINE: Maine already is experiencing significant impacts of climate change. In recent years, Maine has seen record-breaking storms and flooding linked to climate change along the coast and in our inland communities. The Gulf of Maine is one of the fastest warming water bodies in the world. Maine lobstermen, commercial fishermen, and clambers are concerned about the impact that warming waters, ocean acidification, and the arrival of non-native, invasive species have on their businesses and livelihood, in addition to damage to working waterfronts from coastal storms. Iconic Maine species' habitats are shifting north. Coastal communities and property owners are concerned about costly damage caused by sea-level rise. Warming temperatures have been linked to the exponential

increase in Lyme disease cases in Maine. Warmer weather increases the number of "bad air" days that necessitate ozone smog warnings here in Maine. And extreme precipitation events and climate variability are a growing concern because of their impact on Maine agriculture, lake water quality, the winter sports industry, and infrastructure, such as blown-out culverts and roadways.

The Maine Climate Council's 2024 Scientific Assessment states unequivocally that "Maine's climate is getting warmer and wetter and experiencing more extremes." The scientific consensus is that more needs to be done to address the climate problem, not less. The House budget proposes that the EPA does much less, and in many cases, amounts to stopping the work altogether. Taken alongside proposals to intentionally ignore the human health impacts of greenhouse gases, and eliminate greenhouse gas standards from any sources, from tailpipes to smokestacks, the Trump Administration is demonstrating its extreme, anti-science position of denying the reality of human-caused climate change. This budget abdicates the federal government's responsibility to help address climate change through leadership across the federal government—including at the EPA. Everyone in Maine – and worldwide – will suffer the impacts of this Administration's flagrant disengagement from activities aimed at addressing the threat of climate change.



During the winter of 2023, severe storms caused record flooding along the Kennebec River, with water levels in Augusta reaching 25 feet, submerging parts of the downtown area.

V. Halting Important Scientific Research

AT STAKE: Like all states, Maine expects environmental regulations to be based on the best scientific data available. Lawmakers, businesses, and citizens need to know that policy decisions have been made based on science and not politics or guesswork. Otherwise, people will lose faith in our system of environmental safeguards and not be appropriately protected.

Cuts in science, technology, and grant opportunities. The House proposal significantly cuts funding for scientific research on air, water, and chemical risks that inform policy decisions at the state and federal levels. These cuts are part of a larger trend of reduced funding for federal science research, with House budget proposals also reducing the National Science Foundation's budget and canceling some NASA science missions.

- **Conducting important scientific research. DEEP CUTS.** The House budget proposal slashes EPA's overall Science and Technology budget by 31% and eliminates more than 1,000 science positions. The deepest cuts to research programs hit Air and Energy (65% cut), followed by Sustainable and Healthy Communities (56% cut), and Safe and Sustainable Water Resources (29% cut). These cuts could potentially disband EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD), which conducts or funds most of the agency's research. ORD provides grants and operates laboratories across the nation to conduct the high-quality scientific and technical research that is at the heart of all EPA decision-making about public health and environmental protection. Maine DEP does not receive much of this money but depends on the information emerging from this research. The House budget's deep cuts in EPA research would mean that DEP and the nation would receive less information to serve as the basis for decision-making and environmental management.

- **Other science-based agencies face significant cuts.** In addition to cutting the EPA's science and research programs, the National Science Foundation (NSF) would also take a big budget hit. House appropriators are considering a 23% spending cut for the agency, more than \$2 billion below NSF's current spending allocations. The NSF supports fundamental research and education in science and engineering, offering hundreds of funding opportunities, including grants, cooperative agreements, and fellowships. Academic institutions, organizations, and businesses in Maine have received a combined \$32.7 million from the NSF throughout the agency's history.¹⁰ Just last year, Bigelow Laboratory was awarded a \$7 million grant to power algae-based innovation.¹¹ Proposed cuts to the NSF would mean less funding for grants, a risk of research projects being delayed or even terminated, job losses, and negative economic impacts due to decreased investments in innovation.



Harmful forever chemicals (PFAS) have been found on more than 100 Maine farms, contaminating soil, water, and produce, and threatening farmers' livelihoods and our food systems.

IMPACTS ON MAINE: The proposed cuts in EPA's science and research programs would have many impacts on Maine and the nation. These cuts would cripple EPA's ability to provide the facts and analysis needed by policymakers as they seek to make sound decisions about public health and environmental protection. These cuts would delay site-specific assessments needed for cleaning up hazardous waste, including brownfield and Superfund sites in Maine. The cuts would reduce EPA's ability to understand how humans are affected by a broad range of pollutants, including Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), which have been found in drinking water, soil, agricultural products, and fish and wildlife across the state. These cuts would also disrupt efforts by EPA to understand the potential impacts on human health and the environment of thousands of chemicals currently in the marketplace or under development. In that regard, the cuts could jeopardize EPA's ability to implement the bipartisan chemical safety reforms of the Toxic Substances Control Act, which Congress adopted in 2016.

State environmental agencies would have essentially no ability to replace the scientific research performed at EPA laboratories and by university scientists supported by EPA and NSF grants.

¹⁰ U.S. National Science Foundation, Maine State Fact Sheet 2025, (Washington, DC: NSF, 2025), 2.

¹¹ Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Science, "New \$7 Million Grant to Power Algae-Based Innovation," last modified August 27, 2024, <https://www.bigelow.org/news/articles/2024-08-27.html>

CONCLUSION:

Proposed EPA Cuts Would Cause Lasting Damage to Maine



The House's FY26 budget proposal includes deep and sweeping cuts to the EPA that would undercut nearly every aspect of the agency's mission – from protecting clean air and water, to cleaning up hazardous waste sites, to addressing the threats of climate change and toxic pollution. These cuts would have major repercussions for Mainers' health and environment.



These proposed reductions represent the most extreme rollbacks of environmental funding in half a century. If enacted, they would significantly erode EPA's capacity to work with states like Maine in safeguarding public health and the environment. Far from empowering the states, this budget would jeopardize the ability of states, including Maine, to provide clean air and clean water and protect the environment and public health.

The Maine DEP relies heavily on EPA funding – as do all state environmental protection agencies – to monitor and improve air and water quality, clean up contaminated sites, regulate pollution, and respond to emerging environmental

threats. This is how the system was designed to work, involving a partnership between EPA and the states. These funds are not optional; they form a foundation for states to do much of the work required to protect our environment, as set by our nation's environmental laws. The House FY26 proposal represents a serious breach of that partnership.

If these cuts are adopted, DEP would be forced to scale back work across key program areas. But the effects will be felt far beyond government agencies. Maine's lakes and other surface waters will be more polluted; communities with brownfield and Superfund sites may never see them cleaned up; and communities could see higher rates of illness linked to poor air and water quality. Businesses that rely on a clean environment and the latest research – including fisheries, tourism, forestry, and outdoor recreation – would face growing uncertainty and economic risk.

EPA funding also plays a vital role in supporting environmental efforts by towns, nonprofit organizations, businesses, colleges, and citizens throughout the state. DEP pass-through grants funded by EPA dollars help drive local action and attract matching funds that multiply the impact of every federal dollar. The EPA budget cuts would reverberate across Maine by putting these partnerships, investments, and informal collaborations in jeopardy.

Maine people do not want more pollution, fewer environmental safeguards, or a retreat from our shared responsibility to combat climate change. Yet, the House FY26 proposal would move us in exactly that direction.

These drastic budget cuts risk undoing decades of progress and could leave a legacy of environmental harm that affects Maine's environment and communities for generations to come.



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Protecting the Nature of Maine 🌲

The Natural Resources Council of Maine is the state's leading nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to protecting, restoring, and conserving Maine's environment, now and for future generations. Since 1959, NRCM has harnessed the power of the law, science, and the voices of nearly 20,000 supporters statewide and beyond to protect the places and way of life that make Maine so special.



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