Natural Resources Council of Maine

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Protecting Maine, Together | A Year of Impact Made Possible by You

A Message from Our Board Chair

This year's theme, A Year of Impact Made Possible by You, highlights what makes NRCM so successful. For 67 years, our work has been powered by a shared commitment to protecting Maine's environment. Together, we have advanced lasting solutions that safeguard the places we love and strengthen the future of our state.

As a longtime NRCM member and board member, I have never been more optimistic about our future. That optimism is rooted in the strength of this organization: an exceptional staff, a dedicated board, engaged members, and trusted partners who have made NRCM one of Maine's most effective environmental organizations.

This year opens an exciting new chapter as Justin Strasburger joins NRCM as Executive Director. His leadership builds on our legacy while positioning NRCM to meet today's challenges with energy, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to our mission.

The stories in this report demonstrate what your support makes possible. Across Maine, NRCM is protecting clean water, conserving forests and wildlife habitat, expanding access to the outdoors for everyone, advancing responsible clean energy, and advocating for policies that protect the natural resources that define our state.

We recognize these lands and waters as the ancestral homelands of the Wabanaki Nations, whose stewardship spans millennia and continues today.

The impact of this work is visible every day. Maine's roadways remain free of billboards, and cans, bottles, and single-use plastic bags are far less common than they once were. Strong policies are reducing unnecessary packaging waste and holding producers more accountable. Despite federal roadblocks, Maine continues to make meaningful progress toward clean, renewable energy and more resilient communities.

I am so inspired by the strength of our community and the momentum that has defined NRCM for nearly seven decades. Together, we will continue building on this legacy, ensuring that Maine's forests, waters, wildlife, and communities thrive for generations to come.

With gratitude,

Lucy Abbott, Chair
NRCM Board of Directors

"NRCM has been an important voice in our state legislature, in front of state and federal administrative bodies, and with the governor. I appreciate this steadfast, evidence-based advocacy. NRCM protects the Maine that I love."

Richard Estabrook, Katahdin Circle member, Brunswick

"NRCM is protecting our precious natural resources and planning for the future. [They] understand how fragile our environment is and I am grateful that future generations will still be able to enjoy the beauty of Maine thanks to NRCM!"

Jennifer Null, Landmark Society member, Naples

Jym St. Pierre

A Message from Our Executive Director

For thousands of years, the lands and waters we now call Maine have been home to the Wabanaki Nations, whose enduring relationship with this place reminds us that caring for the natural world is both a responsibility and a way of life.

That connection to place and responsibility lies at the heart of NRCM's own origins, when in 1959, people from across the state came together to protect the Allagash River. They were sportsmen and conservationists, guides and paddlers, business owners and families, people from different communities and with different perspectives. They did not agree on everything, but they shared the conviction that some places are too important to lose.

Their determination showed what is possible when people come together to protect the places they love. That commitment has guided NRCM for nearly seven decades, and it is what inspired me to become part of this work.

This spring, I had the privilege of stepping into the role of Executive Director at NRCM. I do so with gratitude, humility, and a deep appreciation for the incredible legacy built by generations of members, staff, partners, and advocates who have worked together to protect the Maine we all cherish.

My love for Maine began during childhood summers at the camp my father built on Long Pond near Jackman. Those early experiences exploring Maine's western lakes and mountains shaped my understanding of what makes this place so special.

Today, as the father of two young boys, I feel a profound responsibility to ensure future generations inherit a Maine that is healthy, resilient, and full of opportunity. I want my sons and those who come after us to have the chance to experience the same sense of wonder that shaped my childhood and continues to inspire me today.

Throughout my career, I've brought people together to solve complex challenges. Those experiences reinforced my belief that lasting progress comes when people feel connected, heard, and empowered to be part of the solution.

That is why one of my first priorities is listening.

As we look ahead, we have an opportunity to build an even stronger NRCM community that reflects the full richness of Maine and brings more voices, experiences, and perspectives into our work. That means listening more deeply and inviting more people to see themselves as part of Maine's conservation story.

This winter, NRCM will embark on a new strategic planning process rooted in listening—to members, supporters, coalition partners, and people from every corner of Maine. Your voices will help guide our path forward.

There is no denying that the challenges before us are significant. Climate change is accelerating. Development pressures continue to grow. Pollution threatens clean air, clean water, and public health. The need to protect the lands, waters, and communities that make Maine special has never been greater.

Yet I remain deeply optimistic.

Maine people have long shown that when we come together, we can accomplish extraordinary things. This past legislative session was no exception. The successes you'll read about were not inevitable. They happened because people across Maine found common ground and worked toward a shared future.

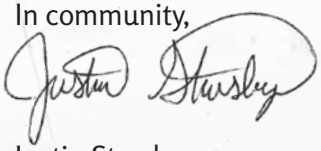
That has always been the NRCM story. From standing alongside countless Mainers to help protect the Allagash to advancing climate solutions, conserving forests and working lands, restoring rivers, and ensuring Maine remains a place where people and the natural world thrive.

NRCM has always had Maine's back. As we begin this next chapter together, I hope you will continue to have ours.

Together, we can protect the Maine we love, strengthen the communities that call it home, and ensure future generations inherit a state every bit as special as the one we have now.

Thank you for your trust, your generosity, and your partnership.

In community,



Justin Strasburger
Executive Director

S. Bierschwale

Big Changes Happen When Mainers Come Together

The year's biggest conservation victories at the State House were made possible with the support of our members and in collaboration with our partners.

LAND FOR MAINE'S FUTURE

Lawmakers secured permanent and ongoing funding for the popular Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program, which has conserved more than 650,000 acres since 1987. NRCM helped advance the provision directing 25% of monthly interest income from the state's "rainy day fund" to LMF.

CLIMATE SUPERFUND

LD 1870 requires Maine to analyze the costs of climate-related damage to communities, laying the groundwork for a future Climate Superfund that could require major oil and gas companies to pay for that damage. NRCM worked with Maine Youth for Climate Justice, Conservation Law Foundation, and Maine Conservation Voters to pass the law.

PLUG-IN SOLAR

NRCM worked with A Climate to Thrive, Maine Climate Action Now, and others to pass LD 1730, which will expand access to small plug-in solar devices. The new law exempts these portable panels from costly rooftop solar interconnection rules, making them more accessible to renters, homeowners, and local businesses once safety standards are in place.

BATTERY RECYCLING

LD 474 updates Maine's product stewardship program to require manufacturers to help establish recycling programs for lithium-ion and single-use batteries, making disposal safer and allowing valuable materials to be recovered and reused.

DATA CENTERS

NRCM helped push for LD 307, a first-in-the-nation moratorium on data centers. Although the bill was vetoed by the Governor, NRCM experts received an appointment to the Maine Data Center Advisory Council, and we will continue working to ensure responsible development.

Want the full story?
Read NRCM's Legislative Report Card at nrcm.org/get-involved/legislative-bill-tracking.

OUR MISSION

The Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to protecting, restoring, and conserving Maine's environment, now and for future generations.

Established in 1959, NRCM works statewide, harnessing the power of the law, science, and the voices of nearly 20,000 supporters to protect the places and way of life that make Maine so special.

OUR WORK

We advocate for strong laws and defend against rollbacks, hold elected officials as well as state and federal agencies accountable, provide expert policy and legal analysis, mobilize Mainers when their voices are needed most, and contribute to building an accessible and inclusive environmental movement.

OUR PROGRAM PRIORITIES

➔ **Climate & Clean Energy**
Accelerate the transition to a clean energy future that works for all Mainers.

➔ **Healthy Waters**
Advocate for river restoration, the removal of obsolete dams, and the protection of lakes and streams.

➔ **Woods & Wildlife**
Protect the North Woods, conserve wildlife habitat, and expand access to the outdoors.

➔ **Sustainable Maine**
Build a more sustainable, equitable waste system through waste reduction, recycling, reuse, and producer responsibility.

"NRCM is the essential, go-to organization for so much of what happens on environmental policy in Maine. Like many of my colleagues, I rely on them constantly."

Maine Senate President Mattie Daughtry (D-Cumberland County)

© Bennett Christiansen

Building Statewide Support for Environmental Solutions

NRCM works statewide to build a more inclusive movement rooted in a shared love of Maine.

Our team connects with people across Maine to listen, learn, and understand the perspectives and experiences that shape their lives. We have made a concerted investment in building relationships in Franklin County and in the Penobscot Bay/Frenchman Bay and Bangor regions.

Our goal is a broader, more engaged movement where people see themselves reflected in our work, feel welcomed, and know their voices can help shape Maine's future.

Partnerships have always been central to NRCM's success. This year, we worked with more than 30 coalitions spanning health care, education, recreation, outdoor businesses, and more. Highlights include:

KENNEBEC RIVER RESTORATION

A historic agreement to purchase four dams on the lower Kennebec River between Waterville and Skowhegan paves the way to restore the river to free-flowing conditions. NRCM and our Kennebec Coalition partners worked for years toward collaborative solutions like this, building on the successful removal of the Edwards Dam in 1999 and Fort Halifax Dam in 2008.

MAINE TRAILS PROGRAM

NRCM was instrumental in leading the coalition that passed the historic Trails Bond in November 2024. In the first year of the Maine Trails Program, $7.5 million was awarded to support 44 projects across 15 counties. The investments expand access for hikers, cyclists, ATV and snowmobile riders, older adults, children, and people with mobility challenges.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE DISINFORMATION

Polluters and their allies have invested heavily in creating confusion by spreading disinformation about the benefits of clean energy. Over the past year, we have worked in close collaboration with partners to address this by identifying effective messages and trusted messengers that will resonate best with diverse audiences to bring the conservation community together to share learnings.

MEETING THE MOMENT

NRCM contributed to the development of a five-year environmental policy road map for Maine, uniting with organizations across the state around a shared vision for protecting our environment and strengthening communities.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN ACTION

8,370 online advocacy actions

6,500 people attended **111 events** in **13 counties** hosted or co-hosted by NRCM

NRCM staff reviewed **256 pieces of legislation**

Our staff submitted **34 pieces of testimony**

NRCM supported **25 new pro-environment bills** that became law

NRCM weighed in on **12 federal regulatory decisions** and held **14 meetings** with federal delegation and staff

3,700+ members signed petitions or submitted comments

NRCM participated in **20+ coalitions**

NRCM staff participated in **30+ state regulatory meetings**

We provided **16 Sustainability Grants** to community groups

WILDLIFE AS INDICATORS OF HABITAT PROTECTION

4.1 million river herring passed through Benton Falls Fish Lift on the Sebasticook River

800+ Bald Eagle pairs

5.9 million river herring passed through the Milford Fish Passage on the Penobscot River

191 Piping Plover pairs fledged **352 chicks**

STATE INVESTMENT IN LAND CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Land for Maine's Future:
$2.25 million

Acreage Estimate:
700,000+/-

Trails Bond Year 1:
$7.5 million
44 Projects in **15** Counties
Recipients: **13 motorized, 12 non-motorized, 19 multi-use**

Building Maine's Future

NRCM's vision is simple: clean water, healthy forests, abundant wildlife, livable communities, and access to the outdoors for all.

Looking ahead, we will:

PROTECT Maine's North Woods and Unorganized Territories
ACCELERATE the transition to clean electricity and hold polluters accountable
BUILD a more sustainable and equitable waste system
RESTORE Maine's rivers and protect lakes, ponds, and streams
EXPAND access to trails, conservation lands, and the outdoors
PARTNER with and support Wabanaki Nations
EXPAND clean, reliable, accessible transportation

The decisions we make today will shape Maine for generations to come. Together, we can make sure Maine's future is one we can all be proud of.

With Gratitude

A heartfelt thank you to every member whose gift, no matter the size, powers our work year-round. The following recognition societies and awards honor individuals whose leadership, vision, and generosity strengthen NRCM's work.

KATAHDIN CIRCLE

NRCM's leadership donors whose extraordinary generosity of $1,000 or more annually provides critical support for the organization's highest priorities.

PARTNERS IN MAINE'S FUTURE

Our monthly donors whose ongoing and dependable support gives NRCM the stability and flexibility to meet emerging challenges.

WINTERGREEN SOCIETY

Members who have included NRCM in their estate plans, creating a lasting legacy and strengthening the organization's future for generations to come.

ALLAGASH AWARDEES

Supporters recognized for 20 years of exceptional generosity and steadfast commitment to NRCM, who have made an enduring impact on our work.

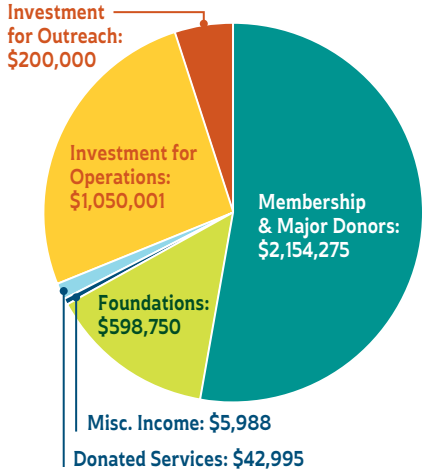
Fiscal Year 2026 Summary (4/1/2025–3/31/2026)

The generosity of members powers every aspect of NRCM's work. The financial summary below reflects our commitment to using your support wisely and effectively to protect the Maine we all love. Thank you for making this work possible!

OPERATING REVENUE, GAINS, AND OTHER SUPPORT

Membership and Major Donors	$2,154,275
Foundations	598,750
Miscellaneous Income	5,988
Donated Services	42,995
Investment Appropriation for Operations	1,050,001
Investment Appropriation for Outreach Allocation	200,000
Total Operating Revenue, Gains, and Other Support	**4,052,009**

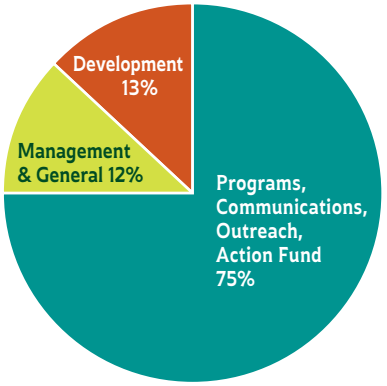
REVENUE



OPERATING EXPENSES

Programs	$2,159,716
Communications	534,939
Outreach	623,776
Action Fund	3,758
Management and General	525,218
Development	577,975
Total Operating Expenses	**4,425,382**

EXPENSES



NET ASSETS	FY26	FY25
Total net assets without donor restrictions	$14,899,960	$15,509,148
With donor restrictions	2,762,907	2,529,139
Total net assets	**17,662,867**	**18,038,287**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lucy Abbott, *Chair*, Bethel
Sam Lavallee, *Vice Chair*, Brunswick
Karen Herold, *Secretary*, Cumberland[2]
Kevin Kobel, *Treasurer*, Cape Elizabeth
Gail Carlson, Waterville
Ned Claxton, Auburn[2]
Sarah Cotton, Hope
Sam Day, Dresden
Heidi Farber, Portland[2]
Francesca Galluccio-Steele, Portland[1]
Marcia Harrington, Brunswick[1]
Nancy Hasenfus, Brunswick
Charles Kanozak, Scarborough[2]
Al Manville, Brunswick
Tony Owens, Cape Elizabeth[2]
Liz Rettenmaier, Bangor[1]
Sarah Short, Portland
Sarah Sindo, Millinocket
Bethany Woodworth, South Portland

[1]Completed Service, Summer 2026
[2]Elected, Summer 2026

With appreciation for the dedicated Board and staff whose expertise, passion, and commitment bring NRCM's mission to life every day.

STAFF

Row 1

Stacy Andrews, Senior Director of Finance & Operations
Laura Atwood, Accountant
Nicole Beetle, Grants Manager
Gail Begin, Executive Assistant
Vanessa Berry, Sustainable Maine Director
Carrie Bolduc, Human Resources Manager
Josh Caldwell, Outreach and Campaigns Senior Manager
Beth Comeau, Web & Communications Manager
Pete Didisheim, Senior Director of Advocacy
Colleen Donohoe, Events Manager

Row 2

Colin Durrant, Communications Director
Anya Fetcher, Federal Policy Advocate
Luke Frankel, Woods, Waters, & Wildlife Director and Staff Scientist
Alden Hallett, Administrative & Operations Associate
Daniel Harris, Application Analyst, Constituent Engagement Systems
Nate Hathaway, Penobscot Bay-Frenchman Bay Regional Outreach Coordinator
Leisa Hodgkins, IT Manager
Frances Killea, Policy Advocate, Woods, Waters, & Wildlife
Vanessa LaVallee, Senior Director of Philanthropy

Row 3

Sedona Lucas, Digital Engagement Manager
Jacob McCarty, Leadership Gifts Officer
Codi Riley-Havu, Gifts, Records, & Stewardship Coordinator
Rebecca Schultz, Senior Advocate, Climate & Clean Energy
Jack Shapiro, Climate & Clean Energy Director
Justin Strasburger, Executive Director
Ella D. Tabasky, Membership & Partnerships Manager
Emmie Theberge, Senior Director of Outreach and Campaigns
Sierra Toomey, Digital Content Producer
Allison Childs Wells, Senior Director of Communications

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Protecting the Nature of Maine

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Back Cover: Tenants Harbor, by NRCM Katahdin Circle member Steve Cartwright

Thank you for helping us protect the nature of Maine!

Our Mission

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