Mainers urge Sen. Snowe to push for protections

In March, the U.S. Senate passed an amendment that provides a lifeline for Acadia National Park—but only for the next two years. Now, Environment Maine and citizens across the state are asking Sen. Olympia Snowe to find a permanent solution to protect all of the land at Acadia before she retires this winter.

The amendment would stop Congress from raiding the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a major federal conservation program that is the source of funding for land acquisition at Acadia and other treasured places across the country.

The fund is critical to Acadia, because about 1,000 acres within the park’s boundaries are privately owned, and the park lacks the resources to purchase and permanently protect the land when it comes up for sale, leaving our park vulnerable to development.

Acadia needs a long-term solution

Unfortunately, the fix would be in place for just the next two years. And, as of this writing, the U.S. House had yet to pass the amendment. We need a long-term solution to protect Acadia. As a result, Environment Maine is mobilizing citizens across the state to ask Sen. Snowe to make protecting Acadia a top priority before she retires.

“Acadia is such a treasured and beloved place that we’re hopeful that Sen. Snowe will make protecting the park a central part of her legacy as she prepares to leave Washington,” said Environment Maine Preservation Associate Ally Fields.

1,000 acres in Acadia at risk

At Acadia, families and friends have a unique opportunity to experience Maine’s most striking natural beauty—from taking in the views of Frenchman’s Bay atop Cadillac Mountain to biking on the 45 miles of carriage roads.

Yet Acadia is scattered with more than 1,000 acres of “holes”—about 130 tracts of land within the park that are privately owned and at risk of being developed. Iconic places like Burnt Porcupine Island and Rum Key are unprotected. These gorgeous undeveloped islands are covered with shingle beaches, steep cliffs and forests that support an array of species, including the bald eagle. Houses built on the islands would threaten these ecosystems and be highly visible from the park.

more online

Find out more about how to protect Acadia at our website: www.EnvironmentMaine.org.
Recent action

At 11th hour, Gov. LePage attacks clean energy

After the deadline for legislative committees to act this year, Gov. Paul LePage introduced two energy bills that would undermine Maine’s progress on clean energy.

One bill would gut Maine’s clean energy standard, which requires our state to gradually increase its reliance on renewable energy. The standard has played a major role in spurring the development of renewable energy in Maine, reducing pollution, making us more energy independent, and fueling economic development.

The second bill would make sweeping changes to Efficiency Maine Trust, which implements the state’s energy efficiency programs. It would politicize the agency and shift its focus away from promoting the most efficient energy sources.

Environment Maine opposed both bills and worked to defeat them.

Coalition pushes for BPA ban in baby food containers

Earlier this year, Environment Maine joined a broad coalition of Maine health and environmental organizations to launch a campaign to ban toxic bisphenol A in lids of baby food jars and cans of toddler food—an important step to a broader ban on BPA in all canned foods.

BPA seeps into our food from the linings of metal cans and tops of jars, exposing us from the very first months of life to a chemical with very serious health effects. In fact, a recent study by Harvard University has found that eating canned soup can increase the amount of BPA in our bodies by 1,000 percent.

This same coalition last year won a ban on BPA in baby bottles, sippy cups and all reusable food and beverage containers sold in Maine. Now, we’ve petitioned the Board of Environmental Protection to extend the ban to canned foods marketed for infants and young children.
Rep. Kim Olsen, a freshman Republican member from Phippsburg, played a critical role in stripping the rollbacks from Gov. LePage’s bill to open the North Woods to reckless development. See our story on page four for more on our victory for the North Woods.

What were your concerns about the North Woods bill?

I had two main concerns with LD 1798 as originally presented. First, allowing commissioners to appoint themselves without Legislative oversight would present inevitable conflicts that could jeopardize Maine’s North Woods. Second, I believed that the opt-out provision would have allowed for a systematic dismantlement of the Land Use Regulation Commission, stripping away 40 years of protections for the places where my constituents love to hike, fish and camp.

Why did you decide to testify and otherwise work to strip out the rollbacks?

Testifying before the committee was very important because I truly believe that these points were reasonable and accurately reflected the concerns of my constituents. I received countless calls and messages asking me to oppose these rollbacks, so it was important that I speak up. As a result, we were able to put our heads together and craft changes to a bill that could have divided but, instead, was voted out of committee with a unanimous report.
Our top priority this year in the Legislature was to protect Maine’s North Woods from reckless development—and we won!

Last year, Gov. Paul LePage proposed eliminating the Land Use Regulation Commission, which manages development in the North Woods. When that failed, the governor and his allies tried to overhaul the commission in ways that threatened to corrupt the agency’s decision-making and weaken protections for the North Woods. Environment Maine delivered more than 17,000 messages to lawmakers asking them to reject the rollbacks, and we worked in Augusta to give lawmakers the facts. Ultimately, we built enough support to stop the worst rollbacks.

“We want to thank the lawmakers on both sides of the aisle who fought hard to make this a better bill. The North Woods are where generations of Mainer have learned to love the outdoors—and we need to keep it that way,” said Environment Maine Director Emily Figdor.

Environment Maine delivered more than 17,000 messages to lawmakers to protect the North Woods from reckless development.

To learn more and get involved, go to www.EnvironmentMaine.org