Gov. Paul LePage’s plans to open the North Woods to reckless development—and, while we have some bruises, the protections we’ve fought for remain intact so far. Generations of Mainers have learned to love the great outdoors in the North Woods—camping on the Rangeley Lakes, canoeing the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, or scaling Mount Katahdin. It’s unlike anywhere else in the east in terms of its vast scale—more than 10 million acres—and how wild it remains.

Yet Gov. LePage is trying to advance a set of policies that threaten to destroy Maine’s North Woods, rolling back 40 years of protections. And he’s working with powerful lawmakers and special interests to push through his changes.

Lobbyists wrote Gov. LePage’s policies

In an expose this past summer, author Colin Woodard revealed that Jay Haynes and Tom Gardner—two timber company presidents—literally wrote Gov. LePage’s North Woods policies. The governor has called for zoning one-third of the North Woods—more than 3 million acres—for development; repealing the rules that limit the impacts of new development; and eliminating the agency charged with protecting the North Woods, the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC).

22,000 rallied to protect North Woods

Environment Maine spent the summer working to block Gov. LePage’s plans. Our staff spoke with 22,000 Mainers about the threat to the North Woods, and thousands got involved by signing petitions, calling their legislators, traveling to Augusta, writing letters to the editor, and more. This groundswell helped block the governor’s proposals—at least for the time being.

Unfortunately, we were unable to defeat a bill that set up a rigged commission tasked with “reforming the governance” of the North Woods and issuing recommendations to the Legislature next January. Every single member of the commission is appointed by either Gov. LePage, Senate Majority Leader Kevin Raye (R-Perry), or House Speaker Robert Nutting (R-Oakland), all of whom want to eliminate LURC.

We’re working this fall to shine a spotlight on the commission and build enough support to defeat efforts to open the North Woods to development.

Visit our website to read more about the governor’s proposals and to take action.

www.EnvironmentMaine.org/North-Woods
Recent action

Early victory in battle to save the Atlantic salmon
This summer, we won a preliminary victory in our legal effort to save the endangered Atlantic salmon from extinction. A federal judge gave the green light to Environment Maine's lawsuits against three power companies for violating the Endangered Species Act and, in one of the cases, also the Clean Water Act.

The lawsuits, which we filed with Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, argue that hydroelectric dams owned by several companies illegally harm and kill endangered Atlantic salmon in the Androscoggin and Kennebec Rivers. Spinning turbines at the dams kill and injure salmon trying to swim past them, and the dams themselves block and delay migration and prevent access to spawning grounds, among other problems.

The court rejected attempts by the power companies to dismiss the cases.

Next steps to protect children from toxic BPA
We were thrilled to help ban toxic bisphenol A (BPA) this year in baby bottles, sippy cups, and all reusable food and beverage containers sold in Maine. But the victory marked just the first step in reducing people's exposure to BPA, one of the most ubiquitous chemicals in use today.

BPA is a hormone-disrupting chemical associated with numerous adverse health effects, including early onset of puberty, breast and prostate cancer, and heart disease. It's especially dangerous to infants and young children.

Yet, amazingly, many plastic containers, cans, and jars for infant formula and baby food contain BPA.

Maine's new law only requires companies to analyze alternatives to these uses of BPA, which clearly is not enough. The next step in our campaign is to push the state to ban BPA in all baby food and formula containers.

To our members

In an exposé this past summer, author Colin Woodard revealed that corporate lobbyists wrote much of Gov. LePage's environmental agenda. Woodard used the Freedom of Access Act to trace how the governor's staff “cut and pasted” from memos written by corporate lobbyists into his own proposals. “Simply put,” said Woodard, “LePage makes policy by letting corporate interests do it for him.”

The good news is that Mainers like you aren’t letting him get away with it. We’ve defeated the worst of his environmental proposals and even scored a victory for getting Maine off oil. But the governor is still pushing wrong-headed policy proposals, and so we cannot tire in our efforts to protect Maine's core environmental laws. Maine’s natural resources are truly extraordinary, and it’s up to us to protect them.

Sincerely,

Emily Figdor
State Director

How do you want to be remembered?

You can be remembered as someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Environment Maine.

For information, call: 1-800-841-7299, or email PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMaine.org.

Photo: Shutterstock.com

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www.EnvironmentMaine.org/newsletters
In June, a bill (LD 553) to reduce Maine’s dependence on oil became law without Gov. LePage’s signature. The bill, spearheaded by Environment Maine, was a rare victory in a legislative session marked by efforts to weaken Maine’s environmental protections.

The bill sets ambitious goals to cut Maine’s oil use 30 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050, and requires the state to develop a comprehensive plan to achieve the goals.

“Maine is dangerously addicted to oil—with massive impacts on our environment, economy and national security. We applaud lawmakers for taking this first, important step to start to get Maine off oil,” Environment Maine Director Emily Figdor told the media after the House and Senate unanimously approved the bill.

**Fourth most oil dependent state in U.S.**

For generations, politicians of both parties have bemoaned our dependence on oil. And yet, nearly four decades after the 1973 oil embargo first exposed the economic costs of our oil dependence, Maine and the country as a whole still remain dangerously addicted to petroleum.

As a result of Maine’s heavy reliance on oil for both heating and transportation, we are the fourth most oil-dependent state in the country.

Oil is a leading cause of many of our most intractable environmental problems, including air pollution, water pollution, global warming and habitat destruction.

Maine’s oil dependence is also a huge drain on our economy. According to the Governor’s Office of Energy Independence and Security, for every $1 increase in a gallon of oil—a price increase we saw over the last year—Maine’s economy loses the equivalent of $1 billion.

**Technology exists to wean Maine off oil**

Maine’s dependence on oil is more than a century in the making, and ending it won’t be easy. But the technology exists to take the first steps.

We can slash our oil consumption by improving the energy efficiency of our homes and businesses, moving people and goods more efficiently, and finding sustainable substitutes for petroleum.

But to get there we need a game plan—concrete goals, a plan that helps get us on track, and a way to hold our leaders accountable.

That’s what Environment Maine set out to accomplish this year—and we succeeded, thanks to the leadership of our sponsor, Rep. Stacey Fitts (R-Pittsfield), the Republican House chair of the energy committee; the broad coalition of environmental advocates, health groups, veterans and clean energy businesses that backed the bill; and, unfortunately, yet another spike in oil prices.

Looking forward, we’re now working to ensure that the state puts together a strong plan to achieve the goals set out in the bill.

**Questions for Rep. Stacey Fitts**

1. Why did you sponsor LD 553 to reduce Maine’s oil dependence?

   Mainly because I am concerned that we have let our attention slip away from the crisis that we potentially face regarding our oil dependency here in Maine and in the northeast. Dealing with this issue will require us to redouble our efforts to make significant progress, and setting goals and focusing on development of plans to reach them is critical.

2. What do you see as the major benefits of making Maine less oil dependent?

   Oil dependency is a drag on the Maine economy. The exportation of dollars due to that dependency is simply unacceptable. I think our prosperity and competitiveness is at stake. The environmental returns are equally important for us and for posterity. Our air, water and health will benefit for generations as a result of our actions today.

3. Can Maine start to wean itself off oil?

   We don’t have a choice, and in fact I think progress is already being made in that direction. Building better management systems will be important. We need to be able to tell what works best and focus on successes, and not spend limited resources on things that don’t work. Development and promotion of alternatives will be important as well.

**more online**

Electric cars are one tool to get Maine off oil. Go online to learn more, and read the latest news about our campaign:

www.EnvironmentMaine.org/news

**Rep. Stacey Fitts (R-Pittsfield) is the House chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology and was the lead sponsor of Environment Maine’s bill to get Maine off oil.**
As Congress battles over the federal budget for this fiscal year, Republicans in the House of Representatives cut critical funding for Acadia National Park and many other special places around the country.

Acadia needs the funds to permanently protect land within the park’s boundaries. Without the funding, the land is vulnerable to development.

Environment Maine and our allies are fighting the threatened funding cuts to Acadia. Here in Maine, our staff is organizing Mainers to speak out and pressing Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins not to allow the cuts.

Meanwhile, our colleagues at Environment America have been working to convince lawmakers from other states to maintain funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the program at issue, which is a major source of conservation funds across the country.

Nearly 1,000 acres of land within Acadia National Park are at risk of being developed. Map source: National Park Service, 2010.

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