



Summer Report

Proposals threaten Maine's North Woods

Fighting plans to open North Woods to development

Generations of Mainers have learned to love the great outdoors in Maine's North Woods, whether it's camping along the Rangeley Lakes, canoeing on the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, or scaling Mount Katahdin in Baxter State Park.

The North Woods' 10 million acres of largely undeveloped forest, clear waters and rugged mountains is the largest unfragmented forest left east of the Rockies and the heart of Maine's natural heritage.

3 million acres at risk

Yet early this year, Gov. Paul LePage proposed to open more than 3 million acres—one-third of the entire North Woods—to big developers for large resorts, subdivisions, casinos, big-box stores and more. He also proposed to repeal all of the rules limiting the environmental impacts of new development in the North Woods.

If you've been to Maine's North Woods, you know what's at stake.

As a result, in early March, Environment Maine launched our Keep Maine's North Woods Wild campaign to stop the governor's rollback proposals, as well as additional bills in the Legislature that threaten the North Woods. Our goal is to protect the Rangeley Lakes, Moosehead Lake, and so many other special places in the heart of the North Woods from reckless development.



Jackie Heddon, Flickr

▲ Allagash Wilderness Waterway.

Uniting hikers, anglers and more

Our plan to stop the rollbacks has focused on bringing together Mainers from all walks of life to protect the North Woods. This includes citizens from across the state, environmental and conservation organizations, hikers, hunters, anglers, state and local officials, businesses involved in tourism, businesses that rely on our great outdoors to attract workers

and customers, and many, many others. Starting in early May, our citizen outreach staff fanned out across the state to educate Mainers about what's at stake and urge them to get involved to stop the rollbacks. We're also testifying in Augusta, educating lawmakers, and shining a spotlight in the media on the need to protect the North Woods for future generations.



Gwyn Fisher, Flickr

more online

◀ Visit our website to read more about the governor's proposal and to take action.

www.EnvironmentMaine.org/North-Woods



To our members

I knew this year would pose a big challenge for our work to protect Maine's air, water, and the places we love.

But Gov. Paul LePage and some members of the Legislature upped the ante more than I ever imagined—proposing to open one-third of Maine's North Woods to development, gut the Bottle Bill, and dismiss well-established science on the harm posed by the toxic chemical bisphenol-A with a callous joke claiming the worst thing the chemical might do is cause women to grow "little beards."

So, yes, it's been a challenging year so far. But it's also been absolutely inspiring to see so many of you across the state come together to fight for the environmental values that so many of us share. Your support is making a real difference. Thanks, as always, for making all of our work possible.

Emily Figdor
State Director

Recent action

Maine businesses innovate to reduce toxic chemicals

In April, Environment Maine released a new report highlighting True Textiles in Guilford and a dozen other businesses that are using innovation to cut toxic chemicals from their products, while creating green jobs and boosting the economy.

We released the report, "Safer by Design," at a press conference in Orno. True Textiles manufactures Terratex, a fabric product made entirely from post-consumer recycled polyester and corn. Terratex is naturally stain resistant and durable without the use of substances that pose health risks, such as toxic stain repellents. The company has estimated that the Terratex manufacturing process saves roughly \$300,000 per year compared with conventional methods.

With new policies, Mainers can reap the health benefits of fewer toxic chemicals in our products and environment—while creating economic opportunities.

Legislature takes action to get Maine off oil

One of Environment Maine's top legislative priorities this year has been to pass a bill to set ambitious goals to reduce our oil dependence, and ensure our leaders create a concrete plan to help us achieve them. We convinced a bipartisan group of legislators to introduce the bill (LD 553) and have lobbied, testified, and built a broad coalition in support of it.

Maine is dangerously addicted to oil—with massive impacts on our environment, economy, and national security. In fact, Maine is the fourth-most oil dependent state in the country, as a result of our heavy reliance on oil for heating and transportation. We can get Maine off oil by improving energy efficiency so we consume less in the first place and by transitioning to clean, made-in-Maine energy sources—more hybrid cars and trucks, expanded public transit options, wind power off our coast, incentives for people to go solar, and more. As of this writing, we successfully passed the bill through committee and are optimistic that the House and Senate will approve it.

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▲ We can start getting Maine off oil with hybrid cars and trucks, improved home energy efficiency, and more.



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Lawsuits aim to protect endangered Atlantic salmon

Maine is home to the last wild Atlantic salmon in the United States—but dams along their critical migration routes pose a severe threat to the fish. Early this year, we joined Friends of Merrymeeting Bay in taking legal action to protect the last wild Atlantic salmon in the Kennebec and Androscoggin Rivers.

Dams pose “direct and significant threat”

The Androscoggin and Kennebec Rivers provide key spawning habitat and migration routes for the endangered Atlantic salmon, but unprotected turbines at dams along the rivers are killing the fish and pushing the Atlantic salmon toward extinction.

The Kennebec and Androscoggin Rivers once teemed with salmon runs of 100,000 or more, but now almost no Atlantic salmon return to the rivers. In 2010, only five adult salmon returned to the Kennebec, and 10 returned to the Androscoggin.

Our lawsuits, filed in U.S. District Court in Portland and Bangor, charge multiple dam owners and operators on the rivers for violating the federal Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act. The salmon populations in both rivers are on the Endangered Species List.

The National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have found that dams “are among the leading causes of both historical declines and contemporary low abundance” of Kennebec and Androscoggin salmon, and that “dams remain a direct and significant threat to Atlantic salmon.”

The biggest problem is that the dams kill and injure migrating salmon when they attempt to pass through the dams’ rotating turbine blades—akin to having fish swim through the rotating blades of a giant window fan.

Unfortunately, the dam owners have refused to implement simple protection

measures—such as installing effective devices to divert salmon from turbines—that have been adopted elsewhere.

Simple steps could aid salmon recovery

When we announced the lawsuits in early February, Environment Maine Director Emily Figdor explained to the media, “We’re in a situation where there’s little time left; these dams are pushing an iconic Maine fish to the brink of extinction.”

Ed Friedman, chair of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay and our partner in the litigation, added that, “Unless dam owners stop stalling on basic salmon protection measures, the clock will strike midnight for the remaining Atlantic salmon in the Kennebec and Androscoggin rivers.”

While the situation is indeed dire, 40 years ago there were no bald eagles in the same part of Maine, whereas now there are hundreds. Atlantic salmon recovery can begin—but only once the dam owners take sensible actions to prevent salmon from swimming into spinning turbine blades.



efh.noaa.gov

take action



Visit our website for the latest news and updates on our efforts to protect the Atlantic salmon:

www.EnvironmentMaine.org/news



maine.gov

Questions for Rep. Jeff McCabe

1. How big of a threat do you think Gov. Paul LePage’s proposals to open Maine’s North Woods to development pose?

Gov. LePage’s proposals threaten some of Maine’s most special and pristine places—the very places many of us go to hike, fish and camp and are at the heart of our natural heritage. I’m optimistic, however, that the Legislature will not rubber stamp the governor’s proposals if lawmakers hear loud and strong from their constituents about the need to protect Maine’s last remaining wild places.

2. What could these proposals mean for the North Woods?

The North Woods are like no other place in the East. It’s the largest remaining undeveloped forest east of the Rocky Mountains. But Gov. LePage’s proposals could open the North Woods to mega resorts, large subdivisions, casinos, big box stores, and more. The consequences could be dire, and we can’t let it happen.

3. What are the most important things that Mainers concerned about these proposals can do?

Please contact your state representatives and senators to ask them to protect the North Woods. Tell your friends and family about what’s at stake and get them involved too. Finally, consider writing a letter to the editor of your local paper.

▲ Jeff McCabe is a state representative from Skowhegan and serves on the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee, which will consider Gov. LePage’s North Woods proposals. He also manages Lake George Regional Park in Skowhegan and Canaan.

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Environment Maine

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Maine. We focus exclusively on protecting Maine's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

President backs program that could protect Acadia

With nearly 1,000 acres of land within Acadia National Park at risk of being developed, Environment Maine has been working for the past year to mobilize Mainer to urge the government to give Acadia the resources to protect all the land within its boundaries.

In a major victory in February, President Barack Obama called for funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a major federal conservation program that is the source of government funding for land acquisition at Acadia.

The president announced the decision after his administration held more than 50 public hearings, including one in Bangor last September, as part of their Great Outdoors Initiative, an effort designed to reconnect Americans with the outdoors and strengthen protections for our nation's most beloved places. Environment Maine used the opportunity to raise the profile of the need to protect land within Acadia's boundaries.



◀ *President Barack Obama signs a presidential memorandum at the America's Great Outdoors Conference at the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C.*

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