



# Winter Report

## Dams threaten last Atlantic salmon

### Suit would protect Kennebec and Androscoggin salmon

Maine is home to the last wild Atlantic salmon populations in the United States—and, in late 2010, Environment Maine announced we were prepared to sue to protect them.

#### Fewer than 2,000 fish remain

The Androscoggin and Kennebec Rivers provide key spawning habitat and migration routes for the endangered Atlantic salmon, but unprotected turbines at hydroelectric dams along the rivers are killing the fish. In November, Environment Maine informed five companies that own the dams that we intend to sue them unless they agree to take simple, inexpensive steps to comply with the law and protect the salmon.

The Atlantic salmon have symbolized the wildness of Maine and the rich bounty that our state offers—and now the threats facing our natural heritage. Maine's rivers used to teem with hundreds of thousands of Atlantic salmon every season, but now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that fewer than 2,000 fish return to rivers in Maine each year to breed.

#### Dangerous turbines break the law

Hydroelectric dams are one of the biggest threats to the survival of the species. They can block the salmon's passage to and from the sea completely, or they can kill the fish by forcing them to travel through the dam's turbines—akin to having fish swim through the rotating blades of a giant window fan. This is the case with several dams currently operating on the



▲ Dams on the Kennebec and Androscoggin rivers are killing the last Atlantic salmon.

Androscoggin and Kennebec Rivers. Measures to provide safe passage by diverting the fish away from the turbines are affordable and in use all over the world.

Environment Maine's pre-suit notice letters informed dam owners that they are violating the federal Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act. This work builds on successful legal action Environment Maine has previously taken to protect and

preserve the Atlantic salmon by cracking down on illegal pesticide spraying and unpermitted fish farms. We're working on this new legal front in conjunction with Friends of Merrymeeting Bay.

The wild Atlantic salmon population in Maine should be protected for future generations. With the number of Atlantic salmon perilously low, action to protect this iconic fish and its habitat is urgent.



### more online

◀ Visit our website to read more about our suit to protect the wild Atlantic salmon.

Links to additional content can be found with the online version of the newsletter:

[www.EnvironmentMaine.org/newsletters](http://www.EnvironmentMaine.org/newsletters)



## To our members

Over the past four decades, Maine has made great progress toward cleaning up our rivers, improving air quality, and preserving treasured lands. We've also started to take serious steps to move to clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power.

While the new political leadership in Augusta threatens to erode this progress and weaken our environmental protections, large majorities of Mainers support clean air, clean water, and protections for our extraordinary natural heritage—all of which are so important to making Maine the place where we want to live and other people want to visit. If Mainers stand up and stand together, we can protect and preserve our environment.

Environment Maine will work tirelessly to defeat efforts to weaken Maine's environmental protections. With your support in this fight, I'm ready to meet the challenges 2011 will present.

Emily Figdor  
State Director

## Recent action

### Working toward 60 miles per gallon

Environment Maine is working to build the political support to require new cars and light trucks to get at least 60 miles per gallon on average by 2025. Cars and trucks are the single biggest source of oil use in Maine.

We have the technological know-how to achieve these landmark efficiency gains, and research released by Environment Maine shows that they could cut Maine's oil use by 179 million gallons and save consumers \$427 million at the gas pump annually by 2030.

In 2005, Maine was one of the first states to adopt standards to cut oil use and carbon pollution from new cars and light trucks. Now it's time to show that Mainers support strengthening federal standards to make super-efficient cars the norm, not the exception.

### \$9 million won to preserve Maine's wilderness

This past election season, Environment Maine worked to pass Question 3 on the ballot, which invests more than \$9 million in conserving Maine's wilderness through the Land for Maine's Future program.

From Mount Desert Island to Moosehead Lake, Maine is gifted with stunning natural beauty. But we lose more of our treasured land to development each year, and the Land for Maine's Future program—the state's major conservation program—had run out of money for new conservation projects.

Over the last two decades, the Land for Maine's Future program has helped protect more than half a million acres of land in every county across the state. Question 3 passed with an overwhelming 59 percent of the vote—injecting much-needed resources into efforts to preserve Maine's most special places.

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▲ The Land for Maine's Future program protected Tumbledown Mountain.



# 2011 Legislative Agenda: Defending Maine's environment

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As the 2011 legislative session kicks off in August, our staff has our work cut out for us.

With a new governor who vowed to overturn environmental rules that he wrongly asserts “serve no purpose except to cost businesses money,” and many in the Legislature who do not share our environmental values, Environment Maine’s top priority is to hold the line against attempts to weaken Maine’s environmental protections.

But even as we work to defend the gains we’ve already won, we’re also determined to continue making progress on the issues Mainers care about—including reducing Maine’s dependence on oil, moving the state to a clean energy future based on the sun and wind, and safeguarding Mainers’ health from toxic chemicals.

## Challenges remain for clean air, clean water and open space

We expect to spend much of 2011 defending our progress on clean air, clean water and preservation against the threat of rollbacks. Maine has made great strides on the environment in recent years, but there’s more work to be done—and certainly no room to backslide.

Maine suffers from high levels of air pollution, which contribute to serious health problems, such as asthma attacks and other respiratory problems. Indeed, Maine has among the highest rates of childhood asthma in the country.

Every county in Maine except Oxford County received a grade of C or worse for high levels of smog pollution in the American Lung Association’s 2010 State of the Air Report, and Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox and York Counties all received Ds or Fs.

Maine’s 30,000 miles of rivers and streams no longer overflow with industrial waste, but they still suffer from elevated levels of pollution and dams that choke waterways

across the state. Clean waterways are vital to ensure safe drinking water, healthy habitat for fish and other wildlife, and the recreational opportunities that are so important to Mainers—and our tourism-based economy.

Maine’s wild lands are being carved up into ever-smaller parcels, and the public is losing its traditional access to our open spaces. In fact, the public owns just eight percent of Maine’s land, which is among the lowest percentages in the nation. Environment Maine is focused on preserving our parks, with Acadia National Park and Baxter State Park as our top priorities.

## Positive agenda moving forward

In addition to defending our air, water and land, Environment Maine will work to move forward on a number of key environmental priorities.

In the coming months our staff and members will push for policies to cut Maine’s dependence on oil, improve consumer rebates for wind and solar power, and ban toxic bisphenol-A in children’s products.



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## take action



Visit our website to learn more about Environment Maine’s priorities for 2011 and how you can get involved:

[www.EnvironmentMaine.org/action](http://www.EnvironmentMaine.org/action)



pingree.house.gov

## Questions for Rep. Pingree

Environment Maine’s Emily Figdor and Rep. Chellie Pingree discussed what 2011 holds for Maine’s environment.

*Are there opportunities to make progress on the environment in 2011, despite a new governor and many in the Legislature who are hostile to environmental protections?*

Maine’s biggest export is dollars—billions of dollars every year sent out of state to pay for oil and gas to meet our energy needs. Maine has unique opportunities to develop new sources of clean energy that will create good jobs in our state while reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. That is a goal that I hope politicians of both parties can support.

Land conservation is another critical issue with support across the political spectrum. In a year when many conservatives were elected in Maine, voters overwhelmingly approved a Land for Maine’s Future Bond. [Lastly,] Maine businesses rely on clean air and clean water—and protecting those vital resources is something I hope all people can agree on.

*What can Mainers concerned about potential environmental rollbacks do?*

The most important thing anyone can do is to speak up. Letters, e-mail and phone calls to your elected officials are important, but so are letters to the editors of your local paper or speaking to community groups. The political landscape in Washington and Maine has changed somewhat, but it’s important to remember that all elected officials should be responsive to the people they represent—regardless of party.

► Visit our website to read the full interview with Rep. Pingree.

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# Environment Maine

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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.

## Funding shortfalls threaten Acadia

Throughout 2010, Environment Maine spoke to nearly 20,000 Mainers and mobilized thousands of people to urge the federal government to protect Acadia National Park—and though there's still much work to be done, our efforts have started to pay off.

The Obama administration has acknowledged the need for increased support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the primary source of funding for land acquisition at Acadia. Acadia needs those resources to purchase privately held land within the park's boundaries as the tracts come up for sale, thereby staving off development.

Unfortunately, Congress ultimately holds the purse strings, and the U.S. Senate failed to act in 2010 on a bill that could have provided much-needed resources to Acadia. Environment Maine will continue working to build the political support to permanently protect all of the land within Acadia National Park.



◀ *Environment Maine is working to preserve Acadia National Park for future generations.*

➡ *To learn more and get involved, go to [www.EnvironmentMaine.org](http://www.EnvironmentMaine.org).*