



Legislative

First Session of the
129th Maine Legislature

 MAINE AUDUBON

SUMMARY

Dear Maine Audubon Members,

What a session! The First Session of the 129th Legislature adjourned in mid-June after securing some big, BIG wins for wildlife and habitat. Maine now has new laws that will reduce carbon emissions, increase renewable energy development, cut plastic pollution, and keep Maine's rivers and lakes clean.

And it's all thanks to you. Maine Audubon members and supporters came out in full force, sending thousands of messages to legislators, attending public hearings, and advocating at the State House. Plus, your financial contributions meant that Maine Audubon staff were a constant presence, advocating on behalf of wildlife and habitat. Thank you.

Let's keep this momentum going. Over the course of the summer and fall, we'll be working to ensure that these historic laws are implemented and enforced. We'll also be turning more of our attention to federal wildlife policy, where a number of fundamental environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, face major threats.

Be sure you're a part of our Action Network to stay up-to-date on all policy issues impacting Maine's wildlife and habitat. Go to maineaudubon.org/advocacy to sign up!

Thank you for your passion, diligence, and support.

Yours in conservation,

Eliza Donoghue, Esq.
Sr. Policy & Advocacy Specialist
edonoghue@maineaudubon.org



Maine's 129th Legislature

A New Era of Clean Energy and Climate Leadership

Ramping Up Solar in Maine

Maine currently lags far behind the rest of the country in solar energy production, but not for long. A new law will lift arbitrary barriers to solar production, allowing more Maine homeowners, businesses, and towns to participate in the solar revolution. LD 1711 directs the state to capture at least 375 megawatts of low-cost solar; encourages development of landfill and brownfield solar projects; and requires that community projects serve low- and moderate-income customers. Thanks to our partners in the environmental community and activists like YOU, we've finally moved the needle on solar in Maine in a big way.

Realizing a Renewable Energy Future

Maine passed into law one of the most ambitious "Renewable Portfolio Standard" programs in the country, DOUBLING the amount of renewable energy required to be sold in the state to 80% by 2030 and 100% by 2050. This new law (LD 1494) will move Maine people to action, having been crafted with input from stakeholders that are poised to invest and grow their renewable energy businesses. Climate change threatens Maine's environment and economy—this bill provides the needed motivation to protect our natural resources while investing in our economy.

Creating Climate Solutions

The Maine Climate Council, established into law this session, is charged with leading Maine's efforts to reduce Maine's greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 and at least 80 percent by 2050 (see LD 1679). Maine people and wildlife will breathe easier—literally and figuratively—while the Council develops action plans to meet these greenhouse gas reduction goals, promotes jobs and economic benefits for Maine people in the transition to a lower carbon economy, and supports the climate resiliency of Maine's communities.

For complete information about each bill, including the bill language and final outcomes, visit legislature.maine.gov



Clean Water for All: Secured.

For the first time in 10 years, Maine has upgraded water quality protections for hundreds of miles of rivers and streams and, for the first time ever, established water quality standards designed to protect sustenance fishing in certain waters for Maine tribes. For waterbodies like the storied Penobscot River, Fish Stream, and all of the tributaries to Webb Lake, this is great news for Maine fish, wildlife, and people. See LDs 1743 and 1775.



Maine Endangered Species Act: Strengthened.

This new legislation will empower Maine's game wardens to protect our most vulnerable species by giving them discretion to issue citations to first-time violators instead of requiring warnings. The law also sets mandatory minimum penalties for violators of Maine's Endangered Species Act, putting potential violators on notice that Maine is serious about protecting threatened and endangered species like the Piping Plover and Least Tern. See LD 713.



Plastic Bags: Banned.

Beginning on Earth Day 2020, Maine will restrict single-use plastic bags at retail establishments across the state. Globally, about 1 million plastic shopping bags are distributed per minute. Only 1% are recycled and the threat of plastic pollution to wildlife, especially seabirds, is pervasive. 20% of Maine's population has already enacted plastic bag ordinances—this law will create statewide regulatory consistency, while protecting Maine wildlife. See LD 1532.



Water Quality Inspections: Statewide.

Thanks to legislation passed this session, inspections of underground septic systems will soon be required in all shoreland areas before the sale of the property. Currently, inspections are only required for coastal properties. This law will go a long way to protect water quality across the state, essential for supporting the Common Loon. See LD 216.



Public Lands: Supported.

Maine's Public Reserved Lands contain some of the largest, oldest trees in the state—prime habitat for forest birds. By statute, management of these lands must be equally balanced between sustainable forestry, outdoor recreation, and wildlife habitat, but that balance has been lost in recent years. However, the creation of new staff positions at the Bureau of Parks and Lands tasked with supporting Public Lands' multiple use mandate will help restore proper management of these vital lands. See LD 1001.

Working Together for Wildlife

Maine Audubon is a member of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC), a partnership of more than 30 environmental, conservation, and public health organizations representing over 100,000 Maine people who share our commitment to protecting the good health, jobs, and quality of life our environment provides us every day.

Learn more at maineepc.org

They're Not Done Yet: **Funding Maine's Environment.**

The Legislature has yet to agree on bonds to send to voters this fall. Please contact your legislators today and ask that they approve a Land for Maine's Future (LMF) bond for the 2019 ballot. LMF is responsible for protecting over 600,000 acres of working farms, forests, waterfronts, miles and miles of recreational trails, and critical wildlife habitat, but is out of funding until voters pass a new bond. Today, the program is out of funding. The Legislature must act by mid-August in order to reinvigorate LMF.

TAKE ACTION

maineaudubon.org/advocacy

Be a part of protecting
Maine's wildlife and habitat
and sign up for e-mail
Action Alerts



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Photo: Jeff Romano

