



Maine Conservation Voters Maine Conservation Alliance

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Coalition and Lawmakers Announce Environmental Priorities for 2023 Legislative Session

AUGUSTA, ME – Today, Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC), a partnership of 37 environmental, conservation, climate action, and public health organizations, joined legislative leaders and hundreds of Mainers from across the state to announce their top priorities for the 2023 legislative session.

Each year, the EPC identifies a slate of priority bills that will have the greatest impact on protecting Maine's environment, public health, and climate future. These aren't the only bills the organizations track, support, and celebrate, but they represent some of the best collective opportunities to advance climate action, further environmental justice, protect biodiversity and our environment, and cultivate healthy Maine communities.

“Our 2023 policy priorities reflect the Coalition’s commitment to tackling the climate crisis, advancing environmental justice and equity, and protecting Maine’s treasured wildlife and outdoor spaces,” stated **Kathleen Meil, Senior Director of Policy and Partnerships at Maine Conservation Alliance**, and spokesperson for the Coalition. “As we see the impacts of climate change intensifying in our state, we’ve selected priorities that will set us on a path towards building a sustainable and equitable future for all Mainers,” continued Meil.

The **seven bills** selected by the coalition were introduced by legislative sponsors and advocates during a virtual legislative kick-off event today. **They include proposals to:**

- Recognize tribal sovereignty;
- Foster a responsible offshore wind industry for Maine;
- Conserve endangered & threatened species habitat;
- Invest in Maine trails statewide;
- Secure the future of Maine's forests;
- Amend Maine’s Constitution to establish environmental rights for all, for generations; and
- Advance environmental justice for all Maine people.

Learn more about the package of priority bills [on our website](#). You can also find a recording of the event [on our YouTube channel](#).

From lawmakers and advocates:

Maulian Dana, Penobscot Nation Tribal Ambassador and Wabanaki Alliance Board President, speaking about the bill to recognize the Wabanaki Nations’ inherent right to sovereignty:

“The Wabanaki Alliance is so pleased and grateful that the Environmental Priorities Coalition has chosen to continue to support the efforts to restore tribal sovereignty in our homelands now called Maine. The Wabanaki Tribal Nations are seeking fairness

and equality and ask to be treated the same as every other tribe across the country. When we have access to our rights as federally recognized tribes and the ability to experience true self determination our communities will prosper, we will be more capable to carry out our ancestral duty of being good stewards of the lands and waters, and the benefits will extend to our neighbors in all corners of the state."

Senator Mark Lawrence, co-chair of the Legislature's Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, speaking to the need to address climate change and the bill to foster a responsible offshore wind industry for Maine:

"Mainers are facing crippling energy bills because of our reliance on polluting fossil fuels. Powering the region with offshore wind will provide the clean energy we need to stabilize electricity prices and meet Maine's ambitious climate goals. This bill will make sure we're acting on the timeline necessary to avoid the worst impacts of climate change while ensuring strong standards for environment, labor, and equity."

Representative Lori Gramlich, House Chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, addressing the biodiversity crisis and the bill to conserve endangered and threatened species habitat in Maine:

"The world is experiencing a biodiversity crisis and Maine is no exception—increasingly more wildlife species are being added to Maine's Endangered Species Act list. I have introduced a bill that will reduce habitat loss and habitat degradation—the primary causes of wildlife population decline—from new development. I am proud to be supporting a common sense strategy to conserve Maine's most vulnerable wildlife."

Representative Jessica Fay, House Chair of the Government Oversight Committee, addressing the Maine Trails Bond and the need to invest in trails statewide:

"Maine has the potential to be a top-tier state in the nation with multi-use trails that support activities that contribute to our economy, environment, and quality of life. We should not take our trails for granted, but rather invest in them to make them even more

important for outdoor recreation and active transportation. That's what the proposed Maine Trails Bond would do."

Representative Maggie O'Neil, addressing the need to secure the future of Maine's forests by creating a Forest Advisory Board:

"Maine's forests are critically important to our state. Their healthy future is integral to the well-being of Maine's people, wildlife, communities and economy. Our forests can help us slow climate change by absorbing greenhouse gasses, and adapt to it by providing large blocks of unbroken habitat. But they are facing many challenges, from insects & disease to development pressure. That's why it's important to bring together a range of stakeholders, including landowners, loggers, and biologists, to advise the Maine Forest Service and to work together to ensure healthy forests well into the future."

Representative Maggie O'Neil, speaking about the proposed amendment to Maine's Constitution to establish environmental rights for all, for generations:

"The Pine Tree Amendment will preserve our rights as Mainers to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment. Nothing is more fundamental to our health, our future, and our self-determination. Right now, we trust that federal and state laws will protect us by safeguarding natural resources, regulating pollution, and cleaning up contamination. That might not always be true. A constitutional amendment will act as a backstop now and for future generations."

Sean Mahoney, executive vice president and director, Conservation Law

Foundation, speaking about the need to advance environmental justice for all Maine people:

"For too long, the voices of many who face environmental threats in Maine have been ignored, and the harmful effects of those threats have been overlooked – this bill will make strides toward justice for all Maine people by prioritizing meaningful engagement

with impacted communities and equitable decision-making by environmental, energy and transportation agencies.”

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Maine Conservation Alliance protects Maine’s environment and our democracy through education, collaboration, and advocacy.

Maine’s Environmental Priorities Coalition is a partnership of 37 environmental, conservation, and public health organizations representing over 120,000 members who want to protect the good health, good jobs, and quality of life that our environment provides.