

First Session
of the
130th Maine Legislature

Legislative and Advocacy 2021 PRIORITIES



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The first session of Maine's 130th Legislature is going to be like no other. The session is a stand-out not only because of the COVID protocols—remote working for legisla-

tors, and no lobbyists or community activists in the State House—but also because it will be the first of many years of significant climate action in Maine, with Maine Audubon leading the charge to confront the impacts of our changing climate on Maine wildlife and habitat.

In late 2020, the Maine Climate Council published a four-year Climate Action Plan, an ambitious document born from the recommendations of a variety of stakeholders, including Maine Audubon staff in prominent advisory roles.

But a plan is just a plan. 2021 is about implementation. Maine Audubon will focus our climate-related efforts on: advocating for sustained funding to conserve natural and working lands; improving land use planning and legal tools to support smart growth and keep vital habitat intact; and guiding thoughtful renewable energy development, among the myriad strategies that will be necessary to stave off the worst impacts of climate change.

Though a major focus, our advocacy work will not be entirely climate-related. We'll also engage on bills aimed to reduce boat and loon collisions, combat harmful pesticides, reduce the impact of lead ammunition on scavengers like bald eagles, and stop the intentional release of balloons, known to be deadly to marine wildlife. We'll continue our work promoting bird-safe buildings, understanding how floating offshore wind and wildlife can co-exist, and engaging in a highly specious proposal to develop a mining operation outside of Baxter State Park, all the while working to undo the mess the Trump Administration made of so many of our bedrock federal environmental laws.

Despite the challenges of remote advocacy, we see an opportunity for improved community engagement. Stay in touch with Maine Audubon and we'll keep you apprised of remote public hearings schedules and other ways to connect with your legislators from home. Please help us make the most of this historic legislative session!

maineaudubon.org/act

What's Next?

- Accelerate transition to EVs
- Increase fuel efficiency
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled

- Transition to heat pumps
- Accelerate efficiency in existing buildings
- Adopt energy-efficient building codes

**Embrace
Maine's
Transportation
Future**

**Modernize
Maine
Buildings**

Maine's Climate Action Plan

**Public Comments
Expert Analysis
Scientific Analysis
Economic Research**

**Engage
with Maine
People and
Communities**

**Invest in
Climate-Ready
Infrastructure**

- Increase awareness and education related to climate
- Start a 'Maine Climate Corps'

- Establish a state infrastructure fund
- Develop climate-ready design guidance

Our Current Focus



**Increase Renewable
Energy Production**



**Conserve Natural
and Working Lands**



**Build Healthy,
Climate Resilient
Communities**

Guiding Thoughtful Renewable Energy Siting

In order to meet the state’s ambitious—and necessary—greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, Maine must significantly build out its renewable energy development portfolio. That means more solar and terrestrial and offshore wind, along with the transmission infrastructure necessary to get that clean energy where it needs to go. As with any new development, but particularly development at this scale, the potential for impacting wildlife and habitat is high. We will continue to utilize a variety of strategies to guide renewable energy development to locations that avoid or minimize impacts to the very same vulnerable habitats and species Maine’s Climate Action Plan aims to protect. That includes advocating for including siting considerations in future renewable energy procurements, which will be decided by lawmakers this session, as well as taking part in a working group that will recommend additional policy to guide thoughtful renewable energy development.

Securing Essential Land Conservation Funding

Maine’s forests, saltmarshes, and coastal eelgrasses provide many economic benefits and ecosystem services, but their ability to absorb and store large amounts of carbon at low cost is perhaps reason enough to conserve these areas. Land conservation funding in Maine has been nearly zeroed out, and with newly available federal matching funds, new state funding is needed now. We will advocate for both short-term and long-term funding for the storied Land for Maine’s Future program, including a bond this session to fund land conservation and much-needed state park capital improvements, as well as pursue a dedicated, sustained funding source so that Maine never again finds itself unable to conserve the lands that are elemental for carbon storage, wildlife, and Maine’s character.

Improving Land Use Planning and Smart Growth

Concentrated development in strategic locations reduces transportation emissions, provides amenities such as corner markets and green space within easy access to homes and businesses, and prepares for anticipated growth and economic opportunities as people move to Maine seeking refuge from severe climate impacts affecting other parts of the country. “Smart growth” can also help wildlife by keeping development out of sensitive coastal and riverine areas and away from important habitat corridors and intact habitats wildlife will need to breed, feed, and thrive as they move across the landscape and adapt to a changing climate. Maine Audubon will advocate for robust technical assistance to help communities improve land use planning. We’ll support pilot projects to plan for climate resilience in select, diverse Maine municipalities, as well as legislative action to incorporate sea level rise projections into land use regulations.

Other Areas of Focus



Legislative

Boats, Loons, Other Wildlife

Blunt trauma, most often from collisions with motor boats, is the leading cause of mortality for the adult Common Loon in Maine, according to recent studies. The rising numbers of high horsepower motorboats, new types of watercraft, and the behaviors of motor operators also pose threats to lake water quality and other wildlife. A handful of bills this session seek to address various aspects of this problem.

Pesticides

Several bills this session seek to restrict harmful pesticides, such as chlorpyrifos and neonicotinoids. Maine Audubon will support these bills, sharing the proven negative impacts of these pesticides on wildlife. Neonicotinoids, for example, can cause “sublethal” problems in bees, causing bees to not forage well or find their way home, which can lead to dramatic colony reductions. In addition to harming agriculture, this also reduces available food for insectivorous birds, especially during breeding season when baby birds need to be fed constantly. The European Union has banned the outdoor use of neonicotinoids and we believe that Maine—and eventually the entire nation—would be wise to follow suit.

Lead Ammunition

Lead ammunition can lurk unseen in deer, wild turkey, and other game carcasses often scavenged by Bald Eagles and other species. Less than one gram is enough to kill a Bald Eagle and more and more sick eagles are being brought to wildlife rehabilitators. A bill would ban lead ammunition in Maine. We plan to be a part of this conversation, seeking to understand how we can protect scavenger species while honoring Maine’s strong hunting tradition and culture.

Defending Single-use Plastic Bag Law

In 2019, Maine became the third state in the nation to ban the use of single-use plastic shopping bags statewide. This was a big step toward reducing plastic pollution in our environment. This session, a few bills seek to overturn this ban. Maine Audubon will join businesses and other stakeholders that want to be part of the solution to the plastic pollution problem by opposing these efforts to overturn the ban.



Balloons

Discarded or released balloons can be harmful to wildlife if ingested, yet they are not widely recognized as litter. Bills this session seek to reduce intentional releases of balloons and their passage would be a big win for wildlife.

Advocacy Priorities

BirdSafe Maine

Between 365 million and nearly one billion birds in the U.S. are killed each year after colliding with buildings, more than any other human-caused source except for habitat reduction. Utilization of “bird-safe technology” like bird-safe glass and alternative architectural design can dramatically reduce bird deaths. We’re working to expand awareness and adoption of these practices and technologies in Maine, with an initiative called BirdSafe Maine.

Mining

Wolfdon Mt. Chase, LLC has applied for a permit to pursue a metallic mineral mining operation in Penobscot County, just northeast of Baxter State Park and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. Maine Audubon will be following the permitting process closely to ensure the permit, if issued, meets the very strict environmental protection standards passed by the Legislature in 2017 after extensive input from Maine Audubon and other stakeholders.

Federal Issues

The Trump Administration wreaked havoc on our country’s core environmental protections, undermining over 100 environmental laws, rules, or policies. With a new administration comes an opportunity to right many of these wrongs. We’re focusing on reinvigorating the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and passing a new law that would annually award millions of dollars to wildlife conservation called the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act.



Photo: NOAA Fisheries/Christin Khan

Offshore Wind

The potential for floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine to produce clean energy and play a significant role in meeting our state’s climate goals is huge, but a lot of work needs to be done to determine and understand the impact of offshore wind—particularly on birds and bats. We’re working closely with other stakeholders to advise the State as it pursues a floating offshore wind research array in the Gulf of Maine, in order to avoid potential wildlife impacts and maximize what can be learned from this essential first step toward developing more offshore wind.