

Second Session
of the
130th Maine Legislature

Legislative and Advocacy 2022 PREVIEW

Dear Maine Audubon members and supporters,

2022 is about perseverance. We are undeterred as we stare down the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasingly apparent changes to our climate and weather. We know what we need to do, and we must do it. Maine Audubon's legislative priorities for the second session of the 130th Legislature reflect our unwavering dedication to our mission to protect Maine's wildlife and habitat.

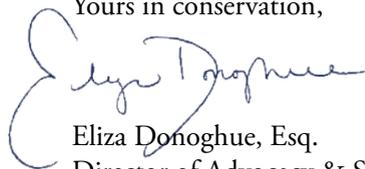
Several of our priorities for this session are focused on implementing the recommendations of the Climate Action Plan we helped create in late 2020. The Climate Action Plan identified strategies to help Maine meet its obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. One bill critical for our climate future would help expand and improve Maine's Ecological Reserve System, which protects lands essential to mitigate and adapt to climate change. We're also supporting a bill to improve climate education in Maine's schools, giving Maine students the tools to understand and fight back against our changing climate.

Our climate work will also focus on the need to continue to secure additional renewable energy. That work continues, in towns and cities and in state government, and in the legislature where we're supporting bills to procure additional renewable energy and to balance renewable energy development with the conservation of natural and working lands.

Climate isn't the only focus of our ambitious legislative slate. We're dedicated to protecting and improving Maine's environment in many ways, including by keeping invasive aquatic species out of our waterways, removing unnecessary dams which block the passage of sea-run fish, and better quantifying the use of pesticides in Maine. We're also committed to equity, and once again support the bill to recognize the sovereignty of Maine's tribes.

As always, we need your help. Join our Action Network at maineaudubon.org/act to stay up to date on all advocacy opportunities. We can achieve a brighter future if we work together.

Yours in conservation,



Eliza Donoghue, Esq.
Director of Advocacy & Staff Attorney

Legislative and Advocacy Preview

Continued Push on the Climate Action Plan

Photo: Scott Heron/Flickr



Enhancing Maine's Ecological Reserve System - LD 736

As Maine faces growing threats from irresponsible development, pollution, and climate change, it is more important than ever to protect rare, threatened, and endangered species and ensure ecosystems remain intact. Maine's ecological reserve system was created by the Legislature in 2000 to maintain effective examples of all the different natural communities found in the state, serve as scientific research sites, protect biodiversity, and provide low-impact recreation opportunities. The goal of protecting all Maine's habitat types has not been met, even when accounting for privately held lands, because the 20-year-old law limits the size of the state's ecological reserve system. LD 736 updates the state's ecological reserve law by lifting the limits to the size of the system, while also helping to meet Maine's climate goals through nature-based carbon sequestration and storage.

Encouraging Climate Education in Maine Public Schools - LD 1902

Supported by a strong coalition of local nature-based education organizations, LD 1902 would give teachers the tools they need to effectively teach climate science and the impacts

of climate change. The bill would provide grants for professional development in K-12 interdisciplinary climate change education, and also help fund partnerships between schools and nature-based organizations to improve curriculum content to engage students in new ways. Maine Audubon has always supported the role of STEM education in helping students develop the skills to find solutions to real-world problems, and giving teachers the power to educate the next generation of climate problem-solvers will benefit us all.



Expanding Maine's Clean Energy Economy - LD 1350

Maine Audubon continues our support for LD 1350, which was carried over from last session. The bill would authorize Maine's Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to conduct additional competitive solicitations for contracts to procure new renewable energy resources. The additional energy would be a substantial step toward Maine's mandatory target of 80% of retail electricity sales from renewable resources by 2030 and 100% by 2050. In our 2021 testimony, Maine Audubon highlighted this bill as a critical strategy to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat by reducing the need for energy powered by fossil fuels, the largest contributor to climate change, as well as proposed a critical amendment that would ensure new resources are sited to avoid or minimize impacts to wildlife and habitat.

Protecting and Enhancing Maine's Environment



Maintaining Opportunities for Salmon Connectivity - LR 2167

Maine Audubon's legislative work includes not only supporting beneficial bills but also working to prevent harmful bills from passing. LR 2167 would potentially preclude the state from improving habitat for endangered Atlantic Salmon along the Kennebec River. Fish passage is currently blocked by four small dams that generate very little power, and Maine Audubon believes that removing the dams should remain an option to protect and improve salmon habitat.



Reducing the Threat From Aquatic Invasive Species - LD 1826

Like many states, Maine has been rocked by the introduction of aquatic invasive species like Eurasian watermilfoil, Brazilian waterweed, and curly-leaf pondweed. New outbreaks can occur easily, and result in habitat disruption, loss of property values, diminished water quality, reduced fishing, and water recreation opportunities. LD 1826 would require the Interagency Task Force on Invasive Aquatic Plants and Nuisance Species to recommend ways to reduce the threat of further infestations to the Maine legislature.

Supporting Tribal Sovereignty - LD 1626

Maine's Wabanaki tribes—the Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, Houlton Band of Maliseet, and Aroostook Band of Micmacs—are treated differently from the vast majority of tribes in other parts of the country in that they do not have sovereignty to form their own government, determine membership requirements, or play a substantial role in law enforcement and court systems. Maine Audubon supports Wabanaki sovereignty as outlined in LD 1626 as a step toward acknowledgement and reparation of the occupation and seizure of Wabanaki ancestral homelands, and by further enabling, empowering, and entrusting tribal traditions and values connected to Maine Audubon's work.



Understanding Pesticide Use - LD 586

Reducing pesticide use is one of the best ways to protect native insects and improve native bird populations. Maine does not quantify pesticide use, though the state does have a policy to "minimize" pesticides. This bill would improve the pesticide registration and reporting systems used by the Bureau of Pesticide Control to better track licensing and applicators of potentially harmful chemicals.