



Environmental Priorities Coalition

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Maureen Drouin, (207) 485-0215, maureen@protectmaine.org

Round Two Begins for Maine's Water, Land, and Wildlife

Environmental Coalition Unveils Priority Bills in Face of Ongoing Rollback Agenda

Forester, Fisherman, Snowmobiler, Engineer, and Town Selectman Join Call for Common Sense Solutions

With the dust barely settled from last year's contentious debates on the future of Maine's land, air, water, and wildlife, lawmakers have returned to Augusta to take up some of the most controversial proposals that were put on hold until this year.

Thursday morning people from all across Maine travelled to the State House to discuss these issues with Maine legislators as part of the 8th annual Environmental Priorities Coalition Legislative Breakfast. Following the breakfast event, the coalition held a news conference where speakers reflected on the challenges ahead and announced their top priorities for the 2012 legislative session.

"As we stand here today, Maine people are facing another round of threats to many carefully-crafted bipartisan policies that would put our health, our environment, and our economy at unnecessary risk," stated Maureen Drouin, Executive Director of the Maine Conservation Alliance. "And as happened last year, some of the policies being advanced reveal an alarming disconnect between the quality of our water, natural areas, and wildlife, and the ability of our businesses to grow and prosper. The truth is, good jobs and a clean environment go hand in hand."

Jackson Parker, Jr., a Project Engineer for Reed & Reed Construction in Woolwich came to talk about the importance of the Clean Energy Citizen Initiative. Parker stated, "We are supporting the Clean Energy Citizen Initiative because it will help transition Maine away from imported fossil fuels and put our energy dollars to work here in Maine, supporting businesses, creating jobs, and reducing pollution. We cannot afford to close the door on future renewable energy investments for so many Maine businesses and Maine workers."

Sam Day, a Hall-Dale High School student from Hallowell, spoke about his passion for duck hunting and the importance of passing the new rule on Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl habitat. "I want to ensure that future generations will have the same opportunities as I have been fortunate enough to have. The rule isn't perfect – it will loosen up development restrictions in the kinds of places ducks need and where I love to hunt them – but it's a fair compromise and it should be passed."

Gordon Mott, a forester from Lakeville, expressed great concern about proposals to alter the Land Use Regulation Commission, also known as LURC, and its role in planning, permitting, and enforcing standards to protect Maine's North Woods in balance with local and regional needs. Mott remarked, "I live and own land in LURC jurisdiction. It is critically important that we have competent land use planning in our treasured unorganized territories. Growth and development must be guided in ways that respect property rights and at the same time conserve our natural resources for future generations. The LURC reform proposal needs significant improvements."

As part of their commitment to fair and effective policymaking, the coalition also announced support for strengthening Maine's Clean Election Act. John Brautigam, a former Maine Assistant Attorney General stated, "Basic protections for

the environment are sometimes opposed by outside corporate interests who spend large amounts to influence our elections and policies in Maine. The Clean Election Act keeps lawmakers accountable to Maine voters, including those who want to preserve our states' natural resources for generations to come. This protects Maine's clean air and water -- and our democracy itself."

One of the most controversial proposals this session is a so-called 'takings' bill that is strongly opposed by the coalition. David Pollack, a town selectman from Fayette, stated, "If the State supports this legislation, the work of preserving our environment will be pushed on to communities without the necessary support, expertise, or resources to carry out this responsibility. Dropping this on our doorstep means municipalities will be working at cross purposes with the State, and that will lead to a quagmire of divisiveness, inconsistencies, and constant judgment calls that may benefit a few at the expense of the many. Some of those 'few' may be lawyers, developers, and real estate agents. The 'many' will be the rest of us."

The coalition also announced its support for the Forest, Farm, and Fish Bond, that would fund the popular Land for Maine's program. Partners say this bond would create important new conservation and economic opportunities and protect Maine's water, land, and wildlife for generations to come.

"Today we have unveiled six priorities for this legislative session that will put Maine on the trail to new jobs, good health, and the protection of Maine's water, land, and wildlife," added Drouin. "Will legislators continue to work together and conserve Maine's natural legacy for future generations? Will they set Maine on course for a clean energy future? And will they prevent the back-door undermining of Maine's core environmental protections? We believe they will. Maine's beautiful environment is the foundation of our prosperity and our way of life. When we work together to protect it, Maine people and businesses can thrive."

#####

Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition is a partnership of 27 environmental, conservation, and public health organizations representing over 100,000 members who want to protect the good health, good jobs and quality of life that our environmental provides for all of us. Members include:

American Lung Association of Maine, Appalachian Mountain Club, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Bicycle Coalition of Maine, Conservation Law Foundation, Environmental Health Strategy Center, Environment Maine, Environment Northeast, Friends of Casco Bay, Maine Audubon, Maine Center for Economic Policy, Maine Congress of Lake Associations, Maine Council of Churches, Maine Council of Trout Unlimited, Maine Conservation Alliance, Maine Interfaith Power and Light, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Maine People's Alliance, Maine Rivers, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Maine Chapter, Product Policy Institute of Maine, RESTORE: The North Woods, Sierra Club Maine, The Ocean Conservancy, The Wilderness Society, Toxics Action Center