

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: January 29, 2009

Contact: Maureen Drouin, Maine Conservation Voters, 620-8811, maureen@protectmaine.org



Environmental Coalition Stakes Out Priorities for Lawmakers Clean Energy, Chemical Exposure, and Resource Protection Targeted for Action

They came to the State House from all over Maine – an outdoor recreation advocate from Madawaska, a farmer from Waldoboro, a mother of two from Portland, a nurse from Hallowell, a river conservation supporter from Oxford Hills and an energy auditor from Rockland. At a press conference convened by almost 30 of Maine’s environmental, conservation, and health organizations, they spoke about Maine people’s vision for the future and what legislators can do today to protect Maine’s natural heritage.

John Ezzy, Executive Director of Four Seasons Trail Association in Madawaska, told lawmakers it’s important to think long-term. He stated, “Maine’s beautiful environment is the river that runs through all of us. Who we are, what we value, what we do for work, and what we do for fun all have their roots in our environment. We need strong leadership in Augusta to make sure we preserve this key to our way of life. That starts with supporting these seven priorities, including investing in the Land for Maine’s Future Program.”

More than two dozen organizations comprising Maine’s Environmental Priorities Coalition have produced a Common Environmental Agenda to help guide legislators for the fifth straight year. Six priority bills include efforts to protect rivers and land, reduce climate change, protect people and businesses from exposure to dangerous chemicals, and make it easier for Mainers to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and businesses. The list includes a seventh priority that is not a bill but a standard for the Legislature to follow: no weakening of current environmental protections.

Sandra Hughes Goff, a mom from Portland was there to talk about climate and energy planning. She stated, “The State of Maine can no longer afford to overlook climate and energy demands within state planning, projects and permitting. By establishing clear-cut guidelines to ensure public and private development is as clean and energy efficient as possible, Maine people and businesses can thrive.”

Sandra Armington, a pediatric nurse from Hallowell, focused on preventing harm from the mercury in fluorescent light bulbs. She urged legislators to take immediate action and stated, “There are simple things you can do in the coming months that will make a huge difference in the health and prosperity of every Maine resident. Fluorescent lights work well and save money, so it’s important that they are safe to use and safe to dispose of. That’s something every family and every business can support.”

Lee Dassler, Executive Director of the Western Foothills Land Trust, spoke about the importance of ensuring some of Maine’s outstanding rivers were adequately protected from pollution. She stated, “Maine’s waterways, like the Crooked River, are the lifeblood of our state and of our communities. They provide beauty, drinking water, homes for plants and animals, and countless

business opportunities. We have a responsibility to protect these beautiful waterways on the priority list.”

Jo Ann Myers, an organic farmer in Waldoboro expressed concern over the dangers of pesticide spray to neighbors and small farmers. She stated, “All we’re asking is ‘say before you spray’. By creating a simple, clear, and comprehensive notification system, no business or family will need to worry about their crops, their health, or damage to their property from off-target pesticide spray. It’s just common sense.”

Richard Burbank, an energy auditor, trainer and home performance contractor from Rockland said, “There’s no better investment in Maine’s future than getting us on the road to energy independence. That’s got to start with a simple and streamlined efficiency and weatherization effort that everyone can benefit from. What grows from there are new businesses, good jobs, and more money to support our local economy. Everyone wins when we invest in a cleaner energy future.”

The Environmental Priorities Coalition is an influential voice at the Maine State House and has a strong track record of success. In 2007 and 2008, nine of its ten priority bills were passed by the Maine Legislature and signed into law. In addition, several partner organizations use the Common Environmental Agenda as the foundation for their legislative “report cards.”

Maureen Drouin, Executive Director of Maine Conservation Voters, spoke for the Coalition and stated, “Protecting and preserving Maine’s environmental legacy takes vision and vigilance. Maine lawmakers have an important role to play and we’re counting on them to support our Common Environmental Agenda and help preserve our precious environment so Maine people and Maine’s economy can thrive.”

#####

Background:

Maine’s Environmental Priorities Coalition is a partnership of 27 environmental, conservation, and public health organizations in Maine representing over 100,000 members. Its goal is to provide lawmakers with a roadmap for protecting Maine people and promoting prosperity for today and future generations.

Fact sheets on priority bills are attached.

The Environmental Priorities Coalition includes:

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