



## Summary of 2012 EPC Priorities

Maine's extraordinary environment forms the backdrop for who we are and what we value as individuals and as a state. Our jobs, our health, our time with family and friends, and our identity as Maine people all have their roots in our beautiful environment. When we work together to protect it, Maine people and businesses can thrive.

Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC) identified eight priorities for the 2012 legislative session. Unfortunately, almost all involved defending against proposals to weaken existing environmental protections. The end result included some important victories, some serious losses, and a handful of outcomes that were improved but not ideal.

We are left with grave concerns about lawmakers' commitment to adequately conserving and protecting Maine's natural resources. With few exceptions, this year's Legislature made little progress for Maine's clean waters, natural areas and wildlife, and the economies that depend on them.



### **Maine's North Woods: Land use planning body remains in place**

A contentious proposal to abolish the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC) was beaten back. The final legislation ensures that LURC will continue to guide development to appropriate areas in Maine's North Woods through planning and zoning. A particularly damaging provision to allow counties to "opt out" of LURC was removed. Unfortunately, the bill allows county commissioners to appoint themselves or their designee to fill eight of the nine slots on the revamped commission, bypassing the normal appointment process.



### **'Takings' Legislation Defeated: Maine's core environmental protections survive**

Despite initial passage by one vote in the House, the "Takings" bill was killed in the Senate, and the House then followed the Senate's lead. "Takings" undermines land use laws designed to protect our water, land and wildlife; the character of Maine communities; public health and safety; and the value or property for all Mainers. The bill would have required the state to pay landowners to follow future land use laws or waive the regulation if funds were insufficient.



### **Clean Elections Set Back: A level field for campaigns is lost**

Maine's Clean Elections Law, passed by citizen-initiated referendum in 1996, suffered a significant blow. The Supreme Court struck down the matching fund provision and legislators rejected a fix to let an outspent, publicly financed candidate qualify for more funds. Undermining this option allows wealthy, out-of-state special interests, such as oil companies, to have increased influence in local races.



### **Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl Habitat Rule Enacted: Maine's water, land and wildlife protected**

Despite pressure, the Legislature approved a proposed rule that had been strengthened by the Board of Environmental Protection. The improved rule satisfies sportsmen, the Maine DEP, and the environmental community. The IWWH rule maintains key protections for land and water essential to the health of wading birds and waterfowl. The compromise provides an opportunity for a shortened permit process while also protecting the most important parts of waterfowl wetlands.





**LMF Bond Enacted: Legislative support for conserving Maine’s natural resources**

Protecting Maine’s natural resource based infrastructure preserves our way of life and secures an economic future for our children. This bill would fund the Land for Maine’s Future program (LMF), which has an outstanding record of success at protecting Maine’s natural legacy and a history of bipartisan support. Lawmakers across the aisle rallied to send a \$5 million bond to Maine voters in November. The bond awaits action by Governor LePage.



**Mining Regulations Weakened: Highest quality waters put in jeopardy**

The Legislature passed a bill that weakens Maine’s open pit mining regulations, which could threaten our waterways. The bill was introduced during the final weeks of the session and the rushed process did not allow for full public debate or robust, scientific input. While the bill was improved from its original version by the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, the outcome still weakens groundwater standards and reduces the state’s protection against abandoned mining sites. The law now will go through administrative rulemaking. Once those rules are finalized in 2014 they must go back to the Legislature for approval.



**Attack on Clean Energy Thwarted: Late-session attack on Maine renewables defeated**

The Governor introduced a bill that would have undercut Maine’s existing Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) by removing the 100-megawatt cap on eligibility for hydropower. The bill would have required Maine ratepayers to subsidize massive Canadian hydropower dams at the expense of Maine-produced renewable energy like wind and solar. A watered-down version of the bill passed in the Senate, was defeated in the House, and died in non-concurrence.



**Assault on Efficiency Maine Trust Blocked: Cost-saving efficiency initiatives will continue**

A second energy bill introduced by Governor LePage late in the session would have stripped Efficiency Maine Trust of much of its autonomy and required the Trust to fund an electric heat conversion program. If passed, the bill could have undermined successful cost-saving efficiency initiatives. The bill was neutralized with a unanimous committee amendment, which was accepted by the full Legislature. Efficiency Maine Trust remains independent, while pilot electric heat conversion programs will be run by the utilities after review and approval by the Maine Public Utilities Commission.



## Maine Environmental Priorities Coalition

*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 environment provides for all of us.*

American Lung Association of Maine | Appalachian Mountain Club | Atlantic Salmon Federation  
Bicycle Coalition of Maine | Conservation Law Foundation | Environmental Health Strategy Center  
Environment Maine | ENE (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

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