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Coalition and Lawmakers Announce Climate and Environmental Justice Priorities for 2021 Legislative Session

AUGUSTA, ME – Today, [Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition \(EPC\)](#), a partnership of 32 environmental, conservation, climate action, and public health organizations, joined legislative leaders and hundreds of Mainer from across the state to announce their top priorities for the 2021 legislative session.

Each year, the EPC identifies a slate of priority bills that will have the greatest impact on protecting Maine's environment, public health, and climate future. These aren't the only bills the organizations track, support, and celebrate, but they represent the best collective opportunities to tackle climate change, help create jobs, reduce pollution in our communities, increase investment in critical infrastructure, and bring more equity into environmental policy decisions.

"With Gov. Mills' ambitious new Climate Action Plan and now climate-friendly leadership at the national level, Maine is poised to make significant progress for our environment and climate this year," stated Kathleen Meil, director of policy and partnerships at Maine Conservation Alliance, and spokesperson for the Coalition. "As we move forward during these challenging times, we've chosen priorities that will help our state emerge stronger and set us on a path toward a just and sustainable future for generations to come," continued Meil.

The nine bills selected by the Coalition were introduced by legislative sponsors during a live online event on Friday. They include proposals to:

- Recognize Tribal Sovereignty.

- Stop filling Maine landfills with out-of-state waste.
- Save municipal recycling programs.
- Phase out toxic PFAS chemicals.
- Ban aerial herbicide spraying for forestry management.
- Fund the Land for Maine's Future program.
- Establish a Green Bank to finance climate solutions.
- Align state agencies with climate goals.
- Fund energy efficiency and weatherization projects.

[Learn more about the package of priority bills](#) and [listen to the recording for the event here](#).

Lawmaker quotes:

Senate President Troy Jackson, Aroostook County, on why he's sponsoring the bill to ban aerial herbicide spraying for forestry management:

"Protecting and preserving our natural resources is about more than safeguarding scenic views. It's about the health and well-being of Maine people and making sure our heritage industries, our beloved pastimes, and the character of our communities get passed onto future generations. It's why I'm so passionate about putting an end to the aerial spraying of toxic chemicals in the Maine woods," said Senate President Troy Jackson of Allagash. "We know this practice is dangerous and only benefits large landowners at the expense of the people living and working in the woods. I'm truly grateful for the support of the Environmental Priorities Coalition as we work together to ban this harmful practice."

Assistant House Majority Leader Rachel Talbot Ross, Cumberland County, speaking about the bill she has submitted to recognize the Wabanaki tribes' inherent sovereignty:

"This bill is critically important in advancing equity and justice in our state. It is legislation that will bring Maine tribes into alignment parity with the 574 other federally recognized tribal nations. It further provides the opportunity to take an affirmative step forward in dismantling systemic racism by restoring the tribes right to self-determination."

Senator Matt Pouliot, Kennebec County, addressing the energy efficiency and weatherization bond measure that he is sponsoring:

"This bond would invest in cost-effective weatherization projects to lower energy bills for Maine's seniors, low-income households, municipalities, and schools. With passage of

this bond, we can help Mainers save millions of dollars in their energy bills and reduce the cost of living for many people who struggle the most with their monthly expenses.”

Senator Cathy Breen, Cumberland County, speaking to the need for renewed investment in the Land for Maine’s Future program.

“In Maine, our economic stability, heritage industries and way of life are tied directly to our environment and natural resources. When our rivers and lakes, forests and working waterfronts are healthy, our state can thrive,” said Sen. Cathy Breen, D-Falmouth. “The Land for Maine’s Future program is one of the best ways we have of preserving our natural resources for generations to come. I’m proud to sponsor this bond proposal, which would make a much needed investment in Land for Maine’s Future.”

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Maine Conservation Alliance protects Maine’s environment and our democracy through education, collaboration, and advocacy.

Maine’s Environmental Priorities Coalition is a partnership of 32 environmental, conservation, climate action 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.