



# Maine Conservation Voters

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Maine Conservation Voters names environmental leaders and laggards**

*Legislators praised for strong bipartisan efforts, despite onslaught of vetoes*

(AUGUSTA) Maine Conservation Voters released their 2014 Environmental Scorecard today, which tracks the votes of each member of the 126<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature on key pieces of environmental legislation. This year's report highlights a pattern of missed opportunities to protect Maine's water quality, invest in clean energy technology, and build Maine's natural resource-based economy.

"Here in Maine, a clean environment and a healthy economy go hand-in-hand," said Beth Ahearn, Political Director for Maine Conservation Voters. "Over the last two years, legislators have worked hard to craft careful, common sense solutions to emerging threats like water pollution, toxic chemicals in household products, and the realities of our changing climate. Unfortunately, Governor LePage used his veto pen on several bills, putting our lakes, our drinking water, and the health of our children needlessly at risk."

Of the 13 bills included in the Scorecard, legislators took pro-environment votes on 12 of them. But in six cases Governor LePage vetoed their passage and lawmakers failed to override, despite strong bipartisan support in earlier votes.

The Governor vetoed bills that would have required a 25 foot setback from lakes for fertilizer application; strengthened water protections in Maine's metallic mineral mining rules; required manufacturers to disclose their use of the hormone-disrupting chemical BPA in food packaging; promoted 'food hubs' to aggregate and distribute local food to institutions like schools and hospitals; studied the health and economic impacts of climate change on Maine people and businesses; and reinstated a solar power rebate.

"It's a shame to watch opportunities for better health and a stronger economy pass us by," added Ahearn.

Assistant House Majority Leader Jeff McCabe of Skowhegan sponsored the bill to protect Maine lakes and another to bond for water protection and culvert replacements. "Maine people are rightfully proud of the state's natural treasures – our lakes and streams, mountains, forests and coast and the wildlife that inhabit these special places," he said. "These natural resources play a fundamental role in our heritage as Mainers, our economy and our well-being. They deserve our steadfast stewardship so future generations will also enjoy and benefit from them."

Sen. Chris Johnson, sponsor of the food hubs bill, stated, "It is an unfortunate setback for Maine that all the hard work to pass the food hubs bill was undone by politics. The bill passed 33-0 Senate and 120-19 House. It would have been a win for Maine's farmers, for our local economy, and for student nutrition. Now it's just another missed opportunity. I look forward to finding ways in the future to expand our agricultural, seafood, and value-added food economic sectors."

Over the past two years, the Governor only signed two pro-environment bills into law (wind power siting and GMO labeling) and allowed three others to be enacted without his signature (paint recycling, opening the St. Croix river to alewives, and the \$10 million water bond being considered by voters in November). Legislators also rejected the Governor's proposal to divert money from the sale of timber harvesting on public land.

"I am a Teddy Roosevelt Republican," said Rep. Don Marean of Hollis. "This session I voted to protect our natural resources, to encourage clean renewable power, and to encourage wider distribution of local foods. I believe that a strong economy depends upon good stewardship of our land, air, and water."

The 13<sup>th</sup> bill included in the Scorecard was a 2013 proposal to amend the rules for open-pit mining in order to strengthen water quality protections and prevent Maine taxpayers from footing the bill for clean-up costs once a mine is closed. While this bill went down to defeat, lawmakers took a pro-environment vote on mining rules in 2014 when they rejected new rules on metallic mining that would have made it easier for mining companies to engage in highly polluting open-pit mining operations in Maine.

"It is our responsibility as legislators to ensure that before any open-pit metallic mineral mining occurs again in Maine, that our environment and public health are protected," said Rep. Gay Grant of Gardiner. "We must also ensure that if an environmental disaster still occurs, the full cost of cleanup will be borne by the companies who profit from the mining, not Maine taxpayers."

Results of the 2014 Environmental Scorecard include:

- Number of Senate Conservation Champions (100% score): 14
- Number of House Conservation Champions (100% score): 59
- Number of Senators with a score of 75% or higher: 22
- Number of Representatives with a score of 75% and higher: 88
- Number of anti-conservation Senators (8% or lower score): 1
- Number of anti-conservation Representatives (8% or lower score): 4

"Maine people value clean water and a healthy environment," said Ahearn. "Most legislators share these values and understand that Maine's natural resources are what set us apart. They are our biggest competitive advantage. Although gains for conservation were modest in the 126th Legislature, we are pleased that the Governor's attacks on our air, land and water were unsuccessful. We are grateful to lawmakers on both sides of the aisle for standing up to protect what makes Maine, Maine."

The Scorecard acknowledges other victories, including bills to determine the value of distributed solar energy generation and to study the effects of ocean acidification.

"Maine is more dependent upon its marine resources than any other state in the northeast," said Rep. Mick Devin, a marine scientist from Newcastle who introduced the ocean acidification bill. "Over a billion dollars of economic activity is at risk from ocean acidification, as well as our top two fisheries - lobsters and clams - which combine for 10,000 jobs. The results from the new study commission will benefit all sectors of the marine economy."

The Scorecard features high and low points of the 2013-2014 session, including examples of political courage on both sides of the aisle. Senator Thomas Saviello, Senator James Boyle, and Representative Russell Black led the fight to restrict motorized, recreational gold prospecting in high value trout streams. The bill was vetoed by Governor LePage but had the distinction of being the only conservation veto to be overridden in 2014.

“Maine is an amazing place, with tremendous natural resources that we live in, work in, and play in,” said Rep. Black, a farmer and logger from Wilton. “We need to protect them, we need to respect them and we need to be good stewards of those natural resources that we have been given.”

In another victory, Senator Saviello, Representative Dennis Keschl, and Representative Michael Carey advocated aggressively and successfully for lake protection funding. Their efforts resulted in the appropriation of \$71,500 per year to fund lake protection programs.

This year’s Scorecard includes a special thank-you to retiring Senators Mazurek and Woodbury, and Representatives Berry, Hayes, MacDonald, Peoples and Priest, who all had a 100% score during the 126<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

The Scorecard is mailed to over 10,000 households in Maine. Ahearn added, “The Scorecard tells Maine people which legislators are moving Maine forward, and which ones are taking us in the wrong direction. With this information, Mainers can hold their elected officials accountable with words of praise or disappointment.”

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*The mission of Maine Conservation Voters (MCV) is to ensure that the protection of our water, air, forests, wildlife, landscapes, and natural heritage is a political priority in Maine. We work in a non-partisan manner to pass strong laws to protect our shared environment, elect conservationists to public office, and hold lawmakers accountable for their actions.*