



# 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 its 2015 Environmental Scorecard today, which tracks the votes of each member of the 127<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature on key pieces of environmental legislation.

"This year's report tells the story of a legislature at odds with Governor LePage," said Beth Ahearn, Political Director for Maine Conservation Voters. "We are grateful that the legislature as a whole stood firm for conservation on almost every vote – rejecting metallic mineral mining rules, restoring energy efficiency, and keeping timber harvesting revenue where it belongs – but were six votes shy of requiring the Governor to release Land for Maine's Future bonds."

Of the five bills included in the Scorecard, legislators took pro-environment votes on four of them.

"Being good stewards of our natural resources is essential to having an economy, state, and nation that flourishes," said Rep. Patrick Corey, R-Windham. "Living in Maine, it's easy to take for granted our natural surroundings, wildlife, as well as clean air and water. We're able to do this because visionaries looked out for our future."

One of the featured bills is a proposal to approve amended rules for open-pit mining. Even though the Environment and Natural Resources Committee spent significant time reworking the rules this session, the rules still did not adequately protect water quality or prevent Maine taxpayers from footing the bill for clean-up costs once a mine is closed. The too-weak mining rules were defeated, and by law, the 1991 rules will remain in effect until new rules are approved by the state legislature.

"Mainers have demonstrated loudly and clearly their commitment to wildlife conservation, and I will continue to support this tradition," stated Senator Cathy Breen, D-Cumberland. "Protecting Maine's natural resources from destructive mining practices or supporting the work of Land for Maine's Future isn't just about preserving wildlife habitat: it is about solidifying Maine's brand and protecting our fishing, agriculture and tourism industries, which form the backbone of Maine's economy."

In one of the most controversial stories of the legislative session, the governor continued to withhold voter-approved Land for Maine's Future bonds. Many projects that had been granted LMF funding have been shelved due to the governor's actions. Proposed legislation would have required the governor to release \$6.47 million approved in 2010 and \$5 million approved in 2012. LMF bonds are consistently approved by at least sixty percent of Maine voters, and the 2010 bonds are closing in on their expiration date.

Senator Roger Katz, R-Augusta, sponsored legislation to require Governor LePage to release the Land for Maine's Future bonds. "When the Governor refused to authorize voter – approved bonds for Land for Maine's Future projects, I was proud to sponsor the bill to circumvent his authority," said Katz. "No one, even a sitting governor, should have the right to veto the will of the people expressed at the ballot box."

House Majority Leader Jeff McCabe, D-Skowhegan, championed the release of Land for Maine's Future bonds as well as the strengthening of mining rules. "Conservation is an area where lawmakers need to come together. It's the foundation for natural resources-based jobs, outdoor heritage and the local economies of rural Maine," he said. "We must stand against irresponsible timber harvesting, the undermining of Land for Maine's Future and other threats and stand up for responsible stewardship. Maine people expect and deserve nothing less."

A high point of the session was the restoration of \$38 million in energy efficiency funding to the Efficiency Maine Trust. The funding cut was the result of a clerical error in the 2013 Omnibus Energy Bill; the word "and" was accidentally omitted and the resulting interpretation slashed energy efficiency funding. Assistant House Majority Leader Sara Gideon, D-Freeport, sponsored the bill to fix the error in the bill's text in order to fulfill the bill's intent. In an act of solidarity and good governance, the legislature unanimously overrode the governor's veto.

"Every single member in the House and Senate present voted to override the governor's veto of the clean fix 'and' bill," said Gideon. "We were united in honoring the intent of the law. We recognized importance of energy efficiency savings for Maine families and businesses, of predictability in our energy policy and of the need to grow jobs in our clean energy sector."

**Results of the 2014 Environmental Scorecard include:**

- Number of Senate Conservation Champions (4/4 score): 15
- Number of House Conservation Champions (5/5 score): 68
- Number of Senators with a score of 3/4 or higher: 24
- Number of Representatives with a score of 4/5 and higher: 85
- Number of anti-conservation Senators (1/4 or lower score): 5
- Number of anti-conservation Representatives (1/5 or lower score): 26

"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 127<sup>th</sup> 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 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."

The Scorecard can be found on line at [www.maineconservation.org](http://www.maineconservation.org), and includes an interaction portion that allows you to search for you legislators and view their conservation scores over time.

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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*