



GOVERNOR MILLS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT: ASSESSING HER FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

GRADE: A



Maine Conservation Voters is a statewide, nonpartisan organization that conserves and protects Maine's environment by passing laws that protect our environmental legacy, electing pro-environment candidates to office, and holding our elected officials accountable, without regard to political party.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Janet Mills took the gubernatorial oath of office on January 2, 2019. This report details — and grades — her efforts on behalf of Maine's environment over the course of her first 100 days in office. The first 100 days is an important indication of the tone, commitment and intent of any Administration on key issues. Auspiciously, the first policy initiative Governor Mills mentioned in her inaugural address focused on tackling climate change by embracing clean energy and green jobs.¹ The governor not only talks the talk with regard to the environment, but she also walks the walk. Governor Mills has done more to address climate change in her first 100 days than former Governor Paul LePage did during his eight years in office. Governor Mills has also announced and initiated efforts to protect our water, land, and wildlife. She has nominated qualified appointees and has shown a refreshing commitment to Maine values of good governance and democracy. Overall, Governor Mills' first 100 days advanced an ambitious environmental vision and path forward. We look forward to working with the Mills Administration to put that vision into action over the next four years so that our environment, communities, and economy can thrive.

TAKING LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

During the campaign, Governor Mills identified climate change and energy independence as a priority for her Administration and has taken significant initiative on these issues in her first 100 days in office.

- The newly formed Office of Innovation and the Future is preparing a comprehensive climate agenda, including a

¹ <https://www.pressherald.com/2019/01/03/read-janet-mills-inaugural-address/?rel=related>

pledge to assist the University of Maine in research and development of offshore wind power, incentives for solar power, and the promotion of energy efficiency and weatherization programs.²

- Legislation to create the Maine Climate Council, made up of scientists, agency commissioners, energy policy experts, natural resource workers, and other stakeholders, was drafted by the Governor's staff to establish renewable energy goals and emission reduction levels, and to update Maine's Climate Action Plan.³ One overarching goal of the Climate Council is to reduce carbon pollution in Maine by 80% by 2050 and to work toward 100% renewable energy within the same time frame.
- The Governor issued an Executive Order ending the wind turbine moratorium imposed by former Governor LePage.⁴
- Maine joined the bipartisan U.S. Climate Alliance to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.⁵
- Governor Mills announced that Maine will not support offshore drilling and will not participate in the Outer Continental Shelf Governors Coalition, which is promoting oil and gas development in the North Atlantic.⁶ This is a stark contrast to former Governor LePage, who supported drilling off Maine's coast.
- Governor Mills launched a set of initiatives to support the expansion of the use of electric vehicles across Maine in an effort to reduce the state's carbon pollution and reliance on fossil fuels. They include the creation of financial incentives to purchase electric vehicles and the installation of at least 50 public vehicle charging stations.⁷
- Governor Mills signed legislation (LD 91) on April 2, 2019 to restore net metering, allowing solar producers to be reimbursed for excess energy supplied to the grid.⁸
- In her budget address to the Legislature, Governor Mills pledged to have 100,000 heat pumps installed by 2025 and to provide more rebates for low to moderate-income people.⁹
- The Governor was chosen to Chair the Natural Resources Committee of the National Governors' Association with jurisdiction over issues related to energy, natural resources, agriculture and the environment.
- The Governor is having solar panels installed to provide electricity to the James G. Blaine House (the governor's official residence) later this year.
- Representatives from the Departments of Transportation and Environmental Protection are monitoring the Transportation and Climate Initiative, a regional collaboration of 12 Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states that seeks to develop the clean energy economy, improve transportation, and reduce carbon emissions from the transportation sector. The state has not yet signed on to the Regional Policy Design Process.¹⁰

In addition to those initiatives, Governor Mills has expressed support for Central Maine Power's controversial proposal to build a transmission line to supply energy from Hydro-Quebec in Canada to Massachusetts. Her support is based on analysis showing projected regional carbon reduction benefits as well as \$258 million in benefits to Maine as outlined in a stipulation agreement. Maine's environmental organizations are divided over the merits of the project, with some strongly critical of the projected economic, carbon, and environmental benefits, including habitat fragmentation in the North Woods. The transmission line has been approved by the Public Utilities Commission and will undergo further regulatory scrutiny from the Department of Environmental Protection and the Land Use Planning Commission.

PROTECTING MAINE'S CLEAN WATER, LAND, FISH AND WILDLIFE

The Mills Administration has taken several steps to demonstrate the Governor's commitment to conserving Maine's natural legacy and protecting human health.

- Governor Mills established a task force to study the effects and prevalence of perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in Maine that continue to threaten our water and public health.¹¹

2 <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-janet-mills-state-budget-address-2019-02-11>

3 <https://www.pressherald.com/2019/02/28/mills-sets-renewable-energy-goals-in-climate-change-speech/>

4 <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-signs-executive-order-ending-maine-wind-turbine-moratorium-2019-02-15>

5 <https://www.pressherald.com/2019/02/28/mills-sets-renewable-energy-goals-in-climate-change-speech/>

6 <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-maine-will-not-participate-outer-continental-shelf-governors-coalition-2019-02>

7 <https://www.mainepublic.org/post/gov-mills-looks-expand-electric-vehicle-use-maine>

8 <https://www.mainepublic.org/post/mills-signs-bill-restoring-net-metering-solar-users>

9 <https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/state-to-expand-promotion-of-heat-pumps/ar-BBTEnso>

10 <https://www.transportationandclimate.org/main-menu/tcis-regional-policy-design-process-2019>

11 <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-signs-executive-order-establishing-task-force-charged-studying-effects-pfas>

- The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced that all sewage sludge will be tested for PFAs to help prevent further contamination of our food supplies.¹²
- DEP is working with the Wabanaki Nations of Maine to develop a proposal for stronger water quality protections in rivers where fishing is conducted more often for human consumption.
- The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) will conduct year-round biotoxin sampling, especially important for aquaculture. DMR also convened the second Lobster Research Collaborative.
- Governor Mills announced support for a Land for Maine's Future Bond to re-establish this popular program and promote conservation of important natural resources, recreational lands, working farms and forests, and working waterfront access in Maine.¹³
- The Inland Fisheries & Wildlife budget supports the addition of new properties to provide public access and increase recreational opportunities for boaters, anglers, hunters, bird watchers, and other outdoor sports enthusiasts.

Of concern is the Land Use Planning Commission's rule change to the "adjacency principle," which began under the LePage Administration and would allow sprawling development in the North Woods as far as seven miles away from retail hubs.¹⁴

ENSURING GOOD GOVERNMENT AND A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY

Governor Mills has shown a commitment to good governance through making highly qualified, broadly respected, pro-environment cabinet appointments including: Judith Camuso, Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife; Amanda Beal, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry; Gerald Reid, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection; and Patrick Keliher, staying on as Commissioner of the Department of Marine Resources. Camuso and Beal are the first women to lead their respective departments in their current configuration.

The Governor's commitment to strong leadership is also evident in her experienced, knowledgeable senior staff including: Hannah Pingree, Director of the new Office of Innovation and the Future; Dan Burgess, Director of the Governor's Energy Office; and Tom Abello, Senior Policy Advisor for Natural Resources and Transportation. The Governor and her appointees have also made a commitment to improving the morale and support of Executive Branch staff.

Governor Mills has yet to name a new Chair of the Public Utilities Commission, a position which expired at the end of March. In addition, it's unclear whether the Governor will take the Bureau of Forestry in a new direction or maintain the status quo under the LePage Administration.

We know that a healthy environment depends upon a healthy democracy. Just two weeks after her inauguration, Governor Mills gave a warm welcome to new Americans from 30 different countries who took their oaths of citizenship at a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Naturalization Ceremony.¹⁵ This simple act signaled that Governor Mills is bringing a respect and passion for democracy back to the Blaine House.

CONCLUSION

Governor Mills gets high marks for making climate change a top priority of her administration, showing the state-level leadership our country needs. We acknowledge that it is still early in Governor Mills' term, but we are encouraged by the numerous positive steps taken in her first 100 days towards protecting Maine's land, air, water, and public health. The Governor is a breath of fresh air, understanding the importance of environmental stewardship to Maine's economy, communities, and way of life. We applaud Governor Mills' practical, forward-thinking approach to setting ambitious but achievable goals and building a team of highly qualified, ethical, and committed professionals who can help her get the job done.

12 <https://www.pressherald.com/2019/03/22/maine-dep-to-require-testing-of-sludge-for-forever-chemicals/>

13 <https://www.pressherald.com/2019/03/05/groups-push-for-95-million-bond-to-fund-maine-land-conservation/>

14 <https://bangordailynews.com/2019/01/24/opinion/editorials/allowing-sprawling-development-would-hurt-towns-wildlife-and-wilderness/>

15 <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-new-americans-king-middle-school-portland-welcome-home-2019-01-18>