

SPECIAL: Governor LePage, 2010-2018

Excerpt from 2018 Maine's Environmental Scorecard, www.maineconservation.org/scores/2018



Eight Years of Damage to Maine's Environment and Democracy

Over the past eight years, Governor Paul LePage's opposition to basic environmental stewardship has jeopardized our clean air, water, and wildlife, and caused lasting damage to agencies tasked with protecting our environment. Fortunately, Maine legislators, concerned citizens and a coalition of environmental advocates defeated most of the governor's dangerous proposals.

This retrospective assessment of Governor LePage's tenure is a sobering review of his anti-environmental agenda – but it is also an expression of hope. The people of Maine value our environment, and we have the opportunity in 2018 to elect a new governor who will share these values. Maine deserves better.

A Poor Beginning

The governor did not wait long to reveal an agenda that favored corporate interests over Maine people. One of his first actions after taking office was to propose a “regulatory reform” bill:

- Abolishing the state Board of Environmental Protection (BEP)
- Rezoning three million acres of Maine's unorganized territories for development
- Easing standards for development near vernal pools and other significant wildlife habitats
- Eliminating product stewardship laws that remove toxins from municipal waste streams
- Shortening the statute of limitations for the prosecution of environmental violations
- Abolishing the Kid-Safe Products Act, Maine's pioneering law to phase out dangerous chemicals from consumer products

Ultimately, the legislature rejected the most damaging aspects of Governor LePage's proposal. However, the governor adopted new approaches to achieve his anti-environment agenda by cutting funding to vital state agencies, driving key staff to leave, and nominating people to leadership positions who share his anti-environment philosophy.

Conservation of Public Lands

Attacks on Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program

Governor LePage waged a campaign to impede the operation of the LMF Program, which has protected thousands of acres of working farms, forests, waterfronts, trails, and wildlife habitat throughout Maine since 1987. His efforts included:

- Eliminating the LMF Director's position in 2011 (restored by the legislature)
- Campaigning against the 2012 LMF bond (passed by voters anyway)
- Refusing to issue LMF bonds that were approved by voters (the legislature forced him to release the funds)
- Jeopardizing more than 30 LMF projects that were awaiting funding by using the voter-approved bonds as a bargaining chip in an attempt to increase timber harvesting of public lands
- Vetoing bills requiring release of the LMF funds (and capitulating to release the funds only when an override vote was almost certain)
- Directing department commissioners on the LMF Board to vote against LMF projects, even projects their own departments proposed

- Appointing LMF board members who oppose LMF and land conservation

Increased timber harvesting on public lands

The governor repeatedly tried to increase timber harvesting on public lands. The legislature authorized a commission to make harvesting recommendations, but the governor vetoed the bill twice, and the legislature had to override the veto.

Blocking creation of a national monument

Governor LePage introduced a bill aimed at trying to block creation of a National Monument in the Katahdin region. After the creation of the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, the governor lobbied President Trump to shrink the Monument and refused to post signs for visitors.

Attacks on state environmental agencies

Governor LePage's attacks on state agencies include:

- Eliminating the Maine State Planning Office
- Merging the Department of Conservation with the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, despite very different missions and management objectives
- Failing to increase the budget for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife despite a campaign pledge to do so
- Reducing the budget and staffing capacity, and terminating key programs, at the Department of Environmental Protection
- Slashing funding for the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC), and appointing members to LUPC who fundamentally disagree with the agency's mission to protect the character of Maine's North Woods

Public Health

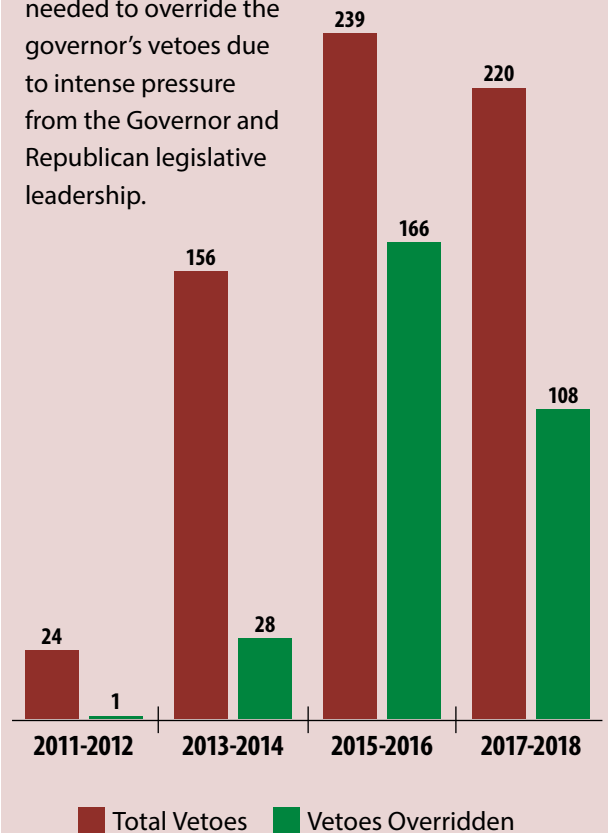
Governor LePage's opposition to public health protections include:

Opposition to controls of toxic chemicals

- Opposing efforts to limit exposure of children and pregnant women to toxic chemicals
- Opposing a plan to phase out use of the chemical bisphenol-A (BPA) in baby bottles, sippy cups, and other reusable food and beverage containers
- Vetoing a bill that required food manufacturers to disclose use of BPA in food packaging
- Opposing implementation of Maine's Kid-Safe Products Act, which requires collecting information from manufacturers about the use of Priority Chemicals in their products and possible safer alternatives
- Vetoing legislation to ban flame retardant material in furniture, a bill designed to protect the health of firefighters and homeowners (overridden by the Legislature)

More vetoes than any Governor in history

Governor LePage vetoed a record number of bills during his eight years in office. Several times, the legislature passed environmental bills by wide, bipartisan margins but ended up a few votes shy of the two-thirds needed to override the governor's vetoes due to intense pressure from the Governor and Republican legislative leadership.



Opposition to Product Stewardship

- Opposing expansions to the e-waste recycling law, even though it has saved taxpayers more than \$9.6 million and prevented more than 3.3 million pounds of lead and other toxic materials from entering Maine's environment
- Opposing other bills to remove paint and medical sharps from community waste streams

Opposition to local controls on pesticide use

- Supporting the repeal of Maine's Pesticide Notification Registry; a simple, low-cost system designed to allow neighbor notification before aerial and air-blaster spraying
- Introducing bills to prevent towns from passing local ordinances with stricter pesticide limits than those of the state.

Clean Water

Governor LePage refused to support several measures that would have improved Maine's water quality:

- Vetoing bills that would have made it easier to recycle pharmaceuticals rather than have them end up in landfills or be flushed into the water supply
- Vetoing a bill that would have strengthened Maine's Lake Protection Programs
- Relinquishing the right to manage lake levels, water flows, and water quality on Flagstaff Lake and the Dead River for at least 25 years

Repeated attempts to weaken mining rules

Governor LePage repeatedly attempted to weaken rules to protect Maine's waters from metallic mineral mining:

- Signing into law a bill to weaken existing, protective, open pit mining regulations and requiring the state to develop new mining rules
- Proposing new mining rules that reduced protections for water quality (defeated three times by the Legislature)
- Vetoing a bill that provided some of the strongest mining protections in the country (veto overturned)

Climate Change and Energy

Governor LePage repeatedly attacked renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives, despite economic and environmental benefits:

- Opposing Maine's energy efficiency programs, despite the fact that every \$1 invested in energy efficiency saves at least \$3 in energy costs
- Stripping \$38 million from an efficiency investment program for manufacturers and signing a bill that weakened Maine's uniform building and energy efficiency code
- Proposing bills allowing Hydro Quebec to flood the electricity market at the expense of Maine-produced renewable energy (defeated each time by the Legislature)
- Proposing a bill stripping Efficiency Maine Trust of its autonomy and undermining cost saving initiatives (defeated)
- Supporting a bill that would have slashed RGGI funding for energy efficiency programs (defeated)
- Proposing legislation to impose a fee on hybrid and electric vehicles (defeated)

Some Environmental Success

Most environmental efforts over the past eight years have been to defend the environment against attack, but there have been some steps forward:

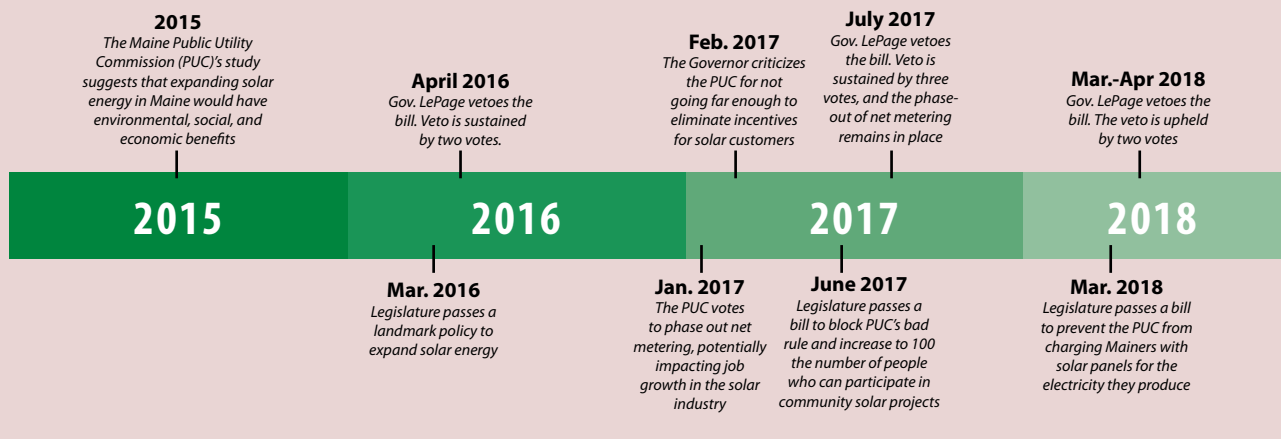
- Maine now has some of the strongest open-pit mining regulations in the world
- Maine is the first state in the nation to ban flame-retardant furniture
- Maine's bottle redemption bill was expanded
- Maine developed a fund to help people test for arsenic in their well water
- Maine twice approved stronger caps on greenhouse gas emissions under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)
- Maine's DEP will create a food recovery database to address food waste on its website
- The governor introduced a bond to upgrade waste water treatment facilities (\$30 million) that will go to the voters in November of 2018

Wind and Solar Energy

Governor LePage has been a strong opponent of wind and solar energy, preventing economic development and continuing our dependence on fossil fuels:

- Rejecting a floating offshore wind project from an international company after the project was approved by the Public Utilities Commission, causing the project to move to Scotland
- Revoking the University of Maine's Power Purchase Agreement for a demonstration offshore wind power project
- Issuing a moratorium on new terrestrial wind energy permits in the state, which is being challenged in the courts on the grounds that it exceeds executive power in the Maine Constitution
- Slowing solar energy development by repeatedly vetoing bipartisan bills that would have greatly increased solar power and created thousands of new jobs in the solar industry

Solar Energy in Maine Gov. LePage's second term has been punctuated by struggles over solar policy in Maine, and particularly the policy of net metering, in which homeowners with solar panels that generate more electricity than the home uses can get credit for the value of the extra electricity. This timeline shows the governor's influence in preventing the growth of the environmentally friendly solar industry in Maine.



Moving Maine Forward

Mainers understand that we cannot have a strong economy without a healthy environment and a healthy democracy. The gubernatorial election in November is an opportunity to make a positive change. Maine's next governor can work to move Maine forward toward a stronger, healthier environment. Environmental priorities for the next administration should include:

- **Energy Independence.** Passing a solar bill into law and creating a friendlier climate for terrestrial and offshore wind, resulting in positive economic and environmental benefits
- **Clean Water.** Protecting water resources by investing in clean water infrastructure and lake protection programs
- **Land and Wildlife.** Investing in Maine's public lands and waters to provide opportunities for hunting, fishing and recreation
- **Healthy Food.** Building a food system that supports local farmers, creates new markets, brings nutritious, local food to Maine people, and reduces food waste
- **Environmental and Legislative Institutions.** Rebuilding the capacity of environmental agencies and reinstating cooperation with the Legislature

Maine Conservation Voters is committed to working with a broad coalition of organizations throughout the state—and with you!—to move these priorities forward. Whether it's voting for pro-conservation candidates at the polls, making a call to your elected official about a bill, or working for clean air, water, and land in your community, thank you for fighting for Maine's environment.