Let the Sun Shine on Maine’s Energy Future

A round the country and throughout the world, the sun is shining bright and solar energy is surging. Last year alone, the solar market increased by a whopping 50 percent globally and the number of solar installations in the U.S. nearly doubled. Solar has become the leader in our march toward a clean energy future.

Much of that growth is being fueled by a sharp decline in the cost of equipment. Since 2011, the cost of installing solar panels has declined by 65 percent. A Maine homeowner can now install a solar system for roughly half of what it would have cost in 2012.

Maine needs changes in politics and policy or it will continue to lag behind in solar development. With solar after January 2018 will still enjoy an excellent return on their investment.

“The first-year impact of the new net-metering rule is insignificant, in the minus three percent range,” he explains. “That’s pretty minuscule when compared to the fact that the cost of solar technology has dropped more than 75 percent in the past 10 years.”

A common question from potential solar customers is whether a system needs to be installed by December 31st to be grandfathered under the current net metering arrangement. The PUC has clarified that it does—now it’s the responsibility of the utilities to determine how to implement the new rule.

“CMP and Emera have a lot of details to work out between now and January,” Woodruff says.

What Needs to Be Done

Even if the PUC’s rules are nullified by the court, there will remain a huge chasm between Maine and the many states that are moving aggressively forward with solar development.

“The people in positions to make decisions have not been paying attention to what has happened around the world in the past decade,” Woodruff says. “The policies we have in place were not based on facts and solid information.”

Woodruff, Coupe, and Berry all share a similar vision for closing that gap. In the short term, they see the election of forward-thinking politicians in 2018—Continued on Page 8
Legislative Update
Victories And One Big Defeat Highlight a Tumultuous 2017 Session

During the tumultuous 2017 state legislative session, Sierra Club Maine's Legislative Team lobbied for a number of environmental bills. The Chapter submitted and presented both written and oral testimony, issued action alerts to our members, reached out to media, and worked closely in support of the efforts of key legislators. We also organized our own lobby day and participated in several other lobby days and press events.

In addition, we partnered and collaborated with Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC) and participated in that group's annual breakfast for legislators.

Victories:

- Mining (LD 820)
  This important bill bans mining in or under floodplains, public lands, rivers, lakes, and coastal waters. It also set limits on groundwater pollution and requires mining companies to pay for major environmental disasters. The bill was passed by the legislature, vetoed by the Governor, and then became law when the legislature overrode the veto.

- Maine Public Reserved Lands (LD 586)
  This bill requires regular reporting on forest inventory, growth and harvest levels, creates a grant program to educate new loggers; bolsters recreation opportunities; and improves access to state forests, including for people with disabilities. The Legislature again overrode the Governor's veto.

- Protecting Our Precious Groundwater

  It makes up more than 60 percent of our bodies. It's the most vital resource needed for life on the planet. Yet too often we take water, especially our drinkable water, for granted. We turn on the tap and think it will always be there—seemingly inexhaustible. But the fact is that less than two percent of the earth's water is drinkable. And with a growing world population and threats from climate change, our water needs greater and greater protection.

  Here in Maine we are blessed with a plentiful supply of pure water. Unfortunately, that fact is also well known to a growing industry eager to make Maine water a commodity. Those commercial operations (notably Nestle) are grabbing water rights in various parts of the state and exporting our valuable resource for its booming bottled water business.

  One person working diligently to protect our precious groundwater is Nickie Sekera of Fryeburg. Nickie is an elected trustee of the Fryeburg Water District, and in a separate role, a co-founder of Community Water Justice.

  Nickie's town has been at the center of Maine's most visible groundwater controversy. Nestle, owner of Poland Springs, has bought up water rights in the area to secure for export. Nestle has been embroiled in a legal battle with the state, and the issue is currently before the Maine Supreme Court.

  The Nestle contract was challenged, but the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) ruled that it was not in its purview to look at environmental impacts in a case like this. In May, the Maine Supreme Court heard a challenge to the PUC position and determined that Fryeburg could indeed sell its water rights. As a result, Nestle can pump as much water as it deems necessary to meet the demand. The PUC's ruling allows Nestle to secure private water rights to pump large amounts of groundwater for its bottling operation.

- Healthy Furniture (LD 382)
  This bill bans all toxic flame retardants in upholstered furniture. The bill was enacted into law.

- Safe Drinking Water and Testing (LD 454)
  The Safe Drinking Water Bill raises awareness about the need to test for arsenic and will create a Private Well Safe Drinking Water Fund. Once again, the Legislature overrode the Governor's veto.

- Municipal Rights to Limit Use of Pesticides (LD 1503)
  This bill stopped an effort to prevent towns from taking steps to reduce citizen exposure to harmful pesticides and would have invalidated local pesticide regulation ordinances. The bill died in committee by unanimous vote.

- Natural Resources Protection Act (LD 1040)
  This bill proposed undermining the Natural Resources Protection Act, Maine's keystone law that protects waters, wetlands, mountain tops and significant wildlife habitat. The bill died in committee by unanimous vote.

- Solar (LD 1504)
  The biggest loss of the session was the failure of the legislature to override the Governor’s veto of the important solar bill (LD 1504). LD 1504 would have prevented a Maine Public Utilities Commission anti-solar rule that charges solar users for the power they generate to use in their own homes. The PUC rule will require a new meter on all solar homes, paid for by all ratepayers. The bill would have also required the PUC to conduct a cost benefit analysis, create an alternative to net metering, and increase the number of investors in solar farms to 100.


  Please take the time to contact these representatives to express your disappointment in succumbing to the pressure from anti-solar interests!


  The Legislature’s failure to override the Governor’s irrational veto is a big loss for Maine’s economy, environment, and public health. Sierra Club Maine is committed to working with other pro-solar advocates to restore mainstream, common sense policies so that Mainers can realize the economic and environmental benefits of clean solar power.

No Action on Passenger Rail

Another major Sierra Club priority, the Passenger Rail Bond to fund expansion of passenger rail in Maine, was not voted on and was part of the bond package negotiation process which resulted in no bonding. We expect to pick this issue up during the next session.

Now that our drinking water is a commodity to international corporations, Maine needs to put this vital resource under a public trust.

Protecting Our Precious Groundwater

It's business is for export,” Sekera says. “Nestle is creating the market for bottled water using the state of Maine brand. Maine spring water brings a higher value. Poland Spring (the number one selling bottled water) has a reputation as this pure, local company, but it's really a major multinational corporation doing everything it can to secure future profits.”

When speaking on the subject, Sekera likes to emphasize that local communities lose much more than they gain by contracting out their water rights.

“Nestle receives millions in tax breaks in France but pays for the resource to the towns,” she says.

There are several things that Sekera believes need to be done to protect communities and their groundwater supplies. The first is demanding transparency and accountability from public officials when dealing with Nestle. Second is working with town officials to develop local water-protection ordinances. Third, and perhaps most important, is to have Maine put our groundwater supply under a public trust.

“Our surface waters have protection—doesn’t it make sense to protect our groundwater?” she asks.

For Sekera, Nestle's solution to drinking water problems—supplying bottled water—is a false one. “It’s not about sending bottled water to Flint or any community else with a problem,” she explains. “It’s about keeping local water supply pure and sustainable. Water resources should be the central part of every community and the most protected.”
New Study Raises Concerns of Warming in the Gulf of Maine

Greatest temperature increases taking place in the summer months.

A recently released study on the warming in the Gulf of Maine reaffirmed some previous findings but also contained at least one major surprise. Most of the warming is taking place in the summer months.

“What was most surprising is how different the warming process is from season to season,” explains University of Maine Researcher Andrew Thomas, who headed the study. “We think of our winters getting warmer, but most of the warming of the gulf is taking place in the summer months.” Spring is coming earlier, fall arrives later, and that change, he noted, totals some 66 days of summer-like temperatures being added to the warming process in the gulf since 1982.

Thomas and his co-authors reported on their study in the journal, Elementa, in August. Previous studies have demonstrated that temperatures in the Gulf of Maine have been rising considerably faster than the world’s oceans. Globally, the ocean temperatures are rising at about 0.1 degrees per decade. The gulf’s temperature had been rising at a 0.3 degrees per decade rate. But the warming has increased to seven times that rate during the most recent decade.

Thomas points to two reasons why the gulf’s temperature is rising so rapidly. The first is that our most recent decade.

“With the warming trend, lobsters have been shifting north,” Thomas says. “The southern lobsters are doing just fine.” However, the warming is having a negative impact on other important fish, including cod.

“This is what happens with climate change,” Thomas explains. “There are winners and losers, there are positives and negatives. The longer, warmer summers will help the tourist industry. But the real problem is that we don’t understand all the negative impacts and some could be dire.”

The study also stresses that the warming waters are increasing the likelihood of severe storms in the region. Historically, the colder waters in the gulf have weakened hurricanes and tropical storms as they move north. That may no longer be the case.

Another troubling consequence of the warming trend is the diminishing natural food supply for the North Atlantic right whale—the world’s second-most endangered marine mammal.

One of the study co-authors, Nicholas Record of the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in East Boothbay, recently explained to The Associated Press that it’s possible the whales are becoming more vulnerable because the tiny organisms they feed on may be shifting to colder waters.

Only about 500 North Atlantic Right Whales are still in existence. This past summer 13 of those whales representing two percent of their population were found dead in the Gulf of St. Lawrence—north of their usual habitat in the Gulf of Maine and the Bay of Fundy. It is speculated that the whales are migrating farther north in an effort to find food. Unfortunately, these areas do not yet have the whale protection rules that are found in the Gulf of Maine.

Northeastern States Take Another Big Step to Reduce Carbon Emissions

Maine is among nine states that have agreed to a 30 percent cap reduction by 2030.

August 23, the nine northeast states in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) took another huge step toward reducing carbon emissions in the region. Those states (all the New England states plus New York, Delaware, and Maryland) agreed to a 30 percent cap reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, based on 2020 levels.

RGGI, a market-based cap-and-trade program, has already reduced power section carbon emissions by close to 50 percent since 2008. During that same period RGGI has reduced electric rates and mitigated costs to benefit consumers and develop clean energy systems.

Agreed to in 2005, it was the first mandatory market-based program in the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector.

According to Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton, the proposed changes will result in an emissions cap 65 percent lower than the original cap.

Sierra Club praised the RGGI states for their commitment in the midst of the Trump administration’s anti-environmental policies and actions.

“More clean energy and stronger pollution limits are overwhelmingly popular and mean more jobs, cleaner air, and healthier communities,” Sierra Club Eastern Regional Deputy Director for the Beyond Coal Campaign Mark Kresowski stated. “This is just a first step toward meeting the commitments to climate protection made by these states, and we look forward to working with them to implement this proposal.”

Public comment was heard in an open session in Baltimore on September 25.

The North Atlantic right whale may be one of the species threatened by the warming in the Gulf of Maine. (NOAA photograph)

“Reduce Carbon Emissions Another Big Step to”

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)

“Save Passamaquoddy Bay—3 Nation Alliance Honored in Eastport”

Save Passamaquoddy Bay—3 Nation Alliance Honored in Eastport

Sierra Club Maine volunteer leaders Becky Bartovics and Joan Saxe traveled Downeast in August to present the 2016 Grassroots Leadership Award to members of Save Passamaquoddy Bay-3 Nation Alliance. This group successfully fought off three attempts to site LNG ports in three different locations over the course of twelve years. Linda Cross Godfrey and her husband Bob organized the ceremony in Eastport. “This award ceremony was a perfect way to give closure to this monumental effort to protect what we love,” said Linda.

The event coincided with the showing of Rhythms of the Heart, a documentary about renowned environmentalist, social justice advocate, and Wabanaki birch bark canoe builder David Moses Bridges.

Representatives from the six groups involved in the LNG effort received awards, including Hilda Lewis—activist and mother of David Moses Bridges.

The following day, Joan and Becky were invited to Sipayik—the Passamaquoddy Reservation to look on. All of the SPB leadership teams—Point Pleasant/Sipayik, Perry, Robbinston, Canada, Red Beach/Calais, and the coordinating office in Eastport were honored for their successful efforts.

Becky Bartovics (left) presents a Grassroots Leadership Award to Paul Strickland, a member of the Save Passamaquoddy Bay (SPB) leadership team for Red Beach/Calais, while Linda Cross Godfrey and Alice Seeley look on. All of the SPB leadership teams—Point Pleasant/Sipayik, Perry, Robbinston, Canada, Red Beach/Calais, and the coordinating office in Eastport were honored for their successful efforts.

Sierra Club Maine volunteer leaders Becky Bartovics and Joan Saxe traveled Downeast in August to present the 2016 Grassroots Leadership Award to members of Save Passamaquoddy Bay-3 Nation Alliance. This group successfully fought off three attempts to site LNG ports in three different locations over the course of twelve years.
Inspiring and Empowering Climate Activists

Some 140 Sierra Club members and climate activists gathered at the University of Southern Maine’s Lewiston campus on September 16 to share knowledge and gain the skills needed to take community-based action toward a clean energy future for Maine. By all accounts, the conference more than fulfilled its goal. “Inspiring” and “empowering” were words that could be heard as people departed at the end of the day.

“I really think the enthusiasm generated and the knowledge shared here today will lead to greater and more effective local climate action around the state,” said Sierra Club Maine super-volunteer Joan Saxe, one of the conference’s prime organizers. “It was encouraging to see so many people here, and it was inspiring to see their commitment to protect our climate.”

Other Chapter volunteers who worked closely with Joan on organizing the event were Lyn Sudlow (co-chair with Joan), Becky Bartovics, Andy Burt, Miriam Rubin, Susan Van Alsento, Norm Anderson, and Claudia King.

The day started with comments from Sierra Club Maine Director Glen Brand, who briefly reviewed the Chapter’s long-time commitment to climate work and its current successes with its Climate Action Teams, now numbering 14 around the state.

Former Chapter Chair Becky Bartovics then paid tribute to the late David Moses Bridges. David was a nationally recognized Passamaquoddy canoe builder, environmentalist/social activist, and artist for whom the conference was dedicated.

Keynote speaker George Lakey took the podium and quickly captivated the conference participants with his wit, wisdom, and positive message on how real change is possible, even in these troubled times.

Lakey is a veteran activist and a past recipient of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Award. Most recently he was an integral part of Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT), the group that got PNC Bank to withdraw its funding from corporations that engage in mountaintop-removal coal mining. His latest book, Viking Economics, looks at how Scandinavian countries have achieved economic success while advancing a progressive social and environmental agenda.

Lakey emphasized that the actions of the Trump administration have served as a wake-up call and that he is encouraged by what he’s seen in his travels around the country. He noted that troubled, polarized times are often the catalysts for major change and pointed to the 1930s and the 1960s as examples of this in America.

Economic inequality, Lakey said, is one of our most polarizing factors. And he thinks the country is set up for further economic inequality resulting in even greater polarization.

“It creates a sense of futility,” he said, “but it also puts society in motion and brings the possibility of change.”

Lakey also emphasized that creating real change means working cooperatively—tapping the individual passions and strengths of each group and each of the group’s members.

“Successful movements recognize and generate different roles,” he said, noting that some people want to be service, some are organizers, and some are rebels.

“When people act on what’s in their heart, they will be more effective.”

In closing, Lakey stressed that it’s not enough to say “no” to troubling events happening around you. You need to say “yes” to an alternative possibility so that society can move ahead.

Following Lakey’s motivating words, conference participants chose from a variety of workshop options for the remainder of the day. Workshop topics included: moving toward clean energy future, grass roots organizing, transportation for livable communities, energy efficiency, water stewardship, community-based energy, creating an effective climate change message, and sustainable agriculture. Thanks to all the workshop presenters for sharing their knowledge.

Lunchtime presented an opportunity for folks to continue discussing some of the major issues of the conference. Participants chose from a variety of “table topics” including: water sovereignty, electric cooperatives, the peace march, Maine green power, the Maine Small Business Coalition, and the Citizens Climate Lobby.

With new knowledge and renewed motivation from the conference, climate activists now get back to working in their communities on projects to reduce carbon emissions. And Sierra Club Maine is committed to providing even greater support for its Climate Action Teams around the state. To get involved go to sierraclub.org/maine or email maine.chapter@sierraclub.org

Thank You Conference Sponsors!

Major sponsor: ReVision Energy


College of the Atlantic
Again Named America’s Greenest College

Colby earns number nine ranking.

For the second year in a row, College of the Atlantic (COA) in Bar Harbor was named America’s “cool-est” school in the Sierra Club’s annual ranking of the most eco-literate colleges. Another Maine school, Colby College in Waterville, also made the top ten list. California and Vermont were the only other states to have two colleges in the top ten.

COA was praised for divesting from fossil fuel, working toward 100 percent renewable energy, and committing to diverting 90 percent of campus waste by 2025. In addition, the school was cited for its innovative sustainability student enterprises such as Reproduc, which markets commercially imperfect produce.

“It’s exciting for us to receive this honor two years in a row,” noted COA Professor of Environmental Law and Policy, Ken Cline, who serves on the Sierra Club Club Maine executive committee. “It’s important for higher education to lead in the field of sustainability. Since its inception, sustainability has been an essential part of COA’s core mission. Our students and graduates believe in that mission and carry it into their lives and professional careers. It’s great that Sierra Magazine recognizes that commitment. We’re a small school but one of the ways that we have a big impact is to inspire other colleges and universities to emulate us.

Colby, which was ranked number nine in the ratings, was recognized for being at the vanguard of introducing academic environmental courses in the 1970s. The school was also praised for achieving its carbon neutrality ahead of goal, for installing a 1.9 megawatt solar system, for its 15 LEED buildings, and for integrating a focus on the environment into all departments.

Maine Sierrans Turn Out for People’s Climate March in D.C.

Two busloads of Maine Sierrans and friends braved two long nights of travel and 90-degree Washington D.C. temperatures to take part in the April 29 People’s Climate March. Overall, some 200,000 people from around the country converged on the nation’s capital to demand that our elected officials move forward with action on climate change.

“It was exhilarating to be among so many people showing that kind of support for climate action,” says former chapter chair, Becky Bartovic. “And it was especially inspiring to see the turnout of Sierra Club members and friends from Maine. I think the march did just what we all wanted it to do—confirm that Americans will not let Donald Trump or Congress turn back the clock on climate action.”

As with the New York City Climate March in 2014, the D.C. event motivated many participants to return to Maine and get involved in their communities on climate action projects.

To get involved in your community, log on to sierraclub.org/maine or email maine.chapter@sierraclub.org.

Katahdin Woods & Waters Will Stay, But There are Concerns

Leaked report suggests the possibility that our new monument could be open to logging.

On August 24, Maine Woods supporters breathed a collective sigh of relief. On that day, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke recommended that the newly established Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument (KW&W) remain in place with no reduction in size.

Zinke’s announcement followed a five-month review of all the nation’s monuments established since 1996. He also recommended that the other 26 monuments under review keep their status, with a number being reduced in size.

While the size of KW&W will remain the same, Zinke said there could be “some changes on allowable uses.” Specifically, he alluded to the permitting of demonstrations of historical logging practices. However, leaks to the media indicate that Zinke will recommend that the monument might be open to commercial forestry. The exact language as reported in the Washington Post was “to promote a healthy forest through active timber management.”

Responding to the leaked report, Lucas St. Clair, the man who led the effort to establish KW&W, told the Bangor Daily News (BDN) that he questioned whether logging is part of active timber management.

“It’s not clear what they are recommending,” St. Clair told the BDN. “The report does not define a ‘healthy forest’ or ‘active timber management.’ We’ll just have to wait and see.”

In addition to the possible changes for KW&W, the report recommends that five other national monuments be open to mining, drilling, logging, or commercial fishing. In addition it recommends that the boundaries of four monuments be shrunk.

Trump commissioned the monument review in April even though many legal experts believe he does not have the authority to rescind a national monument’s status. Some experts don’t believe he even has the authority to reduce their size, or allow for commercial operations.

One person who shares that opinion is Sierra Club Maine’s Mass woods team co-leader, College of the Atlantic environmental law and policy professor Ken Cline.

Cline acknowledges that the Sierra Club is grateful to Secretary Zinke for recognizing the tremendous ecological and economic benefits of KW&W and affirming its value to the American people. But he remains disturbed that the Trump administration ever undertook the review. He is even more troubled by the possibility of shrinking the size of any national monuments or allowing for logging and other commercial enterprises within their boundaries.

“The President does not have the legal authority to revoke or alter national monuments created by prior administrations,” he said. “These national treasures were created by both Republicans and Democrats and they are loved and highly valued by the public—every poll indicates that.”

While we wait for more specifics regarding Zinke’s recommendations, Sierra Club Maine urges all its members to let our Maine national delegation know that allowing commercial operations in our national monuments is unacceptable.

Most especially, members in the 2nd Congressional District need to urge their congressman, Bruce Poliquin, to reverse his support for logging in KW&W. Poliquin, who opposed the creation of the monument, has reportedly urged Zinke to allow logging within Maine’s new monument.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Book Clubs

Sierra Club Book Club

The Hour of Land: A Personal Topography of America’s National Parks
by Terry Tempest Williams
Saturday, Oct. 28–12:30 p.m.
Thai Garden—Route 1, Freeport
For more information on upcoming meetings and books visit Events at sierraclub.org/maine.

Downeast Book Club

The Downeast Book Club meets one Sunday a month. For information on upcoming books and meetings contact Deb at loftusd@roadrunner.com

Films

Bar Harbor Film Series

How to Change the World
Sunday, Oct 22, 2017—2 p.m.
Reel Pizza Cinerama, 33 Kennebec Place

In 1971, a group of friends sail into a nuclear test zone, and their protest captures the world’s imagination. It is the story of how Greenpeace developed from a small group of idealistic environmentalists into a sophisticated protest movement. Post-film discussion by College of the Atlantic Professor Gray Cox and Jon Hinck, a founder of Greenpeace USA.

Sonic Sea
Sunday, Nov. 5, 2017—2 p.m.
Reel Pizza Cinerama, 33, Kennebec Place

Sound is essential to the survival and prosperity of marine life. But man-made ocean noise is threatening this fragile world. Sonic Sea is about protecting life in our waters from the destructive effects of oceanic noise pollution. Post-film discussion will be led by College of the Atlantic faculty member and Allied Whale Director Sean Todd.

Bangor

Chasing the Sun
Thursday, Nov. 16, 2017, 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Center Theatre, 20 East Main Street
(See film description under Bangor)

Bethel

Transforming America
Sunday, Nov. 5, 2017—1:00 pm
The Gem Theater, 23 Cross Street

The Gem Theater, 23 Cross Street will be shown at a date to be announced at Maine College of Art. Check the events calendar at sierraclub.org/maine.

Trainsforming America
Sunday, Nov. 12, 2017—7:00-9:00 p.m.
Community Little Theatre, 30 Academy Street
(See film description under Bethel, above.)

Portland

Transforming America will be shown at a date to be announced at Maine College of Art. Check the events page at sierraclub.org/maine for updates on the date the film will be shown.

Special Events

Sierra Club Maine Annual Dinner
November 3, 2017—5:30 p.m.
Pineland Farms, Farm View Rd., New Gloucester
Join your fellow Maine Sierrans for an evening of camaraderie, great food, annual chapter awards, and a talk by environmental champion, 1st District Congresswoman Chellie Pingree. For reservations and directions to Pineland Farms go to sierraclub.org/maine.

Buxton-Gorham Window Dressers
Community Build Workshop
Saturday, November 11, 2017—9 a.m.
Sunday, November 19, 2017—4 p.m.
Moody’s Collision Centre, Gorham
Tired of wrestling with clear plastic film, tape, and a hair dryer to cover drafty windows for the winter? Want a better solution to keep the heat inside and the drafts out?

Lower your carbon footprint, save money on heating bills, and be more comfortable in winter by adding window inserts to your home. Contact event organizer Miriam Rubin at buxtongorhamwindow-dressing@gmail.com.

Outings

Majestic Maine Weekend
October 7-8, 2017
In celebration of Sierra Club’s 125th anniversary, we invite you to join us for a special weekend hiking in the spectacular Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument (KW&W) and Acadia National Park.

Activities include an October 7 hike in KW&W. On Sunday, October 8 events will include a hike in Acadia National Park and a special Sierra Club reception at Asticou Inn. Contact Sara Harvey at sara.harvey@sierraclub.org.

Mahoosuc Pathways
November 5, 2017
This outing consists of a relaxing hike on Bethel’s Mahoosuc Pathways trails. After a morning spent in Maine’s beautiful natural wilderness, you will gather for lunch, followed by a 1 pm showing of Transforming America at Bethel’s Gem Theater.

Kennebunk Solar Array
November 2017
This outing will give community members the opportunity to learn about Kennebunk Light & Power’s new solar array and discover the benefits of a cleaner energy alternative that is also more cost-effective. The exact date for this outing is not yet set. Check the events calendar at sierraclub.org/maine.

Outings, movies, and Sierra Club Maine special events are a great way to explore new places and new ideas and make new friends. Visit the events page at sierraclub.org/maine

Support Sierra Club Maine through payroll deduction

MaineShare gives you an easy way to support more than 40 organizations working to make Maine a better place to live.

Enroll your workplace for the current campaign online at www.mainshare.org or contact us directly.

P.O. BOX 2095, Augusta, ME 04338
Telephone: 207-622-1050
Email: giving@maineshare.org

Donate now by calling (844-674-3772) or visit http://scfch.careasy.org/HOME.html to fill out our secure online form. Our partners at CARS Inc. will handle the rest—including picking up your vehicle from any location, no matter its condition. CARS accepts trucks, trailers, boats, RVs, motorcycles, and more.

Get Involved with Sierra Club Maine

Sierra Club Maine is a thriving chapter with over 1,500 members. Join today and become involved in local conservation efforts and special events.

Donate Now.

Give Your Vehicle a New Purpose.

Your car donation to the Sierra Club Foundation will not only clear up space at your home, it will help support our work to protect the planet. Vehicle donations are a great way to add another tax deduction to your list.

Donate now by calling (844-674-3772) or visit http://scfch.careasy.org/HOME.html to fill out our secure online form. Our partners at CARS Inc. will handle the rest—including picking up your vehicle from any location, no matter its condition. CARS accepts trucks, trailers, boats, RVs, motorcycles, and more.

Donated Cars Benefit Sierra Club’s Important Work

Your car donation to the Sierra Club Foundation will not only clear up space at your home, it will help support our work to protect the planet. Vehicle donations are a great way to add another tax deduction to your list.

Donate now by calling (844-674-3772) or visit http://scfch.careasy.org/HOME.html to fill out our secure online form. Our partners at CARS Inc. will handle the rest—including picking up your vehicle from any location, no matter its condition. CARS accepts trucks, trailers, boats, RVs, motorcycles, and more.
Chapter News Briefs

Chapter Leaders Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Executive committee member Claudia King traveled to Washington D.C. in mid-September to attend the Sierra Club’s annual Council of Club Leaders (CCL) meeting. It was Claudia’s second trip to a CCL gathering. While the chapter delegates were gathered together, the national Sierra Club board held its annual meeting at the same hotel. On the final day, the two groups met jointly. “It was a great opportunity for chapter leaders to interact with national Sierra Club folks,” Claudia explained. “It was clear that they are totally committed to helping local chapters carry out their work. I also came away with a much better understanding of the importance of the Club’s environmental justice work. In this challenging, polarizing climate, it’s important that we broaden our movement.” She also appreciated the chance to gather with other chapter delegates. “It’s a real opportunity to bond with other Sierrans, and possibly seek out areas for regional cooperation,” she said.

Testimony on Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge

Thanks to executive committee member Olin Jenner of Rockport for providing testimony on behalf of the Sierra Club urging Maine’s legislators to take more action to address sea level rise and increased storm surges. This is especially important in light of the warming in the Gulf of Maine and the likelihood of stronger storms in the region (See story on page 3).

Chapter Treasurer Needed

Sierra Club Maine seeks a volunteer treasurer to begin training in November 2017. Providing oversight of the finances for all chapter entities, the required skills include bookkeeping, budget tracking and grant oversight for the executive committee. The treasurer provides the link between the Maine Chapter’s executive committee and the finance department of the national Sierra Club regarding financial policies and procedures related to grants, investments, administration of the chapter office and staff, and compliance. The current chapter treasurer will provide support through year-end reporting for 2017. If interested, please contact maine.chapter@sierraclub.org.

Many thanks to Ruth Bettinger for her valuable work as Chapter treasurer the past several years. Her organization of the Chapter finances will make the next treasurer’s job a great deal easier!

Support Recycling at Our New Portland Office

In case you haven’t heard, the Sierra Club Maine office has moved to a new location at 565 Congress Street in Portland. With the new space comes new expenses, in particular a $35 per month recycling pick-up fee. Please consider a donation to help the chapter cover this new expense. A $35 contribution to pay for one month’s fee would be extremely helpful!

Maine Chapter of the Sierra Club

565 Congress St. Suite 206B, Portland, ME 04101
Telephone: 207-761-5616
web: sierraclub.org/maine
email: maine.chapter@sierraclub.org

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Becky Bartovics    North Haven
Michael (Mick) Devin   Newcastle
Tony Donovan    Portland
Tara Hollander    Stockton Springs
Olin Jenner    Rockport
Claudia King    Falmouth
Ken Cline    Bar Harbor
David Mokler    Biddeford
Beverly Roxby    Belfast

CHAPTER DIRECTOR
glen.brand@sierraclub.org

CHAPTER TREASURER
bettinger.ruth@gmail.com

CLIMATE ACTION TEAMS
Joan Saxe and Lyn Sudlow  joansaxe@gmail.com

MAINE WOODS TEAM
Ken Cline    kcline@coa.edu
Jim Frick    sierranjim@gmail.com

GULF OF MAINE TEAM
Mick Devin    mick@mickdevin.org

LEGISLATIVE TEAM
Tony Donovan

POLITICAL TEAM
Claudia King    seekingcking@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER
Jim Frick    sierranjim@gmail.com

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
Claudia King    seekingking@gmail.com

MAINE SIERRAN is published twice per year (March and September) by the Maine Chapter of the Sierra Club. Articles may be reprinted with credit to MAINE SIERRAN. We welcome your input. Please email Jim Frick at sierranjim@gmail.com if you have suggestions or comments or if you are interested in contributing articles or photographs.

Statement of Purpose of the Sierra Club

“To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the Earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the Earth’s ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.”

Being a Sierra Club volunteer is fun and rewarding! Just contact Jeanine at maine.chapter@sierraclub.org

Visit us on Facebook

A great way to keep up with Maine environmental issues and Sierra Club activities.

http://www.facebook.com/pages/sierra-club-maine-chapter/181279771922933
Let the Sun Shine

Continued from page 1

as the major catalyst for needed change. "The biggest problem here in Maine is an ultra-conservative, anti-renewable energy agenda inflicted by Governor LePage and his legislative supporters," Coupe says. "It's maintaining the utility monopoly status quo to the extreme detriment of Maine ratepayers."

In the longer term, Maine needs to catch up to other states in policies that promote solar and other renewables—for both economic and environmental reasons.

Phil Coupe points out that Mainers currently drain more than $5 billion per year from the local economy by importing polluting fossil fuels from out of state.

"For its long-term energy security and independence, Maine needs to integrate renewable energy, storage, and complementary technologies like heat pumps, electric vehicles, and microgrids (a small network of electricity users with their own supply source) as rapidly and cost effectively as possible."

For Woodruff, the most important first step is undergoing a full, fact-based assessment of integrating solar and other renewables into the grid.

"This just hasn’t been done," he says. "We need to look at the grid as a whole—both our urban areas and rural areas. For example, looking at the ways in rural Maine that we can use the distributive nature of solar to make sure we provide stable, dependable electricity."

"For its long-term energy security and independence, Maine needs to integrate renewable energy, storage, and complementary technologies like heat pumps, electric vehicles, and microgrids (a small network of electricity users with their own supply source) as rapidly and cost effectively as possible."

The grid modernization effort is already well underway in Vermont, New York, and Massachusetts, as well as other states. These areas are steadily moving toward what is known as a "smart grid."

In simple terms, a smart grid is an electricity-supply network using digital communications technology to maximize efficiency and reliability—providing two-way communications between the utility and its customers. It allows for incorporation of distributed energy sources (small, localized power sources), time-of-use pricing, and electric vehicle charging. Part of moving to a smart grid is the use of smart meters, which can match electricity consumption with the real-time demands of the grid. Through pricing incentives, consumers can be encouraged to shift energy consumption to off-peak hours. Of course, solar plays a big role, because it produces most of its energy during peak hours of electricity use.

Ending Overbuilding by the Utilities

What will it take to move Maine toward a modern grid, utilizing new technologies and incorporating significant contributions from renewable energy sources? In addition to electing forward-thinking politicians, Berry says the rewarding of utilities for "overbuilding" of transmission lines has to end.

"Central Maine Power is guaranteed at least 10 percent profit on transmission projects," he explains. "The more they build, the more they charge. This profit incentive is a primary driver in today’s rising electricity costs."

Moving to a smart grid would greatly reduce the need for more poles and lines, Berry adds, and would allow for a more efficient means of delivery. And while he believes that utilities are currently working against the best interests of Mainers, he’s hopeful that eventually all parties will be able to come to a compromise solution.

Reframing the Conversation

Change isn’t going to happen quickly, but, like Berry, Woodruff remains hopeful that eventually all parties will see the need and value of policies that allow Maine to catch up with the rest of the country.

"No, it won’t happen in a year," he says. "We need to reframe the conversation so that we can move forward together. In the past the discussions on energy have been political, not pragmatic—not fact-based. That has to change."

"If we do it wrong, we won’t compete. We’ll have been passed over."

There’s Never Been a Better Time to Invest in Solar

Because of the uncertainty surrounding solar policy in Maine, many potential customers have been hesitant to move forward with installations. But now is actually an opportune time to make that investment. Solar equipment prices have plummeted in recent years, but some solar industry experts believe those costs are leveling off and will likely begin to rise.

If you’re concerned about the new Public Utilities Commission (PUC) rules that go into effect on January 1, 2018, remember an investment in solar before that date will be grandfathered into current rates.

He says that no matter what happens, there will be more solar development in Maine. But what we really need are policies and leadership that allow us to extract the most value we can out of that solar growth for the benefit of all the people of the state.

"We need to see how we can apply what is happening across the country to our own unique situation here in Maine," Woodruff explains. "If we do it wrong, we won’t compete. We’ll have been passed over."

Another Successful Solarize Effort in Maine

The Solarize movement made its way to Bangor this summer and by all accounts it was a big success. The program was spearheaded by volunteer Karen Marysdaughter and was supported by a citizens advisory committee (including a Sierra Club Maine representative), the City of Bangor, and the Eastern Maine Development Corporation.

Modeling itself after other solarize efforts in Maine, the greater Bangor program selected a single solar installer, in this case, Insource Renewables. That eliminated a significant step for solar purchasers and also provided support and reduced installation costs.

Community solarize programs employ a group purchasing concept. As more community members take part in the program, the more all participants can save. In Bangor’s case the average discount was about 10 percent.

All together more than 30 solar installations were contracted through the program which ran from mid-July to the end of September.

Marysdaughter emphasized that the program also had an important educational component, bringing more awareness and information about the benefits of solar to the greater Bangor area. She hopes that the program lays a foundation for continued solar growth in the region.

Freeport, Brunswick, Mount Desert Island, the Mid-coast and Mid-Maine have also all completed successful solarize efforts. Let’s keep the momentum going!