Summary Notes from Maine Climate Council

September 29, 2023

Overview:

The Maine Climate Council met for 6 hours on September 29 at the Augusta Civic Center to discuss progress on climate action in the state and the process for updating *Maine Won't Wait*, Maine's award-winning climate action plan. Roughly 200 participants gathered in person for the meeting, along with another 212 viewers online via Zoom. Agenda Items included:

- An Overview of *Maine Won't Wait* and the Kick-Off of the next Climate Council planning process
- State of the Climate in Maine
- Engaging youth about climate impacts in their communities
- Workforce opportunities in Maine
- A panel of Mainers on the frontlines of climate action
- An overview of the Community Resilience Partnership
- Climate Council Working Group presentations

See full meeting video here: https://youtu.be/VyqkHKxBrZY?si=Ro2qHqsvu7lVLW2p
See slides here: https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/2023-10/Final-Slides-for-MCC-9.29.pdf. Below are high-level summary notes from the meeting.

Welcome and Overview

Maine Climate Council Co-Chairs Hannah Pingree, Director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, and Melanie Loyzim, Commissioner of Maine's Department of Environmental Protection, welcomed councilors and other participants, describing the work ahead to update Maine's climate action plan. Using real-time polling, participants signaled what success should look like at the end of the process.

It's December next year, we've completed the revision, and you're really pleased with it. What are 3 words that describe it?

In-person participants

Online participants

State of the Climate in Maine

Ivan Fernandez, Stephen Dickson, Susie Arnold, Scientific and Technical Subcommittee Co-Chairs

The Co-Chairs of the Scientific and Technical subcommittee delivered a presentation on the state of the science and climate change in Maine (slides 20-64).

When Climate Comes Home: The Importance of Engaging Youth About Climate Impacts in Their Communities

Amara Ifeji, Youth Representative for the Maine Climate Council
Rob Taylor, Leah Burgess, Brenden Veilleux, Dan Wilson, and Owen Schwab, Youth Representation

Amara Ifeji briefly highlighted the youth representation involved in the Maine Climate Council as well as a video about youth involvement in the local community called "When Climate Changes Comes Home"

Afterwards, a panel consisting of students (current and former) and teachers from Spruce Mountain High School discussed how they engaged around climate issues. Each student highlighted what they've learned in their classes, but more importantly but what gives them hope to do better to help address climate impacts in their communities. They emphasized the importance of keeping youth engaged and involved. See video here for more information: https://youtu.be/wRsPmr1ewzk?si=ZU9OJ2WjciPPXrKc

How Climate Solutions are Creating Economic and Workforce Opportunities in Maine

Heather Johnson, Commissioner, Department of Economic and Community Development

Heather Johnson presented on how climate solutions are creating economic and workforce opportunities in Maine (slides 72-84). Ms. Johnson spoke about economic opportunities in emerging industries such as clean energy, bio-based alternatives, and safe and responsible food.

Mainers on the Frontlines of Climate Action

Moderated by Ambassador Maulian Bryant, Maine Climate Council, Equity Subcommittee
Panel consisting of Bill Kitchen (Town Manager, Machias), Jasmine Lamb (Founder, Pleasant Point Resilience Ctiziens Committee), Bob Baines (Fishermen and kelp farmer), and Bridget Kahn (Interim assistant director, Portland Adult Education)

A panel discussed the various projects and impactions in their lives when it comes to climate actions. Key themes included:

- Geographical Context: Bill Kitchen, the town manager of Machias, highlighted the geographic features of his area and difficulty of planning when it comes to the town's size and location as the last town on the East Coast. Geography plays a role in the local climate challenges, but Machias was able to develop many projects and planning efforts to be prepared for disaster.
- Community Resilience: Jasmine Lamb, a tribal member and Ph.D. student, discussed the importance of community resilience, which includes addressing challenges related to

infrastructure, rising sea levels, food sustainability, and economic disparities among tribal members.

- Economic Impacts: Bob Baines, a commercial fisherman, discussed the significant changes in the fishing industry and the need for regulatory processes to adapt to these changes. He also mentions the importance of responsible scaling in kelp farming.
- Workforce Development: Bridget Kahn's renewable energy training project aimed to integrate immigrants into the workforce and help them become skilled professionals in fields related to renewable energy, such as solar installation and heat pump systems.
- Risk-Taking and Innovation: Both Bridget and Bob highlighted the importance of taking risks and investing in local industries, such as heat pump businesses and kelp farming. They emphasize the potential for growth and the importance of personal safety.
- Community Activation: Jasmine discussed the challenges of keeping communities activated and focused on climate action, emphasizing the need to find opportunities to engage people at all levels and maintain a problem-solving approach.
- Maintaining Hope: Panelists discuss how they remain hopeful in the face of climate challenges. They highlight the positive energy from the community, actionable change, skills development, and the engagement of younger generations as sources of optimism. Bill Kitchen encouraged celebrating small victories as a way to maintain motivation and keep the focus on addressing climate challenges.

Community Resilience Partnership

Ashley Krulik, Community Resilience Program Manager

Ashley Krulik gave a brief presentation on the Community Resilience Partnership program as a part of *Maine Won't Wait* (slides 90-96). This program has led to increased funding for communities with an amount of $3 million per year in biennial budget for grants and technical assistance. There are 174 participating communities in this program across Maine. The state used the presentation to announce a new round of awards: 53 communities in Maine received $2.4 million in grant funds.

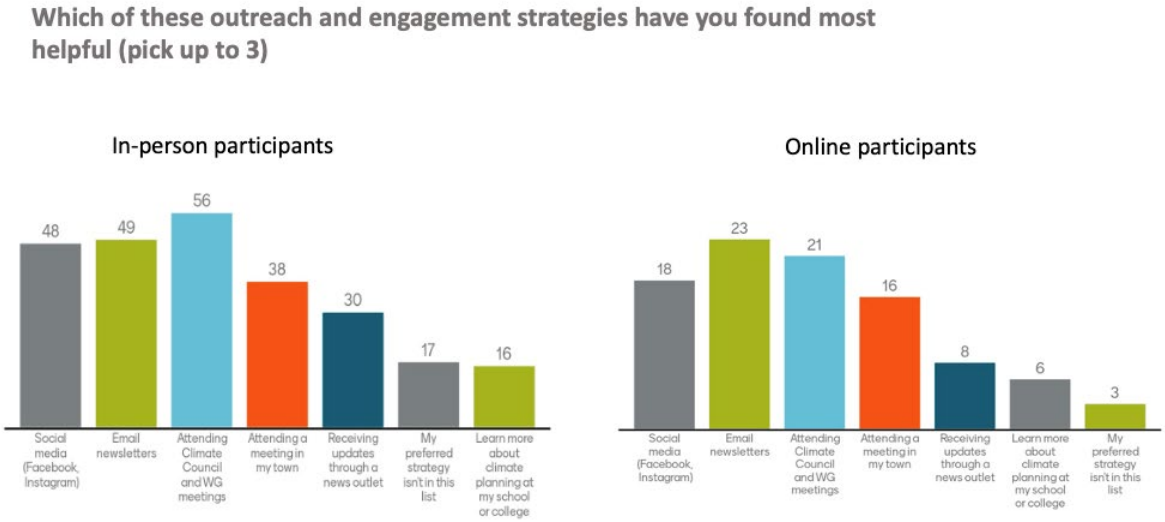
See video here for more details:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcPULSSoCCc&ab_channel=MaineClimateCouncil

Updating the Climate Action Plan – Timeline and Engagement

Sarah Curran & Amalia Siegel

The Governor's Office on Policy Innovation and the Future provided a presentation about the timeline to update the Maine Climate Action Plan and plans for stakeholder and public engagement (slides 98-102). Participants provided input on types of outreach and engagement strategies that would be the most helpful. The top 3 answers were:

- Social Media
- Email Newsletters
- Attending Climate Council and Work Group Meetings.



Working Group Presentations

Working Group Co-Chairs

Co-chairs from each of the six working groups of the Maine Climate Council presented highlights from implementing strategies to date and opportunities for updating *Maine Won't Wait*. Details of each presentations are in the slides (slides 105-156).

During the meeting, participants were asked, what should the working group not forget as it starts this work? Major themes and responses for each working group are included in Appendix A of this document.

Next Steps

The next meeting of the Climate Action Council will be in December. Working Group session will happen in the interim.

Appendix A: Live Polling Results

At the end of each Working Group presentation, participants were asked, what should this working group not forget as it starts this work? Major themes and responses for each working group follow below, alongside a summary of overarching themes that emerged consistently across groups.

Overarching themes

- Affordability
- Energy conservation
- Protection of natural habitats
- Equity – access, affordability, rural vs urban
- Support for workers
    - Create multiple avenues for training and upskilling the workforce
    - New jobs must pay fair, sustainable wages
    - Ensure a just transition for workers whose jobs will be impacted by these changes

Transportation Work Group

Common Themes

- Accessibility of EVs and EV infrastructure
    - Outreach and education to improve access to information about EVs.
    - Ease of access to fast charging stations at reasonable rates, especially in rural areas.
        - Create a map of charging stations across the state
    - Guidance/support for EV owners who live in apartments without fixed parking or for any reason cannot charge their vehicle at home.
    - Integrate EV infrastructure with emergency evacuation routes across the state
    - Promote use of hybrid cars - more accessible across incomes, and more reliable where EV infrastructure does not exist
        - Create incentives and outreach around hybrids and plug in hybrids
        - Ensure people can get some value out of their gas vehicles
        - Create a market for used EVs
    - Consider how Maine will meet the additional electric demand that will come from a large-scale shift to EVs
- Equity
    - Existing tax rebates for EV purchases may not be sufficient to open access to EVs for people with lower incomes.
    - Rural communities need integrated transport plans
    - Planning should account for low-income individuals and families, as well as other underserved groups like people with disabilities, people without access to a car, etc.
- Expand transportation infrastructure and invest in public transportation
    - Increase the number of available ebikes
    - Better connectivity of rail and bus networks. Create transit nodes that link public transport with bike/walking routes.
    - Improve rural infrastructure and provide funding to towns
        - Rural lighting improvements for bike and pedestrian safety

- Engage workers
    - Ensure fair wages and benefits for all new jobs
    - Ensure outreach to entities that train and upskill workers and bring them along
- Consider approaches for medium and heavy-duty vehicles
    - Explore conversion to electric or alternative fuels for both land and marine transportation, and associated infrastructure
    - Enable farmers and foresters to adapt clean technologies for their vehicles

Additional ideas from in person participants

- Electrification of State agency vehicles
- Many emissions may come from out of state vehicles - we must link our work to regional and national solutions
- Reviving Mt Division Railroad could allow Canadians and Vermonters to come to Maine without cars. DOT must keep existing rail corridors open for reviving rail transport, not bike trails.
- Coordinate with resilience group on reducing VMT in LAF use planning strategies

Additional ideas from webinar

- To work with the MPOs and RPOs to develop strategies, solutions and to implement actions
- Maine State Ferries. Assist Service Center communities with funding public transportation and improvements that are influenced by far more than just their own community members.
- MeDOT has rejected the efficiency of a statewide passenger rail system collaborating with private enterprise.
- MeDOT needs to include advanced research for transportation by private entities.

Buildings Work Group

Common Themes

- Increase use of heat pumps
    - Strategy and financial assistance around weatherizing buildings, adding heat pumps, improving resilience
    - Find solutions for buildings that cannot use heat pumps, or where insurance does not allow for heat pumps as a primary heat source
    - Plan for backup energy options for heat pump dependent buildings - need for alternatives in case of an electric power outage
- Make buildings energy efficient and EV ready
    - Access to rebates and incentives for heat pumps, solar, etc.
    - Ensure support for low-income households, affordable housing programs and rentals
    - New or upgraded buildings should support EV charging infrastructure (with Transportation WG)
    - Consider different approaches for rural and urban areas - access to contractors and materials is limited in more remote communities
    - The grid is not the only option - explore solar thermal and small-scale (vertical axis) wind turbines as alternatives
- Equity and Affordability
    - Plan for how the state will manage and distribute increasing electricity costs
    - Goals for lower income households could be more ambitious
    - Focus on affordable housing and advocate for renters
    - Bring the workers along - ensure training and fair wages
- Public buildings should lead by example

    - Explore increased usage of rooftop solar on municipal buildings
    - Find ways to increase construction and upgrade funding for schools
- Education and Training
    - Create accessible information for the public about types of solutions, ease of installation, and how rebates and incentives work
    - Training for code officers - codes change rapidly and officials must receive sufficient training to manage changes effectively
    - Increased training for heat pump technicians - demand for heat pumps is high, but inadequate technician training at present.
    - Work with builders and contractors to address concerns and knowledge gaps

Additional ideas from in person participants:

- Role of telecommuting
- Keep in mind toxicity of building materials

Additional ideas from webinar participants:

- Educate residents about energy efficient lifestyles
- Provide incentives for land managers that increase soil carbon sequestration
- Replace wood stoves with more energy efficient models
- Look into the impact of in-home combustion on indoor air quality

Energy Work Group

Common Themes

- Balance the relationship between the state, utility companies and communities - give communities a stake in decision making and receiving benefits
- Energy affordability
    - People must be able to afford an increased reliance on alternative energy sources (electricity, solar etc)
    - Quantify cost implications for Maine customers
    - For low-income homes, consider how to address the need for infrastructural home changes
    - Supplement traditional heating assistance programs with LMI solar assistance programs, and offer help with higher electric bills associated with heat pumps
    - Consider low income offtake requirements for community solar
- Energy siting and infrastructure
    - Invest in offshore wind, marine derived biofuels, nuclear energy
    - Thoughtful siting of large renewable energy projects, with attention to their cumulative impact.
    - Explore port electrification, solar arrays on farms
    - Pursue low cost transition options. Incorporate the offshore wind roadmap recommendations into planning
- Long-term resilience of energy infrastructure
    - Ensure that the grid can handle increased demand, and plan ahead for extreme weather events
    - Consider smaller scale alternative energy options that can be implemented immediately, e.g., vertical wind turbines
    - Have plans in place for recycling solar panels and batteries

- Incentives for implementation
    - Continue to help municipalities with capital energy upgrades
    - Support and/or incentives for individual homeowners generating their own energy
    - Engage utility companies to align incentives. With more dynamic metrics, costs of grid upgrades can be reduced.
    - Explore how to incentivize EE/electrification projects for middle income building owners on natural gas who will not achieve notable savings by fuel switching to cover project costs
- Workforce development and protection
    - Ensure fair wages for workers given the large scale of new energy projects
    - Create workforce programs through adult education, Maine Maritime and community colleges
- Ensure that equity considerations and other externalities and external constraints are included in 2040 study so the results are meaningful

Additional ideas from in person participants:

- Help change the narrative on community solar
- Continue to support the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium
- VPP and microgrids can help lower the cost of the grid and electrification or everyone
- "The principal barriers to clean energy are not technological or economic, but outdated regulatory structures and misaligned utility incentives."
- Monetize the impacts that climate change has had on Maine and communicate those results in order to support the continued challenge to implement clean resources
- Farmland protection. Farms create climate friendly jobs
- Potential for implementation of statewide distribution system operator to optimize grid ops and DER integration
- How to incentivize EE/electrification projects for middle income building owners on natural gas who will not achieve notable savings by fuel switching to cover project costs.
- How to reduce regulatory barriers and bureaucratic hurdles that close down development progress?
- Deal with the strange and devolving REC market, and more broadly revamp the RPS (get rid of class II for example)
- Don't forget that the interconnection at the edges of the grids is a really important part of helping natural resource dependent industries implement adaptation strategies.
- Reclassification of batteries so they are not generation that has to follow chapter 324 interconnection process.
- How can we focus on transmission witching ISO NE and move it quickly while recognizing that forests provide a source of carbon sink

Additional ideas from webinar participants:

- Utilizing local food supplies and consumption is a good way to reduce our energy use. Win-win for everyone from farmers to consumers.
- All work groups should change leadership each year
- Include consideration of Maine's rare plant sites to maximize protection of biodiversity while sequestering carbon
- Focus on utility reforms, especially around interconnection to get renewables online. Need to move away from counting biomass. Battery storage and DG should be accelerated

Natural and Working Lands Work Group

- Assess impact of PFAS on farmers
- Conservation of natural resources and working lands
    - Protect forests and maximize forest carbon sequestration
    - Explore the impact of large-scale solar on productive agriculture and forestlands
- Support for working lands
    - Farmland conservation and access for new farmers - assistance with scaling up, and building links to other institutions
    - Enable farmers and foresters to adapt clean technologies
    - Incentivize farmers to use climate smart practices
- Support for fisheries
    - Ensure they understand how to adapt to upcoming changes and are supported
    - Fishermen should receive rebates for new gear requirements
- Prepare working waterfronts for climate change
    - Include working waterfronts as a priority in future LMF program funding
- Build awareness and support for Maine agriculture, food and forest products
    - Promote local food and farm products. Collect data about local food consumption
    - Provide funding for food businesses
    - Create incentives for business and institutions to purchase local food
    - Create local food processing and distribution systems
    - Ensure affordability and access to local food for all
        - Nutrition plans for Mainers who can't afford fresh produce
        - Seafood should be included and accessible to low-income families
- Workforce Development
    - Create a transition plan for people whose jobs are impacted by energy transition or climate change
    - Cross laminated timber plants will help to create new jobs
- Long term monitoring and data collection
    - Work with NOAA and identify collaborators for data collection
    - Increase funding to the State Climate Corps
    - Track near shore acidification and loss of tidal mudflats due to SLR
- Engage local tribes - understand their methods for sustainable land management and the connections between food and the environment
- Equitable and ongoing access to public recreation spaces and public waters

Additional ideas from in person participants:

- Stronger property tax relief measures for farmers and fishermen
- More transparency about what's the Maine Healthy Soils Program offers
- Consider conservation targets for private land/home owners who maintain biodiversity gardens or other habitats. Small acreage adds up.
- Work with the Coastal and Marine WG on habitat resilience, blue carbon and coordinated monitoring
- Two points on aquaculture:
    - We have heard a lot about aquaculture today but unless DMR publicly embraces aquaculture and does something about the lease chaos, we are not going to succeed
    - Aquaculture opportunities have already been lost especially for seaweed farming.

Additional ideas from webinar participants:

- Keep the focus on integrating climate change into legislative policies
- What public health risks should we keep in mind as this work moves forward?
- Earmark funding for Regional Coordinators who support communities with the CRP
- Ongoing need for liquid fuels: relied on at working waterfronts and in other industries
- Input on working lands and habitat conservation:
    - Prioritize land conservation but make explicit climate change protections
    - Highlight climate friendly forestry practices information, including listing foresters who harvest sustainably.
    - Plan for resilience to fire risks. How can Rx fire and "good fire" be integrated into management plans?
    - Forestry practices should account for bat conservation
    - Address sea level rise impact on wetlands - need easements or land acquisition to enable wetlands to move inland and serve as a buffer against salt water infiltration of farmland and natural ecosystems
    - Promote eelgrass with citizen involvement
    - Continue to focus on whale conservation
    - The savings that can be had by allowing baitfish to thrive in our rivers by getting rid of or putting in working fish passage around dams cannot be measured.
- Land ownership challenges for low income or POC + Distribution of protected and working lands and waterfronts in low income and disadvantaged communities
- Should work through state planning mechanism to coordinate smart growth, transit, housing, and more. Create a runway for 50x50 and more goals. Focus on Wildlands and Woodlands vision

Coastal and Marine Work Group

- Offshore energy: planning and integration
    - Explore opportunities for co-use of designated spaces, e.g., aquaculture, support for fisheries
    - Work closely with the Energy WG on offshore wind and associated port development
- Ensure ongoing engagement with fishermen
    - Better data and increased attention to shellfisheries and alewives
    - Explore alternative fuels for fishing boats
- Preservation of working waterfronts and associated jobs
    - Explore opportunities for workforce development and carbon sequestration jobs
- Set up long term data collection and monitoring systems
    - Understand how species are adapting to warming waters - impact on lobsters
    - More and better data on whales
    - Need for better data that covers a wide range of coastal and marine issues
    - Suggestion to set up a single survey that will cover a range of issues and deliver data for multiple decision makers
- Natural resource conservation
    - Reintegration of eelgrass onto the Maine coast
    - Track near shore acidification and loss of tidal mudflats due to SLR
    - Assess ecological impact of blue carbon sequestration
    - Menhaden management should be considered as critical forage deserving more protection and management

Additional ideas from in person participants:

- Hurry along those kelp leases
- The role of Gentrification
- Explore opportunities for climate friendly aquaculture

Additional ideas from webinar participants:

- Increase funding for culverts
- Optimize funds for marsh restoration
- “Habitat protection is paramount & development of co-benefits in high use areas of the coastline are essential. Compromises are needed to sustain our natural environment and support the marine economy.”
- Kelp to sequester carbon and feed cattle; local oyster gatherers and clam diggers. Salt marsh conservation.
- Ensure finfish aquaculture is truly recirculating and zero effluent. Focus on marine planning.
- Municipalities should ensure appropriate use of beaches and marinas, and communicate this to residents and visitors

Community Resilience Work Group

Common Themes

- Create a unifying vision that will bring together multiple groups engaged in similar work
- Find diverse ways to engage with different communities, especially in rural areas
    - Help them move from planning to implementation and emphasize opportunities to link with regional initiatives
    - Make space for tough conversations
    - Draw on community assets to build contextual solutions
- Invest in preparation for the impact of climate change
    - Focus on inland flooding, wildfire preparedness and prevention, emergency ingress and egress.
    - Include climate considerations in growth management and shoreland zoning laws.
- Prepare for managed retreat or relocation due to climate change
    - Prepare appropriate policy and zoning strategies
    - Focus on mental health and psychological resilience
- Change/amend the Growth Management Act to allow municipalities to plan in a shorter/more meaningful timeframe
- Increase funding for stream crossings, culverts and bridges
- Support health system preparedness and response readiness
    - Consider the role of hospitals and doctors in education and resilience building
- Keep equity and justice at the forefront
    - Systemic poverty is intersectional, and will impact community resilience

Additional ideas from in person participants:

- Need for implementation funding in the CRP process
- Create a dedicated fund for stormwater management infrastructure
- Kudos for the tough conversations points— Maine shouldn’t be the “insurer of last resort”!

Additional ideas from webinar participants:

- "It's not just coastal, it's all over the state"

- Create opportunities for seniors as volunteers in projects.
- Guide town budget committees and select boards on possible climate resilience associated budget needs.
- Develop strategies for working in a political environment hostile to funding these kinds of projects