

# Summary Notes from Maine Climate Council

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June 18, 2024

## Overview

The Maine Climate Council held its Quarterly Meeting from 9am - 4pm on June 18, 2024 to hear and discuss final recommendations and updates from the Working Groups. The meeting was held in person at the Augusta Civic Center in Augusta, ME from 9am - 3pm. 217 people attended the meeting, and another 263 observed online. Agenda Items included:

- Overview of Strategies and Introduction to Working Group Updates
- Working Group and Task Force Presentations
- Small Group and Panel Discussions

See full meeting video here:

- Morning session: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJQpdHXz350>
- Afternoon session: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1y\\_4E8vzpJQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1y_4E8vzpJQ)

See slides here: [https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/2024-06/MCC%20June%20Meeting%20Slides\\_Final\\_0.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/2024-06/MCC%20June%20Meeting%20Slides_Final_0.pdf)

Below are high-level summary notes from the meeting.

## Welcome

Maine Climate Council Co-Chairs Hannah Pingree, Director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, and Commissioner Melanie Loyzim, Department of Environmental Protection, opened the meeting. They welcomed Councilors, Working Group co-chairs and members of the public, and thanked everyone for their hard work over the past months.

## Overview of Strategies and Introduction to Working Group Updates

Hannah Pingree provided an overview of existing Maine Won't Wait strategies and introduced the Working Group updates, which will guide the next four years of climate action in Maine. The work has been a significant undertaking - 222 working group members held over 100 meetings between September 2023 - June 2024, totaling over 7,500 hours of participant time. Over 450 members of the public attended Maine Climate Council meetings during the same period.

The process has reached a diverse group of Mainers. The George Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions at the University of Maine will continue to work on outreach to priority populations through summer 2024. Their preliminary input was shared with the working groups and incorporated into recommendations.

Participants received several other updates.

- **Scientific Assessment Report:** The updated report by the Science and Technical Subcommittee is now available to the public, and can be found online [here](#).
- **Tribal engagement:** The co-chairs of the Council are working closely with Ambassador Bryant to ensure robust Tribal engagement as a part of the Maine Climate Council's work, with her leadership.

- **Support for Community Resilience:** Grant programs are yielding tangible support for communities on the ground.
  - **Community Resilience Partnership Program:** 54 grant awards were announced on June 17, 2024.
  - The **Coastal Communities Fund** will announce 11 grants next week.

## **Working Group and Task Force Presentations**

The co-chairs of each working group presented their recommendations to the Climate Council. Following the presentations, the co-chairs discussed the process of developing the recommendations, named turning points that impacted their work along the way, and talked about progress that they would like to see over the next two years.

A summary of recommendations is listed below. Detailed recommendations can be found at this link: <https://www.maine.gov/future/climate/council/workinggroups/2024strategies>

Members of the public are invited to offer their feedback on these recommendations through the survey available here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2SJJD5>

### **Community Resilience Working Group**

1. Empower Local and Regional Community Resilience Efforts.
2. Enhance state and local abilities to assess climate risks, prepare for and recover from natural disasters, and adapt infrastructure and communities.
3. Establish a framework for measuring the effectiveness of adaptation and resilience actions.
4. Improve information and education about climate and health.
5. Expand access to funding and financing for climate adaptation and emissions reduction.
6. Increase awareness and action on the mental health impacts of climate change.

### **Coastal and Marine Working Group**

1. Build healthy and resilient coastal communities and protect critical place-based infrastructure.
2. Support climate adaptation of Maine's fisheries, aquaculture and seafood industries.
3. Monitor, conserve and increase resilience of coastal and marine ecosystems.

### **Natural and Working Lands Working Group**

1. Increase by 2030 the total acreage of conserved Natural and Working Lands in the state to 30%.
2. Increase the amount of food consumed in Maine from state food producers to 30% by 2030.
3. Develop new incentives to increase carbon storage.

### **Materials Management Task Force**

1. Measure and reduce consumption-based emissions.
2. Advance policies and deploy funding resources to grow Maine's circular economy.
3. Reduce food loss and waste 50% by 2030.
4. Regionalize and scale-up access to waste prevention and diversion services.
5. Foster resilience in the built environment through materials collection and reuse.
6. Reduce and capture methane emissions from Maine's waste sector.

### **Transportation Working Group**

1. Accelerate Maine's transition to light-duty electric vehicles, including plug-in hybrid vehicles.
2. Reduce vehicle miles traveled.
3. Accelerate Maine's adoption of zero-emission medium-and heavy-duty vehicles.

#### **Buildings, Infrastructure and Housing Working Group**

1. Continue the progress on making homes and businesses more energy efficient by investing in weatherization and heating systems.
2. Establish strong systems to support rapid adoption and compliance with climate-friendly building codes and standards.
3. Promote the manufacture and use of climate-friendly building products.
4. Support measures that both reduce carbon and improve resilience.
5. Accelerate decarbonization in industrial processes.
6. Continue to lead by example in publicly-funded buildings.

#### **Energy Working Group**

1. Decrease energy burdens while transitioning to clean energy.
2. Plan and build the infrastructure needed to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2040.
3. Manage the impact of buildings, vehicles, and industry on the grid with load flexibility and innovation.
4. Grow Maine's clean energy economy with a goal to support 30,000 clean energy jobs by 2030.

#### **Land Use Task Force**

1. Promote smart growth to reduce emissions, prevent natural and working land conversion, and create affordable housing.
2. Provide technical assistance to communities and use proactive communication and engagement to support effective land use planning.
3. Use incentives and regulations for land use policies that foster vibrant community centers, reduce sprawl, and provide measurable benefits.

#### **Small Group and Panel Discussions**

Following the presentations from the working groups, meeting attendees broke into groups of 2-4 people to discuss the recommendations. Following these discussions, participants responded individually to three questions:

1. What recommendations are you most excited about?
2. How can the MCC ensure that these recommendations benefit priority populations?
3. What overarching themes do you see emerging through these recommendations?

Participants responded using the Mentimeter tool. Responses are summarized in Annex A of this document.

#### **Panel Discussion: Context for the Climate Action Plan Update**

Sam Dina, Maine Department of Labor, Linda Nelson, Town of Stonington and co-chair of the Infrastructure Rebuilding and Resilience Commission, Dr. Puthiery Va, Equity Subcommittee and director of the Maine CDC, and Spencer Thibodeau, U.S. Department of Energy, discussed the major themes that will impact the Climate Action Plan, and shared their reactions to the recommendations presented by the working groups. They noted the urgency to adapt rapidly to climate change, the opportunity of

federal funding to support climate action in Maine, the need to address workforce as part of the strategies, and the importance of focusing on equity while addressing the needs of Mainers.

## **Next Steps and Adjourn**

The Council will receive additional public input on these recommendations through in-person engagement and surveys over the summer. There will be additional feedback from the Mitchell Center's engagement with priority populations, as well as modeling of emissions reductions and a cost benefit analysis. These inputs will all inform the final updates to the climate action plan.

The next meeting of the Maine Climate Council will be held virtually on September 25, 2024. Details about the agenda and how to attend will be made available closer to the date on the Maine Won't Wait website: <https://www.maine.gov/future/meeting-calendar>.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00pm.

## **Annex A: Mentimeter Poll Results**

Meeting participants contributed their reactions to the working groups recommendations by responding to three questions via a Mentimeter poll. These responses are summarized below.

### **Question 1: What recommendations are you most excited about?**

- **Infrastructure and transportation**
  - Reducing vehicle miles traveled and more infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation.
  - Funding to expand public transport and electrify buses and other larger fleets of vehicles.
  - Expanding public transit options.
  - Expanded use of Electric Vehicles (EVs), and increased EV charging infrastructure across the state.
  - Medium Duty Fleet Electrification.
- **Food systems and security**
  - Statewide food plan that will decrease food waste and increase food security.
  - Promoting local food production and consumption.
- **Community engagement**
  - Plans for broader reach in education, outreach and engagement.
  - Private sector engagement on both the demand and supply side.
  - Increased opportunities for education and technical assistance to priority populations and rural communities.
  - Building public understanding of natural resource solutions.
- **Coastal and inland resilience**
  - Building coastal resilience, mental health support, and nature-based solutions for climate change.
  - Inclusion of retreat in discussions related to both coastal and inland flooding.
  - Helping small coastal communities and empowering local and regional community resilience efforts.
  - Building resilient working waterfront infrastructure.

- Connections between the Climate Council and the Governor’s Resiliency initiatives show that this will not be a siloed effort.
- **Land use and conservation**
  - Redevelopment of village centers.
  - Farmland conservation and promoting smart growth land use policies.
  - Excitement about seeing land use integrated into the work of many working groups.
- **Energy and emissions**
  - Building infrastructure to achieve 100% clean electricity. Reducing energy burden.
  - Investment in offshore wind, and the reduction and capture of methane.
  - New incentives to increase carbon storage.
  - Consumption based emissions, equity considerations for low and moderate income, public transport
  - Energy navigator program.
  - Maine assessing scope 3 emissions.
  - Intersectionality with housing -- zero energy mobile homes, funding for charging stations etc.
- **Mental health resilience**
  - Psychological resilience task force
  - Support for mental health and community resilience, especially if people have to talk about moving due to climate impacts
  - Building working waterfront infrastructure with the mental health impacts in mind to build a sense of agency
- **Circular economy**
  - Multiple participants expressed excitement about the addition of materials management to the list of priorities
  - Material management and reuse of marine byproducts - creative recycling solutions
  - Materials management as an education tool
- **Equity and accessibility**
  - The general intersectional approach across working groups that focused on equity and accessibility.
  - Navigation for communities to improve access to federal and state dollars
- **Other comments**
  - Participants expressed excitement about recommendations that intersect across working groups, and appreciation for cross cutting working groups examining how recommendations will work and identifying areas where roadblocks and opportunities might exist.
  - Increased density of housing, reducing vehicle miles tracked, electricity demand management.
  - Multiple participants expressed excitement about the addition of materials management to the list of priorities.

**Question 2: How can the MCC ensure that these recommendations benefit priority populations?**

- **Deepen engagement with priority populations**
  - Involve priority populations early, and on an ongoing basis. Learn their barriers and unique needs, and ensure that they have ownership over their futures.
  - Build up local leadership and work with community based organizations to create and deliver programming
  - Create community benefit agreements.

- Share recommendations with communities before finalizing plans and ensure that they share decision making power.
- Ensure availability of funding, and provide both technical assistance and human support to these communities.
- Create specific metrics to evaluate success and monitor for continuous engagement.
- Consider compensation for participation.
- **Broaden stakeholder engagement for better collaboration and implementation**
  - Work with a range of stakeholders through the entire process of planning to implementation - support collaboration across sectors.
  - Integrate intersecting issues and challenges and ensure that they are addressed.
  - Ensure that Climate Action Plan implementation is not siloed - work with other organizations also addressing housing, workforce development, and other intersecting issues.
  - Collaborate with local partners and leverage partnership networks.
  - Invest in state-level jobs to help deploy, monitor, and respond to implementation of this work across Maine.
- **Invest in outreach and communications**
  - Ensure that communication and engagement strategies are adaptable and applicable to the communities you're speaking with.
  - Centralize information and make it easily accessible.
  - Prioritize giving priority populations a seat at the table and in decision making.
- **Public transportation**
  - Design solutions to reach those most in need.
  - Promote policies that have transportation-related taxes put toward transportation
  - Make-Ready infrastructure programs for public fleets
- **Accessibility and equity**
  - Ensure a mix of approaches, including but not limited to tax rebates and sliding scale rebates.
  - Consider how communities will access rebates and other incentives, and account for barriers to access.
  - Create access to low income vehicle leases.
  - Consider trust based funding for communities
  - Earmark funds for priority populations.
- **Indigenous sovereignty:** Recognize the sovereignty of indigenous peoples and widen their access to resources to care for their lands.
- Growing Maine's **circular economy** will help everyone
- **Focus on livable communities:** Make communities livable, walkable, and improve air quality
- **Increase access to affordable housing**
  - Affordable housing paired with distributed energy resources owned by local community and affordable transportation options.
  - Prioritize Net Zero affordable housing.
- **Robust education**
  - Focus on climate education for youth and students
  - Create public education initiatives summarizing state and federal incentives for climate action.
- **Build political support.** Engage our legislators to embrace Maine Won't Wait. Ensure that the next legislature is aware and informed about the updated plan.

**Question 3: What overarching themes do you see emerging through these recommendations?**  
97 people responded.

