

# **Maine Climate Council Recommendations: A Summary**

## **Prepared for Casco Bay Coastal Academy, September 2020**

In June 2019, LD 1679 established the Maine Climate Council, setting up a long-term forum for climate action in Maine. The bipartisan bill received unanimous support and created a 39-member Council to advise the Governor and Legislature on shared solutions to meet new, ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals for 2030 and 2050, along with those to prepare for and adapt to the consequences of climate change.

This document is a summary of a [framework document](#) that included draft actions recommended by the six working groups that support the Maine Climate Council. The six working groups are:

- Transportation Working Group
- Buildings Infrastructure and Housing Working Group
- Energy Working Group
- Community Resilience Planning, Public Health and Emergency Management Working Group
- Coastal and Marine Working Group
- Natural and Working Lands Working Group

The Council structure allows for and has encouraged strategy development across working groups. This document also summarizes recommendations of the Community Resilience Planning, Emergency Management and Public Health Working Group, which has actions especially relevant for our local communities.

The final four-year Maine Climate Action Plan is due to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature on December 1, 2020.

### **Maine's Climate and Energy Goals**

#### ***Goal 1: Create jobs and economic opportunity***

The [executive summary](#) of the draft report, *Strengthening Maine's Clean Energy Economy* finds that the State of Maine is poised to significantly grow and expand its clean energy economy.

#### ***Goal 2: Reduce Maine's greenhouse gas emissions***

Maine's Climate Action Plan must put us on a trajectory to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 and at least 80% by 2050:

- A. Bring the Future of Transportation to Maine
- B. Modernize Maine's Buildings: Energy Efficient, Smart and Cost-Effective Homes and Businesses
- C. Drive Innovation to Reduce Carbon Emissions in Maine's Energy and Industrial Sectors

#### ***Goal 3: Prepare Maine residents, businesses and communities for climate change impacts***

From increasing land and ocean temperatures, to rising sea levels, more frequent severe storms, increased environmental damage, and public health risks, Maine scientists have

catalogued the significant effects of rising greenhouse gases and climate change on our state.

Maine's Climate Action Plan must ensure Maine people, environment, industries, and communities are more resilient to the impacts of climate change. These efforts should include supporting transitions for communities, businesses, families and workers who will be most impacted by climate change. And it should support both planning and adaptation to help Maine's communities better withstand the current and future impacts of climate change.

### **Climate Actions Developed through Collaboration among State Agencies**

The actions recommended within each of the proposed strategies represent science-based and detailed information provided by the six Working Groups. They include cost-benefit considerations from the Cost-Benefit and Modeling Analysis conducted by the consultants Eastern Research Group, and a summary of the feedback from the public surveys conducted by GOPIF during the summer of 2020. They also refer to the impacts of climate change described in the *Scientific Assessment of Climate Change and Its Effects in Maine*, from the Maine Climate Council's Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. These reports as well as the June 2020 Working Group reports are available at [maine.gov/future/initiatives/climate/climate-council/reports](http://maine.gov/future/initiatives/climate/climate-council/reports)

#### **A. Build Healthy and Resilient Communities**

***Objective:** Support Maine communities in being proactive about understanding climate risk, planning, and taking actions to safeguard their citizens from the impacts of climate change.*

##### **Actions include:**

- 1) Enhance and coordinate assistance and funding for community resilience activities;
- 2) Improve the planning and legal tools communities use to build resilience;
- 3) Invest in public health monitoring and education; and
- 4) Protect water sources from contamination due to high intensity weather events.

#### **B. Invest in Climate-Ready Infrastructure**

***Objective:** Improve the climate readiness and resilience of infrastructure in Maine so that it serves Maine better under day-to-day conditions and functions reliably during emergencies.*

To improve the climate readiness and resilience of infrastructure in Maine, three key actions are needed:

- 1) Assess the vulnerability of Maine's infrastructure to climate hazards;
- 2) Develop a new "State Infrastructure Adaptation Fund" which could help municipalities and state agencies meet these cost-share requirements, unlocking new federal funds for infrastructure projects. Because the cost-share requirements are frequently 10 to 25 percent of the total project cost, a relatively modest investment of state funds would result in four to ten times match from federal grants.
- 3) Support working waterfronts in becoming climate-ready.

#### **C. Protect Maine's Environment and Natural Resource Economies and Promote Natural Climate Solutions**

To improve the climate readiness and resilience of Maine's natural and working lands and waters, prepare our natural resource economies for climate impacts, and improve our ability to sequester carbon, four key actions are needed:

- 1) Protect Maine’s natural and working lands and waters;
- 2) Support Maine’s natural resource economies;
- 3) Increase carbon sequestration from natural and working lands and waters;
- 4) Improve monitoring of natural and working lands and waters to understand and manage the response to climate change

**Goal 4: Ensure that Maine’s climate strategies are equitable**

Maine’s climate strategies can help address inequities that are exacerbated by the effects of climate change. We must ensure that we protect our most vulnerable communities from the impacts of climate change, and that all Mainers benefit from the economic, quality of life, and public health benefits of our climate strategies. This includes engaging diverse groups of Maine people and communities in the development and implementation of effective climate solutions, especially those most impacted. The Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) worked with the University of Maine's Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions to assess the recommendations of the six working groups from an equity perspective. The result was an [Equity Assessment of Working Group Recommendations](#).

**Community Resilience Planning, Public Health, & Emergency Management Working Group Strategy Recommendations to the Maine Climate Council**

Community Resilience Planning strategies are proposed as an interrelated whole. Each can stand on its own merits but, to realize the goal of community resilience and economic security in the face of climate change, all three are mutually inter-dependent. Each strategy is founded on the scientific and technical committee recommendations particularly with respect to projections for sea level rise and riverine flooding. Likewise, implementation of all three strategies is bounded by the financial constraints imposed by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The strategies recommend Executive Orders to establish cabinet level coordination across state agencies so that funding priorities are consistent and can reach communities and regional organizations who are ready to implement adaptation solutions. The strategies also recommend assembly and maintenance of a clearinghouse of funding options from public and private sources and the development of, and participation in, multiple creative financing ideas.

**1. Comprehensive Review of Maine Laws to Achieve Resilience and Economic Security in the Face of Climate Change:** This strategy calls for and initiates a comprehensive review and revision of several Maine statutes and their associated regulations to support adaptation and resilience.

**2. Improve Delivery System of Technical Assistance on Resilience to Municipalities:** This strategy establishes the institutional infrastructure at the state and regional levels to support resilience in all municipalities. It stresses the importance of using existing governance structures, providing access to the most recent data and tools, and tailoring assistance to municipal need and capacity.

**3. Funding Mechanisms to Achieve Resilience:** This strategy call for investment of dollars but especially for coordination, efficiency, collaboration, and incentivizing behavior. Such investments in resilience will cost less than responding to repetitive and increasing climate impacts that compound virtually all contemporary social and economic problems. The profound economic disruption posed by the COVID-19 pandemic will demand even greater efficiency than was already obvious at the launch of the Maine Climate Council’s work.