

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Maine Climate Council

Annual Report to the Legislature

January 15, 2025

On November 21, 2024 Governor Mills [welcomed](#) the release of [Maine Won't Wait \(PDF\)](#), the second four-year Climate Action Plan from the Maine Climate Council. The updated *Maine Won't Wait* builds on Maine's success in fighting climate change and recommends commonsense strategies to advance the state's work in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, achieving carbon neutrality, strengthening Maine's resilience to the impacts of climate change, and growing Maine's economy through new good-paying, green jobs.

The report recognizes Maine's leadership in climate action, including:

- reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent since 1990, making meaningful progress towards statutory targets of a 45 percent reduction by 2030 and an 80 percent reduction by 2050;
- progressing to meet Maine's goal of using 80 percent renewable sources for electricity by 2030;
- [exceeding Governor Mills' goal](#) of installing 100,000 heat pumps statewide and setting a new, more ambitious target of installing 275,000 heat pumps by 2027;
- [reducing Maine's dependence on heating oil](#) from 70 percent of Maine households in 2010 to just over 50 percent in 2023, including the largest recorded year over year decrease (6 percent) from 2022 to 2023;
- steadily increasing electric vehicles on the road to more than 17,000 and building electric vehicle charging infrastructure to more than 1,000 ports statewide;
- growing the clean energy economy to employ more than 15,000 people, more than halfway toward the Governor's goal of 30,000 clean energy jobs by 2030; and
- investing \$60 million – the largest investment in state history – to enhance the resilience of Maine communities, working waterfronts, and businesses following last winter's devastating storms.

The updated plan calls for continued support to make Maine communities and people more resilient to climate impacts such as the severe flooding and storms that devastated the state in the past year. It outlines goals to increase conserved lands in the state to 30 percent by 2030, including doubling the amount of permanently protected farmland by 2030, and to protect and strengthen Maine's vital working waterfronts.

The plan adds new actions to reduce emissions from waste, including by reducing food waste. It outlines an approach to land use that is beneficial to Maine communities and helps to meet the state's climate, conservation, and energy goals.

The plan calls for making Maine homes and businesses more energy efficient through weatherization and heat pump installation, for transitioning to renewable energy sources to reduce Maine's reliance on expensive and environmentally harmful fossil fuels, and for promoting electric vehicles to reduce carbon emissions within Maine's transportation sector.

The updated four-year climate action plan, *Maine Won't Wait*, is available at: maine.gov/climateplan.

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Climate Planning Process

On June 26, 2019, Governor Mills and the Legislature created the Maine Climate Council, an assembly of scientists, industry leaders, bipartisan local and state officials, and engaged citizens, to develop a four-year plan to put Maine on a trajectory to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 and at least 80% by 2050. By Executive Order of Governor Mills, the state must also achieve carbon neutrality by 2045.

Since the Maine Climate Council first released *Maine Won't Wait* in 2020, its [39 members](#) have convened regularly to evaluate the latest climate science, track the state's progress toward its ambitious climate goals, and consider the impact of local, national, and global events and trends on Maine's climate action plan. The input of 10 working groups, subcommittees, and task forces formally assembled to advise the Council as well as more than 1,000 members of the public informed that work and shaped the strategies in this updated plan.

Six [working groups](#) composed of more than 200 people focus on key areas for climate action, as directed by statute:

- Transportation
- Buildings, Infrastructure, and Housing
- Coastal and Marine
- Energy
- Natural and Working Lands
- Community Resilience

Two subcommittees ground the Council's work across all areas:

- [Scientific and Technical Subcommittee](#), which as directed by statute identifies, monitors, studies, and reports out findings and recommendations related to climate change and its effects in Maine.
- [Equity Subcommittee](#), which the Council established following the release of *Maine Won't Wait* in 2020 to support ongoing planning and implementation of the state's climate strategies to ensure shared benefits across diverse populations.

Two task forces also provided recommendations to the Council for consideration in the 2024 update:

- Materials Management, to identify opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through solid waste reduction and prevention, recycling and composting, and recovering energy from certain materials.
- Land Use, to explore proactive growth management while meeting the state's climate goals.

Just over a year ago, in September 2023, the Council embarked on a comprehensive process to gather public feedback, aiming to ground its work in the perspectives of everyday Maine people. Individuals and organizations contributed their thoughts and questions virtually and in person, including more than 1,000 people who responded to online surveys and more than 350 people who attended seven public meetings and other local events throughout the state. This updated report to the Governor, Legislature, and people of Maine will now serve as a roadmap to advance Maine toward its climate goals for the next four years.

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The Effects of Climate Change on Maine

Since 2020, the Maine Climate Council's Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STS) has provided the Council with the best available science on climate impacts in Maine to help its members make evidence-based decisions. The STS is made up of leading scientists with a broad array of expertise on climate change globally and in Maine. In 2020, the STS released its initial comprehensive report, *Scientific Assessment of Climate Change and Its Effects in Maine*, followed by an update to the scientific assessment in June 2024 which informed the development of the 2024 update to *Maine Won't Wait*.

The latest scientific assessment affirms that Maine's climate continues to change in part because of human activity, and that Maine people are already feeling the impacts of extreme storms, hotter summers, shorter winters, and higher seas, all of which threaten ecosystems and human health. It also tells us that Mainers experience climate change differently depending on where they live and the financial and community resources they have to prepare for and adapt to climate impacts. As a 2020 Maine Climate Council report, *The Cost of Doing Nothing*, documented, Maine and its people face economic, ecosystem, and public health impacts if the state does not take action to prevent and prepare for climate change.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

The 39-member Maine Climate Council, as designated in state law, includes scientists, industry leaders, bipartisan local and state officials, and other community representatives who bring expertise and varying perspectives to their role. *Maine Won't Wait* benefited from the significant contributions of more than 200 working group and subcommittee members who shaped the strategies over the course of more than 100 public meetings.

Hundreds of additional members of the public observed and participated in the Council's planning process. More than 1,000 people responded to the Council's public survey in the summer and fall of 2024, and more than 350 people attended in-person meetings to share their input, emphasizing the strategies that were most important to their communities and families.

The Council stepped up its efforts to hear from communities and populations who often don't participate in public planning processes due to geography, income, age, race, cultural or language barriers, disability, or other factors. With funding from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the Climate Council worked with the Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions at the University of Maine to directly engage with many of these populations to inform the state's climate plan.

Recognizing the importance of youth involvement in climate action planning, Maine stepped up youth engagement efforts as part of the 2024 update to *Maine Won't Wait*. With the support of community funders in Maine, the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) hired a Youth Climate Engagement Fellow in 2023 to connect young Mainers (ages 13-29) to state climate action by creating pathways for climate work and leadership. As a part of this initiative, GOPIF engaged over 1,100 young Mainers through workshops, discussion and listening sessions, and digital engagement.

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Maine's Climate Action Plan Goals

Reduce Maine's Greenhouse Gas Emissions

While Maine has made meaningful progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we must reduce these emissions at a faster pace to ensure that we meet the state's 2030 and 2050 targets and do our part to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius this century.

Strengthen Resilience to Climate Impacts

Maine must take action to ensure that our people, environment, economy, and society are more resilient to the impacts of climate change that are now occurring. While mitigating the causes of climate change and better preparing Maine for its impacts requires significant public and private investment, inaction will cost Maine substantially more, and those costs will accelerate over time.

Create Jobs and Economic Prosperity

Many of the strategies in this climate action plan will grow the economy, protect key economic sectors most at risk from climate change, and foster innovation in new business sectors that will drive climate solutions.

Bring Climate Action to All Maine People

Some Maine people and communities experience climate-change impacts more acutely than others, including rural, older, and lower-income residents, as well as people and places with economies tied to natural resources. As we move forward from climate-action planning to implementation, this plan outlines new and updated strategies and targets to ensure that the benefits of climate investments reach all Maine people.

Maine's Climate Action Plan Strategies

Strategy A: Embrace the Future of Transportation in Maine

Transportation is responsible for 49 percent of Maine's carbon emissions from fossil fuels, making the sector one of Maine's largest opportunities to combat climate change. Most of those emissions come from the tailpipes of passenger cars and trucks as many drivers travel long distances across our large, rural state. Continued progress will depend on faster adoption of cleaner electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids, improved public and active transportation options, and better land use planning for new development that helps Mainers avoid or reduce driving.

Strategy B: Modernize Maine's Buildings: Energy Efficient, Smart and Cost-Effective Homes and Businesses

After transportation, Maine's building sector holds the most potential for achieving the state's emission-reduction goals. Heating and cooling of residential and commercial buildings contribute 31 percent of Maine's greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel combustion. Lowering these emissions and reducing energy costs will require modernizing our buildings to use cleaner energy,

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increasing energy efficiency, improving building resilience against climate impacts like heatwaves and extreme storms, and encouraging the use of more sustainable building materials.

Strategy C: Transition to Clean Energy

Maine has become a national leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from its energy sources by setting ambitious requirements for transitioning to renewable sources. In 2019, Governor Mills signed bipartisan legislation that set a requirement for Maine to use 80 percent renewable energy by 2030. In 2023, Maine crossed the threshold of using more than 50 percent of its electricity from renewable sources. Recognizing the progress made to date and the key role of clean energy in bringing down the cost of electricity for Maine people, protecting our environment from harmful carbon emissions, and creating good-paying jobs, Governor Mills announced a new accelerated goal of 100 percent clean energy by 2040.

Maine can achieve its clean energy and climate goals while reducing energy burdens for Maine people through thoughtful planning and build-out of clean energy infrastructure. We have the technology to increase efficiency and reduce the costs of resilient energy infrastructure through innovative “demand management” strategies. And we can continue to build a clean energy workforce that offers local, good-paying jobs.

Strategy D: Create Jobs and Grow Maine’s Economy through Climate Action

Climate change is threatening the natural resources that underpin Maine’s economy and the livelihoods that depend on them. At the same time, new opportunities are arising in Maine’s response to climate change. Rich oceans, abundant forests, and productive farmlands position Maine’s heritage industries to lead in trillion-dollar markets for global climate solutions. Making businesses more climate friendly can save on both operating costs and emissions. Growth in the state’s clean energy and energy efficiency sector requires a skilled workforce, creating thousands of well-paying jobs that are already helping Maine families thrive.

Transformative workforce investments through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan are helping to build an economy poised for prosperity, including major efforts to draw young people into quality careers. Over the next four years, Maine must sustain and build on these investments. This means focusing on drawing more Mainers into quality climate careers and then helping those individuals build their skills to deliver on, and benefit from, a Maine economy that embraces the opportunities in climate action.

Strategy E: Protect the Environment and Natural and Working Lands and Waters in Maine

Maine’s abundant forests, rugged coastlines, and local farms depend on vibrant natural ecosystems. These natural and working lands and waters that embody our state’s character are simultaneously threatened by climate change and, through their ability to store carbon, act as one of our most powerful tools to fight it. Beyond storing carbon, these lands and waters provide clean drinking water and sustain wildlife habitat and ecosystems. The farming, fishing, forestry, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries that rely on these ecosystems benefit the health of our people and economy. As the climate changes, Maine’s approach to natural and working lands and waters should emphasize restoration as well as protection, to reduce harm from climate impacts and sustain ecosystems for generations to come.

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Strategy F: Build Healthy and Resilient Communities

The past two years have thrown into sharp relief the impact of climate-driven weather events in Maine communities. Persistent warming trends on land and at sea are generating more frequent and damaging storms, rising seas, flooding, and drought, all of which threaten the lives of Maine's people, their livelihoods in Maine's heritage industries, and our economy and environment. These events further drive home the danger posed by climate change and the urgent need to plan for and invest in climate resilience at the state, regional, and local levels. Maine communities continue to need funding, tools, and support to tackle these climate impacts as they balance the interconnected local challenges of aging infrastructure, the need for more affordable housing, public health impacts, and more.

Strategy G: Engage with Maine People on Climate Action

The success of *Maine Won't Wait* relies on the support of Maine people. As climate actions become more urgent, we must improve communication and engagement – especially with populations who have greater challenges accessing information and programs. With unprecedented federal funding available for climate action, the state must act to ensure communities and people aren't left out of these time-limited opportunities.

Implementing Maine's Climate Action Plan

Since the release of the state's first four-year climate action plan, *Maine Won't Wait*, in 2020, Maine has become recognized as a leader in commonsense climate action. Record installations of high-efficiency heat pumps, continued progress on efficiency and weatherization, and a steady increase in electric vehicle purchases and public charging stations, among other advances, directly address our state's leading causes of greenhouse gas emissions and start us on a path to achieve the ambitious goals in the plan. Maine is on track to meet its goal of using 80 percent renewable sources for electricity by 2030, and the Mills Administration is developing a pathway to reach 100 percent clean energy by 2040.

Maine's response to climate change has been thoughtful, ambitious, and effective in many ways, yet the hardest work still lies ahead given the scale of the challenge. Relentless land and sea warming trends are driving extreme storms, rising seas, flooding, and drought, all of which threaten our state's environment, heritage, and future. In a span of just four weeks during December 2023 and January 2024, three historically severe storms caused catastrophic inland and coastal flooding, resulting in unprecedented devastation to infrastructure and communities across the state. The damage to public infrastructure alone reached at least \$90 million, with millions more in losses for private homes and businesses.

Following these storms, Governor Mills established the Infrastructure Rebuilding and Resilience Commission (IRRC) to identify near-term rebuilding and resilience priorities and deliver a long-term resilience plan for Maine in May 2025. The IRRC's [preliminary recommendations](#), delivered in November 2024, focus on both near-term approaches to strengthening resilience and long-term commitments that will be required to confront a changing climate.

In the last several years, federal legislation has created unprecedented funding opportunities to achieve the goals in *Maine Won't Wait*. Investments from the American Rescue Plan through

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Governor Mills' Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) are making a difference in Maine communities, allowing them to rebuild infrastructure, invest in workers, and transition to clean and resilient energy.

Moving with urgency to take bold, specific actions to achieve Maine's climate goals will require extensive resources, and no single funding stream will suffice. With federal funding likely to decrease from the significant investments of the last several years, at least in the short term, Maine needs to leverage a variety of source – existing and new, private and public, local, state, and federal – and innovative financing mechanisms to support transformation.

Maine needs to leverage new financing tools for both clean energy and energy efficiency as well as climate adaptation and infrastructure resilience projects. The Maine Climate Council recommends that the state develop a long-term funding plan and investment strategy to support implementation of *Maine Won't Wait* goals, including the financial tools needed to make sure all Maine people have access to clean energy and energy efficiency improvements. The State should explore how to structure programs and products to attract private investment, consider the opportunity for other finance structures to provide long-term capital support for both climate resilience and energy programs, and leverage the significant federal funding that is currently available, such as the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, a \$27 billion national investment created by the IRA to expand financing for energy efficiency and carbon-reduction projects.

Maine should continue to strengthen partnerships with philanthropy and other private sector partners to achieve climate goals.

Tracking Progress

Tracking the progress of climate action in Maine informs the public and helps evaluate whether evidence-based adjustments, enhancements, or replacements to policies are needed in pursuit of the plan's climate objectives.

Each year, the Maine Climate Council releases an annual progress report, highlighting the actions taken through each strategy toward Maine's climate and energy goals.

The Council has an interactive dashboard highlighting this progress at maine.gov/climateplan.

Private Funding for the Maine Climate Council and State Climate Work

The Council is encouraged by the original statute to seek state and philanthropic funding opportunities to support its work to supplement state appropriations. The Council receives an annual appropriation from the Legislature to support the Council's work, and has received additional support from federal and philanthropic grants. This additional funding has supported projects like cost-benefit modeling and data for the state climate action plan, staffing support, stakeholder and public engagement and communications, and piloting new programs, like the Community Resilience Partnership, and technical support for communities.

In calendar year 2024, private funds received totaled \$100,000 and include:

- \$50,000 to support the coordination and development of priority projects for federal infrastructure climate and energy funding from the Maine Community Foundation's Climate Leadership Fund.

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- \$50,000 to support communications on the state climate action plan and programs from the Maine Community Foundation's Climate Leadership Fund.

The private funds for the Maine Climate Council spent January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024 include funds received in 2024 and private funds carried over from previous years:

- Communications on the state climate action plan and programs (paid to communications consultants for graphic design services) – \$25,869.59
- Staffing support for the coordination and development of priority projects for federal infrastructure climate and energy funding – \$44,146.25
- Staffing support for the outreach and engagement with youth (limited period position) – \$136,821.96
- Community Resilience Partnership (Regional Coordinators Pilot and associated costs) – \$249,376.42
- General support including state-required indirect costs – \$21,492.43

In 2023, the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) was awarded a \$3 million planning grant through the U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program. These funds are supporting additional capacity, outreach efforts and specific emission reduction pathways for the 2024 update to Maine's four-year climate action plan.

Next Steps

Continued implementation of the state's climate action plan will include state and federal funding streams, in partnership with state agencies including the Department of Environmental Protection, Governor's Energy Office, Department of Agriculture, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, Department of Marine Resources, Department of Education, Department of Transportation, and the Department of Health and Human Services including the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention; as well as quasi-government agencies such as the Efficiency Maine Trust and the Maine State Housing Authority. We anticipate both legislation and funding items in this legislature to support continued implementation.

Thank you for your support of this critical work.



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