

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LAWS
OF THE
STATE OF MAINE

AS PASSED BY THE

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION
December 2, 2020 to March 30, 2021

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION
April 28, 2021 to July 19, 2021

THE GENERAL EFFECTIVE DATE FOR
FIRST REGULAR SESSION
NON-EMERGENCY LAWS IS
JUNE 29, 2021

THE GENERAL EFFECTIVE DATE FOR
FIRST SPECIAL SESSION
NON-EMERGENCY LAWS IS
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IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MAINE REVISED STATUTES ANNOTATED,
TITLE 3, SECTION 163-A, SUBSECTION 4.

Augusta, Maine
2021

CHAPTER 143
S.P. 179 - L.D. 437

An Act To Establish the Maine
Healthy Soils Program

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine
as follows:

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA c. 7 is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 7

MAINE HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM

§351. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

1. Commissioner. "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

2. Department. "Department" means the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

3. Greenhouse gas. "Greenhouse gas" has the same meaning as in Title 38, section 574, subsection 1.

4. Greenhouse gas drawdown. "Greenhouse gas drawdown" means greenhouse gas emissions source reduction or sequestration.

5. Healthy soils best practices. "Healthy soils best practices" means agricultural and land management practices that:

A. Enhance the continuing capacity of soils to function as a vital, living biological system, increase soil organic matter, improve soil structure, strengthen water holding and nutrient holding capacity, improve nutrient cycling and result in net long-term greenhouse gas drawdown;

B. Continuously improve the capacity of soils to host a diversity of beneficial organisms, grow vigorous crops, enhance agricultural resilience, including, but not limited to, the ability of crops and livestock to tolerate and recover from drought, temperature extremes, pests and other stressors, and help regulate the global climate by converting organic residue into stable soil organic matter and retaining nutrients, including, but not limited to, nitrogen and phosphorus;

C. Continuously improve the health of soils by considering all relevant factors, including, but not limited to, depth of topsoil horizons, water infiltration rate, water holding capacity, organic carbon content, biologically accessible nutrient content, bulk density, biological activity and biological and microbiological diversity; and

D. Follow the principles of minimizing soil disturbance and external inputs: keeping soil covered, maximizing biodiversity, maximizing the presence of living roots and integrating animals into land management, including grazing animals, birds, beneficial insects and keystone species, such as earthworms.

§352. Program established

The Maine Healthy Soils Program, referred to in this chapter as "the program," is established within the department and is administered by the commissioner. The commissioner shall consult and cooperate with the University of Maine, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, soil and water conservation districts as defined in section 3, subsection 2 and the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service in the development and administration of the program. The commissioner may consult with the Department of Environmental Protection in carrying out the purpose of the program.

1. Purpose. The purpose of the program is to:

A. Improve the health, yield and profitability of the State's diverse agricultural soils and commodities;

B. Protect native biological and microbiological diversity, vitality and health and increase the greenhouse gas drawdown provided by the State's agricultural soils;

C. Promote healthy soils agricultural practices based on indigenous knowledge, current understanding and emerging soil science as determined by the department; and

D. Promote and expand the use of healthy soils best practices among farmers and farmland owners in the State.

2. Responsibilities of the commissioner. To carry out the purposes of the program, the commissioner shall:

A. Provide information and educational materials to educate farmers and farmland owners about the benefits of implementing practices that achieve the purposes of the program. The commissioner shall:

(1) Increase opportunities for farmer-to-farmer outreach and education by highlighting farmers and farmland owners using healthy soils best practices successfully;

(2) Facilitate peer learning opportunities for farmers and farmland owners engaged in a broad range of healthy soils best practices, maintaining an active network of practitioners and technical experts and highlighting related services and programming; and

(3) Aggregate and highlight opportunities for grant funding, loan programs and other forms

of financial assistance to support the use of healthy soils best practices by farmers and farmland owners;

B. Investigate opportunities for market-based levers and promotional activities that incentivize healthy soils best practices;

C. Subject to availability of funding, support and make available incentives, such as technical assistance, financial assistance and research support, to implement healthy soils best practices;

D. Design the program to equitably distribute incentives to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers as defined by 7 United States Code, Section 2279(a); and

E. Determine how the program may be implemented to enhance other state and federal programs that provide financial assistance to farmers implementing healthy soils best practices.

§353. Maine Healthy Soils Fund

The Maine Healthy Soils Fund is established as a nonlapsing separate account to be administered by the commissioner. Income from gifts, grants, fees and other sources may be deposited into the fund. All money in the fund and earnings on that money must be used for the purposes of this chapter.

Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY, DEPARTMENT OF

Maine Healthy Soils Fund N358

Initiative: Provides an allocation to accept grants, bequests, gifts or contributions from any source, public or private, to support the administration of the healthy soils program.

| | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
| All Other | \$500 | \$500 |
| OTHER SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS TOTAL | \$500 | \$500 |

See title page for effective date.

CHAPTER 144

H.P. 378 - L.D. 515

An Act To Create New Models of Maine Manufacturing Employment and Education

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §11, sub-§3, ¶D, as enacted by PL 2011, c. 346, §2, is amended to read:

D. Devise strategies for promoting career and technical education alignment and supporting early career planning and transition supports from high school to college and to the workforce; ~~and~~

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §11, sub-§3, ¶E, as enacted by PL 2011, c. 346, §2, is amended to read:

E. Propose methods for integrating out-of-school programs focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics with school-based programs, with the goal of inspiring more students to concentrate in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics; ~~and~~

Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §11, sub-§3, ¶F is enacted to read:

F. Coordinate the development of higher education programs and public-private partnerships to enhance higher education and employment opportunities in the State in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Sec. 4. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics program development for education and employment. The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Council under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 11, referred to in this section as "the council," shall engage with the University of Maine System under Title 20-A, chapter 411, the Maine Community College System under Title 20-A, chapter 431, adult education programs under Title 20-A, chapter 315, the Finance Authority of Maine under Title 10, section 964, the Loring Development Authority of Maine under Title 5, section 13080 and private sector stakeholders to develop proposals for the following programs and initiatives to promote new models of manufacturing education and employment in the State:

1. A 5-year dual degree program through the University of Maine System in green technology and entrepreneurship, along with a scholarship program for students in the program and seed funding for business development in green manufacturing;
2. A 5-year dual degree program in educational communication and digital technology based within the University of Maine System to develop and prepare educators for remote communication, learning and training platforms;
3. A dual degree program in accounting and green technology based within the University of Maine System;
4. A platform for occupational licensing in educational communication and digital technology that addresses the needs of new residents of the State, including but not limited to immigrants and refugees;