

Dear Interested Party:

The [Maine Climate Council](#) was established to advise the Governor and the Legislature on mitigation, adaptation, and resilience strategies that will allow Maine to reduce the impacts of climate change on its residents, communities, industries, and ecosystems.

We are co-chairing the Natural and Working Lands (NWL) Working Group, which is one of 6 Working Groups responsible for developing and recommending mitigation and adaptation actions to the Council. As the NWL Working Group considers possible strategies, **we invite your feedback by May 13 on the current list of draft strategies that pertain to forestry, agriculture and natural lands.**

Attached is a list of the latest version of the NWL Working Group's strategies (**see pages 8-12**) as well as some broader context on the Maine Climate Council's purpose and process. We invite you to share your reactions to the draft strategies with us. Please consider these general questions:

- 1) Which strategies seem particularly promising to you?
- 2) What is missing?
- 3) Do any of these strategies concern you, and if so, why?

Please send written comments to tom.gordon@maine.gov by May 13.

For more information about the Maine Climate Council's Natural and Working Lands Working Group's work to date, please go to <https://www.maine.gov/future/initiatives/climate/climate-council/natural-working-lands>

Thank you, and we look forward to your feedback.

Amanda Beal, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Co-Chair NWL Working Group

Thomas Abello, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Co-Chair NWL Working Group

Maine Climate Council

Amanda Beal & Tom Abello,
Natural and Working Lands co-chairs



Maine Climate Council



Scientific and Technical Subcommittee



Buildings,
Infrastructure,
+ Housing
Subcommittee



Coastal +
Marine



Community
Resilience Planning,
Public Health
+ Emergency
Management



Energy



Transportation



Natural +
Working Lands

Maine Climate Council

PROCESS TIMELINE



June 2019
Governor signs LD 1679, establishing Maine Climate Council



Sept 2019
Governor appoints Maine Climate Council members; MCC launches



Oct 2019 - June 2020
Working Groups & Scientific + Technical Subcommittee Meet Monthly to Develop Mitigation & Adaptation Recommendations, Characterize Climate Impacts



June 2020 - Dec 2020
Maine Climate Council Considers and Selects Final Strategies for State Climate Action Plan



Dec 1, 2020
State Climate Action Plan Delivered to Legislature

CLIMATE COUNCIL MITIGATION GOALS

45%

below 1990 gross
annual greenhouse
gas emissions by 2030

80%

below 1990 gross
annual greenhouse gas
emissions by 2050

Use the latest scientific
and technological
information



Analyze technical feasibility
and cost-effectiveness of
potential solutions



Emphasize **clean energy economy** and opportunities for
good job creation, consider impacts on Maine's people
and communities

**CARBON
NEUTRAL BY
2045**

CLIMATE COUNCIL ADAPTATION GOALS



IMPROVE THE RESILIENCE of Maine's communities, people, and industries to climate impacts



PRIORITIZE the welfare of Maine citizens— especially the most vulnerable communities



FOSTER the value of the State's natural resources and natural resource industries



ENCOURAGE diversity, inclusion and equity of all Maine communities and people



UTILIZE the most recent scientific and technical information and measure progress



Working Groups

Roles + Responsibilities

DEVELOP AND RECOMMEND

mitigation and adaptation actions to the council

MEMBERS INCLUDE legislators, scientific and academic experts, and representatives of affected businesses and industries, the State's youth, federal, state and local governments and agencies, and nonprofit organizations and foundations

SOLICIT STAKEHOLDER INPUT; CONSIDER COSTS AND BENEFITS including impacts on low-income, elderly and rural residents and other vulnerable communities

ADVISE ON ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE BENEFITS and challenges; and recommend funding and financing mechanisms for strategies



Natural + Working Lands Working Group

Scope of Work

FORESTRY

Creating incentives for different levels of forest landownership to capture carbon

Creating economic opportunities for landowners by expanding markets for wood products

NATURAL LANDS

Determining relevant strategies for lands where timber harvesting is not the primary objective and managed for other primary purposes (e.g., biodiversity, wildlife and habitats, outdoor recreation).

AGRICULTURE

Explore potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through existing programs and practices

Explore new opportunities to support increased resiliency and carbon sequestration



Draft Strategies

1. Create a dedicated, sustained funding source to conserve working forest, agricultural, and natural lands to increase carbon storage opportunities, avoid future emissions, and enhance climate adaptation and resilience

a. Increase permanent protection of forest land and farmland (especially prime agricultural soils and soils of statewide significance) via conservation easements and fee acquisition

b. Conserve areas of exceptional biodiversity value as informed by Beginning with Habitat Focal Areas and other conservation planning tools from the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's (DACF) Maine Natural Areas Program and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW)

c. Revise scoring criteria for state and federal land conservation funding sources (e.g. Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program, Land for Maine's Future Program, Forest Legacy Program, and Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund) to incorporate climate mitigation and resiliency goals into grant criteria and project selection



Draft Strategies

2. Create new and update existing financial incentives and support for private land management and infrastructure that supports climate mitigation and adaptation

a. Establish a stakeholder process to develop a voluntary incentive-based Maine forest carbon program for woodland owners of 10 - 5,000 acres, to increase carbon storage and encourage forest management while maintaining current timber harvest levels

b. Address land taxation policy through legislation introduced by the Governor to:

iii. Update the Open Space Current Use Taxation Program in a manner that incentivizes climate-friendly land management practices, makes it more attractive to woodland owners, and enables landowners to move between Tree Growth and Open Space as land management objectives change

iv. Update Farmland Current Use Taxation Program in a manner that encourages broader use of the Program and incentivizes farmland management practices with climate mitigation and adaptation benefits

v. Operationalize and fund the currently eligible but unused "wildlife habitat" criterion of the Farm and Open Space Tax Law (36 M.R.S. §1101-1121) to provide landowner financial incentives for conserving parcels of exceptionally high biodiversity value, including species and habitats at risk of decline from climate change

vi. Maintain Tree Growth Tax Law as an established program for landowners committed to active forest management

c. Provide funding to support the use of agricultural and forestry mitigation and adaptation practices; incentivize infrastructure and technology upgrades to support the adoption of those practices including renewable energy use and other strategies to reduce fossil-fuel usage

d. Encourage high quality on-the-ground performance by loggers, and facilitate the use of low-impact timber harvesting equipment

e. Increase funding for private and public road-crossing infrastructure, using Stream Smart practices for bridges and culverts, thereby reducing flooding damage and improving aquatic and terrestrial wildlife passage

f. Provide financial support to strengthen Maine's food systems, so that more food can be produced locally, distributed efficiently, and priced affordably



Draft Strategies

3. Provide technical assistance on natural climate solutions to landowners and producers

- a. **Forestry Assistance:** Add significant field forester capacity to the DACF's Maine Forest Service to support landowner adoption of carbon-friendly and resilient forest management practices, through outreach, education, and technical assistance
- b. **Agricultural Assistance:** Make natural climate solutions a priority in federal and state agricultural programs, and increase technical service provider capacity to NRCS, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and University of Maine Cooperative Extension, to assist producers in using agricultural practices with mitigation and adaptation benefits
- c. **Natural Land Assistance:** Increase technical service provider capacity to DIFW's Beginning with Habitat Program and DACF's Maine Natural Areas Program to support towns, land trusts, and landowners in their efforts to conserve native species and habitats vulnerable to climate change and to address climate-related threats such as invasive species.



Draft Strategies

4. Update and refocus state programs and policies to address climate mitigation and resilience

a. Continue and enhance climate-friendly public land management practices

i. Update DACF's Bureau of Parks & Lands Integrated Resource Policy (IRP) to incorporate current climate science and management priorities for enhancing landscape and species resiliency and mitigating climate change

ii. Maintain support for, and consider expansion of, the state's Ecological Reserve System (ERS), and update ERS legislation and mandates to reflect new science on climate change threats, mitigation opportunities, and landscape resiliency

iii. Incorporate principles of climate science and landscape resiliency when evaluating and prioritizing future land acquisitions by DACF and DIFW

b. Update existing policy and staffing needs to support comprehensive, accurate, and timely environmental review and permitting of projects under existing environmental regulations, thereby ensuring smart development and appropriate renewable energy project siting

c. Assess and improve state, regional and local land use planning efforts, policies and regulations to promote climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation, as well as carbon storage

i. Enhance existing and develop new land use planning tools and policies that encourage greater state coordination to reconcile competing land uses and promote efficiency, including streamlined renewable energy development review and permitting with rigorous natural resource standards

ii. Balance renewable energy development with no net loss of valuable working and natural lands, especially prime agricultural soils and forest land (for example, through an in-lieu-fee program)

d. Reduce CO2 emissions from fossil fuels used for building heat/power by encouraging the installation of modern wood heat/power technology in homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and other institutions

e. Increase climate education related to forestry, agriculture and natural lands, through public school curricula, consumer awareness, and landowner information



Draft Strategies

5. Strengthen research and development, and monitoring of climate mitigation and adaptation practices

a. Create a sustained source of funding for research on climate change and climate mitigation and adaptation strategies

- i. Conduct research in support of agriculture and forestry mitigation and adaptation practices
- i. Promote research, surveillance, and monitoring to inform adaptive management practices designed to conserve climate-sensitive species and habitats

b. Establish the University of Maine as the coordinating hub for research on forestry, agriculture, and natural land-related climate concerns, partnering with state government and the private sector

c. Continue to invest in the University of Maine research facilities in their efforts to become a globally recognized hub for climate-friendly bio-based wood market innovation; issue an Executive Order to seek opportunities in State construction projects to use Mass Timber (including Cross Laminated Timber - CLT) building technologies, and to encourage related manufacturing facilities to locate in Maine

d. Promote research, development and planning efforts supporting the growth and stability of Maine food systems

THANK YOU AND NEXT STEPS

NOW UNTIL JUNE

WORKING GROUPS CONTINUE DEVELOPING +
REFINING STRATEGIES

JUNE 17

WORKING GROUPS RECOMMEND PRIORITY
STRATEGIES TO MAINE CLIMATE COUNCIL

DECEMBER 2020

4-YEAR STATE CLIMATE ACTION PLAN
DUE TO MAINE LEGISLATURE

A FEW WAYS TO ENGAGE

SEE INFO ON PAST & FUTURE MEETINGS
AT [MAINE.GOV/FUTURE](https://maine.gov/future)

ATTEND A MCC WORKING GROUP MEETING

LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS:
COMMENT ON OUR WEBSITE
OR EMAIL US AT
MAINECLIMATECOUNCIL@MAINE.GOV

