



Maine Sierran

25th Anniversary Edition

Maine Chapter of the Sierra Club

Spring 2018

Volume XV, No. 1



Elliott Hazen
NOAA Fisheries permit # 123245
NOAA Photograph by Elliot Hazen

Let's Protect This



NOAA Photograph

By Stopping This

No Drilling In The Gulf of Maine!

The Trump/Zinke proposal to open our coastlines to drilling is a threat to our environment and our economy.

We were beginning to think that nothing about the Trump Administration's continuous attack on the environment could be a shock. Then in January comes a proposal that reaches a new level of irresponsibility, irrationality, and arrogance—a plan to open more than 90 percent of U.S. coastal waters to offshore oil and gas drilling.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's plan includes opening more than one billion acres off Alaska and the Eastern Seaboard (including the Gulf of Maine)—all areas that were excluded in President Obama's 2016 plan—to exploration and drilling.

Days after the plan was unveiled, Zinke met with Florida Governor Rick Scott and assured him that Florida was "off the table" for potential drilling operations. Since that time, there have been conflicting statements and some confusion about Florida's status.

Of course, no one was expecting good news regarding offshore drilling from Trump and Zinke. But this proposal's callous disregard for our coastal environment and for the millions of fishing, recreation, and tourism jobs dependent on a healthy ocean is truly astounding.

Sixty-four environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, immediately issued a joint statement condemning the plan.

Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune

emphasized that the administration's plan is in direct opposition to the wishes of the American people.

"Donald Trump and Ryan Zinke are now trying to sell out our coastal communities, our waters, and our climate in order to please corporate polluters," he said. "Millions of Americans have raised their voices to send a message, loud and clear, that they do not want offshore drilling.... The Sierra Club will continue to stand with coastal communities in fighting back against this reckless plan...."

Offshore drilling is also being rejected by governors—15 in all, including Republicans. Not surprisingly our own Maine governor is not on that list. In the past, Paul LePage has supported offshore drilling, and he continues to believe that the Zinke drilling plan will ultimately exclude economically and ecologically sensitive areas of the Gulf of Maine.

The Maine Legislature, however, voted unanimously to reject offshore drilling. And the state's entire congressional delegation quickly united in opposition to the administration's proposal.

"The plan to roll back a decade-old ban on drilling for gas and oil along our coast has to be one of the most outrageous and irresponsible proposals to come out of the Trump administration," stated 1st District Congresswoman Chellie Pingree. She added that in Maine, lobstermen and others whose livings depend on a healthy Gulf of Maine, already have

enough to worry about with warming waters and ocean acidification.

Marine biologist and Sierra Club Maine executive committee member Mick Devin notes that over 45,000 Maine jobs are associated with our coastal industries which generate upwards of \$2.5 billion for the Maine economy.

"That includes over 5,000 commercial fishermen," Devin, who is also a state representative, says. "The risks are too high to place that many jobs in jeopardy.... Lobster and other shellfish are vital to

-Continued on page 8

The Healing Power of Nature



Sierra Club Maine is looking for volunteers to lead outings for veterans. If you enjoy the outdoors and would like to support those who've served, join us for free training May 10-13 in Winthrop.



Sierra Club Maine Executive Committee member Linda Murray believes strongly in the healing power of nature and in the effectiveness of mindfulness practices. Now, she wants to use nature and mindfulness to help veterans make the adjustment from their military service.

Murray is the prime mover in the Chapter's startup of a Military Outdoors Program in Maine. Nationally, this Sierra Club program has brought some 85,000 active military members, veterans, and family members on outdoor experiences. Time in nature promotes mental health and emotional resiliency. It can help those in active military service prepare for a deployment and also help veterans deal with their past military experience.

-Continued on page 8



Sierra Club Maine
565 Congress St. Suite 206B
Portland ME 04101

Non-Profit Org.
U.S Postage Paid
Ellsworth, ME
Permit No. 82

How will it benefit Mainers? How will it impact our small towns and wilderness areas?

Hydro-Quebec Transmission Through Maine Raises Concerns

With New Hampshire's recent denial of Hydro-Quebec's Northern Pass proposal, Central Maine Power Company (CMP) is now poised to implement its plan to transmit electricity from Quebec to Massachusetts through the state of Maine.

New Hampshire's Site Evaluation Committee denied Hydro-Quebec's application for the project back in February. Among the prime reasons for New Hampshire's rejection were concerns that the transmission project would affect property values, interfere with economic progress in small towns, and adversely affect outdoor recreation experiences.

The \$950-million CMP plan, known as The New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC), could potentially deliver up to 1,200 MW of hydro-generated electricity to the New England grid by way of 145 miles of transmission lines and use of the new CMP substation in Lewiston.

Chapter executive committee member Dot Kelly has considerable experience with electricity generation and transmission issues. Concerns about the rigor and transparency of the CMP application process led her to file as an intervener in its evaluation by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

Kelly wants the NECEC proposal to be fully vetted for its impact on abutters and its benefits to the state of Maine.

"This power line, a high voltage DC project, is new technology for Maine and questions about both the environmental impact and the economic benefit to Mainers remain," she explains.

CMP is saying that NECEC will benefit all ratepayers in the region, but has issued no specific information on the subject.



There are significant environmental concerns with this project as well. According to a Natural Resources Council of Maine statement, the project would create 53 miles of new transmission corridor in addition to clearing and expanding nearly a hundred miles of existing corridor. Above-ground transmission lines would cross the Appalachian Trail at three points. In addition it would cross 263 wetlands, 115 streams, 12 inland wading bird and waterfowl habitats, and a class 6 remote pond.

Of particular concern to the Sierra Club is The Forks wilderness area (near where the Dead and Kennebec Rivers meet). The CMP plan is to construct above-ground transmission lines across the Kennebec.

Sierra Club Maine leaders are especially concerned about the above-ground lines across the river. Beyond the potential environmental damage caused by above-ground transmission, what would be the visual impact on what is a heavily used outdoor recreation area?

As noted earlier, part of New Hampshire's rejection of the Northern Pass transmission proposal

was concern about the project's impact on property values and small town life and economies. Similar concerns need to be addressed in Maine before NECEC is approved.

There are also questions regarding the project that encompass more than its impact on the state of Maine.

Several Innu First Nation leaders have spoken out against Hydro-Quebec's plans to transmit power to New England for fear that it would exacerbate the degradation of the iconic Betsiamites River on Quebec's North Shore. There are also serious concerns about the displacement of Pessamit Innu families during the implementation of hydro-power projects on their ancestral territory.

And then there is the overarching question of whether hydro-power is the most sensible and responsible path to a clean energy future for New England.

Emily Norton, chapter director of the Massachusetts Sierra Club, doesn't believe it is. Her chapter has strongly opposed plans to import hydro-power from Canada.

"Wind and solar power within New England would do more to provide the affordable, reliable, and truly clean energy that we need," she explained.

The approval process for NECEC is being expedited—spurred by Governor LePage's desire to "push it right through." Technical hearings have already taken place. Public hearings are set for August with a final decision deadline in September.

Although not an intervener, Sierra Club Maine will keep close tabs on NECEC as it works its way through the PUC process. We'll insist on transparency and thorough evaluation based on facts and science—even if that takes longer than the governor wishes.

For all the filings on the proposal do a Google search for Maine PUC 2017-00232—2017-00232 is the case number for CMP's NECEC application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Need (CPCN) from the PUC.

Legislative Update

Maine House Fails to Override Governor's Veto of Solar Bill



The results for environmental legislation in the current session of the 128th Legislature are mixed. The biggest disappointment was the failure of the Maine House to override Governor LePage's veto of the solar bill, LD1444. Just days before, the Maine Senate had voted for an override of the legislation.

Both the Senate and the House initially passed LD1444 by a large majority. As happened with the failure to override the 2017 solar bill veto, some representatives who promised to support the bill, caved under political pressure.

The solar legislation would have reversed the PUC's misguided decision to implement gross metering for homeowners with solar installations. It would also have significantly expanded the limit (now nine-person) on community solar projects.

Progressive solar legislation for Maine remains a high priority for Sierra Club Maine. The focus now turns to the 2018 elections, and electing a governor and legislators who understand that Maine needs a forward-thinking policy on solar—for economic as well as environmental reasons. The Chapter will be working hard for candidates who want a clean ener-

gy future for Maine.

Also unclear at press time was the status of Sierra Club Maine's other legislative priority, LD590, a railroad infrastructure bond for passenger rail in Maine.

If passed by the Legislature, a November 2018 referendum question would ask voters to approve a \$50 million bond to match federal transit funds. The funds would be used to rebuild the rails connecting Portland to Lewiston/Auburn and ultimately lead to passenger rail service to Oxford County and through to Montreal. Sierra Club Maine has been a prime mover in this effort and has worked hard to get the rail bond bill voted on as a stand-alone bill and not be tied to other legislation.

Other Priority Environmental Legislation

LD1853: "An act to ensure the safe and consistent regulation of pesticides throughout the state by providing exemptions to municipal ordinances that regulate pesticides."

This misguided bill would have prevented towns from regulating pesticide use in their municipalities. Sierra Club Maine gave testimony and the bill was defeated.

LD1810: "An act to amend the laws governing expedited permitting for wind energy development."

This was the Governor LePage bill to limit the expedited process for wind project siting. The Chapter provided testimony on this legislation that, in early April, was still stalled in committee.

LD1667: "An act to prohibit the entry of anadromous fish species into Sheepscot Pond for three years and to study the consequences of the presence of anadromous fish in Sheepscot Pond."

There is no scientific basis for the blocking of native sea-run fish into the pond as called for in the bill, and thankfully, it was defeated.

Sierra Club Maine did support a related bill, **LD922:** which directs the Commissioner of Marine Resources to investigate the conditions of Sheepscot Pond and to develop a management plan for anadromous fish species.

LD1699: "An act to revise the renewable portfolio standard laws to allow certain hydro-power facilities to qualify as new renewable capacity resources."

This bill was wisely killed in committee.

LD1797: The Chapter opposed this bill calling for a change in the Maine Solid Waste Management Rules to allow waste contaminated with oil and gas to be cleaned and used in construction. It emerged for committee with an "ought to pass" status, but as of early April, it had not been voted on by the full legislature.

LD1149: "An act to ensure equity in the funding of Maine's transportation infrastructure by imposing an annual fee on hybrid and electric vehicles."

We're pleased to report that this backwards-thinking bill, which the Chapter testified against, was defeated. The original bill called for a tax of \$250 for electric vehicles (EVs) and \$150 for hybrid vehicles.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Film

Saving Snow

April 18—5:30-7

Rising Tide Brewery, Portland

Saving Snow is a documentary about how skiers, snowboarders, and residents of towns that depend on winter snow and cold for their livelihood are struggling against changing climate and paving the way for a clean energy future.

Earth Day 2018 Youth Climate Summit

April 21

Hannaford Hall, University of Southern Maine

Six school groups will present their climate solutions reports. This will be followed by a march from Hannaford Hall to Deering Oaks Park for a gathering with food, banners, bands, and celebration. For more information about the project, guidelines for presentations and schedule of events go to <http://terramatters.org/>

Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change

A talk by Sherri Mitchell

April 24—7 pm

Lincoln Theater, Damariscotta

Outdoor Leadership Training

May 10-13

Mechuwana Lane, Winthrop

Train and qualify to lead outings for active military personnel and veterans. Training, food, and accommodations are all free. Register at sierraclub.org/maine. For more information email Linda Murray at loonsong207@gmail.com.

Brown Bag Lunch and Discussion Series

May 23rd—12-1pm

Sierra Club Maine, Portland office conference room, 565 Congress St. 2nd. Floor

Sears Island Events

May 9th—10am-12pm

Vernal Pool Hike

May 12th—7am

Bird Walk

May 23rd — 11am-12:30pm

Discovering Sears Island

A presentation with Ashley Megquier and Paul Bock Penobscot Shores Retirement Community in Belfast

Military Outdoors Program —Service Outing

June 19-23

Acadia National Park

For active military, veterans and their families. We'll explore the natural treasures of Mount Desert Island while working to make the national park a better place for visitors.

Visit our events page at sierraclub.org/maine

New Belfast Group to Address Climate Change

A new group is forming in Belfast to address climate change through projects and activities that move beyond the extensive work already being done on municipal properties and buildings by the City of Belfast's Energy Committee.

Plans for the group originated among three people who had recently completed the Pen Bay Stewards course—the purpose of which is to educate people about the Penobscot Bay and its ecology. Included in the group are Bev Roxby of Belfast, a Maine Chapter executive committee member, and Waterville Climate Action Team (CAT) participant Norm Anderson. Norm has given the new Belfast group valuable input on the Waterville CA'Ts strategic planning process.

The Belfast group will be up and running later this spring. For more information contact Bev Roxby at beverlyteach@gmail.com.

Maine Chapter of the Sierra Club

565 Congress St. Suite 206B, Portland, ME 04101

Telephone: 207-761-5616

web: sierraclub.org/maine

email: maine.chapter@sierraclub.org

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Becky Bartovics	North Haven
Michael (Mick) Devin	Newcastle
Tony Donovan (Chair)	Portland
Olin Jenner	Rockport
Claudia King	Falmouth
Dot Kelley	Phippsburg
Linda Murray	Bristol
Beverly Roxby	Belfast

CHAPTER TREASURER

Denny Gallaudet denny.gallaudet@gmail.com

CLIMATE ACTION TEAMS

Joan Saxe and Norm Anderson joansaxe@gmail.com

WILDLIFE, WOODS, and WATERS

Ken Cline kcline@coa.edu
Jim Frick sierranjim@gmail.com

GULF OF MAINE TEAM

Mick Devin mick@mickdevin.org

LEGISLATIVE TEAM

Tony Donovan melikesrail@gmail.com

POLITICAL TEAM

Claudia King seekingcking@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER

Jim Frick sierranjim@gmail.com

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Claudia King seekingcking@gmail.com

MAINE SIERRAN is published twice per year (March and September) by the Maine Chapter of the Sierra Club. Articles may be reprinted with credit to *MAINE SIERRAN*. We welcome your input. Please email Jim Frick at sierranjim@gmail.com if you have suggestions or comments or if you are interested in contributing articles or photographs.

Statement of Purpose of the Sierra Club

"To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the Earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the Earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives."

Visit Us On Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/sierra-club-maine/chapter/181279771922933>

MaineShare

Support Sierra Club Maine through payroll deduction

MaineShare gives you an easy way to support more than 40 organizations working to make Maine a better place to live.

Enroll your workplace for the current campaign online at www.mainshare.org or contact us directly.

P.O. BOX 2095, Augusta, ME 04338

Telephone: 207-622-1050

Email: giving@mainshare.org

No Drilling In The Gulf of Maine

Continued from page 1

our tourism industry—nobody comes to our coast to eat a chicken sandwich. We need to close the door on offshore drilling immediately....”

As pointed out in a recent *Bangor Daily News* op-ed by Jacqueline Guyol and Claire Weinburg, a single oil spill could decimate Maine’s tourist, fishing, and fast-growing seaweed industries.

“Even if the spill is able to be ‘cleaned,’ our reputation for quality ocean products may not recover,” the op-ed noted.

In addition to the negative economic effects on the fishing and tourism industries, offshore drilling is a serious danger to a wide variety of species that inhabit the eastern seaboard.

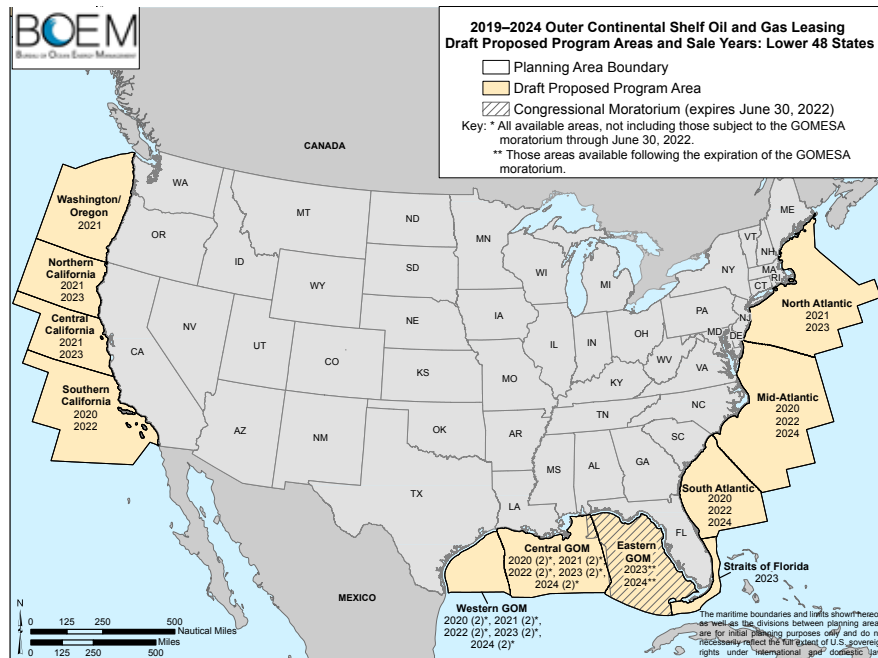
Seabirds, in particular, are attracted to offshore drilling platforms. It’s estimated that some 200,000 migrating birds are killed each year in drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico alone.

We’ve all seen the heart-wrenching images of seabirds devastated by catastrophic spills in the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere. But spills don’t have to be catastrophic to do real damage. Smaller oil spills have a cumulative effect. And there are many of those smaller spills every year—479 in 2016 in the Gulf of Mexico alone, according to The Louisiana Bucket Brigade, an environmental group that analyzed Coast Guard data to arrive at their findings.

Even without drilling, seismic exploration for offshore oil and gas is another serious danger to marine life. The testing done for offshore oil and gas involves the use of air guns that shoot loud blasts of compressed air that, among other things, can cause hearing damage.

Whales, including the endangered right whale, are particularly threatened by seismic exploration. They are acoustically sensitive, and hearing loss can affect communications needed to locate family, mates, and food. Because of its threat to marine life, the Obama administration banned seismic testing in the Atlantic. Sadly, that ban was reversed by Trump’s Interior Department last May.

Underwater noise, like that from drilling, drowns out whales’ low-frequency calls, Dr. Lindy Weilgart explained in article in *The Globe and Mail*. Dr. Weilgart is a Halifax biologist with 25 years of experience



The Trump/Zinke plan opens up 90 percent of U.S. coastal waters for oil and gas leases. Most of Alaska’s coastal waters are also scheduled for lease.

“Lobster and other shellfish are vital to our tourism industry—nobody comes to our coast to eat a chicken sandwich.”

studying underwater acoustics. She noted that noise doesn’t kill whales directly, but it makes their lives more difficult.

Dr. Weilgart told *The Globe and Mail* that whale calls are used to communicate about food, mating, migration, and care of the calves—who remain with their mothers for a decade. She said the calls, which can travel up to 30 kilometers, are also how the whales guard against danger, such as approaching ships.

“You take away the main sense by which they orient and sense their environment—that’s a major handicap,” Dr. Weilgart noted. “They can’t handle any extra stressors—none.”

And then, of course, there is the bigger question: how increasing offshore fossil fuel production will affect our climate. At a time when we know how

dramatically carbon emissions are disrupting our climate, it’s completely irresponsible to be expanding our long-term commitment to fossil fuel production. We need to be making that commitment to clean, renewable energy instead.

Mainers voiced their concerns about offshore drilling during a recent Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) meeting in Augusta. Although there was no opportunity for public comment at the meeting, a coalition opposed to drilling (including Sierra Club Maine) held its own, simultaneous,

event adjacent to the BOEM information session. The coalition included those who make their living from the Gulf of Maine. One of the speakers was Kristan Porter, newly elected president of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association (MLA).

“The MLA stands before you today to say that we will not allow this to happen on our watch,” Porter said.

The public comment period ended the day after the BOEM’s event in Augusta. From Maine to California, Americans let it be known that this offshore drilling plan is completely unacceptable.

In fact, the only good thing about the Zinke plan is just how unacceptable and terrible it is. So terrible that it’s fueled public outrage throughout the country and political opposition within the President’s own Republican party. That, coupled with the exorbitant cost of exploration in a time of low fossil fuel prices has led many energy analysts to think that new, large-scale offshore drilling operations are unlikely.

Let’s hope they’re right. In the meantime, we need to stay committed and vocal in our opposition.

The Healing Powers of Nature

Continued from page 1

“Recovery in wilderness works,” Murray says. “It can work for anyone, but it can be particularly beneficial for vets.”

Murray has firsthand experience with veteran adjustment problems—her deceased husband, a Vietnam veteran, suffered from PTSD.

“It affected our lives a great deal,” she explains. “At the time I didn’t have a good understanding of PTSD. I wasn’t able to help him, so now, I’m pleased to have the opportunity to help other veterans.”

Murray’s father and two of her uncles also served in the military.

The first step toward building the Chapter’s Military Outdoors Program is finding and training volunteer leaders. While it’s helpful for leaders to be veterans or closely related to a vet, it’s not a requirement.

“We like leaders to have some affiliation with the military—it just helps them connect,” she explains. “But anyone with a love of the outdoors and a desire to support veterans is welcome.”

The training is completely free—including food and accommodations. It will take place May 10-13 in Winthrop. The three-day session combines two levels of Sierra Club outings leader training and first aid/CPR certification.

In addition to the standard outdoor leadership skills, this training is designed to improve skills and confidence working with veterans.

An additional component of the training will involve mindfulness practice. Murray has received training in mindfulness and has experienced its



Chapter Executive Committee member Linda Murray (center) braves the sub-zero January weather in Vermont during Sierra Club’s Outdoor Military Training. With Linda are fellow trainees Kathy Vlnrotter and Wil Libby.

benefits first hand. She believes it can be especially powerful when practiced in the beauty and serenity of nature.

Murray’s vision for the Military Outdoors Program for Maine is to offer a range of experiences that meet the needs of different veterans and military personnel.

“Some vets just need to be introduced to outdoor recreation experiences,” she notes. “So we hope to

offer simple day hikes or family picnics in a natural setting—we really want family members involved. For other, more experienced vets, we want to offer more extreme outdoor experiences.”

Murray also plans on offering “service” outings—knowing that most veterans have a desire to continue to serve.

The first service outing is scheduled for Acadia National Park from June 18-23.

Murray believes that bringing veterans to the outdoors fits in well with the Sierra Club’s emphasis on equity and social justice.

“A good many vets may not have had the opportunity, or the means, to enjoy and benefit from the outdoors,” she says. “This program is geared to overcome those obstacles.”

In addition, she hopes the outdoors program will raise awareness about conservation and climate change issues and inspire new supporters and leaders for Sierra Club’s mission.

If you’re interested in receiving outdoor leadership training, or have questions about the program, please email Murray at loonsong207@gmail.com.