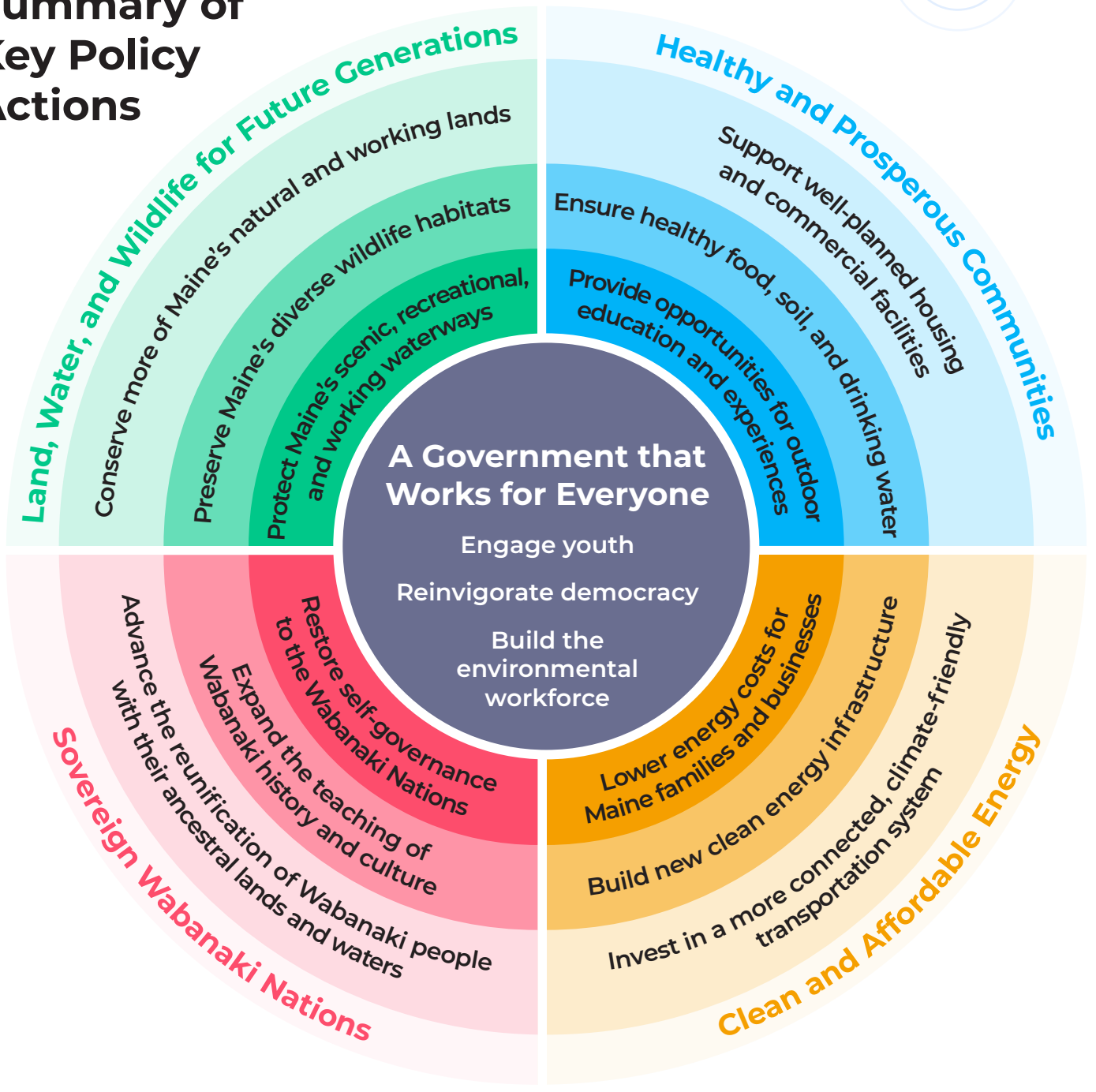


Meeting the Moment

An Environmental Policy Guide for Maine 2026-2031

This policy guide outlines five areas of focus and the specific actions needed to rebalance Maine’s environmental policies in favor of fairness, responsibility, sustainability, and collaboration. In taking these important steps to meet the moment, we will be preserving our natural assets and supporting the health and economic prospects of people and communities in Maine for generations to come.

Summary of Key Policy Actions





Land, Water, and Wildlife for Future Generations

KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- 1 Establish a secure, long-term funding source** for lake and stream protection work that supports increased capacity at state agencies and broadens the scale and scope of local lake protection projects.
- 2 Research and publish a county-by-county blueprint** for land and water protection over the next 10 years, actively engaging communities in prioritizing high-need, high-value projects that are distributed fairly across regions and funded creatively with local and nonprofit partners.
- 3 Support the implementation and enforcement of common-sense regulations** for improving water quality, including updates to shoreland zone protections, new design standards for septic systems that ensure wastewater is properly treated, restrictions on toxic pesticide and fertilizer applications, and stronger inspection protocols for aquatic invasive species.
- 4 Develop a statewide habitat protection and conservation plan** that sets goals through 2040 for the preservation of key places, focusing on areas that are richly biodiverse, have high potential to store carbon, and are critical habitats for species on Maine's Endangered and Threatened Species list.
- 5 Partner with municipalities to improve habitat connectivity**, from upgrading or replacing failing culverts and stream crossings to supporting dam removal projects.
- 6 Pass a significant wildlife habitat policy package** that updates tax incentives for landowners to manage their properties for the betterment of wildlife, establishes stricter forest management standards to address severe disturbances such as clearcutting, assesses additions to the species and habitats safeguarded under Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act, and allocates resources to conserving the last of Maine's late-successional and old growth forest.
- 7 Ensure permanent, ongoing, and full funding** for the Land for Maine's Future program.
- 8 Prioritize and actively pursue conservation projects** that will achieve Maine's goal of conserving 30% of our natural and working lands by 2030.
- 9 Reestablish cabinet-level leadership** for conservation, which could include the creation of a separate Department of Conservation that contains other bureaus and functions with an overall mission of stewarding Maine's land-based natural assets.



Healthy and Prosperous Communities

KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- 1 Embrace and grow Maine's Green Schools Network**, including the creation, promotion, and seed funding for a grant program that can support schools and educators in every Maine county.
- 2 Increase the number and geographic diversity of schools participating** in the Maine Outdoor Learning Initiative and the Maine Outdoor School for All Program.
- 3 Establish a community investment fund** and a Governor's award for small businesses and community partners who are creating innovative ways to offer outdoor education and recreation experiences for youth and adults of all ages, particularly those who have not had outdoor opportunities in the past.
- 4 Stop corporate polluters from weakening or delaying Maine's waste management laws** and ensure all municipalities can access recycling and waste diversion resources.
- 5 Protect the health of Maine food and farmers** by phasing out the use of synthetic pesticides and reducing exposure to all pesticides, particularly for Maine's agricultural workforce.
- 6 Protect Maine children and adults from exposure to toxic chemicals** by maintaining the ban on the land application of sludge and fully implementing the Kids Safe Products Act, the PFAS Products Act, and the removal of all remaining PFAS-laden firefighting foam in Maine.
- 7 Dedicate sufficient resources** to assist municipalities, regional planning organizations, and tribal governments in updating and implementing their comprehensive plans and to support the Maine Office of Community Affairs and the Land Use Planning Commission in serving Maine's communities and unorganized areas.
- 8 Increase state investments in public infrastructure**, such as drinking water and sewer systems, stormwater management, climate-friendly transportation and transit, energy efficient schools, and other adaptations and resilience to climate-related impacts.
- 9 Assess and update Maine's commercial development siting laws** by 2030 and biennially to follow, incentivizing the use of renewable energy sources and ensuring responsiveness to other environmental, economic, and community conditions.



Sovereign Wabanaki Nations

KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- 1 Implement all remaining recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act**, including enacting all necessary legislation and dedicating appropriate resources.
- 2 Work with Maine's Congressional delegation** to make all changes to federal law needed to give full effect to the Wabanaki Nations' sovereignty.
- 3 Develop and fund an Office of Indigenous Studies** within the Department of Education, supported by contracted Wabanaki advisors, to build, support, and coordinate a Wabanaki Studies curriculum and the resources needed by teachers to implement it successfully across Maine.
- 4 Provide funding to school districts** so they have the resources needed to effectively teach Wabanaki Studies.
- 5 Make Wabanaki Studies a curriculum requirement** for high school graduation in Maine.
- 6 Actively support a Wabanaki-led process and timeline** for land return and repatriation.
- 7 Identify potential models and mechanisms** for returning a portion of Maine's public lands and waters to the Wabanaki Nations.
- 8 Collaborate with the Wabanaki Nations to collect data and assess the impacts of repatriation** on human health and wellness, environmental health and stewardship, and economic opportunity among tribal and non-tribal communities in Maine.



Clean and Affordable Energy

KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- 1 Rein in utilities' rate of return** to the amount they need to attract investment.
- 2 Expand permanent disconnection protections** for people and families with a medical need for electricity and fully fund the Low-Income Assistance Program (LIAP) that helps Mainers afford their electricity bills.
- 3 Require new data centers to pay their fair share**, invest in their communities and clean energy innovations, protect local water sources, and insulate electric customers from related rate increases.
- 4 Incentivize energy efficiency investments** in Maine homes and businesses to provide immediate relief from high energy costs.
- 5 Begin regular Maine Department of Energy Resources procurements of low-cost renewable resources** to bring more clean power into the grid in pursuit of the state's goal of 100% clean energy by 2040.
- 6 Support the completion of Northern Maine onshore wind and transmission projects**, with high standards for environmental and ecosystem protection, community engagement, job creation, and economic benefits for Aroostook County.
- 7 Responsibly develop offshore wind projects and infrastructure**, including an offshore wind port for turbine construction and regional and international partnerships with labor, industry, and community groups - especially tribal and fishing communities.
- 8 Build a smarter, modernized electric grid** by expediting interconnection timelines, designing rates to incentivize peak shifting, and creating demand-side markets to unlock innovations.
- 9 Establish sustainable transportation funding solutions** that maximize federal and regional resources and create more fairness, including more equitably distributing turnpike toll revenue across modes and geographies, making all road users pay their fair share for road degradation, and creatively identifying new revenue sources that don't target electric vehicle owners or low-income Mainers.
- 10 Prioritize transportation projects that align with Maine's climate goals**, as well as our economic development, housing, and public health priorities, instead of projects that add long-term costs and increase pollution.
- 11 Fully fund Maine's transit and active transportation networks**, including public transit, complete street initiatives, walking and biking paths, and statewide mobility management programs.
- 12 Advance Maine's public EV infrastructure** by pursuing all available funding opportunities for charging installation and accommodation, implementing the Clean Transportation Roadmap for Medium- and Heavy-Duty Vehicles, and maximizing the grid flexibility benefits of EVs by supporting bidirectional charging and managed charging policies.



A Government that Works for Everyone

KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- 1 Create a new Youth Advisory Council** as a permanent office and cabinet-level advisory body to Maine's governor, legislature, and administrative agencies.
- 2 Support the new Youth Advisory Council with resources** for hosting multi-generational community conversations, collecting data on the opinions and recommendations of Maine youth, producing an annual report on priority policy issues, maintaining a data dashboard, coordinating a youth ambassador program with Maine schools, and designing other civic engagement and data modernization initiatives.
- 3 Design, implement, and evaluate a digital civic engagement demonstration project** in several regions of Maine that allows municipal staff and elected leaders to share information and gather input from residents, such as their budget priorities, observations of local conditions, and willingness to participate in committees or special projects.
- 4 Invest in digital applications, training, and implementation assistance** to make all public-facing government functions online and publicly accessible, including absentee ballot requests, sample ballots and voting information, municipal services, public meetings, community events, volunteer opportunities, and e-filings within the Maine court system.
- 5 Host annual in-person community conversations** in every primary and secondary service center town in Maine that are neutrally facilitated, promoted widely, accessible to all, and cover issues of interest and concern, including issues related to environmental health, community resilience to extreme weather, energy affordability, and local efforts to preserve and protect Maine's water, land, and wildlife.
- 6 Hold polluters accountable by establishing a system to recover costs**, impose penalties, and redirect their profits into financial support for Maine's clean water, public lands, and the environmental workforce that protects our resources, enforces the rules, and keeps our communities healthy.
- 7 Match the size of Maine's environmental workforce with the needs in our communities**, including the capacity to fully implement regulatory frameworks that prevent exposure to toxins, manage municipal waste, extend produce responsibility, and enforce common-sense protections of our air, water, and land.
- 8 Address the interconnected issues of environmental justice and the affordability of energy, food, and other basic needs** by ensuring that the scope and capacity of the Maine Office of Community Affairs is sufficient to support local collaborations and partnerships, especially in rural areas.