

This analysis of the current state of environmental affairs in the State of Maine was drafted by the STEWC Steering Committee and participating others over the summer and approved for posting by the Steering Committee September 2, 2017. It is offered up to help better come to terms with the challenge of unfolding environmental threats.

Maine and its Environment, 2017

1. Fundamental challenges to Maine's democracy and our environment have been seemingly unending over the last ten years or so.

Consider:

- a. a concerted, still-not-fully-corrected weakening of metallic mineral mining standards;
- b. a currently-in-abeyance corporate initiative to build a privately-owned and constructed limited access highway and utilities corridor from Calais to Coburn Gore (Canada to Canada) to move containerized freight and commodities east and west across Maine;
- c. the slow process of decontaminating the Callahan and Kerr-American mines on the Blue Hill peninsula and the HoltraChem pollution of the lower Penobscot River;
- d. unresponsiveness to Maine's treaty obligations with the Penobscot Nation respecting sustenance fishing provisions;
- e. serious inattention and insufficiencies in Maine's longrange, comprehensive energy planning to transition us to renewable energy sources and end our heavy dependence on fossil fuels;
- f. huge expansion of solid-waste landfills not just for Maine use, but because corporate profit is the root driver, for out-of-state disposal as well;
- g. dredging threats to Penobscot and Frenchman Bays;
- h. an emerging risk to Mount Desert Island and Acadia National Park in the form of a corporate and local business initiative to build a half-mile long pier out from Bar Harbor into Frenchman Bay capable of serving two mega-cruiseliners at a time;
- i. continuing issues respecting land-based windpower siting and development;
- j. existing legislative authority threatening communities through corridor development for highways, utilities, pipelines, and transmission lines;
- k. burgeoning demands for rights of way across Maine and its municipalities;
- l. private corporate withdrawal of water from Maine's aquifers;
- m. etc.

These many assaults leave those of us who work to address them feel like spinning ducks in a carnival shooting gallery! It has become incumbent on us to understand the purposes and premises underlying government regulatory authority at all its levels and domains, and to become intimately familiar with its many forms and detailed elements.

We need to think on the fundamental nature of these kinds of challenges to our collective social, economic, environmental, and political well-being. It pays us to understand what lies at the core of these present and

emerging issues. If we're clear as we can be on the generic issues as well as their specific manifestations, we will be better prepared to respond, more quickly and more appropriately. Herewith an attempt to articulate four core themes for the kind of work in which we're presently engaged.

2. Four Core Values of Our Concern

Two are bio-physical realities we understand through the processes of science and intellect.

Water is Life

All living things depend on water, humans no more nor less than any other organisms; our bodies are 3/4 water. Water transports dissolved chemicals to and from the cells of every organism on the planet. It is a key resource for the natural world and for what remains of the wild. Water is central to Maine's particular economy – fishing, agriculture, human use, tourism and vacationing, forestry, recreation, etc. We have always known this, but advanced science and technology – to say nothing of carelessness and narrow self-interest – now raise threats to virtually all our water resources whose availability we have too often taken for granted. Mindfulness about all this is one thing; the need for eternal vigilance against threats to our water – of any kind – should be seen as an obligation on each and every one of us.

Everything Relates to Everything Else

This is the fundamental ecological and environmental principle. There is no escaping the unending interconnectedness of the elements of our presence on Earth – socially, physically, chemically, biologically, atmospherically, intentionally, as consumers of the planet's resources, and so on. Whether it's cruise ships, mining's continuing threat to Maine's waters, failed energy planning, the attempt to initiate a private E/W corridor across Maine from Canada to Canada, or tapping Maine aquifers (or groundwater!) for private profit for bottled water – the range of interconnections within and, indeed, between such issues, is large even as the capacity to thoroughly analyze and understand the implications is limited, not only among activists, but in government and the membership environmental organizations with which we may individually affiliate.

Two values reflect the moral and ethical obligations inherent in any human society.

Justice and the Commons

The last thirty years or so have seen a resurgence of what was once called 'rugged individualism' or, now, a 'me generation.' That which we necessarily hold in common with one another – underwritten by the phenomenon of language itself which allows us to faithfully communicate our needs, desires, facts, and understandings only if we faithfully *share* its structure and content – is quintessentially a social instrument. So are the very concepts of morality and ethics. Lying at the bottom of what motivates us must be a renewed sense of what it means and why it is important that we deeply grasp *E Pluribus Unum* as well as the fundamental notion of moral purpose in human life, and that all the occupants of the planet must be inextricably linked in the stewardship of its health and future.

Respect for Community Sovereignty

In a rare victory, on June 16, 2017, the State of Maine formally acknowledged municipal home rule authority in the domain of food sovereignty. That follows similar community sovereignty initiatives successfully undertaken by municipalities to block Cianbro's proposed E/W Corridor. It is all too easy, however, to forget that we are all members of communities of different sizes and jurisdictions, missing that because there are hierarchies of authority in *some* select areas, they do not necessarily extend to others. The U.S. Supreme Court's mistaken conclusion that money is speech and the dramatic changes in the effective locus of political power to large and multi-national corporations and a tiny handful of obscenely wealthy individuals only increases the importance of the community sovereignty issue. And it is not just a government issue. Parallel concerns arise in the role of shareholders in corporations and the members of non-profit organizations. As activists have learned, the meaning, mechanisms, and requirements of democracy, in public bodies *and* private, have never been an easy matter or more in need of attention and refurbishment.