

# Maine Wilderness Guides Org.

An Association of Registered Maine Guides



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### An MWGO Summary of the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature

Melanie Sturm, MWGO Advocacy Committee Chair

The 130th Maine Legislature was one for the books. Like every other aspect of life, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the session, shaping how committees did their work and which issues rose to the top as priorities. What started out rocky, with everyone wondering how productive the session could actually be, turned into one of the most successful legislative sessions in recent decades from an environmental and climate perspective.

A great deal of progress was made on the use of chemicals, such as PFAS or forever chemicals (LD 1503) and pesticides like neonicotinoids (LD 155); curbing pollution and reducing waste from items such as stray balloons (LD 1023) and prescription drugs (LD 8), and advancing Maine's climate change agenda by addressing sea level rise (LD 1572), phasing out use of hydrofluorocarbons (a greenhouse gas) (LD 226), and a resolve to create the Maine Climate Corps (LD 722), among others. All of these were signed into law by Governor Janet Mills.

From January to May, all committee work and public hearings were carried out remotely by Zoom and streamed live on YouTube. The full House and Senate met a few times in the Augusta Civic Center, socially distanced and then both bodies returned to the State House in June to complete committee work, caucus, debate, and vote on the floor of the House and Senate.

MWGO selected three priority bills for the session and testified in favor of each. The outcomes were a mixed bag:

- Good news! LD 983 proposed a \$80 million bond to fund the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) and Maine State Parks. The Governor and Rep. Patrick Corey also put forward proposals to fund LMF and State Parks. Although this bill didn't pass, both programs got new funding this session, which is absolutely terrific. Included in the biennial budget is \$40 million over four years for LMF, funds which are available immediately. Additionally, Maine State Parks received \$50 million from the federal American Rescue Plan funding package (i.e., COVID relief funding) signed by Governor Mills on July 19. Funds for State Parks will be available in October this year (90 days after the Governor's signature).
- Bad news! LD 125 sought to ban the aerial spraying of glyphosate for forestry. Although it made a further through the legislative process than one might expect since industry was strongly opposed to it, the bill ultimately failed because the Governor vetoed it and it didn't have the 2/3 vote of the Legislature needed to overcome the veto.

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### Short Byte: Drought conditions persist across Maine, despite drenching by Tropical Storm Elsa

Despite the up to 4" of rain that fell in parts of Maine from Tropical Storm Elsa, nearly all of Maine remains "Abnormally Dry" and about 40% of Maine remains in the Moderate or Severe Drought category. The lack of snow pack from this past winter combined with a dry spring and early summer have contributed to pond and lake levels being well below normal and measured stream flows around the state at or near 30 year lows. As a result, many recreational boating releases as well as commercial rafting releases have been canceled or curtailed to either lower volumes or shorter time periods. These lower water levels are also likely to result in warmer water temperatures, especially in the shallower ponds, which may result in earlier vegetation loss and changes in behavior patterns for both aquatic life and other wildlife. To see current data on Maine's drought conditions, check out: <https://www.drought.gov/states/maine>.

### From the Field



"Sunset after the storm" on Pitcher Pond in Lincolnville.  
Photo Credit: Greg Shute

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- So-so news! LD 471 sought to ban CMP's illegal lease over land owned by the Bureau of Parks and Lands in Western Maine. The Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee voted to carry this bill over to the next session, so its fate is to be determined. It continues to be a long arduous road blocking the CMP corridor.

MWGO kept its eye on a few other bills too:

- LD 1626, the tribal sovereignty bill, was carried over to the next session.
- Two bills became law creating a permanent appointment for a member of the Wabanaki Tribes to the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Marine Resources advisory committees (LD 342 and LD 361).
- LD 1474 also became law, creating an educational trip leader permit, which requires a new permit process. It requires camping trips by secondary and higher education institutions to be led by persons who have obtained educational trip leader permits. It also requires the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to adopt rules to implement the program, including establishing an advisory committee to advise the commissioner on the program.

Overall, Maine lawmakers are owed a big thank you for their tenacity, trying out new technologies, and meeting late into the night on some days to finish their work during a challenging session. MWGO brought a unique voice to the legislative process and was able to support important pieces of legislation that will have or would have supported the profession of guiding and the natural resources upon which we rely.

## Guide Tips:

### When was the last time you checked your med kit?



It is a wonderful thing to never need to use that med kit you bring with you on all of your trips, but when was the last

time you checked your med kit? While many items in your med kit do not expire (think tweezers, gauze, triangular bandages and SAM Splints), there are plenty of items that do. Note the expiration dates on these items found in a recent med kit check!

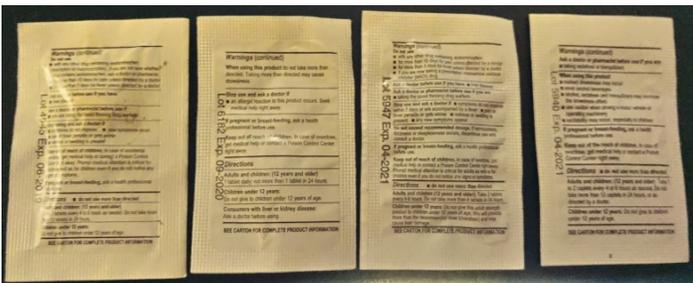


Photo Credit: Reid Anderson

## Upcoming Events and Dates

- Jul 29, 9:30am-5:00pm: Project Wild Educator Workshop at the Maine Wildlife Park in Gray, ME. For more information, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/project-wild-educator-workshop-registration-158114985177>
- Jul 29 – Aug 8: Maine Outdoor Film Festival. For more information, visit: <https://maineoutdoorfilmfestival.com/>

MWGO Professional Members are eligible for a \$50 reimbursement (\$25 for Supporting Members) for WFA, Wafa, WFR, WEMT or Recertification Courses.

## Invasive of the Month: Purple Loosestrife

### *Lythrum salicaria*

Purple loosestrife is invasive and is flowering at this time. Please cut it now, before seeds form and spread!

The plant is a robust, erect, perennial herb that grows two to six feet tall in wet areas, including road ditches. The deep pink to purple flowers are long, crowded spikes that bloom mid- to late-



summer in Maine. They produce tiny, dark-colored seeds in a dry capsule, and a mature plant can produce 1-3 million seeds. When you try to roll the stem in your fingers you will notice it has four corners like a square. The narrow, lance shaped leaves grow opposite each other or in whorls around the stem. Purple loosestrife can completely dominate the area excluding other vegetation, and

forcing out wildlife. Removal by hand is recommended for small populations and isolated stems.

An invasive species is a plant or animal that is not native to a particular ecosystem, whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. There are approximately 2,100 plant species recorded in Maine, and approximately one third of those are not native. Only a small fraction are considered invasive. It is illegal to import, export, buy, sell or intentionally propagate Purple loosestrife in Maine. Please cut it now, before seeds form and spread!

Photo credit: Tomas Dunzila

**Do you have an article, recipe, tip, event, or photo to share in the next eNews?**

**Send your submission to: [newsletter@mwgo.org](mailto:newsletter@mwgo.org)!**

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