

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

LD 474 - An Act To Improve Maine's Environment And Protect Natural Resources. New Title: An Act to Establish a Stewardship Program for Primary and Rechargeable Batteries

Summary: This bill was a concept draft. As amended, it establishes a statewide battery stewardship program in Maine. It requires producers of primary and rechargeable batteries — and products containing those batteries — to finance and operate (individually or collectively) a Department of Environmental Protection–approved stewardship program for collecting, transporting, and recycling covered batteries sold in the state.

Implications: It shifts end-of-life management costs from municipalities to battery producers. It will increase compliance, reporting, and infrastructure costs for manufacturers and importers, which may be passed through the supply chain. The bill creates market access conditions tied to program participation and sets detailed geographic collection mandates, introducing long-term operational and regulatory obligations for companies selling batteries or battery-containing products in Maine. It will reduce the number of batteries ending in landfills and could prevent the number of fires at waste management facilities.

Upcoming Work Sessions:

Wed 3/4 10:00 AM @ Cross, Room 216

LD 2036 - An Act To Clarify The Approval Process For And The Operation Of The Commingling Program For The Management Of Beverage Containers

Summary: The bill requires industry participants to form a cooperative and submit a detailed operating plan to the Department of Environmental Protection for review and approval, outlining how beverage containers will be managed, financed, collected, and reported. The legislation clarifies the Department’s authority, sets out planning and reporting requirements, and creates a structured pathway to transition the redemption system toward material-based sorting rather than brand-based sorting.

Implications: The bill shifts Maine’s bottle redemption system toward a more modern, system-managed model by moving operational complexity away from redemption centers and into a coordinated, data-driven program overseen by the Department. If implemented successfully, it could improve efficiency for redemption centers and transporters, create

more predictable cost allocation using verified sales data, and reduce administrative burdens tied to brand sorting.

LD 2070 - An Act To Prohibit Landfill Expansion Into Wetlands

Summary: It prohibits the DEP from issuing a permit under the Natural Resources Protection Act or a license under the solid waste management laws for the altering of freshwater wetlands in connection with the expansion of a solid waste landfill.

Implications: This would significantly change how landfill expansion into wetlands is permitted and licensed, potentially impacting all landfill development.

LD 2141 - An Act To Direct A Portion Of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits To The Lake Water Quality Restoration And Protection Fund, The Maine Working Farmland Access And Protection Program And Public Defender Office Staffing

Summary: This bill directs a portion of unclaimed beverage container deposits toward investment in the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund and the Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection Program beginning October 1, 2026 and toward the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services to support regional public defender office staffing beginning August 1, 2026.

Implications: By shifting money from the unclaimed beverage container deposits, it will minimize what can be reinvested into Maine beverage redemption program. However, it will also add revenue to other funds aimed at protecting Maine's natural resources.

LD 2174 - An Act To Replace The Maine Waterway Development And Conservation Act With The Maine Renewable Energy And Associated Transmission Development And Conservation Act. New Title: An Act to Streamline Environmental Permitting for Renewable Energy Development

Summary: The bill establishes firm processing deadlines for state permits related to solar, wind, energy storage, and certain transmission projects. If the relevant state agency fails to issue a decision within the required timeframe, the application is automatically deemed approved. The bill also limits municipalities from enforcing local ordinances that are more stringent than state standards for these developments and directs the creation of a permit-by-rule process for certain smaller solar projects (up to 100 acres).

Implications: The bill will provide certainty and increased permitting times for certain energy projects. It shifts more authority to the state by preempting local standards. For developers and investors, this lowers regulatory risk and could accelerate project deployment; for municipalities and local stakeholders, it could impact home rule.