Communicating with Mainers on Climate Change

A Toolkit

July 2017

Prepared by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research
on behalf of the Maine Climate Table

ABOUT THE MAINE CLIMATE TABLE

The Maine Climate Table is a broad-based, nonpartisan partnership that now includes more than 120 individuals and organizations from the business, nonprofit, philanthropic and government sectors in Maine. The Maine Climate Table originated in 2013 out of concern about the impacts of Climate Change on Maine's environment and economy. Participation in the Climate Table is open to any organization or individual interested in supporting our efforts.

The Climate Table's vision is to create a state-based model that increases civic engagement and leads to climate action on the ground. Our primary goal is to engage more people in community-based climate action that will, collectively, help to reduce climate changing pollution, support adaptation to the changing conditions around us, and promote measures that will increase the resiliency of Maine's communities and small businesses.

The Role of the Climate Table: The Four C's

The Climate Table will not lead projects but it will support and strengthen them. We have defined the role of the Climate Table in terms we refer to as the "Four C's":

- To **Convene** people who are not currently working together but share an interest in climate change action, and/or community-based action;
- To **Connect** them and help to highlight areas of common interest;
- To **Catalyze** new actions or the expansion of existing actions the Climate Table can support that will help meet the Climate Table's goals; and
- To **Commission** new research, where appropriate.

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WELCOME

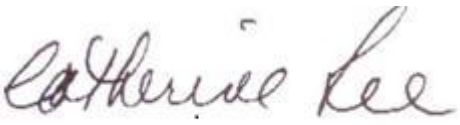
From the Maine Climate Table

Four years ago, a group of individuals and organizations concerned about the lack of political leadership on climate and its impacts in Maine got together, determined to DO something.

Thus the Maine Climate Table was born. The Climate Table's 120+ participants—which includes leaders from non-profit organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Maine Farmland Trust, and the Island Institute—believe that municipalities, businesses, non-profits, and citizens in Maine have a critical role to play to educate the public about climate change and to help develop the policies and projects that will protect and promote our environment and our economy.

We identified, through workshops, the five climate-related factors that are most pressing for Maine: energy efficiency, clean energy, strengthening Maine farming, marine and coastal resources, and creating a dedicated funding source for all of the above. We understood that we needed to learn to communicate effectively about these issues if we were to succeed in addressing them. We then engaged Goodwin Simon Strategic Research, a firm that has demonstrated repeatedly the value of using evidence-based communication strategies and has deep knowledge of the state of Maine, to help us.

The results of the groundbreaking Maine-based research they conducted for us are captured in several reports. We will use this Toolkit to share what we learned with a broad audience of concerned individuals, local organizations, and candidates for public office. We thank our generous funders and many supporters who helped to make this important work possible.



Catherine Lee, Chair
Maine Climate Table

Elizabeth Rogers, Chair
Messaging Committee

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RESEARCH OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY

This toolkit presents findings from a research project conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research on behalf of the Maine Climate Table, designed to help climate change advocates in Maine more effectively promote their goals and priorities.

The initial research included two 12 focus groups conducted in the spring and summer of 2015 to explore attitudes toward climate change generally, as well as reactions to five different policy proposals. The first round of six focus groups included two each in Bangor, Portland, and Machias. In the second round of six focus groups, two each were held in Ellsworth, Portland, and Auburn. In all cases, the men and women were divided into separate groups to reflect the fact that men and women approach social issues in very different ways.

In 2016, the research continued with a specific goal of exploring attitudes toward efforts to promote energy efficiency in Maine. This research included both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and began with a four-day online bulletin board among 27 Maine voters (of mixed gender) conducted in December 2016. This online focus group was followed by an online survey conducted in February 2017 among a broader sample of 400 registered Maine voters. The online format allowed respondents to give quantitative and qualitative input on energy efficiency-related messaging and proposals.

Respondents in all research phases were engaged Maine voters who regularly follow news about politics and current events. To help capture a swing voter audience, respondents who identified as either "very liberal" or "very conservative" were excluded from the groups. Participants were also screened to include a mix of views on climate change, although those believing the earth is *not* warming were excluded.

About Goodwin Simon Strategic Research

GOODWIN SIMON
STRATEGIC RESEARCH

Goodwin Simon Strategic Research (GSSR) is a national public opinion research firm with special expertise in conducting research on emotionally complex, socially controversial issues. GSSR's cutting-edge approach is built on decades of experience in polling, social and political marketing, policy analysis, and communications, and rooted in the latest research on neuroscience, emotion, psychology, cognitive linguistics, and narrative theory. This unique methodology is used to unpack underlying attitudes and emotional reactions that impact behavior and decision-making and to develop effective message frameworks that enable deep attitudinal change. www.goodwinsimon.com

DYNAMICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS:
Underlying Emotional Dynamics, Motivations, Human Reasoning

Here are brief explanations of some of the underlying emotional, psychological, and cognitive dynamics at play inside human beings and how they are relevant when developing communications about climate change.

Identity and Tribalism

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The dynamics of self-identity and tribalism play a major role in our ability to hear and believe information. Since the topic of global warming and climate change have become ideological touchstones for the political right and left in the U.S., communications about climate change that may seem like straightforward information actually can unintentionally further polarize beliefs when they clash with an individual's own identity.

Research has consistently shown that humans remain very much tribal creatures, with our self-identities defined by both who we are and who we are not. These self-identities are extremely important for people as they move through the world gaining experiences and giving those experiences meaning. Self-identity can shape beliefs and in many ways define what people are capable of believing.

In addition, our thoughts, opinions, and beliefs are constantly being compared within our social circles, strengthening or undermining our beliefs as they butt up against or align with the views of the people around us.

For example, some focus group participants who report seeing climate change impacts in Maine simultaneously remained somewhat skeptical that human actions are the major cause of climate change, as opposed to natural earth patterns. They perceive people who "believe" in human causation of climate change, as well as people who deny climate change is happening at all, as being very different kinds of people than they see themselves as being. A portion of these skeptics were hesitant to adopt or express views on climate change that they felt would ally them with either one tribe or the other in this arena of conflict.

What does this mean for climate change communications? Communicating about climate change can fail to be persuasive when it requires people to "believe" in climate change in a way that contradicts their own identity. So it is not that people fail to understand, or simply refuse to hear, various arguments about climate change or the science explaining it. Instead, some people are literally unable to hear – much less adopt – beliefs that are held by a competing tribe.

In addition, for many Mainers, proposed climate change solutions and the messengers delivering them can feel very elite and out-of-touch with everyday people's lives. So, their lack of identification with messengers and approaches they perceive as elitist can interfere with their willingness to support addressing climate change.

Communications on climate change are more effective when they avoid triggering identity conflicts.

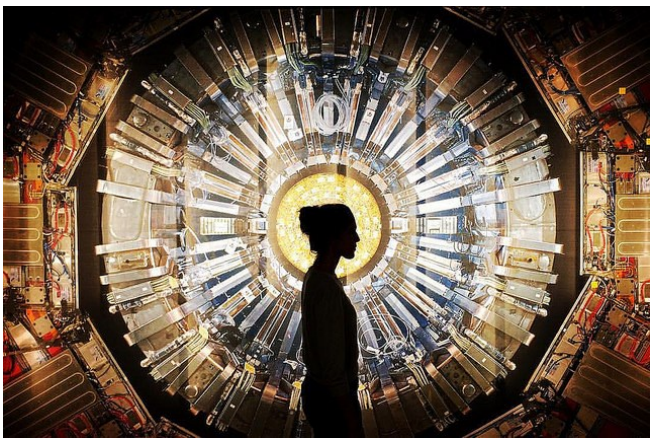
Lived Experiences and Constructing Stories to Make Sense of It All

Reflecting their lived experience, most people report seeing or hearing about significant changes related to climate. However, the vast majority do not understand what is causing these changes. Furthermore, current explanations of how climate change impacts the weather do not make intuitive sense and often fail to connect the dots for them.

In the absence of understandable causal stories about climate change, people frequently take various facts they have at their disposal and weave their own (sometimes inaccurate) narratives about the causal connections of climate change. This tendency echoes extensive research conducted on jury decision-making, in which jurors are shown to rely heavily on spontaneously-constructed stories to decide on their verdicts.

Patternicity

Polarized views may be further compounded by people's disposition to find patterns, even when none exist, a phenomenon termed "patternicity."



Human brains are belief engines, evolved pattern-recognition machines that are constantly seeking ways to connect the dots and create meaning out of patterns we think we see around us in nature or in human behavior. (See *The Believing Brain: From Ghosts and Gods to Politics and Conspiracies* by Michael Shermer.*)*

In other words, people have a bias toward assuming all patterns are real and a deep motivation to identify potential patterns and attribute meaning to them. This presents an opportunity for the climate change community in that people are very adept at recognizing that weather and climate patterns have changed significantly. It also creates a challenge, in that people are so motivated to find and understand patterns, that when communications about climate change fail to make intuitive sense to people, they generate their own (flawed) explanations instead, and then hold onto these explanations, rather than understanding the real causes and dynamics of climate change.

Agenticity

Another dynamic, which Shermer calls "agenticity," also presents a challenge to effective climate change communications. People have a tendency to infuse patterns with meaning, intention, and agency. In this dynamic, people are quick to believe that intentional agents control the world, sometimes invisibly from the top down – e.g., "Mother Nature" or elite and abstract agents such as "corporations" – rather that recognizing the causal laws and randomness that make up much of our world. Therefore, people have a bias toward assuming all patterns are real and an instinctive motivation to identify potential patterns and attribute meaning to them. This dynamic can make communications about both climate change's causes, impacts, and solutions more challenging.

Photo credit: Har Gobind Singh Khalsa, Flickr Creative Commons, CC BY-ND-2.0, flickr.com/gobindkhalsa

At the same time, many people have difficulty imagining how human activity can significantly alter the earth's climate – either in terms of *causing* climate change, or *reversing* it. This skepticism is due in part to agenticity, with people placing weather and climate events within the realm of "higher powers." From this perspective, it would be arrogant to assume that human beings could influence God or Mother Nature.

When taken in the context of identity, the human tendency toward patternicity and agenticity may result in the, perhaps unconscious, desire to seek out meaning that reinforces one's beliefs. So some people believe that their lived experience of a severe snow storm means climate change is not happening because it breaks the pattern they are searching for of uninterrupted warming patterns. For others, they see and understand climate change is happening, yet they are unable to believe that it is primarily caused by – or could be mitigated by – human behavior.

Communications on climate change are more effective when they employ a clear reasoning chain – describing not only the problem and solution but the mechanisms through which climate change is impacted or causing impacts.

Anxiety Level and Emotional Responses

With both patternicity and agenticity operating, people attempt to make sense of what they see, hear, and experience with the changing climate.

In the absence of clear causal explanations or reasoning chains, this effort to make sense of what they are hearing or seeing can lead to anxiety, as they are confounded by an inability to understand these changes. As they struggle to make sense of it all, their anxiety increases still further because they feel they lack impartial information and trustworthy sources to provide guidance. To help resolve this heightened anxiety, many instead become more skeptical.

When people hear that the impact of climate change will be catastrophic, it makes many of them push back because that scenario is just too scary. This dynamic is consistent with research showing that apocalyptic scenarios often trigger dissonance, because most people gain a measure of comfort from the view that the world generally is orderly and stable. In this context, many people resolve this dissonance and its resulting anxiety by minimizing climate change and its effects.

In addition, references to human causation made some participants feel guilty, which can make people both defensive and also undermine their willingness or motivation to take action. Feeling resentful at being blamed for climate change and its dire impacts, many then assert that some or even most of these climate changes could be the work of natural and/or supernatural forces that are beyond humans.

We also saw increased anxiety among focus group participants who thought (or began to think) that climate change is real and having a negative impact.

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This heightened anxiety motivates some to want to act to "fix" the problem or to feel it should be fixed, yet many do not think they can personally do anything about it. They perceive the issues and the forces involved as so much bigger than one person. To lessen their anxiety, some participants often turn to very tangible, personal examples of ways they feel they can help the environment, such as recycling or using fewer electronics. However, when people do not feel they can make a difference, their anxiety results in skepticism that can be compounded by a lack of trust in messengers, in part because they do not understand or trust the motivations of the messengers in this polarized communications environment. These results reflect why promoting self-efficacy and concrete actions are central to effective communication.

Climate change communications that address negative impacts should also include actions that individuals can take to help, as an important tool to help people manage their own anxiety about the potential dire impacts of climate change.

Perceived Lack of Scientific Consensus on Climate Change

Participants view science as exacting—so for them any scientific dispute about a subject means it is not really scientific. In this context, many people think scientific consensus is lacking on climate change, because even a small proportion of "scientific deniers" is sufficient to upend the views of the vast majority of scientists. Adding to this challenge is the fact that this issue is often framed in terms of whether or not one "believes" in global warming, which reduces the debate to a question of faith (like believing in Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy).

Communications are more effective when delivered by a mix of credible messengers, including both scientists and everyday Mainers who are relatable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General Messaging on Climate Change

- **Say "climate change" or "changing climate"** instead of global warming, as global warming is viewed as more politically charged and divisive among certain segments of people.
- **"Carbon pollution" is more effective than "greenhouse gasses" or "heat-trapping emissions."** Pollution is broadly understood to be bad; human-caused; and something that can, and should, be cleaned up or otherwise addressed through the actions of individuals, corporations, and public policy.
- **When talking about climate change, use examples that match people's lived experiences.** Describe impacts that are readily apparent and affect people's everyday lives.

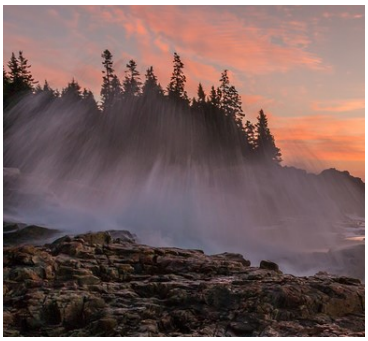
RECOMMENDATIONS (Cont.)

- **Acknowledge Mainers' frustration about Maine's economic and political situation**, and channel that anger in ways that are helpful to environmental causes that protect the state.
- **Establish readily apparent impacts before explaining that climate change is the cause.** Mainers consider addressing climate change as secondary to the overall soundness of the policy itself and its ability to benefit Maine.
- **Include proven solutions and specific, innovative ideas** for how Maine (and Mainers) can "take action" on climate change.
- **Emphasize job creation** as a key result of enacting climate change policies, especially for young people.
- **Utilize "regular people" as relatable messengers** to help convey the impact of climate change on "regular people" and their support for specific solutions. Recognize impact of perceptions of elitism (messengers & solutions).
- **Along with statements from regular people, include testimony from scientific experts** that speaks to wider community impacts and offers causal explanations in laymen's terms.
- **Include University of Maine faculty** in messaging as a way to evoke Mainers' pride in their state's system of higher education.
- **Avoid scientific jargon.**
- **Show collaboration between scientific experts and "regular people"/fishermen** working together and leveraging one another's skills to help Maine adapt to changing conditions.
- **Acknowledge that climate change can be confusing or hard to understand**, and that people may have questions about how a state can address a global problem.
- **Touch on the urgency in responding to these problems now – but don't use overly dire language.**
- **Describe the *collective* impacts of the problem and solutions.**
- **Emphasize Maine's history of leadership** in fields like forestry and shipbuilding.
- **Include elements of Mainers' core identity** as independent, sensible, frugal, hard-working, capable, and responsible, with a "can do" spirit, Yankee ingenuity, and a recognition that one must do one's part.
- **Utilize the notion of Maine as a tailpipe** for environmental problems as a way to reinforce the idea that human activities impact weather.
- **Use the example of acid rain** to show how policies and technology overcame resistance from industry and oppositional policymakers to address a serious environmental problem.

MAINE'S MESSAGING LANDSCAPE

Communicating about climate change in Maine requires understanding and leveraging the larger messaging landscape in which you are operating. This section provides an overview of that landscape.

Pride in Maine's Natural Resources



Maine's natural resources—both their inherent beauty and the bounty they provide—are deeply cherished by Mainers. Mainers have a keen understanding about how these natural gifts are connected to tourism and the larger economy. Maine's natural resources are a core part of the Maine identity, and as such, Mainers want to ensure these resources are protected now and for future generations.

Mainers' Core Identity

Sometimes advocates communicate about certain issues in ways that fail to connect with how many Mainers see themselves and with the values they deeply hold. While the psychological and emotional dynamics related to identity are complex, at the core, communications that connect with someone's identity and are empathically attuned can be highly persuasive, while communications that fail to connect with someone's identity may be dismissed and rejected.

To that end, a key learning is the power of aspirational messages that, in addition to leveraging past successes, highlight elements of Mainers' core identity: independent, sensible, frugal, hard-working, capable, and responsible, with a "can do" spirit, Yankee ingenuity, and a recognition that one must do one's part. When taken together, it is possible to show how climate change challenges can be overcome in ways that move Maine forward—while staying true to key values that make Maine a special place to live, work, and celebrate the outdoors.

Tough Economic Times & Class-Based Perceptions on Climate Change

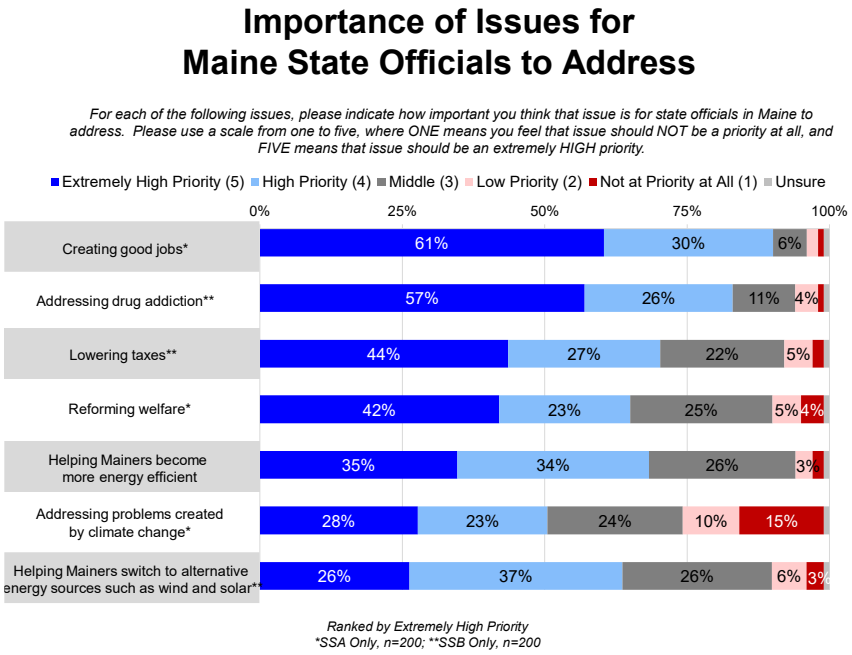
There is a strong consensus that most Mainers are really struggling. Between the slow financial recovery, scarce jobs, the high cost of living (especially high heating costs), and feeling overburdened by taxes, these voters are working hard to make ends meet (and so are their neighbors).

Therefore, while most Mainers are generous by nature when it comes to helping one another, Mainers currently do not feel like they have a lot to give. Policies that are perceived as resulting in significant costs to them personally create a lot of pushback. Within this context of economic anxiety, addressing climate change can be seen as an elite problem with elite solutions (e.g., purchasing an expensive hybrid car). Many of our participants want to live a greener life, but the costs of entry are often perceived to be beyond their reach.

Addressing Climate Change Frequently a Second Tier Issue

In addition, it is important to recognize that Mainers view job creation and other issues as higher priorities than addressing problems caused by climate change. In our energy efficiency survey, for example, 28 percent of respondents say that addressing problems created by climate change is an extremely high priority for state officials to address (see dark blue bars in chart below). By contrast, 61 percent and 57 percent respectively say creating good jobs and addressing drug addiction are extremely high priorities.

Importantly, however, we see relatively strong support for helping Mainers become more energy efficient, which is rated as an extremely high priority by 35 percent of respondents and a high priority by another 34 percent. Likewise, respondents also prioritize helping Mainers switch to alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind. In each case, however, these environmental priorities lack the same level of urgency as jobs, drug addiction, taxes, and welfare reform.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Meet People Where They Are

A climate change platform that fails to acknowledge and understand Mainers' core identity, economic anxiety, and other related factors will seem disconnected for many Maine audiences.

Channeling Frustration in a Positive Direction

Meeting people where they are also means recognizing that Mainers are extremely frustrated about Maine's economic and political climate. It will be important to channel that anger in ways that are helpful to environmental causes. At the same time, while Mainers urgently want to improve the situation in their state, many have difficultly envisioning what that change looks like. Providing specific examples of realistic, innovative ideas helps provide a roadmap to that better future. We discuss specific examples in the subsequent sections on climate change policies.

Summary: Mainers' Mindset on Climate Change

Communicating effectively with Mainers requires a deep understanding of how Mainers think about climate change, and the potential role they envision for what the state—and they themselves—can do to address it.

As a starting point, Mainers are seeing the impacts of climate change all around them—in unusual weather patterns, more frequent extreme weather events, and shifting wildlife populations (e.g., longer allergy seasons, more ticks and other pests, and changes in fisheries).

While many of our participants offer examples of climate change impacts in Maine, the vast majority do not understand the mechanisms of climate change that are leading to these changes. The lack of understandable causal stories—along with a desire to associate oneself with one's political identity—makes it much easier for Mainers to deny the existence of climate change altogether.

When it comes to negative environmental impacts, Maine voters often feel that things happen to them—they are not the lead actors. Even national efforts to address climate change are viewed as potentially limited in impact, given that other countries also play a role in both impacts and potential solutions (China is often cited as an example). This somewhat "passive" view can be a barrier to supporting a stronger role for the state addressing climate change, because when the frames are climate change and global warming, there is a sense that Maine is too small to affect these issues.

Despite these perceptions about constraints on Maine's ability to take action, these voters can nevertheless imagine a number of ways in which the state could play a significant (if somewhat limited) role in addressing climate change. This belief flows from a clear and general sense that Mainers have a "can do" spirit infused with "Yankee ingenuity," and that in their own way there is both a moral and a reasonable argument to doing "their part" to solve specific climate change problems in Maine.

At the same time, however, most participants do not apply a "climate change" lens when they are considering each approach—at least initially. Rather, these Mainers consider policies first and foremost in terms of whether they are "good" ideas in general, irrespective of climate change. In other words, they support "common sense" efforts that can "stand on their own two feet" as good for Mainers and good for business—e.g., energy efficiency, alternative energy, and promoting local farming and seafood. If these policies *also* help Maine address climate change, all the better, because these Mainers either already know about climate impacts, or are generally open to learning about how climate change is impacting Maine—especially its farming and seafood industries.

Associations with "Climate Change" and "Global Warming"

In the focus groups, participants were asked to write down the words, images, and associations that came to mind for them when they heard the phrases "global warming" and "climate change." As you can see in these word clouds, people associate global warming more with human impact including pollution, and also more with a partisan political agenda. On the other hand, climate change is experienced as a more neutral description of the changes they see and hear about in the climate and environment around them. It also evokes for some the sense that cyclical change in climate is part of a natural pattern. When working to build broad public support, "climate change" is a more effective term as it is less divisive and feels less political to a certain segment of the population.

Global Warming

Climate Change

Key Climate Change Audiences

Mainers vary considerably in their views on climate change, both in terms of whether they think climate change is really happening, and if so, what is causing it.

On the next page, we share audience profiles from the survey data. These profiles show what portion of Mainers feel that climate change is happening or not, and its causes if they think it is happening.

The largest segment of Maine voters (36%) say that climate change is happening *and* that it is mostly caused by human activity, such as from emissions from cars and industry.

The next largest segment (31%) say that climate change is happening *and* that it is caused by *both* human activity *and* natural patterns in the Earth's environment that are not due to human activities.

A smaller segment (13%) say that climate change is happening *and* that it is solely caused by natural patterns, while just nine percent insist that climate change is *not* happening or that the earth is *not* getting warmer.

The audience profiles on the next page show the demographic and attitudinal subgroups that are more likely to be in each of these four segments.

Photo credit: John Lamar,, Flickr Creative Commons, CC BY-NC 2.0, flickr.com/jpl

Climate Change Audience Profiles

Climate Change Happening/Human Caused (36%)

More likely to be:

- Female
- Ages 18 to 39; 55 to 64
- College educated (especially graduate school)
- Living in a large city with about 30,000 people or more
- Democrat
- Liberal (especially very liberal)
- *NOTE: minimal differences by region*

Climate Change Happening/Both Human Caused and Natural Patterns (31%)

More likely to be:

- Ages 40 and older
- Non-college educated
- Independent
- Moderate
- *NOTE: minimal differences by gender/region/urbanity*

Climate Change Happening/Natural Patterns (13%)

More likely to be:

- Male (especially age 54 and younger)
- Republican
- Somewhat conservative
- *NOTE: minimal differences by education/urbanity*

Climate Change Definitely NOT Happening OR Earth Not Getting Warmer (9%)

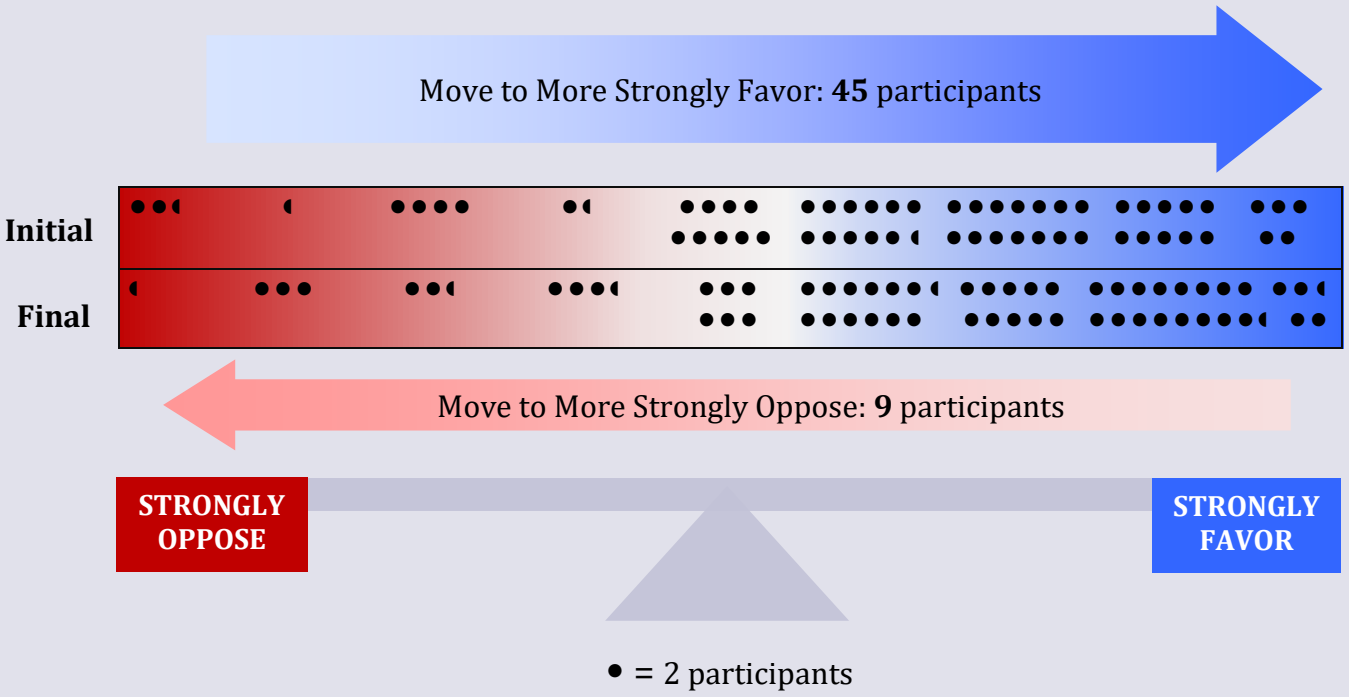
More likely to be:

- High school educated
- Living in southern region
- Republican
- Very conservative
- *NOTE: minimal differences by age*

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

Despite the challenges noted in the previous chapter, we can communicate with confidence knowing that the research clearly indicates that discussion and messaging can prompt positive attitude shifts toward taking action. For example, after reviewing our messaging materials, 45 out of 117 focus group participants shifted to being more in favor of the state of Maine taking action to address climate change in Maine, compared to just nine who shifted to being more opposed at the end of the sessions (63 participants did not change).

Should the state of Maine take action to address climate change in Maine?



Those who moved to become more in favor of taking action on climate change tended to cite one or more of the following reasons for their move:

- They learned about how climate change is impacting (or could impact) Maine.
- They saw specific ideas for how Maine (and Mainers) could "take action" on climate change.
- They feel more positive about Maine's ability to affect climate issues locally.
- They could see collective benefits above and beyond climate change, especially job creation.

This section offers recommendations for communicating about climate change in general, while subsequent sections address specific topics (e.g., energy efficiency, agriculture, etc.).

Emphasize Known Climate Change Impacts in Maine

Many Mainers are seeing the impacts of climate change all around them—in unusual weather patterns, more frequent extreme weather events, and shifting wildlife populations (e.g., longer allergy seasons, more ticks and other pests, and lobster populations shifting north). These results suggest that in order to effectively connect with Mainers on climate change, we need to describe impacts that are readily apparent and affect people's everyday lives. The research indicates that there is a range of climate change impacts that are credible to Mainers. By using examples that match people's lived experiences, skepticism is minimized and people become more open to solutions and ways that Maine can take action on climate change. *See the table below for examples of climate change impacts that participants offered in focus groups.*

Impacts on land animals and insects	• Increase in Lyme disease • Seeing turkey buzzards, turkeys, cardinals • Changing bird migrations • Seeing possums in Maine • Increase in potato bugs, deer ticks, wood ash borer, mosquitoes "We never saw those when we were kids."
Impacts on fish and other sea creatures	• Fish stocks affected • Salmon hatcheries suffering • Influx of jellyfish • Shark sightings in southern Maine "Smelts were everywhere. They go up into the fresh water and they come back and they feed the pollock and the haddock and the cod fish. Smelts are changing their migration habits."
Impacts on plant life	• Maple trees dying • Birch trees affected
Impacts on weather, geology, and seasons	• More intense storms • Hurricanes and tornadoes • Torrential rains/absence of rainy springs • Water is getting warmer • More extreme temperatures • Receding shorelines • Increased erosion • Rising sea levels • Storm surges "Some of the coldest weather we've had since the 40s this past winter." "There is no spring or fall anymore." "We're seeing warmer weather early in the spring, and then it turns really cold again before it finally warms up."
Impacts directly on people—health, livelihood	• Ozone warnings now • People with breathing problems • Relentless allergy season • Displacing some of the fish that we have relied upon • Changes in what the fishermen can catch, what they are charging • Growing season has changed; farmers are going to have to find new ways to grow food • Running helicopters to keep the air moving above crops to keep them from freezing

Use a Mix of Messengers (Some Unexpected)

One of our most important research learnings is the need to effectively tie our messages to the right combination of messengers. The clearest example of this messenger effect is seen in our message testing on coastal climate change impacts and solutions. Reactions to our written handouts, where the messenger was unclear, were often muted or even negative. Some of that initial negative reaction is due to the inclination of some Mainers to view climate change as a politically liberal topic and some of the proposed solutions as elitist (which we discuss more in other areas of this toolkit).

As one example, when we tested a print message without a specific messenger, many participants assumed that the views, experiences, and concerns of fishermen had been left out. Some expressed that these policy prescriptions were "telling the fisherman what to do" rather than respecting that fishermen are experts —who are already heavily regulated.

Yet when we showed people an Island Institute video depicting lobstermen and fishermen talking about climate change impacts and potential solutions, people's reactions shifted dramatically. Now they saw climate change as hurting "regular people"—and felt that "regular people" support these types of solutions. Integrating a separate video with scientific expert Robert Steneck helped to further validate these points from an academic and empirical perspective.

Screenshots and a transcript from the edited video we tested are shown below, and include sequencing and language that we recommend integrating into your messaging on coastal climate change impacts. *For additional analysis and recommendations on this video, please see the annotated messaging example on the next page.*

⍟ *Messaging Example: Gulf of Maine Video*

The video begins by having fishermen describe changes to the Gulf of Maine. Fishermen are seen as very knowledgeable about ocean changes, and are more relatable for lay audiences than are climate change experts.

Bruce Fernald [Fisherman]: Well the water is warming for sure. The catch in the last 10 years has gone through the roof.

Steve Train [Fisherman]: I am worried that the population we have isn't sustainable, not from my doing, but from outside factors.

David Thomas [Fisherman]: I mean, acidification of the water is -- I mean you see pictures of oyster spat that are dying in the lab because the acid level is so high in the water. What are we doing to ourselves?

Fishermen are the first to introduce the idea that "outside factors" are affecting the Gulf. The first mention of ocean acidification also comes from a fisherman.

[Caption: Voice of Rob Snyder, Scientist/Advocate, Island Institute]

Rob Snyder: Along the coast of Maine, the communities here are really concerned about the effects that climate change is having, particularly in those communities that are really dependent upon fisheries.

We then introduce expert Rob Snyder of the Island Institute, who can speak to wider community impacts.

[Caption: Point Judith, RI]

Steve Train [Fisherman]: When I started lobstering the guys on Long Island Sound and Rhode Island had big boats and they caught a ton of product.

David Thomas [Fisherman]: The unproven theory among most of us is that that body of lobsters has come this way.

Fishermen and Professor Robert Steneck together describe how warming waters have impacted lobster, hake, haddock, and shrimp populations.

[Map showing northeast shift of fish populations]

An on screen map depicts the shift of fish populations to the northeast.

Robert Steneck [Professor; School of Marine Sciences, University of Maine]: So what we are seeing is clearly the gradual movement of the biggest lobster landings moving north and east. I do worry about our lobster fishery. There are oceanographic things going on that are driven by climate. When temperature gets up in the 60 degree range, it is actually too warm for lobsters. Now we know that the cod, the hake, the haddock inshore stocks have gone. Shrimp having gone down right now because the water temperatures are too warm.

Robert Steneck: A lot of this is being driven by very big climate - planetary climate change. Ocean acidification is a serious problem. Cold water retains more carbon dioxide.

Only after we establish changes do we assert that climate change is the cause. Note also that Steneck does not imply that *all* of these changes are the result of climate change, merely "a lot."

Steneck uses a Coke bottle metaphor to create a reasoning chain about warming Gulf waters, carbon dioxide, and the impact on shellfish and Maine's economy.

Robert Steneck: Just think of a Coke bottle. When it is cold, not that much of the bubbles come out. If you leave it on the dashboard of your car on a summer afternoon, it explodes and what is going on there is a lot of carbon dioxide in solution in cold water. Carbon dioxide forms carbonic acid and that will corrode anything that is limestone; so we are talking about soft shell clams, lobsters, northern shrimp. Ninety percent of our marine resources are shellfish in Maine. There is not a state that depends more on shellfish for its economics, marine economics than Maine. Yes, we are at incredible risk.

Avoid scientific jargon.

We'd like to thank the Island Institute for providing this video, and associated quotes and photos. Videography credit: Scott Sell.

⍟ *Messaging Example: Gulf of Maine Video (cont.)*

Snyder emphasizes the importance of collaborating with fishermen and leveraging their knowledge and skills to help Maine adapt to the changing conditions.

Rob Snyder: The answers aren't going to be simple but it is clear from the skill of the fishermen we are working with that they have been adapting their entire lives.

Robert Steneck: What we need to be able to do is we need to be able to react. So we have to come up with ways of reacting to climate change. If we could come up with a better way of stretching out our season, especially the way the Canadians do that. They actually have different sectors and they fish for 3 or 4 months in each sector and so they have product 12 months out of the year. So, there are ways of kind of improving the economics.

After highlighting significant problems in the Gulf, Steneck relieves audience anxieties by offering proven solutions and innovative ideas to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change.

Robert Steneck: We have undersea forests. They are called kelp beds. They could actually be changing the local acidification and that could be done in clever aquaculture kind of developed ways. I know people are working on that. Kelp sucks up a lot of carbon dioxide and in times of very active growth for a lot of these shellfish, economic diversification is likely to continue as we see more economically viable species moving into the Gulf of Maine. Some of the changes that we didn't really expect that were going to be driven by climate change, but they are on our doorstep just the same.

Steneck closes by acknowledging that some of these changes were unexpected, but that the changes are real and require a response.

Construct Helpful Reasoning Chains

The Island Institute video also highlights the importance of helping audiences understand how climate change works. While many of our participants can offer examples of climate change impacts in Maine, the vast majority do not understand the mechanisms that are causing these changes. Furthermore, current explanations of climate change impacts often fail to connect the dots for them and do not make intuitive sense. In the absence of understandable causal stories about climate change, people frequently take various facts they have at their disposal and weave their own (sometimes incorrect) narratives about the causal connections of climate change. For example, people sometimes connect climate change to other extreme events that are not climate-related, such as earthquakes or volcanic eruptions.

In some cases, the lack of understandable causal stories—along with a desire to associate oneself with one's political identity—makes it much easier for Mainers to deny the existence of climate change altogether. This was especially true among more conservative audiences. As such, we need to help people properly construct causal stories around climate change—especially ones that emphasize everyday local impacts. One example of an effective way to do this can be found in the Gulf of Maine video shown on the previous page, when Professor Steneck uses a Coke bottle metaphor to help describe the effects of carbon dioxide in warming ocean waters.

> *Robert Steneck:* A lot of this is being driven by very big climate—planetary climate change. Ocean acidification is a serious problem. Cold water retains more carbon dioxide. Just think of a Coke bottle. When it is cold, not that much of the bubbles come out. If you leave it on the dashboard of your car on a summer afternoon, it explodes and what is going on there is there is a lot of carbon dioxide in solution in cold water. Carbon dioxide forms carbonic acid and that will corrode anything that is limestone; so we are talking about soft shell clams, lobsters, northern shrimp. Ninety percent of our marine resources are shellfish in Maine. There is not a state that depends more on shellfish for its economics, marine economics than Maine. Yes, we are at incredible risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Constructing Helpful Reasoning Chains

- Recognize that for most lay people, they have difficulty connecting the dots—i.e., "If it's supposed to be getting warmer, why all the severe snowstorms and cold in Maine?"
- Take care not to overwhelm folks with details and terminology that they don't understand and don't need to know.
- Use small numbers that don't seem hyperbolic but are still perceived as significant in a global climate context—e.g., "a 1.6 degree increase in global temperatures".
- Show/cite "climate scientists" as experts (more than one is better).
- Provide relatable timeframes (e.g., "since 1970"), while recognizing some timeframes are perceived as arbitrary (e.g., "warmest temperatures in 118 years"—in these cases, briefly explain the reason for that timeframe—for example, "in the 118 years since they started keeping these records").

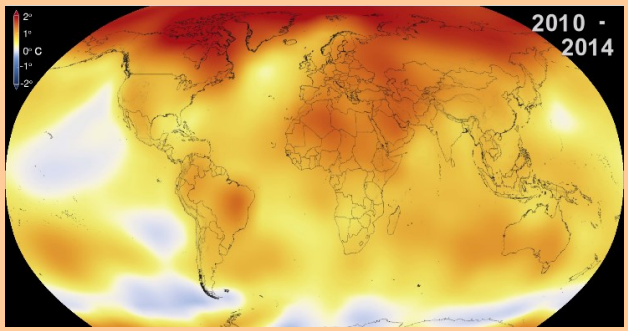
RECOMMENDATIONS (Cont.)

Recommendations when Showing Charts

- Provide an overall description for the chart—e.g., "This chart shows the average annual temperature in Maine for the years 1970 to 2014."
- Do not assume understanding. Briefly describe each chart element—e.g., trend line, line, or dots marking annual totals/average.
- Explain how data was collected—e.g., "Climate scientists collected this data by using temperature gauges from around the state/globe."
- Cite research organization—e.g., "This information was collected by climate scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA."
- If chart has a timeline, explain the reason for the timeline—e.g., "This timeline is important because it shows the overall trends over time, because there can be a lot of variation from year to year."
- Also explain why the timeline starts where it does—e.g., "The timeline starts in the year 1880 because that's when scientists began tracking global temperatures."

Reasoning Chain Examples

1. Warming temperatures



"With 14 of the warmest years taking place in the last 16 years, perhaps the clearest image of our warm-up and what lies ahead is this time lapse of earth's temperatures since 1880, where yellow and red represent increased warming. While natural forces may play a role, scientific evidence confirms that carbon pollution is the dominant cause of the earth's warming. This warming melts glaciers, raises sea levels, and causes some weather events to be more extreme."

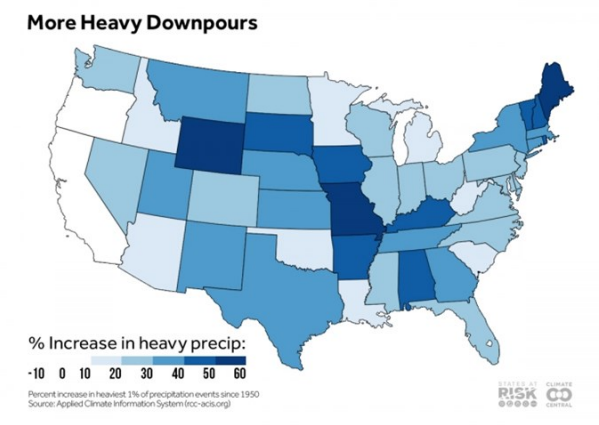
Video to accompany message:
NASA: Five Year Global Temperature Anomalies from 1880-2014; https://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/4252

2. Warming temperatures + Normalizing skepticism

"It can be hard for people to know *what* to think about climate change and folks may have questions. For example, how do climate scientists know that the earth's warming is contributing to climate change? Well, using temperature gauges from around the world, scientists have measured that our planet has warmed roughly 1.6°F over the past century. While natural forces played a role, scientific evidence confirms that the dominant cause of this warming is increasing carbon pollution from burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. This carbon pollution from things like power plants, factories, cars, trucks and airplanes traps heat in the atmosphere and as a result increases global temperatures. This warming is enough to melt ice sheets and glaciers and raise sea levels, and cause some weather events to become more extreme."

RECOMMENDATIONS (Cont.)

3. Heavier rainfall or snowstorms



"As global temperatures rise, more water evaporates from the oceans and lakes. When storms form, there is more water in the atmosphere to become rain or snow. As a result, heavy rain in our region has increased by 60 percent in Maine since the late 1950's. These large storms can overwhelm drains, etc. and cause destructive flooding."

Visuals to accompany message:
http://www.climatecentral.org/news/heavy-rain-sewage-overflows-20718
http://pmm.nasa.gov/education/sites/default/files/videos/WaterCycleMovie-NoText.mp4

4. Ocean acidification

"Increasing carbon pollution in the atmosphere, caused primarily by human beings burning fossil fuels such as oil, coal, and natural gas, is making the ocean water more acidic. Acidic water can wreak havoc on shellfish. A lot of things we like to eat—such as shrimp, lobsters, and oysters—have shells that are very sensitive to acidification. Just a small increase in acid can dissolve their shells and kill them, especially the larvae that are much more vulnerable than the adults.

Some of the hardest hit shellfish are these tiny sea snails called 'sea butterflies.' Most people have never heard of sea butterflies, but salmon love them. Just a small increase in acid dissolves their shells. And when sea butterflies die, salmon start to die off as well."

Emphasize Maine's Historic Legacy

Another video using a mix of messengers demonstrated the power of positioning Mainers as leaders. In this case, Professor David Hart discussed Maine's leadership role in forestry and shipbuilding alongside Professors Ivan Fernandez and Esperanza Stancioff, who talked about the impacts of climate change and the urgency in addressing these problems now. As with the Gulf of Maine Video, we would encourage you to consider using a similar approach in making overall appeals to address climate change in Maine.

David Hart: Mainers have been leaders for centuries in the forest products industry, in ship building, and once again we are on the cusp of being great leaders to create a better future for our children and grandchildren.

Leverage Perceptions of Maine as Tailpipe

The video also leverages Mainers' tendency to think of Maine as a tailpipe for environmental problems that originate elsewhere yet impact Maine. While problematic in some ways, this belief shows an intuitive understanding that human activities can influence the climate. Referencing acid rain not only taps Mainers' existing template of how human activities impact weather, it also illustrates an environmental problem that was overcome through a combination of effective policies and technology in the face of considerable resistance from industry and oppositional policymakers.

> *Ivan Fernandez:* So the problem is urgent, but it is not hopeless by any means. To use the acid rain example, back in the end of the 80s, we heard a lot about how the American economy would be ruined by the Clean Air Act and that never happened. We can provide all sorts of tools and opportunities to address and adapt and thrive, but we have to take action.

Job Creation is Key

Our participants frequently talked about the large number of people who are from Maine and who are unable to find good jobs, and about the large number of people who come to Maine and think they can find work but cannot. In this context, the promise of good jobs is crucial, and for many, credible. To be sure, they appreciated that these policies could address climate change, but job creation is arguably a larger priority given their economic anxiety.

Build on People's Deep Pride in the University of Maine

Another important part of this video is that it highlights experts from the University of Maine. Throughout the research, we see that Mainers place a very high value on education, and are deeply proud of the state's system of higher education. They also have a great deal of confidence that scientists and academic experts at the University can help Maine tackle its most intractable problems. As such, we highly recommend including University of Maine faculty (from a range of academic areas including economics) in your messaging.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Build on Mainers' Mindset

Use a mix of messengers to tap Mainers pre-existing values, beliefs, and personal lived experiences, including their awareness about climate change impacts they are already experiencing in Maine.

Caveat: Climate Change Considerations Are Frequently Secondary

While we see a lot of positive reactions to messaging about climate change, it is important to recognize that most participants do not apply a "climate change" lens when they are reacting to our communications. Rather, they consider actions first and foremost in terms of whether they are "good" ideas in general, without regard to climate change. In other words, they support "common sense" efforts that can "stand on their own two feet" as good for Mainers and good for business—e.g., energy efficiency, alternative energy, and promoting local farming and seafood. If these policies *also* help Maine address climate change, all the better, because these Mainers either already know about climate impacts, or are generally open to learning about how it is impacting Maine—especially its farming and seafood industries.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

In our initial 2015 focus group research, we saw considerable interest in and support for each of the five messaging pieces we tested:

- Transform Maine into the Most Energy Efficient Rural State in the Nation
- Support the Clean Energy Economy in Maine
- Strengthen Maine Farming and Local Food Systems
- Ensure the Future Viability of Maine's Marine and Coastal Resources
- Creating a Dedicated Self-Funding Source to Help Maine Create Jobs, Promote Clean Energy, and Respond to Climate Change

In this toolkit, we address research findings on all of these topics.

In this section, we provide communication recommendations on energy efficiency. These recommendations are informed by the additional qualitative and quantitative research on energy efficiency that built on initial findings from the 2015 focus groups. In later sections, we address the other topics.

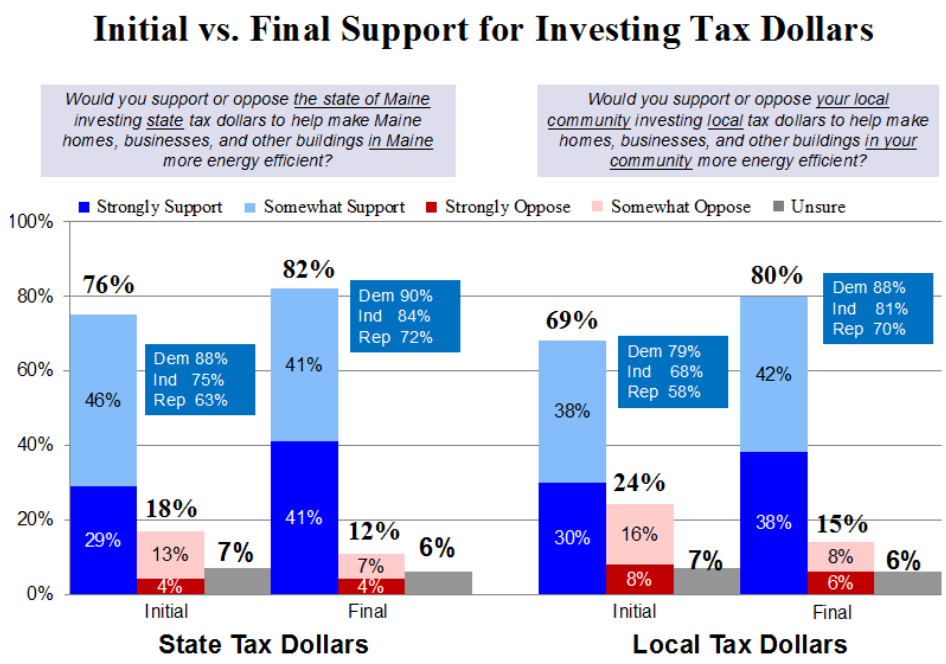
Focus on Creating Opportunities, Not Persuasion

Our in-depth research results strongly suggest that focusing on energy efficiency is a good place to start. Promoting energy efficiency earns strong support across partisan lines, especially when these efforts are described in ways that fit squarely within core Maine values—e.g., being sensible and responsible. We would therefore recommend focusing communications more on creating opportunities on energy efficiency—and addressing latent concerns—rather than trying to persuade people that energy efficiency is a good idea.

Messaging Still Matters

A good example of people's strong general support for energy efficiency efforts can be seen in our survey, where over three quarters (76%) say they support investing tax dollars into making homes, businesses, and other buildings more energy efficient (29% strongly support). Notably, this strong support comes at the *beginning* of the survey, *before* respondents have seen any messaging or watched any videos.

Nevertheless, when the respondents are asked again at the *end* of the survey after being exposed to our messaging, support increases significantly—especially *strong* support for these investments. For example, eighty-two percent (82%) say they support the state of Maine investing state tax dollars, with 41 percent saying they strongly support. Just 12 percent say they oppose. Eight in ten (80%) support their local community investing local tax dollars, with 38 percent saying they strongly support it. Just 15 percent oppose. There is a nine point increase among Republicans in support of state tax dollars and a 12-point increase for local tax dollars.



These results suggest that effective messaging can be critical to solidifying support, especially support for the kinds of policy and implementation approaches exemplified in the survey and discussed below.

Set the Stage by Describing the Current Situation

While Mainers strongly support the overall idea of improving energy efficiency, they have little detailed knowledge about where Maine currently stands in this regard. As such, we recommend providing an overview of the current situation, and including components that describe each of the following:

- The overall problem
- Who and what is being negatively impacted
- The inability of current approaches to adequately address the need
- Novel solutions, at both the state and local level
- The multiple and collective benefits of these solutions, which *include, but do not lead with,* addressing climate change

Our final tested overview statement is provided on the next page, which evolved significantly over time and was strengthened by input from multiple stages of research. The result was quite effective: nearly nine in ten (89%) respondents in our energy efficiency survey reacted favorably to the efforts described here, with 45 percent indicating they were very favorable. By contrast, just six percent expressed an unfavorable opinion (and five percent were unsure). *For additional analysis and recommendations on this overview, please see the annotated messaging example on the next page.*

⊛ *Messaging Example: Maine Energy Efficiency Investments*

Establish problems with Maine's older homes, but also praise their beauty as a source of pride.

Maine has some of the oldest homes in the nation. While many of these homes are beautiful, they are also drafty and waste a lot of heating energy. Mainers pay over one billion dollars for home heating each year, yet hundreds of millions literally go out the window or roof. Senior citizens, who tend to live in older homes, are hit especially hard. Small businesses lose money, too.

Focus is on wasted energy AND an uncomfortable environment.

Emphasize how the problem affects sympathetic groups, such as seniors and small businesses.

The fact that Mainers are spending billions to import fossil fuels from elsewhere is very powerful, especially when coupled with how that money could be spent locally.

According to experts at the University of Maine, Maine currently sends $5 billion out of state every year to pay for oil and other fossil fuels. That money could be spent locally, instead of on heating oil and natural gas from other states and countries.

Efficiency Maine, which administers energy efficiency programs in the state, has helped some Mainers "button up" their homes and businesses to become more energy efficient. While these programs have proven to be effective, energy experts say they do not operate at the larger scale necessary to fully cover the needs of people in the state.

Efficiency Maine received largely favorable reviews in our online focus group, and most participants thought it was credible that demand for energy efficiency programs would outstrip supply.

These incentives are well received, and audiences appreciate that communities are participating as well.

To address this problem, new energy efficiency approaches are being considered by communities across the state. For example, qualifying Bangor residents who spend $600 on air leak sealing and an energy assessment receive a $400 rebate from Efficiency Maine, plus an additional $100 rebate from the city.

Other communities are investing in energy efficiency improvements for municipal buildings such as community centers, libraries, and schools. Small and large businesses are also looking to energy efficiency as a way to save money and make employees and customers more comfortable.

A clear example of "show me, don't tell me," we see muted reactions to these concepts in written form. However, participants respond positively when they see real-life examples in our videos.

All three benefits are seen as very compelling: saving money on energy bills, creating hundreds of local jobs, and reducing fossil fuel use.

Investments like these are saving individual Mainers thousands of dollars on their energy bills—keeping more money in their pockets and in Maine's economy. The resulting demand for energy efficiency improvements is also creating hundreds of good local jobs for Maine workers. Plus, reducing the use of fossil fuels also decreases air pollution and carbon emissions that can contribute to climate change.

Tying climate change mitigation with decreased air pollution is effective, especially as part of the other benefits listed here.

Emphasize the Many Motivators for Increased Efficiency

Audiences can envision many important reasons for Maine homes, businesses, and other buildings to become more energy efficient. First and foremost is the cost savings, as one of the biggest reported challenges of living in Maine is the high cost of living. There are other powerful motivators for support as well, including the basic idea of conserving energy—an important commodity that participants feel should be valued in its own right.

Mainers also support efforts to reduce the use of fossil fuels, and they bristle at the idea that Maine currently sends $5 billion out of state every year to pay for oil and other fossil fuels. Furthermore, their dismay grows when they are reminded that this money could be spent locally instead of on heating oil and natural gas from other states and countries.

In addition to these economic motivators, people have an emotional, visceral reaction when they think about living or working in a drafty, uncomfortable environment. Therefore, tapping into how energy efficiency can increase personal comfort—in the winter *and* the summer—can be especially powerful. Likewise, people value the potential health benefits (like fewer asthma triggers) of heating and cooling systems that are more modern and energy efficient.

Among more liberal audiences, addressing climate change is a very important reason for Maine homes, businesses, and other buildings to become more energy efficient. However, this is a secondary or even tertiary motivator for others and can even be a deterrent to support for moderate or conservative audiences.

Describe the Collective Impact of the Problem and Solutions

Throughout the research, we saw that building support for our approaches required showing audiences how they themselves—or the people they cared about—are impacted by the problem and could benefit from the proposed solutions. On the problem front, for example, it is very effective to describe how seniors are hit especially hard because they tend to live in older homes, and that small business are negatively affected as well. Likewise, the solutions described here appear to be ones that most Maine residents could benefit from, especially if their own community elects to take part in these efforts.

Another example can be shown in our description of financial assistance programs. Our first iteration was problematic, because it only described assistance programs for low-income Mainers. Some respondents reacted negatively, because although they were not low-income, they too wanted to benefit. As such, in the revised version, we intentionally sequenced low-cost loans for *all* Mainers prior to describing programs for low-income Mainers, and also included the collective benefit that weatherizing these homes saves tax dollars by reducing the need for fuel assistance programs. The resulting statement proved to be extremely effective, with 86 percent of our survey respondents indicating they have a favorable opinion of the energy efficiency efforts described in the statement, with 42 percent reacting *very* favorably.

Photo credit: Josh and Melanie Rosenthal, Flickr Creative Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0, flickr.com/sensibleabode

⍟ *Messaging Example: Home Energy Assistance for Low-Income Mainers*

Highlight cost savings plus added comfort.

Talk about programs for all Mainers before talking about programs for low-income residents.

Strong support for $1,000 in weatherization measure for a $50 copay.

Highlight the collective benefits of reducing the need for fuel assistance.

Conclude with re-emphasis on savings, plus added comfort, plus good local jobs.

People across Maine are looking for ways to make their homes more energy efficient in order to save money on heating costs and make their homes more comfortable. Yet most of Maine's energy efficiency programs require homeowners to pay up front for efficiency improvements and then wait for a rebate. Many Maine families, however, cannot afford to pay these costs upfront.

To help address this problem, Efficiency Maine offers a variety of loans for residents at all income levels to pay for energy upgrades. All Efficiency Maine loans are low-interest (fixed 4.99% to 5.99% APR), long-term (up to 15 years), with no fees—and the application process is simple and quick. Frequently, the annual energy savings exceed the cost of monthly loan payments in the very first year.

For lower-income Mainers, Efficiency Maine also provides $1,000 worth of basic weatherization measures in exchange for a $50 copay to Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)-eligible homeowners of homes or mobile homes valued at $80,000 or less. This basic weatherization service includes air-sealing and insulation, helping these Mainers save 15% on home heating bills each year. In addition, weatherizing these homes saves tax dollars by reducing the need for fuel assistance programs that help low-income Mainers heat their homes.

These programs can help Mainers save on energy costs, and enjoy the increased comfort and air quality from weatherizing their home or apartment building. Plus, the resulting demand for more home improvements can create hundreds of good local jobs for Maine workers.

Identify the problem: high up front costs are perceived as the biggest obstacle.

Emphasize that the loans are low interest with no fees.

We'd recommend revising this language to ensure audiences understand that ALL mobile homes are eligible for the Efficiency Maine low-income rebates, regardless of property value. All homes (mobile or not) valued at $80,000 or less are also eligible.

Show Me, Don't Tell Me

We find in this and other research that merely *describing* new policy and implementation approaches is frequently ineffective, because many people have no prior awareness of what these approaches are or how they work. In this arena, for example, most people have never seen or heard about energy efficiency efforts being applied to a municipal building—they only think about energy efficiency as it applies to individual residences. As such, we saw muted reactions to descriptions of other communities investing in energy efficiency improvements for municipal buildings such as community centers, libraries, and schools.

However, these same participants reacted very differently—and much more positively—when they saw the Efficiency Maine video on the next page depicting a specific example of a community-wide energy efficiency effort in Allagash. Seven in ten (70%) indicated the Allagash Community Center video made them more likely to support these types of energy efficiency efforts in Maine, compared to just four percent who said the video made them less likely to support these types of efforts. Some of the primary reasons for its effectiveness, which we would recommend integrating into your own messaging, include the following:

- Takes place in a small community in northern Maine
- Depicts a community center that is used by many residents
- Clearly describes the problem and goals
- Highlights improvements to the gymnasium—a relatable example
- Focuses on money saved *and* increased comfort

⍟ *Messaging Example: Allagash Community Center*

Efficiency Maine's video began by establishing Allagash's location in northern Maine.

[On screen graphics; map of Maine]

City Clerk Patricia Pelletier: Allagash is a place that I was born in and brought up in and I would not want to be any place else.

Use an authentic, local Mainer as your initial messenger.

City Grant Writer David Potter: They had a very large facility. It's a former high school and they were in the process of establishing new uses. The fire station was located here. The town government services and community center were all being established here.

[On screen graphics] Community Building Energy Upgrade: PROBLEM: inefficient heating systems; GOAL: stabilize energy costs so this community hub could operate well into the future.

Initial audiences were confused about what was happening, so we added on-screen graphics to clarify the problem and improvement goals.

This establishes the collective need and that many people in the community will benefit.

Pelletier: We have a lot of people using it. We have benefits, we have weddings. It was just very important to get all of this done so that we could continue doing that same thing, because if we didn't, with the fuel bill especially, we would have had to close down part of the building.

Potter: One of the most important aspects of this project was the ability to stabilize cost and better control costs through energy efficiency and other improvements that were done. The heating systems themselves weren't very old. The boilers weren't very old, but they weren't being operated efficiently.

Emphasize cost savings plus added comfort.

Pelletier: It wasn't a nice flow of heat. You were either too hot or too cold. It was never all the same. Residents that do come in comment about the heating. It's a nice, warm building now. They're very satisfied with everything that has been done.

Potter: We had a standard manual thermostat in the building in multiple locations and all of those were converted to a programmable thermostat so that the heat was operating only when it was needed.

The solution focuses on increased comfort in the gymnasium, which is very relatable.

Pelletier: What surprised me the most was the gymnasium. The heating, it wasn't chilly in there anymore. It had a better flow.

Potter: Everywhere you go in the building now it's warm and comfortable. You're not walking through cold spaces or you're not detecting a change in the climate as you go through the building.

Pelletier: I certainly would recommend this for other towns. They will get their money back. Save like a Mainer.

Use your authentic messenger to encourage change in other communities.

Highlight Unexpected Communities

While many participants appreciated the Bangor incentive program described in the energy efficiency overview described earlier, many wondered if energy efficiency efforts are underway in other communities—especially the smaller communities that are so common in Maine. As such, part of the power of the Allagash example is that it highlights what can be done in a small, inland community in a far northern part of the state. Audiences saw Allagash as a relevant case study of what could be done elsewhere, and they also responded positively to the video's relatable, small town messengers.

Include the Nuts and Bolts

Energy efficiency is one policy area where the devil is definitely in the details. As such, in all of the effective videos, we included specific information about *what* the problem was, *how* it was addressed, *who* benefited, and in *what ways*. In the Allagash case, for example, audiences were initially confused about what the overall problem and goals were, so we added the on-screen graphic to provide that explanation.

Tell the Story of an Individual Homeowner

One of the most effective videos told the story of a homeowner who had undertaken a series of comprehensive energy efficiency improvements for her house. Nearly seven in ten (68%) indicated the video made them more likely to support these types of energy efficiency efforts in Maine, compared to just three percent who said the video made them less likely to support these types of efforts.

In addition to providing important detailed nuts and bolts about her situation and approach, the video succeeded in providing a real-life example of someone nearly every participant could relate to: an individual looking to make her home more comfortable and save money at the same time. *For additional analysis and recommendations on this video, please see the annotated messaging example on the next page.*

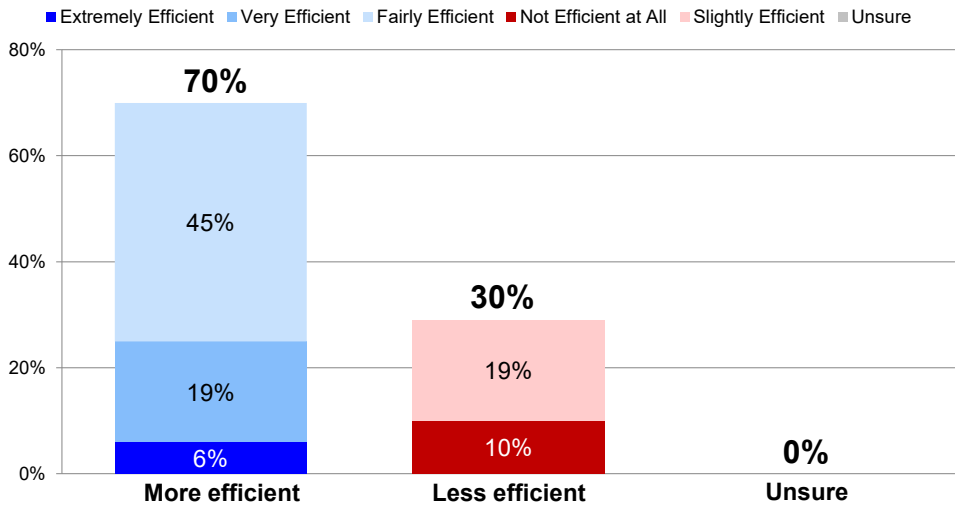
Screenshots from homeowner video

Promote Information Sessions and Energy Audits as Good Starting Points

Audiences responded very positively to how the homeowner began her home improvements, first seeking information at a community information session and then conducting an energy audit to get a clearer idea of the problems and potential solutions. The audit also provided a set of priorities that Emily could respond to in turn over time.

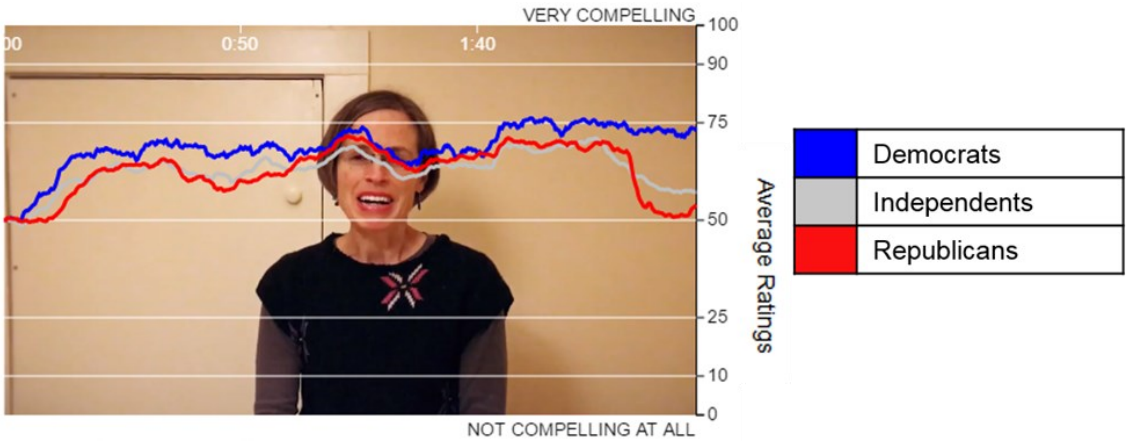
Promoting low-cost energy audits may also be a good idea to address the perception among a majority of our respondents that their home is already energy efficient (see chart below). As such, many Mainers may not realize they could benefit from additional improvements.

How energy efficient would you say your home is?



Avoid Positioning Climate Change as the Primary Motivation

While the homeowner video was rated the most compelling video of those tested in our survey, her closing emphasis on climate change as her primary motivation to make her home more energy efficient proved to be divisive. In the dial tests, Democrats (blue line below) responded positively to this motivation, but the downward trend among Independents (gray line) and Republicans (red line) clearly shows their negative response.



⍟ *Messaging Example: Homeowner Video*

Establishes Maine identity and a relatable occupation.

I'm Emily Vail and I live in Brunswick, Maine. I'm a school teacher at Matter High School at Thompson across the river.

I decided to pursue energy efficiency and seek out those home improvements shortly after I became a homeowner.

We have found that Mainers have a strong desire to know all of the pertinent information about energy efficiency efforts. Therefore, on-screen graphics throughout provide the details of Emily's experience.

Independents and Republicans react somewhat negatively to Emily's mention of "carbon footprint," albeit to a lesser degree compared to her emphasis on climate change in the conclusion.

[On screen graphic] CHALLENGES: Heat loss through the foundation, attic, and air leaks; Moisture in basement; High energy bills; Sweltering second floor in summer; Drafty first floor in winter.

I liked the idea of energy efficiency obviously not only from a savings point of view, financial point of view, but doing what I could do to reduce my carbon footprint.

Shortly after I moved in, there was like an energy conference, open house, info session over at one of the churches on Main St. in Brunswick. It was made clear to me then that getting a home energy audit was probably one of the first things you should do just as a diagnostic to see how tight and how efficient your home was. And then after I got that report, following up on it as I needed to with insulation and just ticking away at those improvements as time and funds are allowing me to do.

Audiences appreciated that Emily gathered information at the start with a community meeting, and then began with an energy audit.

Audiences saw "ticking away at improvements" to be a common sense approach.

[On screen graphic] SOLUTIONS: Seal air leaks in basement and attic; Insulate foundation and attic; New weather stripping.

For me, the largest benefit so far has been just a kind of satisfaction in knowing that I'm doing the best I can to make this place snug and energy efficient as opposed to a leaky bark that is dribbling energy out through cracks and invisible nooks and holes that I can't even see and am not aware of. I'm also using much less oil. That's clear from just the payments, the checks I write, to the man who comes out and fills up my tank much less frequently than he did my first year or so here.

Emily lists the important benefits, including cost savings and increased comfort.

Using less oil is seen as a significant benefit.

[On screen graphic] Financial Analysis: Project cost: $225 for home energy audit; $7,185 for home energy improvements; Rebate from Efficiency Maine: $1,500; Projected Savings: $600 per year (160 gallons of oil); 30% reduction in heating and hot water energy usage; Air leakage dropped by 45%.

The dial tests show reaction to this concluding statement is divergent. While Democrats are positive about the emphasis on climate change, independents and Republicans respond negatively.

So that's satisfying and it's, uh, it means a lot to me. Climate change is a pressing concern and while I know that I'm just one person and a drop in the bucket, I guess it has to start at an individual level.

Similarly, we also saw very different responses when the homeowner talked about reducing her carbon footprint (see below).

> I liked the idea of energy efficiency obviously not only from a savings point of view, financial point of view, but doing what I could do to reduce my carbon footprint.

However, these different responses were less pronounced than at the conclusion of the video, perhaps reflecting her using language other than "climate change"—which can be especially triggering for more conservative audiences. Note that reducing her carbon footprint was also sequenced *after* the desire to save money.

Community-Wide Solutions Are Both Aspirational and Nostalgic

While new to most audiences, the community-wide efforts we presented proved to be extremely effective in part because they tap into people's deep nostalgia about how Maine used to be: tight-knit communities where everyone knew each other and worked together. This "neighbor helping neighbor" frame is especially powerful in the WindowDressers program described below, in which neighbors pitch in to help provide low-cost window frames for everyone in the community, and also offer them to low-income residents at significantly reduced prices.

Importantly, although the WindowDressers program may not have the systemic impact of larger (especially statewide) efforts, it represents the kind of gateway action that introduces people to communal efforts to improve energy efficiency. As such, we would recommend considering whether emphasizing this or similar efforts can be helpful as part of your long-term communication strategies.

Some of the primary reasons the video was effective include:

- Takes place in a church
- Focuses on community volunteers
- Shows ordinary people as credible messengers
- Helps viewers understand how the frames are manufactured

Screenshot from WindowDressers video

⍟ *Messaging Example: Helping Neighbors Stay Warm*

Identify a problem affecting many people, then offer a surprisingly low-cost solution.

Some homes in Maine lose about 20-30 percent of their heat through leaky window frames. Most old window frames can be easily sealed to dramatically reduce heat loss through cracks in and around the frame and glazing. Replacing old and inefficient windows is not only too expensive for most Mainers, it is also not necessary.

Emphasize that WindowDressers is volunteer-driven and non-profit.

WindowDressers, a volunteer-driven non-profit organization based in Rockland, is helping Maine residents address that problem. By manufacturing low-cost window inserts that minimize heat loss through windows, WindowDressers helps Maine residents reduce heating costs and fossil fuel consumption by offering an inexpensive alternative to window replacement.

25% savings offers audiences a concrete, numeric result.

WindowDressers started out by building inserts for large church windows, which dropped the church's fuel bills by 25 percent. The word quickly got out, and other Rockland residents wanted inserts for their homes as well. To meet demand, yet keep costs low, WindowDressers borrowed the old-fashioned "barn-raising" model by engaging communities in a way that brings together customers and volunteers to build window inserts for friends and neighbors. These "Community Build" events, which are typically organized through churches or other community organizations, last a week or two each year.

Barn-raising model is seen as both efficient and community building.

Mainers want to see exact costs in dollars and cents.

These high quality inserts are designed by engineers and last approximately ten years. They cost between $15 and $35 per window depending on the size, with nearly one quarter of the inserts given to low-income households with a simple request for a donation of $10 in total (if they are able). WindowDressers buys everything they can from Maine suppliers, including the pine frames.

Strong support for helping low-income people afford them, especially if they are encouraged to contribute.

Highlight "made in Maine."

WindowDressers estimates that the demand for low-cost window inserts is about 2.5 million inserts due to the large number of older homes in Maine. However, commercial businesses have been reluctant to tap this potential market, because of the labor-intensive manufacturing process, high distribution costs, and the custom fit each insert requires.

Show how the program is being expanded throughout Maine.

To respond adequately to these challenges, communities across the state are seeking to follow WindowDressers' volunteer-based "barn raising" model, by coming together to build window inserts that help neighbors keep their houses warm, save money on heating costs, and reduce carbon emissions that contribute to climate change.

Sequence climate change benefits <u>after</u> added comfort and cost savings.

Collective Purchase Is Also an Effective Community-Wide Solution

We also tested a video description of another of Efficiency Maine's collective purchasing programs, which allows neighbors to bulk buy energy services and equipment from local contractors at a discount. This program (described in the video transcript below) was well received by Mainers in both our online focus group and survey, and they could easily understand the economics of a group discount. Two thirds (66%) of respondents indicated the video made them more likely to support these types of energy efficiency efforts in Maine, compared to just six percent who said the video made them less likely to support these types of efforts.

The mix of messengers in the video was especially important, as it showed both energy experts and specific residents discussing how the program works and the significant benefits that result. Many also liked the idea of a "Weatherization Week," where residents can get energy efficiency services at reduced costs by bundling multiple homes.

⍟ *Messaging Example: Collective Purchase Video*

Emphasize "neighbors" coming together to leverage bulk discounts.

Dana Fischer: Collective Purchase. What is Collective Purchase? Collective Purchase is neighbors coming together to bulk buy energy services and equipment from local contractors at a discount. Collective purchase is not a new concept. The Island Institute and municipalities like Freeport and the city of Bangor have been helping homeowners with initiatives like this over the past few years. Why collective purchase? Homeowners in your town may be interested in energy efficiency services but may not know how to get started. By organizing a collective purchase group, you can leverage the power of community to get bulk discounts for homeowners, encourage them to take action, saving money and energy.

Highlight specific community examples to show this is a proven, effective program.

Avoid implying that success relies on regular people to lead the effort. Most find that too daunting a challenge.

[On screen] How Does COLLECTIVE PURCHASE Work?

A community leader or municipal employee serves as an organizer and promoter for the process and sets up a meeting time and place. Residents attend the planning meeting to learn more, express interest in participating, and identify the services that they're interested in. Now, knowing what they're looking for, the group seeks competitive pricing on energy services and equipment from local contractors. Then, individual homeowners work directly with the selected contractor to schedule and complete discounted work. They then receive rebates from Efficiency Maine, which also has financing available.

Show how this can help people get started.

Make it clear that neighbors get to choose their <u>own</u> contractor.

Showcase ordinary people who have benefited from collective purchase.

Woman: The process felt like a very positive one. It felt like a great thing to do as a community.

Dana Fischer: It's simple, it works and it builds community cooperation.

Man: It just snowballed because people talked to each other about it and found it useful. It's like Maine. You pull a lot of things together and make something work.

Make connections to Maine values, such as a "can do" spirit.

Provide specifics about what can be accomplished.

[On screen] Some Maine communities sponsor a "Weatherization Week" where residents can get energy efficiency services at reduced costs by bundling multiple homes. Discounted examples include: Energy assessments; Air leak sealing; Insulation; LED bulbs. Using this model, Maine island communities have weatherized over 350 homes in the last 4 years.

Dana Fischer: Get a collective purchase group started in your area. All the information you need is in a handy toolkit on our website at efficiencymaine.com. Or call our friendly call center at 1-866-ES-MAINE. They'll be happy to help.

People like to know where they can go for more information.

Beware of Implying Too Much Cooperation

While our participants appreciated the idea of community members coming together to access bulk prices on energy services and equipment efficiency, some came away feeling that they would be forced to work *with* their neighbors on their home improvement projects—using the same contractor—rather than just taking advantage of group discounts. As such, future descriptions should make that distinction more explicitly, rather than merely stating that "individual homeowners work directly with the selected contractor to schedule and complete discounted work."

Leverage Conflation with Innovative, Renewable Energy

While advocates frequently make a clear distinction between promoting energy efficiency and promoting renewable energy such as solar and wind, the research participants frequently conflate those two categories. In their mind, both belong to a larger cognitive category one might label as "innovative and common sense energy approaches," which they wholeheartedly support. As such, we advise allowing audiences to continue conflating these two efforts, rather than attempting to separate them.

In a similar vein, participants responded positively to the idea of communities replacing their street lighting systems with LED lamps. The description (shown on the next page) was extremely effective: more than nine in ten (91%) respondents in our energy efficiency survey reacted favorably to the efforts described here, with 54 percent indicating they were very favorable. By contrast, just four percent expressed an unfavorable opinion (and five percent were unsure). While this concept was promoted as an energy efficiency effort, switching from inefficient halogen bulbs to LEDs was also seen as taking advantage of a new, innovative technology—in line with installing solar panels. Audiences especially appreciated the Rockland case study (shown on the next page) where the cost savings were laid out in important detail.

Photo credits: Top photo: flickr.com/ausgridphotos, CC BY 2.0; Bottom photo: screenshot from Collective Purchase video

LED Lighting Systems

Across Maine, municipalities typically each spend hundreds of thousands of dollars every year on energy for street lighting, while also battling increasing operating costs and dwindling tax bases.

However, a new state law allows municipalities to save money by giving them greater control over their street lights. This allows towns to own and manage their own street lights instead of renewing costly 10-year leases with a utility company. And by replacing inefficient halogen lamps with new, efficient, durable LED lamps, towns can save hundreds of thousands of dollars and reduce more than half their energy use. LEDs also last significantly longer than halogen bulbs.

Rockland, for example, is ending its lease with Central Maine Power (CMP) and is installing 57 new LED lamps on Main Street. The project is expected to cost $215,000 up front and be paid back in 4.5 years—with $47,450 annual savings from reduced electricity consumption and the absence of lease payments. In other words, after 4.5 years the town will be saving $47,450 each and every year. Over the long lifetime of the LED lamps, that adds up to hundreds of thousands of dollars saved in street lighting costs.

These upfront costs in exchange for long term savings can help towns balance their budgets while reducing the need to raise property taxes. Additional benefits include lower maintenance costs, increased visibility, less nighttime light pollution with dimmable lamps, and reduced air pollution and carbon emissions that contribute to climate change. Towns can also enjoy costs savings from bulk purchases if they organize with other communities to install new lamps.

Prepare for Some Pushback

Some participants push back at the idea of using taxpayer dollars to help individual property owners improve their personal properties. As such, focusing on how these programs help sympathetic populations and provide collective benefits is especially important. On the collective benefits front, however, we would caution against overselling community tax savings on municipal buildings, as people are skeptical those savings will trickle down to them. Providing specific examples of those tax savings may be helpful, especially if those savings strike a balance between being significant yet not too large as to be unbelievable. In our community solar video, which is examined in the following section, a three percent cost savings seemed to hit the mark.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Energy Efficiency Messaging

- **Focus on creating opportunities, not persuasion.** Promoting energy efficiency already earns strong support across partisan lines, so persuasion is largely unnecessary. We would therefore recommend focusing communications more on creating opportunities on energy efficiency—and addressing latent concerns—rather than trying to persuade people that energy efficiency is a good idea.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Cont.)

- **Start with an initial description of the overall problem**, including who and what is being negatively impacted and the inability of the current approaches to adequately address the need.
- **Use a relatable messenger and context**, such as an authentic local Mainer from a small community. Audiences related to the real-life example of a small-town homeowner undertaking a series of comprehensive energy efficiency improvements for her house.
- **Discuss how problems and solutions impact *all* Mainers, while specifically addressing the impact on sympathetic groups**, such as seniors and small businesses. Frame solutions to emphasize the collective benefit, even when the direct impact is on low-income families alone. There may be some pushback against taxpayers helping individuals improve their personal properties.
- **Cover a range of impacts**, not just environmental, but also financial, political, and personal. For example, drafty houses not only have higher environmental impacts, but also cost more to heat and cool, tighten our dependence on foreign imports, and are generally less comfortable.
- **Don't lead with climate change** as the primary reason; it can be a secondary motivation.
- **Show, rather than tell, audiences how the policies work**, especially if public familiarity with an approach is limited or nonexistent. Use specific examples of proven, effective programs.
- **Include novel solutions at both the state and local level** so audiences can be confident in the applicability of the prescribed solutions to other communities, big and small.
- **Include nuts and bolts** of the policy by laying out in detail the concrete benefits (e.g, initial costs, projected savings on gas, projected savings on electricity, etc).
- **Promote information sessions and low-cost energy audits**, which will help Mainers become familiar with a wide range of energy efficiency options for their homes.
- **Promote "gateway" actions** that introduce people to improving energy efficiency even though those actions may not have the systematic impact of larger efforts.
- **Allow audiences to conflate "energy efficiency" with "renewable energy."**
- **Evoke Mainers' nostalgia for tight-knit communities** by including community-wide solutions. But, make it clear that a leader or an expert, rather than a lay person, will be leading and organizing the way forward so the burden is not on individuals to build the program from scratch.

CLEAN ENERGY

Our 2015 focus groups—as well as subsequent research on energy efficiency—found considerable support for adopting more clean energy sources in Maine—especially solar power. In particular, there is great promise in promoting clean, secure, and affordable energy, which is seen as key to sustainable economic growth and a high quality of life. In addition, as with energy efficiency, audiences appreciate that clean energy would reduce Maine's dependence on imported energy sources. As with our earlier messaging suggestions, we recommend showing how clean energy efforts fit with Mainers' core values and character, such as Mainers being "careful," fostering "community," and applying their "Yankee ingenuity" to solve problems.

Clean Energy = Green Jobs

One of the key draws of clean energy is its potential to create new jobs. Not just any jobs mind you, but "green jobs" in an innovative, cutting edge industry that could entice younger Mainers to stay in the state. This is critical, because anxiety about young people leaving Maine represents a major concern among both young and old alike.

Messaging note: We did not see negative reactions to the term "green jobs" in the 12 focus groups and subsequent online surveys, though research outside of Maine has shown a mixed reaction to the term. It may be worth noting that nearly 9,000 Maine residents already work in energy efficiency related jobs according to the report *Energy Efficiency Jobs in America*, and that Maine ranks 11th in the nation for energy efficiency policies and programs.

Showcasing the (Young) Face of Green Jobs

A prime messenger example can be found in the story of young Ben Holt, who landed a solar installation job himself but is convinced that Maine could create far more. Despite the brevity of this video, it was rated one of the most compelling in our 2015 focus groups. Part of its success lies in Ben Holt himself, because he is perceived to be the exact kind of young Mainer that needs an opportunity to stay in the state. *For additional analysis and recommendations on this video, please see the annotated messaging example on the next few pages.*

Photo credit: Edward Faulkner, Flickr Creative Commons, CC BY-NC-2.0, flickr.com/eaf

⍟ *Messaging Example: The Young Face of Green Jobs*

The video begins by establishing Ben as a true Mainer; the kind of young Mainer people want to stay.

Ben Holt: I was born in Maine and I went to school here.

I was lucky enough to find a job in the solar industry. I work for a small, renewable energy company here in Maine. Just looking around at the rest of the country, most of the states have incentives and their solar markets are taking off well beyond ours.

Ben works for a small business located in Maine.

Ben points out how solar is taking off in other states, leaving Maine behind.

It is important to have incentives to drive the solar installations. Just looking at other states in New England; it seems to be that Maine is falling behind the curve with renewable energy just due to lack of incentives and that is just a – its meaning that there's less jobs staying in the state. People are moving out for solar jobs elsewhere and it is just important that we have solar legislation that incentivizes renewable energies here in Maine.

Ben connects the lack of incentives to lost jobs.

One of the biggest problems cited by Mainers throughout the research is young people leaving the state for jobs elsewhere. Ben effectively argues that solar jobs will help young people like him stay in Maine.

If there is more incentives to promote solar jobs here in Maine, I think more young people would be inclined to stick around.

Emphasize Collective Benefits

As with energy efficiency, emphasize how all Maine residents can benefit from clean energy. This could include taking advantage of low-interest loans and tax incentives to install solar panels on homes and businesses. Even Mainers who do not own solar panels can benefit from lower electricity costs, reduced prices, and reduced pollution.

Show Examples of Community Solar

Include examples of community-owned solar projects (e.g., on public buildings or solar farms), which are largely unknown but receive strong support once audiences see specific examples. As with municipal energy efficiency efforts, emphasize how these would pay for themselves by providing revenue to boost town budgets and benefit the whole community.

The video on the following page is very effective in this regard, showcasing a community-owned solar array installed on the city of Belfast's fire station. This example is both specific and believable, and participants could easily imagine installing solar panels on high schools and other public buildings. The Belfast economic development official featured in the video was deemed to be very credible, and when he said the installation has been generating three percent of the town's electricity, the savings were thought to be sufficiently significant yet credible.

⍟ *Messaging Example: Maine Leadership/Community Solar Video*

The video includes two economics professors, who we suspected would be especially credible given Mainers' economic anxiety and concern about jobs.

[Caption: Sharon Klein, Economics Professor]

Sharon Klein: My name is Sharon Kline. I'm a professor in the School of Economics. I think Maine has a real opportunity right now to grow a local economy based on renewable energy. We are already seeing it with the pellet industry and I see the same kind of opportunity with solar energy. There is actually a new option that has been going on for a while around the country and it is just starting to be seen in Maine and that is called community solar. Some people call it solar farms or solar garden. But basically what it means is that you can buy solar panels as a group. It doesn't matter if you live near each other or if you live in the same neighborhood, but you can basically go in on a solar array, which is a group of panels together and you own the panels so you get the energy savings. You get the payback period and you start to generate basically free electricity for yourself after 10 years when you have paid off the panels. This idea of community solar is really helping some Mainers get involved in solar, to get the financial benefits of it, to help contribute to the environmental benefit of it. It is just starting to take off.

Professor Kline introduces the idea of community solar, which proved to be very intriguing. Note that she positions the collective benefits as primarily economic, while the environmental benefits are important but secondary.

[Caption: Thomas Kittridge, Belfast Economic Development Director]

The video then introduces Belfast's community solar array, along with numerous overhead shots of the solar panels on the firehouse roof. This is a good example of "show me, don't tell me."

Thomas Kittridge: My name is Thomas Kittridge. I'm the Economic Development director for the City of Belfast. The solar array will allow the City of Belfast to save money on electricity as well as a way to attract businesses and people to the City of Belfast. The firemen are really happy with the system. It is going to be like it's not even there in the first place. We estimate it generates about 58,000 kilowatt hours per year. This facility generates about 3 percent of the City of Belfast's electrical usage.

The 3% figure represented a significant amount of savings, but not too much to trigger skepticism.

[Caption: Caroline Noblet, Assistant Economics Professor, University of Maine]

Caroline Noblet: I am Caroline Noblet. I am an assistant professor in the School of Economics at the University of Maine. I am a native Mainer. I grew up in Bangor and in West Gardiner, Maine. When I think about what renewable energy can do for Maine, I actually sort of back up and think about what do Maine people care about? And so, I know that as a Mainer we are very careful with our finances and our investments and we also think a lot about what do we want Maine to look like in the future? Is it going to be a place where my daughter is going to want to stay and grow up and be the 7th generation Mainer that she would be? What I see is that as a Mainer, we often identify a problem, and in this case, it is increased carbon emissions due to our use of fossil fuels: coal, gas, natural gas, and when we run into a problem, our Yankee ingenuity kicks in. How do we solve this problem in a sensible way that is consistent with our other objectives like being financially sound and making sure that Maine is a place that our kids want to be? So I see renewable energy as being consistent with those objectives because we are doing pilot studies of some of these renewable energies like tidal energy, deep water offshore wind, solar energy and we are also complimentary investing in energy efficiency. We have Efficiency Maine, for example, and so we think that the benefit for Maine with respect to renewable energy are to be consistent with our economic objectives, being careful with our finances and making sure that there are jobs for our children to have, and retaining our natural resources, which are very precious to us.

Professor Noblet clearly establishes herself as a bona fide "true Mainer."

Noblet taps key elements of Maine's identity, including frugality and "Yankee ingenuity."

Noblet closes with showing how climate change solutions can benefit Maine economically while also protecting Maine's cherished resources.

Focus on Emotional Benefits As Well

Ensure that messages not only highlight the practical, financial aspects of solar installations, but also appeal to the emotional satisfaction they produce. In one video we tested featuring an older couple talking about their new solar panels, many of our participants were bothered that the couple did not appear to have gained any *personal* satisfaction from having them installed.

Leverage Maine's Coastal Possibilities for Clean Energy

We see considerable opportunity for promoting tidal energy and offshore wind. Although focus group participants are largely unfamiliar with how they work, they are very intrigued by the concepts. In particular, the land-use issues of offshore wind are far less problematic than onshore wind.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clean Energy Messaging

- **Select messengers who tap key elements of Maine's identity**, including frugality and "Yankee ingenuity."
- **Focus on the ability of clean energy initiatives to create green jobs for young Mainers** who are otherwise leaving the state in search of work.
- **Emphasize the collective benefits of clean energy,** even for Mainers who don't own solar panels.
- **Include examples of community-owned solar projects** which are largely unknown but receive strong support once audiences see specific examples.
- **Make it clear how and within what timeframe the program would pay for itself.**
- **Estimate significant, yet believable, cost savings.** For example, it was deemed very credible that a solar array installed on the city of Belfast's fire station would generate about three percent of the town's electricity.
- **Include the personal satisfaction and emotional appeal of implementing clean energy solutions**.
- **Leverage Maine's coastal possibilities for clean energy, such as tidal energy and offshore wind**. Although focus group participants are largely unfamiliar with how they work, they are very intrigued by the concepts.

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STRENGTHENING MAINE FARMING

Strengthening Maine farming earns broad support, in part because farming is seen as a great iconic symbol for Maine. In addition, there is a lot of pride in Maine and its products, and Mainers are only too happy to "buy Maine."

Emphasize the Connections Most Mainers Have to Maine Agriculture

Many of our participants reported having farmed themselves or purchased produce from a local farmer—and these connections help root their reactions to our policy proposals in a very positive way. This dynamic suggests the more we can root our solutions in concrete examples, the better.

Do Not Imply Maine Farmers Are Prospering

Ordinary farmers, like Mainers in general, are perceived to be struggling, and traditional Maine agriculture is perceived to be in decline. As such, saying "farming is on the rise in Maine" is deeply problematic because it generates skepticism and pushback that prevents participants from engaging in the rest of the message content. Instead, you can describe the situation as uneven, as seen in the example below:

> After decades of decline, Maine's local farms are starting to make a comeback—with the potential to strengthen Maine's economy and reduce its reliance on imported food. This turnaround has been uneven, however, and Maine's local farmers continue to face challenges…

Highlight the Negative Impacts of Climate Change

Concretely describe how Maine farmers are being impacted by climate change, such as more extreme and less predictable weather, and an increase in potato bugs and other damaging pests. Highlighting an increase in agricultural pests also fits their larger narrative about Maine experiencing a significant rise in the tick population, which they report has led to the spread of Lyme disease into Maine and a higher death rate among moose calves.

Provide Specific Examples, Including New and Unusual Ideas

In this and other research, we see strong support for encouraging local farmers to pool their products into more efficient community-scale "food hubs." However, there is little if any preexisting knowledge about food hubs among Mainers, so consider employing video stories (featuring farmers and experts) explaining how food hubs work and how they are similar to the small canneries and creameries that once existed throughout Maine.

Another effective example is the "Cow Power" story describing a family-owned dairy farm in Exeter that is the first farm in the state to harness electricity from cow manure. This sustainable farming example is persuasive and is seen as one example of a cost-effective solution that will reap environmental and financial benefits over the long term.

Avoid Making This Solely about Farmers

While Maine farmers represent a very sympathetic group, we also see very positive reactions to messaging components that focus on the consumer. For example, it is effective to emphasize how food hubs can benefit all Mainers, not just farmers, resulting in healthier, more nutritious local foods for consumers, hospitals, and schools.

Messaging Caveat: Given Maine's continuing economic struggles, many consumers may be unable to benefit from these sustainable agriculture approaches if the resulting food products are too expensive. Focus group participants expressed concerns about the high prices of local products available at farmers' markets, especially organic products. This also fed a negative narrative about elitist solutions that do not help regular Mainers.

Overdevelopment a Tough Sell

The problem of too much of farmland being lost to real estate development was a tougher issue. First, participants view Maine as a state with a great deal of undeveloped land, so few see overdevelopment as a problem. Second, many believe that the reasons farmers sell their land are varied and complex, and therefore cannot be simplified into a narrative about farmers being forced off their land.

Pulling it All Together

The description on the next page ties together many of these elements into a comprehensive and very effective messaging statement about strengthening Maine farming and local food systems. Note, for example, how the initial paragraphs blend the great potential for Maine farming with the reality that some Maine farmers continue to struggle.

Photo credit: Flickr Creative Commons, CC BY-NC-ND-2.0, flickr.com/ericjalbert

⊛ *Messaging Example: Strengthen Maine Farming and Local Food Systems*

Describe the potential for Maine farming, while also noting that many farmers continue to struggle.

After decades of decline, Maine's local farms are starting to make a comeback—with the potential to strengthen Maine's economy and reduce our reliance on imported food. Maine could in fact significantly scale up its local food production to feed not only our state, but others in the Northeast as well.

This turnaround has been uneven, however, and Maine's small farmers continue to face challenges including the loss of vital farmland to real estate development, expensive and inefficient farming and processing equipment, and the fact that Maine's supermarkets, schools, hospitals, and other institutions often buy food from outside Maine rather than food grown and processed in Maine.

Maine farmers also report problems due to climate change, including more extreme and less predictable weather patterns, and an increase in potato bugs and other damaging pests.

Highlight the negative (but relatable) impacts of climate change.

Other parts of the country are already seeing serious climate change impacts on agriculture, like the recent droughts in California. A stronger, more reliable food system in Maine means protection from food shortages and a reduced threat of hunger for some of the most vulnerable people in Maine.

This proposed plan would prioritize the smart production and consumption of "Maine-made" food by protecting farmland, improving infrastructure, providing technical assistance, and supporting academic research and better technology for the agriculture sector.

Emphasize how these efforts benefit farmers and consumers alike.

This plan would also help local farmers diversify their crops and sell food both wholesale and directly to Maine consumers—who benefit from food that is more nutritious and higher quality. This plan would also provide loans and grants to encourage farmers to implement sustainable farming practices to help them grow and adapt to climate change and/or reduce its impacts over the long term. Farmland management can make a difference too. New strategies to control weeds without turning the soil can help the earth capture and store carbon.

This plan would capitalize on new, innovative local farming methods and help Maine reach its full potential as a leader in local, sustainable farming. It would strengthen local farmers' ability to grow, store, and transport food, and support environmentally-friendly farming methods that benefit Maine farmers and consumers alike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening Maine Farming Messaging

- **Evoke Mainers' lived experiences of farming or purchasing from local farmers**.
- **Emphasize both the farmer's and consumer's perspective**, and how sustainable agriculture can benefit all Mainers, not just farmers, resulting in healthier, more nutritious local foods for consumers, hospitals, and schools.
- **Do not imply that Maine farmers are prospering.** To suggest otherwise generates skepticism and pushback that prevents participants from engaging in the rest of the message content. Instead, describe the situation as uneven.
- **Highlight the negative impacts of climate change, such as an increase in agricultural pests.** This is a narrative Mainers are familiar with, as they've witnessed a significant rise in ticks and the spread of Lyme disease.
- **Provide specific examples, including new and unusual ideas.** People like the idea of "food hubs," but are largely unfamiliar with the concept. Consider employing video stories (featuring farmers and experts) explaining how food hubs work and how they are similar to canneries and creameries.
- **Avoid elitist solutions that rely upon high prices of local, and especially organic, produce.**
- **Be aware that overdevelopment is generally a tough sell for Mainers,** who generally view their state as having a great deal of undeveloped land. Mainers also believe farmers sell their land for varied and complex reasons which cannot be simplified into a narrative about farmers being forced off their land.
- **Avoid food and farming jargon,** such as "food security" and "no-till farming." These terms are largely unknown and/or confusing. Consider focusing more on creating a more "self-sufficient" and "reliable" food supply.
- **Highlight low-interest loans to farmers**, which earn support even from more conservative men. Grants from the state, however, often trigger opposition, as they are more likely to be viewed as giveaways.

MARINE & COASTAL RESOURCES

Ensuring the future viability of Maine's marine and coastal resources is extremely compelling. Throughout the research, we saw many opportunities to build support for coastal climate change policies, especially by evoking the iconic nature of Maine's lobster and seafood industries, and the vital importance of these industries to Maine's economy and character.

Build on Climate Change Knowledge

Many Mainers are quite familiar with climate change impacts to the coast, and can share personal stories about sea level rise, the effect of green crabs on clamming, etc. Therefore, advocates should not shy away from highlighting these examples. In addition, it is useful to remind audiences that other states have already experienced negative impacts:

> University of Maine scientists warn that as the Gulf of Maine continues to warm, the lobster population will likely decline (as in Rhode Island and Connecticut).

Emphasize the Larger Impacts

Set the stage by showing how climate change affects all people along Maine's coast, not just lobstermen and fishermen:

> Sea level rise makes Maine's coastline more vulnerable to storm surges and flooding, and makes Maine's seafood economy more unpredictable. The growing unpredictability will prove especially hard for Maine's coastal communities, who depend on fishing.

In addition, show audiences how solutions such as improving lobster processing facilities benefit fishermen *and* other Mainers living in coastal communities.

Acknowledge Mixed Impacts

Many Mainers are aware that climate change has resulted in increased lobster catches, which is largely seen as a positive development despite the driving down of prices for lobstermen. As such, it is important to acknowledge potentially positive impacts of climate change along with negative impacts. We would also recommend doing so by using reports from both fishermen and scientists:

Photo credit: Gulf of Maine video screenshot; Island Institute; Scott Sell.

Maine's commercial fishermen and scientists report that while warming waters have contributed to recent record lobster catches, temperature changes and ocean acidification are a growing threat to shellfish fisheries—including clams, oysters, crab, and lobster—and cod fisheries.

Suggestions for Specific Approaches

Mainers generally support efforts to ensure the future viability of Maine's marine and coastal resources, and the majority of participants who reviewed the written description (below) found it very convincing. As noted above, however, when this approach is presented in written form and with no apparent messenger, we see that support for this approach can be shallow. Therefore, we would recommend weaving elements of this description into a video format, with credible messengers like fishermen, academics, and members of coastal communities.

Ensure the Future Viability of Maine's Marine and Coastal Resources

With 3,500 miles of coastline and over 9,500 active commercial fishermen, Maine's coastal way of life is already feeling the impacts of climate change—and facing even more changes in the future.

Climate change's sea level rise makes Maine's coastline more vulnerable to storm surges and flooding, and makes Maine's seafood economy more unpredictable. Maine's commercial fishermen and scientists report that while warming waters have contributed to recent record lobster catches, temperature changes and ocean acidification are a growing threat to shellfish fisheries—including clams, oysters, crab, and lobster—and cod fisheries. University of Maine scientists warn that as the Gulf of Maine continues to warm, the lobster population will likely decline (as in Rhode Island and Connecticut). The growing unpredictability will prove especially hard for Maine's coastal communities, who depend on fishing.

To address these issues, this proposed plan would use public funds and matching private funding to help coastal communities diversify their marine economies, protect the fishery resources they rely upon, and make energy efficiency investments. It would:

- Train fishermen and their family members who want to invest in new business opportunities, such as small-scale shellfish and seaweed aquaculture, newly emerging fisheries (including traditionally more southern species moving into Maine waters), and new local tourism-oriented businesses.
- Ensure that Maine communities benefit more from each lobster landed in the state, by improving lobster processing facilities and promoting Maine seafood more broadly in the U.S. and around the world (think "Got Milk?").
- Support fishermen who want to switch to gear with less impact on fisheries habitat.
- Improve monitoring of shellfish harvesting areas, so productive areas can re-open quickly after big rainstorms, instead of staying closed from lack of monitoring funds.
- Reduce the impact of sea level rise and storm surges on coastal communities by improving infrastructure—roads, water treatment plants, harbors, and working waterfront structures—and protecting wetlands and estuaries, which are natural barriers to sea level rise.
- Support research into how to capture carbon locally to decrease ocean acidification by growing seaweed aquaculture.
- Decrease fossil fuel usage by increasing the fishing fleet's energy efficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Marine & Coastal Resources Messaging

- **Evoke the iconic nature of Maine's lobster and seafood industries**, and the vital importance of these industries to Maine's economy and character.
- **Refer specifically to the climate impacts on the coast**, as many Mainers have personal stories about sea level rise, the effect of green crabs on clamming, etc. It is useful to remind audiences of the negative impacts already experienced by other states.
- **Show how climate change affects all people along Maine's coast**, not just lobstermen and fishermen. And show audiences how solutions such as improving lobster processing facilities benefit both fishermen *and* other Mainers living in coastal communities.
- **Acknowledge the mixed (both positive and negative) short-term impacts of climate change**, using reports from both fishermen *and* scientists. For example, there are more lobster, but fewer shrimp.

Photo credit: Rex Hammock, Flickr Creative Commons, CC BY-SA-2.0, flickr.com/rexblog

CREATING A DEDICATED FUNDING SOURCE

Creating a dedicated funding source to help Maine respond to climate change can be a tough and rather abstract sell. Over two rounds of focus groups, however, we made considerable progress in making the case for a dedicated funding source, and we believe the potential exists to build support for such a fund, given the right strategic messaging.

Explain How These Approaches "Pay For Themselves"

As noted above, many Mainers already feel overtaxed and overburdened, so they are initially reluctant to support significant government funding to address climate change. However, they become much more open to the idea if the funded approaches could pay for themselves. Yet it is insufficient to merely claim they will pay for themselves; you need to explain *how* that will happen. Below are some effective examples of ways to make the case:

> How will this work get paid for? This approach would create a self-sustaining "Maine Jobs, Energy, and Climate Fund," based on passing a bond.
>
> The bond would finance a range of energy-related projects. The bond would be repaid from the energy savings that result from the proposed projects—therefore allowing the bond to pay for itself. These projects would also attract private investments, which would help the projects be successful.
>
> This fund would only finance programs and projects that help make Maine a leader in renewable, locally produced energy. All of the projects would save enough money to make the bond self-sustaining.
>
> For instance, with investments backed by the bond, buildings (home and commercial) would be retrofitted to save significant heating and electrical costs. The owner's utility bill would be averaged and stay the same for a few years to pay back the investment, but after that, the savings would be all theirs. This would allow the bond to pay for itself, plus save property owners significantly.
>
> Another project would be community energy projects that lower energy costs. Rather than doing homes one at a time, community energy projects would allow towns to provide renewable electricity, and after the investment is paid back rates would be significantly lower.

Put Job Creation Front and Center

Emphasize job creation and how creating a dedicated funding source would help promote a more resilient, independent Maine economy, by creating an urgent need to train and hire people (especially young people) to implement these programs thereby giving them a reason to stay in Maine.

Replace Abstract Appeals to "Address Climate Change" With Specific Examples

While there is reluctance to support state funding to address climate change *in the abstract*, there is also fairly robust support for state action when that action is laid out with *specificity*. For example, we see considerable support for using the funds to do the following:

- Enabling University of Maine scientists to conduct research on how climate change is impacting Maine, especially Maine's agricultural and seafood industries;
- Encouraging local farmers to pool their products into more efficient community-scale "food hubs," similar to the small canneries and creameries that once existed throughout Maine;
- Providing Maine businesses and homeowners with low-interest loans for more efficient homes and buildings, energy production, transportation, and manufacturing.

Similarly, messages are more effective when they demonstrate how the fund would provide revolving loans, grants, and investments for a wide range of projects across Maine, including:

- Investing in long-term renewable energy projects, including community solar, offshore wind, geothermal, biomass, and tidal power;
- Strengthening infrastructure such as bridges and culverts to prevent flooding and damage from extreme weather events;
- Providing businesses and individuals with low-cost loans that support energy efficient building, transportation, and manufacturing processes; and

- Providing research and development grants to Maine businesses and universities to find new and cost effective ways to help Maine communities save energy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dedicated Funding Source Messaging

- **Build on existing climate change knowledge.**
- **Explain *how* approaches will pay for themselves.** This is especially important since many Mainers already feel overtaxed and overburdened.
- **Emphasize job creation** and how creating a dedicated funding source would help promote a more resilient, independent Maine economy, by creating an urgent need to train and hire people (especially young people) to implement these programs thereby giving them a reason to stay in Maine.
- **Replace abstract appeals to "address climate change" with specific examples**.
- **Demonstrate how the fund would provide revolving loans, grants, and investments for a wide range of projects across Maine**.

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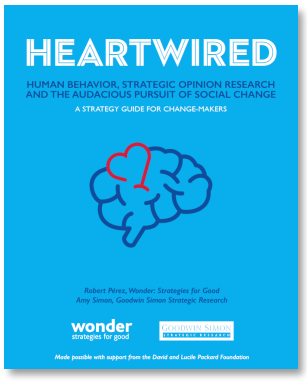
CONCLUSION

Despite the challenging economic and political climates, and some skepticism of the human causation of climate change, there are clear pathways to effectively communicate about climate change impacts and build support for climate-related policies in Maine. The messaging strategies outlined in this toolkit focus on ways that targeted policy approaches can produce wide scale collective benefits for Mainers. These benefits include creating jobs and saving Mainers money, while at the same time strengthening Maine's ability to weather—and even reduce—the worst impacts of climate change here in Maine.

To that end, this toolkit includes many specific messaging examples that you can integrate into your own climate change communications. These examples were continually revised and strengthened based on audience reactions over the course of our research.

In many cases, however, we find that effectively communicating with Mainers on these issues requires tying your messages to the right combination of messengers. This toolkit shows how this can be done successfully in ways that resonate strongly with Maine voters.

Photo credit: Ken Lane, Flickr Creative Commons, CC BY-NC-2.0, flickr.com/kenlane



Should you wish to learn more about Goodwin Simon Strategic Research and read about other real-world case studies where our strategic communications have been applied, we would invite you to explore and download our "Heartwired" strategic communications guide.

www.heartwiredforchange.com

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