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Natural Resources Council of Maine

Writing Letters to Editors

The letters to the editor section of your local newspaper (<https://www.nrcm.org/take-action/contact-information-for-maine-newspapers/>) is an ideal forum for getting your message to its readers, your neighbors, legislators, and members of your congressional delegation. More people read the letters to the editor section than any other part of the paper (except the comics, of course!). **Here are a few guidelines for getting your letter to the editor printed:**

1. Keep your letter short and on one subject –250 words is a good length.
2. Use short punchy sentences and avoid big words. A catchy first line is helpful too.
3. Type the letter—double spaced, one page maximum.
4. Personalize your letter—tell a story...explain how the issue has or will affect you.
5. Be as factual as you can, but use statistics sparingly because they can get boring, confusing, and overwhelming very quickly.

6. When possible, mention a related article already printed by the paper. This increases the chances that your letter will be published.
7. Take pains to be moderate and fair. This doesn't mean you should be bland, but that you should write with the average person in mind, and use phrases and arguments that resonate with them.
8. Emphasize the positive. When you criticize, also propose a better alternative.
9. Don't repeat claims made by opponents on your issue.
10. Include your full name, address, and telephone number. The newspaper will contact you before they print the letter to verify that you are the author.
11. Feel free to follow up with a phone call to make sure the appropriate person got your letter.
12. Send letters to weekly community newspapers, too. Sometimes it is easier to get your letter printed there and it is likely that your legislators read the local weekly papers.
13. Encourage your friends and neighbors to write letters to the editor as well.
14. Sending the letter to your legislator or to members of the appropriate legislative committee can also be effective.

Your letter stands the best chance of getting printed when it responds to something recently printed in that newspaper—a news story, column, editorial. Use the reference to that item as a springboard for stating your case.

Your letter can support and expand on something already in the news, make a point that was omitted, or disagree with and correct misinformation in whatever form it appeared.

Don't be afraid to ask for action—tell readers what you want them to do. This includes your elected representatives—at the state and federal levels. You can be sure they read the letters to the editor.

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Meet others who care about issues facing
Maine's air, land, water, and wildlife.

Take Action

Join thousands of others, get involved to
protect the Maine you love!

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