

Analyzing Climate Change Activism in Maine **Angus Parton and Spencer Follett, Class of 2022**

Research Goals: As students coming from very different academic backgrounds, this summer was a great opportunity for us to practice the interdisciplinarity that Bowdoin emphasizes and encourages. While we initially planned a summer project, our timeline has now extended into the fall to give us time to create a final report with the potential to make an impact on the climate activism community. Before the summer started, our plan was to undertake an expansive project to unearth what makes for effective global climate change activism, but as we got closer to actually conducting our study and spoke with our advisors, we decided to focus on Maine as a case study. We developed this project to study Maine's climate change movement, by interviewing members and leaders of activism groups to understand different organization styles and tactics. Eventually, we hope to draw connections between work in Maine and the climate change movement at the national and global level. Choosing Maine has allowed us to take advantage of Bowdoin's stature and look deeper into the state's climate change movement as a microcosm of the global movement.

Methods: Before beginning our interviews we spent two weeks reading articles on social movement theory and on Maine's climate policy agenda and how it has evolved over time. This gave us a good understanding of past and current Maine politics and helped us become familiar with existing theory on modern climate activism and social movements in general. At the recommendation of our advisors, we used the responses from our first few interviews to guide the rest of our summer. This meant that although we had an extensive questionnaire before starting our interviews, we revised this to a shorter list once we had our first few meetings with interviewees.

Findings: After doing secondary research, as well as interviews and transcription in June and July, we started analyzing our results in August. In doing so, we have identified pieces of Maine's politics, culture, and natural ecosystem that impact the Maine climate change movement and how it functions. We will continue to analyze our interviews which will reveal more about the movement but we have already identified some themes shaping the movement in Maine.

1. Network of coalitions: Within Maine, there is a wide variety of climate activism groups, and many of these groups work together through coalitions. These coalitions vary in goals and size, but they are generally led by large groups such as *350 Maine*. These groups have more funding, resources, and staff. Many of the small groups we spoke to, such as *A Climate to Thrive*, cited a number of positive aspects to coalition membership including access to the knowledge of other groups and the convenience of pooling resources.

2. Generational differences: Though known for its elderly population, Maine has passionate youth voices that have proven powerful in the climate change movement. While the presence of these young activists is powerful, the movement must work to balance young and old mentalities to ensure all ideas are heard. Many of our interview subjects mentioned clashes between generational priorities, showing the need to find an equilibrium and common ground through allyship and collaboration between generations, rather than conflict.

3. Diversity in leadership and membership: It is clear that Maine's climate change movement needs to address issues of diversity. For instance, none of our respondents were people of color, and most of them were college educated and came from wealthy backgrounds, indicating a lack of diversity in leadership. Yet many of our interviewees were women, and there is also a large number of young activists who are more attentive to the issue of environmental justice in the movement. We have seen that many of the leaders of Maine's climate change movement have an interest in addressing these issues, though they have not had much success so far.

Future Plans: The initial goal of this project was to produce a set of public scholarship pieces that would be accessible and easy to share with many people. We planned to produce a series of op-eds to be published in Maine newspapers alongside a podcast series. However, as the summer progressed and our deadlines approached, our goals shifted and we realized that we wanted to work on a more meaningful paper/report. This fall, we plan to create an in-depth report on climate activism in Maine which will include our findings in the form of group and coalition profiles, ecosystem modeling, and our own analysis of what is working and what is not. A report will give us more time to develop our findings, and will be an easy way to share our insights with everyone involved in the Maine climate change movement. While these ideas are still up in the air, we have ~~also~~ discussed publishing op-eds to draw attention to our report, holding events on campus to share our research, and setting up meetings with leaders in the movement to discuss our report.

In order to achieve this we will do an independent study during the fall semester. In this course, we will continue to analyze the data we have already collected, conduct more interviews and possibly add text analysis and surveys. Along with this additional data collection and analysis, we will also read more to apply and use more theoretical frameworks vis-a-vis our findings. Using this academic research, we can also write a term paper as an additional facet of this independent study. Though many pieces of this project are still uncertain, we have created and shared an online video summarizing our work from this summer and are very excited to see where we can go next!

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