



Memorandum

DATE: April 2, 2026

TO: Chair and Members of the Board

FROM: Kevin H. Roche, CEO

SUBJECT: **Agenda for the Outreach & Recycling Committee Meeting**

There is an **ecomaine** Outreach & Recycling Committee scheduled for April 9, 2026 @ 4:00PM. The meeting will be held here at **ecomaine** in the 1R Conference Room.

The agenda for this meeting is as follows:

1. Approval of February 12, 2026, Minutes (*Attachment A*)
2. Monthly & FY 26 YTD Outreach & Media Metrics (*Attachment B*)
3. Eco-Excellence Nominations Review (*Attachment C*)
4. Managers Update:
 - UMaine Food Waste Program Follow-up
 - Tour of Agri-Cycle Facility
 - Recycling is a Work of Art 2026
5. Other:

Meetings:

Finance & Audit Committee	05-21-2026 @ 3pm
Executive Committee	05-21-2026 @ 4pm
Outreach & Recycling Committee	05-28-2026 @ 4pm
Annual Board of Directors Meeting	06-18-2026 @ 11am

DATE: February 12, 2026
TO: Chair and Members of the Board
FROM: Kevin H. Roche, CEO
SUBJECT: Minutes – Outreach & Recycling Committee Meeting

There was an **ecomaine** Outreach & Recycling Committee scheduled for **February 12, 2026 @ 3:00PM**. The meeting was called to order at 3:00pm by Caleb Hemphill, Chair.

Item 1: Approval of Minutes

Dave Durrell motioned to approve the minutes of November 6, 2025. Lisa Belanger seconded the motion. All in favor.

Item 2: Monthly & FY 26 YTD Outreach & Media Metrics

Dillon Whitton (staff) and Lucy Sullivan (staff) presented the year-to-date outreach metric. The report reflects increases in two key site metrics, the website relaunch, and the establishment of a new outreach goal to directly reach 75% of member communities annually.

Item 3: Multi Family Recycling Initiative Update

Zoe Malia (Staff) presented the updated Multi Family Recycling Initiatives report, including updated metrics on number of units in the program enrollment pipeline.

Item 4: Presentation: Mark McClennan & Alexandra Phillips, C+C Communications

C+C Communications firm was selected to fulfill the marketing & PR needs of the MFRI grant. They presented an overview of their project scope. They discussed their three-phase approach (as reflected in the presentation), and the work they have completed to date, which includes conducting key stakeholder research.

Item 5: Eco-Excellence Awards: Review submission categories and criteria (*Attachment D*)

The committee approved the categories and criteria as proposed in the attachment, with the following adjustments and process updates:

- Restore the category “Municipality.” This winner will be selected by the committee from a shortlist of finalists prepared by the staff. Staff will provide committee with a finalist report that includes recycling rate, outreach, and community engagement activities. Category will not be subject to public nominations.
- Explicitly include schools in the “non-profit or community group” category.
- Following the closure of nominations, staff will provide the committee with nominations and a tool for numeric ratings (1-5), which committee will use prior to the meeting. These ratings will not be binding or the sole determinant of winners but will help narrow the discussion during selection.

Item 6: Update: U. Maine Mitchell Center Food Waste Program Discussion

Lucy Sullivan (Staff) noted that Susanne Lee is scheduled to meet here at ecomaine on Friday, 2/20 to discuss a potential partnership and collaboration on food waste initiatives.

Item 7: Update: tour of Agri-Cycle Facility

Lucy Sullivan (Staff) suggested combining this with a tour of Municipal Waste Hub (formerly Fiberight), securing transportation, and opening it to interested staff members as well. The committee agreed that early spring would be ideal. Staff will work to establish a schedule for the event.

Item 8: Other Business

None

Troy Moon motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:00pm. Linda Boudreau seconded the motion. All in favor.

Attendees: Linda Boudreau, Lisa Belanger, Troy Moon, Caleb Hemphill, Carrye Castleman-Ross, Amber Swett, and Dave Durrell

Guest: Mark McClennan & Alexandra Phillips, C+C Communications

Staff: Lucy Sullivan, Bea Johnson, Zoe Malia, Dillon Whitton, Emily Gerencer & Sarah Folan

Outreach & Recycling Committee April 9th, 2026 | Metrics Report

MEDIA REPORT: MARCH 2026

WEB ANALYTICS

Search Engine

Impressions 97,188 (-29.7%)
Clicks 1,902 (+19.2%)
Click-Through Rate 2.05% (+66.7%)


Users & Acquisition


Active Users 4,567 (+15.4%)
Sessions 6,049 (+17.8%)


Top Visited Pages by Views

Homepage: 2,089 (+16.18%)
Recyclopedia: 1,407 (+23.0%)
Eco-Excellence: 710 (+688.9%)
Recycling 101: 299 (+2.75%)
Careers: 271 (+55.75%)




 11,593 Views (+141.87%)
307 Interactions (+279%)

 8,533 Views (+141%)
289 Engagements (+338%)

 334 Impressions (+17.3%)
158 Pageviews (+187.3%)

 671 Views (-18.07%)
2.7k Impressions (-17.9%)

RECYCLOPEDIA

5,388 Materials Searched 
1,418 First Time Visitors
Top searches: electronics (170),
styrofoam (150), Mattresses (141),
single-use batteries (121)

Paid Social Report: Display Ads

Campaign Objective: Website Visits (eco-Excellence Landing Page Views)

Audience: Geo-target, ecomaine communities

Timeframe: 14 Days (March 11th - 25th)

Impressions: 29,104

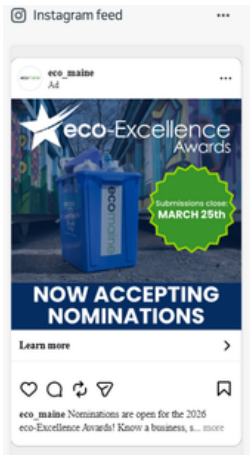
Reach: 13,706

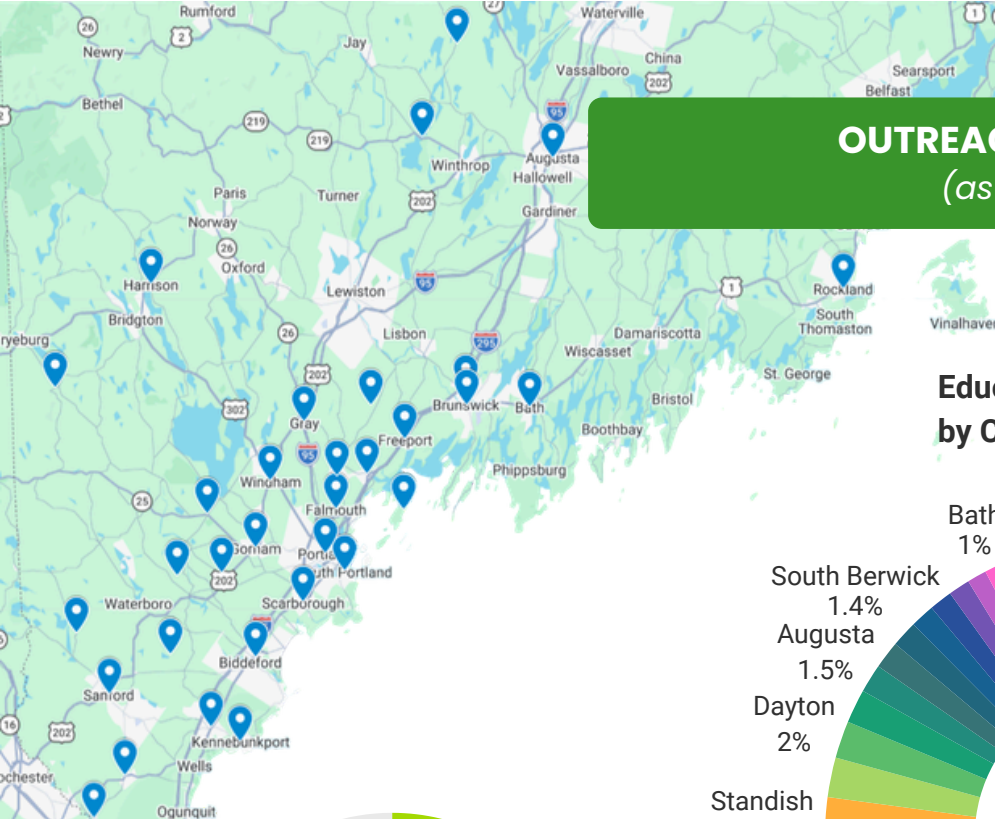
Link Clicks: 422

Landing Page Views: 400

Total Spend: \$194.36

Cost Per Result: \$0.49

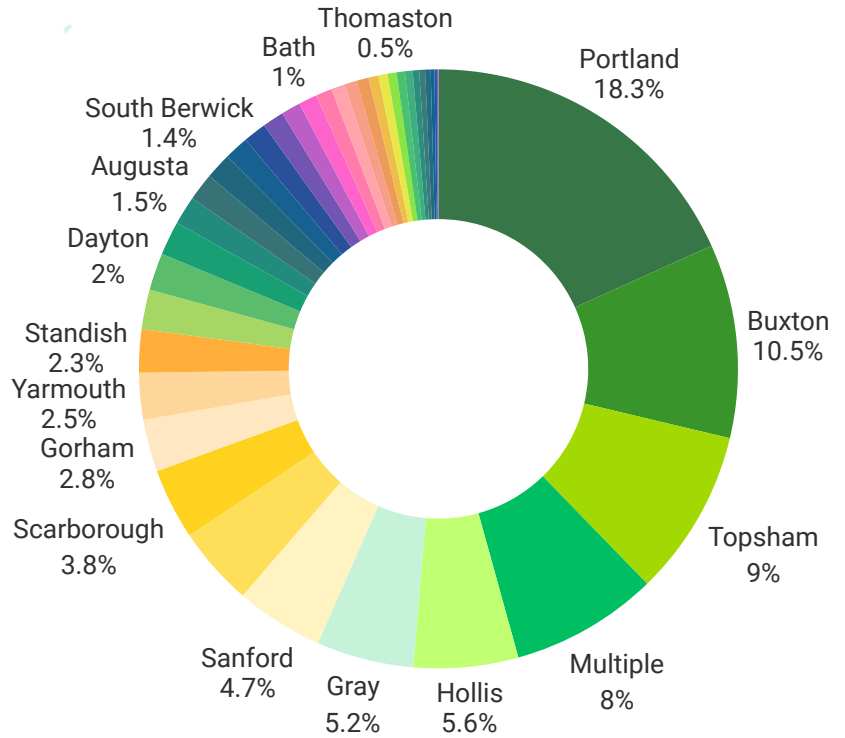




OUTREACH METRICS FYTD

(as of 3/31/2026)

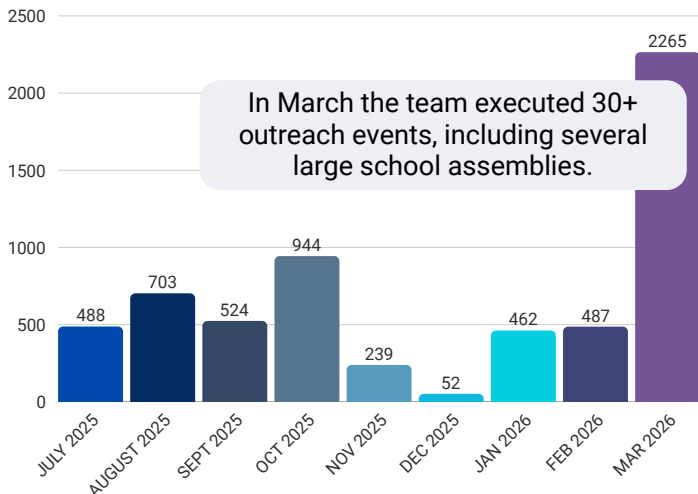
Educational Reach by Community 6,165 FYTD



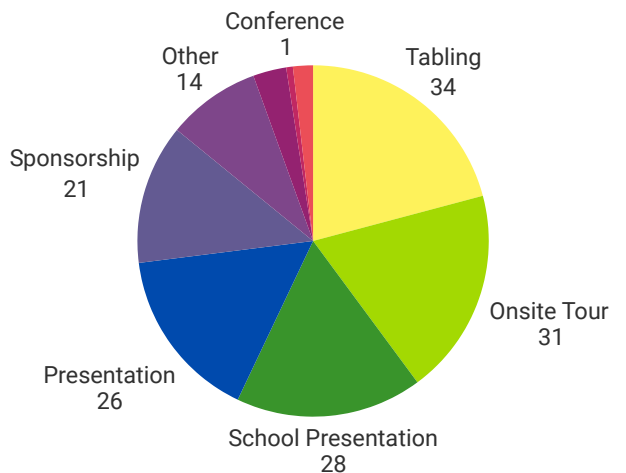
ecomaine Communities Reached FYTD



Educational Reach (# people) 6,165 FYTD



Completed Events by Type 155 FYTD





eco-Excellence Awards 2026

Submissions for Review

Rating Deadline: April 8, 2026 at 12pm | Discussion: April 9, 2026 at 4pm

Committee members are encouraged to review and **submit ratings by 12pm on Wednesday, April 8**. These non-binding ratings will be compiled by ecomaine staff to help guide the selection process.

Submit your ratings here:

<https://forms.gle/hGVZVVGLNgMhxard9>

Questions? Contact Dillon Whitton at whitton@ecomaine.org or (207) 523-3124

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Rating Criteria

The eco-Excellence Awards recognize individuals, organizations, and communities that are making meaningful contributions to sustainable waste management across our region. Open to nominees ranging from individuals and businesses to schools, community groups, multi-family housing leaders, and municipalities, these awards celebrate efforts that advance recycling, composting, waste reduction, and environmental stewardship. The selection committee evaluates nominees based on the effectiveness of their impact, their ability to raise awareness and inspire others, and the potential for their work to be replicated or scaled. Together, these criteria highlight innovative, practical solutions that help build more sustainable communities.

Eligible Categories:

- Individual
- Business
- Non-Profit, Community Group, or School
- Multi-Family Housing Leader
- ecomaine's Municipality of the Year

For this year's awards, the selection committee should consider:

- **Relevance to Sustainable Waste Management**
 - Preference is given to nominations that are focused on recycling, composting, waste reduction, and other sustainable waste practices.
 - Projects that integrate these practices into daily life, business operations, or community programs are highly encouraged.
- **Effectiveness**
 - The nominee's actions or programs produce measurable or clearly observable positive environmental outcomes.
 - Examples could include waste reduction, increased recycling or composting rates, energy savings, or demonstrable improvements to local communities.
- **Increasing Awareness**
 - The nominee actively educates, engages, or inspires others in the community about sustainable practices.
 - This could involve outreach campaigns, workshops, volunteer programs, or innovative communications that motivate behavioral change.
- **Ease of Replication**
 - The nominee's approach can be adopted or adapted by other individuals, organizations, or communities.
 - Efforts that are scalable, cost-effective, or creatively designed to be shared.

Individual Category

Nominees recognized for their personal commitment to sustainability, recycling, waste reduction, and environmental stewardship. Rate each nominee 1–5 where 5 = most aligned with the award criteria.

Jean Smith

Piper Shores, Scarborough

Q1: Sustainability Efforts & Community Impact

Jean has worked diligently through the Piper Shores resident community and amongst staff to support proper waste disposal, ranging from recycling best practices to soft plastic recycling via Trex.

Q2: Education, Inspiration & Engagement

Jean regularly attends resident events within the Piper Shores community to promote proper waste disposal, answer questions, and provide general education to residents on what goes where.

Q3: Changes & Signs of Progress

Jean's enthusiasm and dedication has made a real difference. Finding a resident who can serve as a resource to others has been key to the community's success and may be a replicable model for other communities.

Isaiah Sorrell

Cumberland

Q1: Sustainability Efforts & Community Impact

As part of his school's new recycling initiative, Isaiah consistently collects recycling, including paper and returnable bottles and cans, as part of his vocational skills training.

Q2: Education, Inspiration & Engagement

Isaiah communicates his responsibilities to each classroom as he collects recyclables. He is well liked by students and staff alike, and inspires others with his outgoing personality and excitement about recycling.

Q3: Changes & Signs of Progress

The school had no recycling program prior to the 2024/2025 school year. Isaiah's efforts have helped start and sustain this program within the school community.

Kelly Greenlee

Cumberland

Q1: Sustainability Efforts & Community Impact

Kelly is the Community Outreach Librarian at Prince Memorial Library in Cumberland and an incredible advocate for sustainability. Her portfolio includes Repair Fairs, Junk in the Trunk free-

cycling events, clothing swaps, visible mending workshops, flexible plastics recycling, a Library of Things program, and hosting EcoMaine educators, all fostering learning and community connection for participants of all ages.

Q2: Education, Inspiration & Engagement

Kelly develops, plans, and executes a wide range of sustainability-focused events. Highlights include two successful Repair Fairs (a third is planned in collaboration with Yarmouth Public Library), Junk in the Trunk free-cycle events, a new Gear Swap, a Thrift and Sift Clothing Swap series, a Visible Mending workshop, and coordination of PML’s Library of Things lending program.

Q3: Changes & Signs of Progress

Collaborating with Kelly has driven increased attendance and engagement, with participants coming from well beyond the two communities PML serves. A neighboring library has asked to attend her next Repair Fair, a clear sign her model is spreading. Her efforts have meaningfully expanded opportunities for community members to reduce, reuse, repurpose, and recycle.

Claire Carter

Freeport High School

Q1: Sustainability Efforts & Community Impact

Claire is president of the Earth Club at Freeport High School. She led the club in identifying and executing a project to replace plastic silverware with reusable metal utensils in the school cafeteria, a goal that was successfully achieved last month.

Q2: Education, Inspiration & Engagement

Claire is an exceptional young leader. She sets meeting agendas, communicates professionally with adults in the building, and led the club in designing a presentation to the principal and director, as well as posters to communicate the transition to the broader school community.

Q3: Changes & Signs of Progress

Freeport High School has moved away from single-use plastic utensils. The transition is still early and the club continues to meet, discuss challenges, and propose solutions, showing persistence and commitment beyond the initial win.

Kathryn Flynn

Portland

Q1: Sustainability Efforts & Community Impact

In her 11th year as retail store manager at Sea Bags, Kathryn is the front-line communicator of the company’s mission, telling the story of repurposing over 10,000 sails per year to hundreds of thousands of visitors and customers from Maine and around the world.

Q2: Education, Inspiration & Engagement

Kathryn has built a team culture around storytelling and sustainability, training staff to share the Sea Bags mission in their own words. She conducts outreach to area hotels and volunteers with local women’s retail organizations to spread the message further.

Q3: Changes & Signs of Progress

Sea Bags uses every bit of reclaimed sailcloth, whether for totes or gift tags, keeping materials entirely out of landfills. Kathryn communicates this commitment clearly and enthusiastically to every customer who walks through the door.

Aaron Witham

University of Southern Maine

Q1: Sustainability Efforts & Community Impact

As Director of Sustainability at USM, Aaron has introduced initiatives including the Green to Go Program, the Mindful Move Out Program, blue waste stations, sustainable transportation advocacy, and active involvement in ensuring new campus buildings pursue LEED certification. He also leads the campus arboretum map project and a pollinator garden on the Portland campus.

Q2: Education, Inspiration & Engagement

Aaron leads USM's sustainability program, fostering a biodiversity and zero waste team, working with students on sustainable transportation, and collaborating with construction teams on green building practices. He also helped relocate the Free Store, which has seen roughly 500 more participants than in prior semesters.

Q3: Changes & Signs of Progress

USM has significantly reduced its waste and seen growing campus-wide participation in sustainability initiatives under Aaron's leadership.

Josh Bossin

Portland/Brunswick (Maine Gear Share)

Q1: Sustainability Efforts & Community Impact

Josh has committed himself to diverting usable outdoor equipment from the waste stream by advocating for and offering outdoor gear repair, a service that was previously not accessible in the area. By teaching these skills he is creating the next generation of skilled sewists and repair technicians.

Q2: Education, Inspiration & Engagement

Josh spends much of his time spreading the word that repair is possible and that there are alternatives to throwing out damaged equipment. He hosts numerous events in his role as Director of Maine Gear Share and speaks on panels and does advocacy through organizations like Maine Outdoor Brands, the Common Ground Fair, and many more.

Q3: Changes & Signs of Progress

Miles of nylon material that would otherwise be buried in a landfill is living second and sometimes third lives because of the repair work and upcycling Maine Gear Share takes part in under Josh's direction.

Edward Caron

Town of Topsham – Solid Waste Director

Q1: Sustainability Efforts & Community Impact

Ed Caron is Topsham's Solid Waste Director, beginning his career there in 1984 when the town still had a landfill. He has enthusiastically embraced recycling and stewardship programs both for their environmental benefit and as a method to reduce costs to taxpayers. He has worked to transform the town's former landfill into a recreation destination through partnerships that stock ponds for fishing and maintain mountain bike trails and a pump track, and was recently part of the effort to plant a pollinator garden on the landfill cap.

Q2: Education, Inspiration & Engagement

Ed instituted Topsham's monitored recycling program, allowing staff to educate residents on which materials can be recycled as they bring them to the transfer station, resulting in high-quality recyclables with little contamination. He began composting yard waste thirty years ago and has developed refined methods, including chipping compost during the process to produce a high-quality finished product residents look forward to taking home each spring. He has been passing these techniques on to his expected successor.

Q3: Changes & Signs of Progress

In addition to traditional recyclables, Ed has undertaken programs to divert other materials from the waste stream including kitchen waste, and stewardship programs for paint, light bulbs, and batteries. He accepts returnable bottles which earns the town hundreds of dollars a month, and maintains informal programs such as setting aside durable medical equipment for community members who may need it.

Business Category

Nominees recognized for integrating sustainability into business operations, culture, and community engagement. Rate each nominee 1–5 where 5 = most aligned with the award criteria.

Whaleback Nursery

Limington, ME

Q1: Sustainability in Operations & Culture

Whaleback Nursery grows and sells native and edible perennial plants that support biodiversity, soil health, and resilient landscapes. Sustainability is woven into daily operations through pot and tray reuse, on-site composting of organic plant debris, chickens that process food scraps and contribute to the compost system, and a practice of sourcing reclaimed materials from junkyards for farm infrastructure.

Q2: Measurable Environmental Results

The nursery contributes to measurable impact by replacing conventional lawns and ornamental plantings with native and food-producing perennials, reducing mowing, fertilizer, pesticide, and irrigation needs while improving rainwater infiltration and soil health. On-farm practices including container reuse, composting, and material salvaging further reduce waste across operations.

Q3: Employee, Customer & Community Engagement

Whaleback engages customers through plant sales, landscape consultations, and informal education on transitioning to low-maintenance, biodiverse yards. The nursery also hosts community events like plant sales and seed swaps, creating space for people to share plants, seeds, and knowledge around ecological land stewardship.

Reverie Coffee House

Brunswick

Q1: Sustainability in Operations & Culture

Reverie Coffee House partners with Maine Compost Co. to compost all coffee grounds and food waste generated at the shop. They offer a discount to customers who bring reusable cups, provide in-house mugs for dine-in customers, and participate in the Okapi reusable cup program, where customers download an app, pay a small fee, and scan a QR code to receive their drink in a reusable mug that can be returned to the shop within two weeks and cycled back into use.

Q2: Measurable Environmental Results

While specific diversion numbers are not yet tracked, Reverie recognizes that consistent, everyday practices, from composting to reusable cup programs, add up to meaningful impact over time.

Q3: Employee, Customer & Community Engagement

Reverie uses clear, visible signage throughout the shop to guide customer behavior, including Okapi program signs and QR codes, compost bin guidance near the trash area indicating what

can and cannot be composted, and a register sign reminding customers of the reusable cup discount.

Diversified

Portland

Q1: Sustainability in Operations & Culture

Diversified embeds sustainability into daily operations through a structured, data-driven approach guided by Global Sustainability Goals for 2030. In partnership with Honeycomb Strategies and the HIVE platform, the company tracks waste, emissions, and resource use across its global events portfolio. Key initiatives include reusable signage, digital alternatives to printed materials, recycled carpet programs, and collaboration with vendors and venues on recycling and composting outcomes. Internally, a Sustainability Champions network and Sustainable Event Certification Program equip employees with tools to implement sustainability onsite, supported by a Green Thread sustainability newsletter.

Q2: Measurable Environmental Results

Using the HIVE platform, Diversified has established baselines and is actively measuring waste diversion, emissions, and material usage. Through their partnership with Bonneville Environmental Foundation, the company purchased 3,884 carbon offsets from 2008 to 2026, including 1,578 between 2024 and 2026. Diversified owns a solar energy asset that generated over 1.8 million kWh of renewable energy in the past year, avoiding nearly 2 million pounds of CO2 emissions.

Q3: Employee, Customer & Community Engagement

Employees are engaged through Green Week, Day of Caring volunteer days, and Lunch and Learn sessions with sustainability partners. The Sustainability Champions program empowers staff across events to share best practices globally. Externally, exhibitors and attendees receive sustainability messaging and tools to minimize booth waste. Many events coordinate donation programs for surplus food and materials, often in partnership with organizations like Matterbox.

Lots for Tots

Falmouth and Scarborough

Q1: Sustainability in Operations & Culture

Lots for Tots recycles children's clothing and makes it more affordable for parents to clothe their children. The store serves as a donation station for recycled Raising Readers books for the Book Fairy Pantry Project, accepts items that Maine Needs cannot process and donates the proceeds back to Maine Needs to purchase essentials, and donates unclaimed goods to nonprofits including Apparel Impact and Goodwill. Every item that comes through their doors that does not sell is donated to the community.

Q2: Measurable Environmental Results

Lots for Tots reduces waste by paying cash for used clothing, books, toys, and baby equipment, which actively encourages people to sell rather than discard their used items.

Q3: Employee, Customer & Community Engagement

By buying and reselling needed items, Lots for Tots not only reduces waste but keeps money circulating in the local economy. Their culture of finding homes for all unsold items is an inspiring and replicable model for other local businesses.

TipToe Eco Marketplace

Kennebunk

Note: Five nominations were submitted for TipToe. This entry combines all responses.

Q1: Sustainability in Operations & Culture

Sustainability is built into the core of TipToe Eco Marketplace, whose mission from conception has been to help the community tread more lightly on the planet. TipToe offers bulk refills of carefully researched products that avoid greenwashing, a freebie library of sanitized jars so customers don't need to bring containers from home, and goods from a curated collective of local makers whose products avoid plastic and harmful synthetics. Consigners whose packaging is not sustainable cannot sell at TipToe, and producers must change their process to be green before their products are carried. The store also sells refillable soaps, lotions, and beauty supplies in glass containers, and works with closed-loop suppliers who accept returned and reusable packaging.

Q2: Measurable Environmental Results

For every 5-gallon returnable and reusable bucket or bladder ordered, 40 single-use 16oz plastic containers are diverted from landfills. With three years and counting of re-ordering through these types of suppliers, TipToe has saved thousands of wasteful containers from disposal. The store also stocks organic bags that extend the life of produce by an average of two full weeks, reducing kitchen food waste.

Q3: Employee, Customer & Community Engagement

Customers are regularly offered eco-friendly tips in a welcoming, non-judgmental way. TipToe offers a variety of sustainability classes to the community and accommodates special topic requests. Staff are deeply knowledgeable about every product carried and the story behind it, creating an educational shopping experience that connects customers to the broader sustainability mission.

Scrap Dogs Community Compost

Rockland, Thomaston, South Thomaston, Owls Head

Q1: Sustainability in Operations & Culture

ScrapDogs Community Compost is a food scrap collection and composting service founded in 2018 with the goal of diverting food waste from landfills and incinerators while strengthening the local food system in Maine. Based in Rockland, ScrapDogs serves a growing number of coastal communities from Belfast to Wiscasset and along the Kennebec River from Waterville to Gardiner, including the ecomaine communities of Rockland, Thomaston, South Thomaston, and Owls Head.

Q2: Measurable Environmental Results

ScrapDogs composted 1.2 million pounds of food waste from their 800 subscribers in 2025, up from 1.05 million pounds in 2024, a 15% increase year over year. The resulting compost returns important nutrients and microorganisms to local farms and gardens, improving soil quality, increasing plant growth and biodiversity, supporting healthier local food production, and reducing water runoff.

Q3: Employee, Customer & Community Engagement

ScrapDogs engages customers through a newsletter and farmers market stands in Rockland and beyond, sharing composting tips and updates on new services. The team enlists volunteers to help collect lobster carcasses and corn cobs at the annual Rockland Lobster Festival. For the broader community, ScrapDogs now offers free self-service drop-off centers at several municipal waste transfer stations.

Non-Profit, Community Group & School Category

Nominees recognized for their organizational commitment to sustainability, environmental education, and community impact. Rate each nominee 1–5 where 5 = most aligned with the award criteria.

Seeing for Ourselves

Cape Elizabeth

Q1: Mission & Sustainability Initiatives

Seeing for Ourselves trains marginalized individuals to document their lives and concerns photographically, amplifying underrepresented voices through gallery exhibits, film, and social media. Their current initiative, Picturing My Climate Future, trains high school students in Cape Elizabeth and across the country to document environmental change in their communities and envision sustainable futures. The project has earned support from multiple foundations and expanded to partner groups in the Bay Area and Chicago.

Q2: Measurable & Observable Community Impact

The Cape Elizabeth pilot was covered by the Portland Press Herald and exhibited at Thomas Memorial Library, coinciding with the town's Climate Action Plan development. A short film about the project won several awards. The full documentary, My Climate Future, was completed in February 2026 and premiered March 12 at Patagonia's Freeport store. The project has also been featured by Maine Conservation Voters and covered by climate thought leader Circle of Blue.

Q3: Engaging & Educating Around Sustainability

Seeing for Ourselves partners with aligned environmental organizations in Maine and nationally to elevate youth voices on climate change. By centering young people in the public conversation, the initiative builds climate literacy, civic engagement, and community connection around sustainability.

Intercultural Community Center

Westbrook

Q1: Mission & Sustainability Initiatives

The ICC empowers immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Greater Portland through education, social services, and cultural programs. Sustainability is a core value embedded across programming, from pollinator habitat restoration and trail adoption on the Presumpscot River Trail, to composting all food scraps from daily meals, eliminating disposable dishware entirely, and distributing over 8,000 pounds of surplus food annually through The Locker Project. Their theater, Shark Tank, Muralist, Fashion, and Sewing clubs all repurpose donated and discarded materials, teaching students that waste is a creative resource.

Q2: Measurable & Observable Community Impact

ICC has eliminated thousands of pieces of disposable waste annually by switching to reusable plates, cups, and silverware for all meals. Their composting program diverts hundreds of pounds of food scraps from landfills each year. Last year's theater production used 95% repurposed materials. The Locker Project partnership has redirected over 8,000 pounds of

surplus food from landfills annually. Over 100 youth are engaged in sustainability programming each year, with ripple effects into their families.

Q3: Engaging & Educating Around Sustainability

ICC uses hands-on, project-based learning so students don't just learn about sustainability, they live it daily. Students build pollinator houses, conduct citizen science, maintain trails, and create informational signage for park visitors. ICC partners with Maine Audubon, Portland Trails, Friends of the Presumpscot River, and local land trusts to connect their immigrant community to Maine's broader conservation network.

Cape Elizabeth Recycling Committee

Cape Elizabeth

Q1: Mission & Sustainability Initiatives

The Cape Elizabeth Recycling Committee provides community education and outreach on recycling through a variety of strategies, including a bottle shed charitable donation program and food waste reduction efforts. One of their most impactful initiatives is the twice-yearly zero-waste Clothing Swap, organized by Jenna Pfueller in partnership with Thomas Memorial Library, an event that grew from COVID-era front yard swaps into a widely anticipated community tradition now in its sixth successful iteration.

Q2: Measurable & Observable Community Impact

Each swap draws hundreds of participants from Cape Elizabeth and surrounding communities, with dozens of volunteers sorting donations the day before and staffing the event. Remaining items are carefully sorted and distributed to Maine Needs, Goodwill, Salvation Army, Apparel Impact, and the town's own Swap Shop, ensuring virtually nothing goes to waste. The event directly addresses textile waste, which grew from 1.7 million tons in 1960 to over 17 million tons in 2018 and now represents roughly 10% of all landfilled waste in the US.

Q3: Engaging & Educating Around Sustainability

The swap model is low-cost, replicable, and deeply community-driven, with racks, hangers, mirrors, and decorations often coming from and returning to the town Swap Shop. At each event, Recycling Committee members share information on recycling options, the importance of reducing and reusing, and how to keep clothing out of the trash.

Avesta Housing

Portland

Q1: Mission & Sustainability Initiatives

Avesta is a nonprofit providing safe, affordable housing and supportive services. Sustainability is central to their work, exemplified by 409 Cumberland Avenue, a property featuring energy-efficient design, high-performance building systems, and a rooftop garden that reduces stormwater runoff, improves building efficiency, and creates urban green space for residents.

Q2: Measurable & Observable Community Impact

409 Cumberland Avenue demonstrates measurable environmental benefits through energy-efficient insulation and building systems that reduce heat loss and lower energy consumption,

alongside a rooftop garden that manages stormwater and reduces heat absorption, all while maintaining affordability and resident comfort.

Q3: Engaging & Educating Around Sustainability

Avesta partners with Cultivating Community, Wayside Food Pantry, Garbage to Garden, and ecomaine to integrate sustainability into daily resident life, supporting urban gardening, food waste reduction, composting, and recycling education directly within the building community.

Wells Reserve at Laudholm

Wells, ME

Q1: Mission & Sustainability Initiatives

The Wells Reserve's mission is to understand, protect, and restore coastal ecosystems in the Gulf of Maine through research, stewardship, environmental learning, and community partnerships. They were the first nonprofit in Maine to generate all their electricity needs through solar arrays.

Q2: Measurable & Observable Community Impact

The Wells Reserve has permanently conserved undeveloped coastal land, established a New England-wide invasive marine species monitoring program, and created the first Blue Crab Network, a research collaboration tracking the expansion of blue crabs into New England as ocean temperatures rise. Their work is published in academic journals and regularly covered in local media.

Q3: Engaging & Educating Around Sustainability

The Reserve engages audiences from pre-K students to retirees through expert talks, workshops, educational camps, and stewardship programming. Their research, education, and stewardship departments work in concert, monitoring estuaries, managing 2,500 acres of land, and guiding communities on protecting undeveloped coastal parcels like the recently acquired Goodwin Marsh.

Thomaston Grammar School Grade 5

Thomaston

Note: Two nominations were submitted for Thomaston Grammar School Grade 5 and have been combined into one entry.

Q1: Mission & Sustainability Initiatives

After reading Trash Vortex, Thomaston Grammar School's 5th graders spent a week collecting, sorting, and graphing single-use breakfast plastics from 9 classrooms. They repurposed cereal bowls as seedling starters, spoons as plant markers, and sandwich bags as mini-greenhouses. On March 11, 2026, they hosted a school-wide Plastic Pollution Showcase, inviting students, staff, parents, and school board members to learn about plastic pollution.

Q2: Measurable & Observable Community Impact

The Plastic Pollution Showcase reached the entire school community and drew strong attendance. Next, the students will present their science boards at a televised RSU 13 School Board meeting. Students throughout the school are now actively discussing plastics and seeking ways to reduce and reuse them.

Q3: Engaging & Educating Around Sustainability

The 5th graders' mission is to shift the mindset of their home, school, and community around single-use plastics. Their peer-to-peer outreach, family engagement, and school board presentations demonstrate that youth voices can drive real institutional and community change.

The Book Fairy Pantry Project

Statewide, Portland

Q1: Mission & Sustainability Initiatives

The Book Fairy Pantry Project is a grassroots family literacy movement that collects new and gently used children's books and delivers them to food pantries and WIC offices for families in need. The project operates entirely on donations and volunteer labor, requiring no ongoing funding, and incorporates sustainability through the sorting and recycling of damaged books and the use of youth volunteers for collection and logistics.

Q2: Measurable & Observable Community Impact

By operating without formal funding and relying entirely on community donations and volunteers, the project sustains itself as a truly circular model. Damaged books are sorted and recycled rather than discarded, and the decentralized structure allows each food pantry location to operate independently and grow organically within their community.

Q3: Engaging & Educating Around Sustainability

The project mobilizes youth volunteers for collection, delivery, sorting, and shelving, creating meaningful community engagement around reuse and resource sharing. Volunteer parent support enhances the experience for families receiving books, strengthening connections between sustainability, literacy, and community care.

PSL STRIVE

South Portland

Q1: Mission & Sustainability Initiatives

PSL STRIVE takes pride in recycling across many of its locations and uses a composting service through Garbage to Garden at several sites. The organization encourages students to bring and use reusable water bottles and provides them to students who don't have one. Reusable plates, cups, and silverware are used as the default, with compostable and eco-friendly paper products used only when necessary. Eco-friendly cleaning supplies are used as much as possible throughout operations.

Q2: Measurable & Observable Community Impact

Students participate in collecting and sorting recyclables across many programs. An ecomaine grant funded a garden project and recycled art project. Students are now learning to market sustainability information as a micro-business, sharing what they've learned on the agency's social media, through presentations, videos, and newsletters. An art show featuring recycled art is also planned.

Q3: Engaging & Educating Around Sustainability

PSL STRIVE has hosted several workshops and presentations by ecomaine representatives and facilitated facility tours that have inspired students to learn more about recycling at home. Students participate in community cleanups, picking up litter in the neighborhood, and are learning to raise plants in a raised bed garden.

Multi-Family Housing Leader Category

Nominees recognized for implementing sustainable practices across multi-family residential properties, improving recycling access, and engaging residents in environmental stewardship. Rate each nominee 1–5 where 5 = most aligned with the award criteria.

Foreside Estates

Falmouth, ME

Q1: Sustainable Practices at the Property

Foreside Estates is actively working to increase accessibility to recycling and boost resident engagement and education. Current efforts include evaluating proposals to swap out a waste dumpster for a recycling receptacle and add recycling options at each location where a trash dumpster is currently placed, making recycling and waste disposal available side by side throughout the community.

Q2: Resident Education & Encouragement

One single-stream receptacle is already in place. Plans are underway to host community events and add signage and materials to encourage proper participation. Proposals developed in coordination with their hauler, Troiano, reflect a phased approach to expanding access and making recycling as convenient as possible for residents.

Q3: Practicality & Replicability

Foreside Estates intends to use this effort as a pilot program, with the goal of applying lessons learned to their other Portland and Scarborough communities. Dumpster audits conducted by ecomaine in December identified clear missed opportunities, such as cardboard, cans, and plastics ending up in waste bins, reinforcing that greater accessibility and education could significantly reduce contamination and increase diversion rates.

Randy Levangie, Sanford Housing Authority

Sanford, ME

Q1: Sustainable Practices at the Property

Beginning in July 2025, the Sanford Housing Authority partnered with ecomaine to launch a recycling initiative across its properties. Randy Levangie, SHA's Maintenance and IT Director, moved quickly to get appropriate dumpsters in place, secured a new recycling hauler, and pivoted infrastructure at older adult properties to bring dumpsters inside trash rooms to improve accessibility for tenants. What began as a pilot at 2 properties totaling 61 units has expanded to all SHA multi-family properties, now serving 173 units of older adult tenants.

Q2: Resident Education & Encouragement

ecomaine drafted a workplan covering community room presentations, door-to-door material distribution, and resident communications. Randy set up all meetings and was present to address tenant questions and concerns directly. His trusted relationship with tenants helped generate genuine buy-in before the program officially launched, and staff enthusiasm further reinforced resident participation.

Q3: Practicality & Replicability

Randy's approach demonstrates that trust, accessibility, and flexibility are the keys to success. Keeping pathways to dumpsters clear during a heavy snow year, having custodians collect recycling at the 62-and-older property, and prioritizing easy participation over perfection all contributed to the program's rapid expansion. Residents felt empowered and that their efforts were making a meaningful environmental impact.

Portland Housing Authority

Portland

Q1: Sustainable Practices at the Property

Portland Housing Authority has implemented a practical, community-centered approach to sustainability across its properties, including expanding waste diversion, strengthening recycling systems, and advancing eco-friendly building standards including passive house principles. PHA's Green Policy, approved by commissioners in 2014, spans all properties and focuses on reducing energy consumption, lowering water usage, improving indoor air quality, reducing waste through recycling and green purchasing, and using technology to monitor energy use. PHA has installed rooftop solar panels on ten multi-family buildings providing 250 units of affordable housing, saving nearly 1.8 million pounds of CO2 emissions over 10 years. PHA's first modular homeownership project, which generally produces 75% less wood and drywall waste, was recently completed.

Q2: Resident Education & Encouragement

Residents are engaged through newsletters, push notifications, and building-specific guidance on waste reduction and recycling. PHA begins with listening, surveying residents to understand their specific trash and recycling challenges and shaping education accordingly. Partnerships with neighborhood organizations strengthen outreach, while community cleanups and beautification activities led by CHEETAH interns and mentors create direct opportunities for resident stewardship.

Q3: Practicality & Replicability

PHA's model relies on a coordinated combination of resident feedback, clear communication, property-specific education, and community partnership. Tools such as newsletters, mobile notifications, site-specific signage, and resident engagement activities are accessible approaches that can be adopted by a wide range of housing providers. By pairing education with visible amenities, local partnerships, and opportunities for resident involvement, PHA has created a model that is both realistic to implement and capable of producing lasting impact.

Municipality of the Year

The following communities have been selected by ecomaine staff based on gathered metrics including recycling rate, outreach activity, sustainability initiatives, and multi-family recycling engagement. Rate each municipality 1–5 where 5 = most aligned with the award criteria.

Sanford

Population: 22,247 | Recycling Rate: 27.2% | Years with ecomaine: 4 years

Outreach FY26: National Night Out, transfer station kick-off, Sanford Housing Authority presentation, YMCA Senior Center compost and sustainable gift wrap presentations, Sanford Middle School presentations and Green Team presentation.

Sustainability Initiatives: Diverting textiles with Apparel Impact (134 tons in their first year), Sanford Energy Redevelopment Corridor Solar Project.

MFRI: Sanford Housing Authority pilot programs at the Maples and Mayflower Place have diverted nearly 1,800 lbs of recyclable materials in just a few weeks.

Topsham

Population: 9,560 | Recycling Rate: 12.17% | Years with ecomaine: 1 year

Outreach FY26: Intern on-site facilities tour, kickoff event, virtual recycling facility tour with Topsham Homeschool Co-op, virtual facilities tour and composting presentation at Woodside Elementary, Crusher Assembly at Williams-Cone School, meeting with MT. Ararat for district-wide composting, upcoming library presentations.

Sustainability Initiatives: Apparel Impact partnership, large-scale transfer station composting project sold to community members, 2025 Topsham Climate Action Plan and GHG accounting, Energy Committee, new conservation sites.

MFRI: Upcoming meeting with The Highlands senior living property.

South Portland

Population: 26,994 | Recycling Rate: 25.9% | Years with ecomaine: 50 years

Outreach FY26: Waste Reduction Committee Repair Fair and meetings, STRIVE PSL presentations, STRIVE PSL school grant for composting and gardens, on-site tour with South Portland residents.

Sustainability Initiatives: Share Shed of electric tools, Reuse Maine pilot program in businesses, Waste Reduction Committee, Waste Reduction Committee Repair Fair, community composting and curbside pickup.

MFRI: South Portland Housing Authority (124 units, planning underway).

Freeport

Population: 8,877 | Recycling Rate: 27.8% | Years with ecomaine: Owner

Outreach FY26: Green Me Up Girl Scout Earth Day Event sponsorship, Freeport Library Sustainability Committee presentation, Freeport Waste Fair, Freeport Grange Earth Day, grant with Freeport High School for reusable cutlery.

Sustainability Initiatives: New Environmental Services Coordinator, Composting for Community, Sustainability Advisory Board, sustainable coastal farming at Wolfs Neck Farm, Climate Action Plan 2024.

MFRI: No current involvement.