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WEATHER:  
Mostly sunny  
High 72°  
Details, B8

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On land and at sea, Maine’s chaplains tackle climate anxiety

Faith leaders are increasingly looking for ways to address people’s spiritual needs in the face of a warming planet.

By SEAN SCOTT  
The Maine Monitor

As a maritime chaplain with Seafarer’s Friend, a 200-year-old New England organization, Thomas Kircher boarded vessels from Portsmouth to Seaport. Many of the men he met onboard came from other countries on three- to

nine-month stints. Kircher offered a quiet ear, listening to their struggles with isolation, as well as practical support, helping them send money home to their loved ones. In every conversation, Kircher had a go-to question: How’s the weather been out at sea? Research shows that

climate change has led to more frequent marine heatwaves and more intense storms, among other changes, according to NASA. The seafarers Kircher worked with had more immediate concerns than a warming planet, he said, but they all had stories of bigger waves and stronger winds. This summer, Kircher retired from Seafarer’s Friend to focus more on climate advocacy within faith communities, joining other

faith leaders in Maine who are putting more emphasis on addressing people’s spiritual needs in the face of a warming planet. According to a 2022 survey by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, one in 10 Americans reported experiencing consistent symptoms of anxiety because of climate change, with almost as many reporting symptoms of depression. Please see **CHAPLAINS**, Page A5



Liz Parsons of Portland (center), a member of the BTS Center’s Board of Trustees, leads participants in a reflection during the center’s 2024 Convocation. (PHOTO COURTESY ALLEN EWING-MERRILL/THE MAINE MONITOR)

Weather dampens weekend plans, but not drought

Most of Maine received about an inch of rain.

By SOPHIE BURCHELL  
Staff Writer

Rainy weather brought only limited relief to Maine over the weekend, and put a slight damper to end-of-summer plans. The Portland area and most of Maine received about an inch of rainfall overall, with some isolated thunderstorms in York County bringing the total rainfall closer to two inches, according to the National Weather Service in Gray. While the rain did alter outdoor plans for Mainers, many persisted as they tried to squeeze the last drops of summer from the season. In Portland, the Deering Center Porchfest was officially canceled by organizers due to Sunday’s wet weather, yet bands still played on covered porches and out of garages throughout the neighborhood as the rain cleared. While Porchfest organizers did not get the 3,000 attendees they anticipated after canceling the organizational side of the event, the turnout of the hundreds from the neighborhood and bands organically finding spots to perform across Deering Center exemplified the spirit of the original Porchfests over 10 years ago, said organizer Charlie Shattuck-Heirdorn. “The part that was canceled was the organization. The part that was not cancelled is that we are in community and we can do what we want,” said Shattuck-Heirdorn. “This is exactly what Porchfest is,” he said.

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‘THIS IS HOME. THIS IS FAMILY’



Kiwinik Dana, a member of the Penobscot Tribe, dances during the Community Days gathering of the Houlton Band of Maliseets in Littleton on Saturday. Dana was the youth male head dancer at the gathering. (PHOTOS BY GREGORY REC/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

Houlton Band of Maliseets celebrate history, traditions



Isaac Sylaboy, the head adult male dancer at the Community Days gathering of the Houlton Band of Maliseets in Littleton on Saturday, dances under a tent after rain moved the dances under cover. “We don’t want that floor to ever be empty, and it’s our job to make sure that someone’s always dancing, whether it’s just us or getting other people in there,” Sylaboy said.

By REUBEN M. SCHAFIR  
Staff Writer

LITTLETON — The bingo tent was always full. Intermittent rain showers — some light, some torrential — sent attendees of the 45th Annual Metaksonekiyak Community Days ducking for cover throughout the day. Some gathered under the main tent, where Wabanaki dancers stepped in rhythm to one of the six drum groups in attendance. Trash bags used to hood the speakers and keep the rain off flinched with each emphatic beat. Other people dipped into the market space, where artisans sold beadwork, children’s books, jewelry and baskets. The rain seemed to keep people away, said Bonnie Murphy, a Mi’kmaq beader from Presque Isle. Business wasn’t as

good Saturday as she would’ve hoped. But even during breaks in the weather, the bingo daubers were never laid to rest. The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians’ annual community days is a family reunion of sorts, attendees said. “This is home. This is family,” said Alan St. Jean, of Monticello, with a chuckle. “I’m related to 90% of the people sitting around here.” St. Jean left his hometown on the Canadian border for central Maine when he was 18. He is a member of the Houlton band of Maliseets as well as the Saint Mary’s First Nation in New Brunswick. It was his culture, he said, that brought him back home six years ago.

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Newry couple’s plans to extract lithium-rich ore remain ‘on hold’

Changes to Maine’s mining law didn’t go far enough, said Mary and Gary Freeman, who in 2021 discovered a lithium deposit on their land estimated to be worth \$1.5 billion.

By CHRIS D’ANGELO  
The Maine Monitor

It was more than a year ago that Maine regulators approved final changes to Maine’s 2017 mining law, capping a yearlong process that was designed to clear the way for the development of a lithium-rich deposit in the western part of the state. So far, the overhaul has done little, if anything, to

inspire Mary and Gary Freeman, the owners of the land in Newry where the deposit was discovered in 2021, to move forward with a small-scale spodumene mining operation. Mary Freeman told The Maine Monitor in an email that the project remains “on hold.” “Unless the price of

spodumene soars, the costs to remove it under current regulation is prohibitive,” she said. “The mining regulations in Maine are not designed to promote environmentally safe extraction but rather to ban mining.” Last year’s rules-change, which the legislature, Gov. Janet Mills and state regulators all signed off on, allows for would-be developers of certain metallic minerals, including spodumene, to apply for

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Mary and Gary Freeman stand in their test pit in the woods of Newry, surrounded by spodumene crystals. (GARRICK HOFFMAN/THE MAINE MONITOR)

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