

# Morning Sentinel

## Green groups target toxic toys

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AUGUSTA -- Sandra Armington of Hallowell is worried about children who play with rubber duckies.

A registered nurse and mother, Armington said Thursday that some duckies contain phthalates, which are chemicals linked to hormone problems and learning disabilities.

"In my work as a pediatric nurse, I see the effects of toxic chemical exposure and I am frustrated by how many of these dangerous chemicals continue to be used when safer alternatives are already out there," she said at a Statehouse press conference.

Armington and others came to the Capitol to speak in favor of five bills they support this legislative session. The Environmental Priorities Coalition, 25 groups that represent 100,000 people, organized the event to talk about five major issues.

Armington spoke about a bill that requires manufacturers to disclose the use of certain chemicals in toys and other children's products. It also authorizes Maine to require safer alternatives if they are available.

On another issue, Bobby Monks, a developer from Cape Elizabeth, spoke on behalf of a bill that provides an expanded state historic tax credit.

Monks currently has a 300,000-square-foot mill in Biddeford under contract that he hopes to renovate into housing, business use and retail.

But his project, and others that seek to find new uses for old buildings, would not be able to go forward without state help, he said.

"The cost of doing nothing will be far greater than the cost of the bill," he said.

Environmental groups like the bill because it prevents sprawl.

Another effort aimed at developers would set a mandatory residential energy building code. Maine is one of only six states nationwide that does not have a building energy code for new home construction, according to the coalition.

The bill is important because it helps consumers save money on heating costs, and reduces the amount of global warming emissions released into the atmosphere, they said.

Another carbon dioxide bill would require new coal-powered plants to meet new emissions standards.

The groups also are supporting a bill to open fish passage facilities at two dams to help alewives on the St. Croix River.

Dwayne Shaw, executive director of the Downeast Salmon Federation, said he wants lawmakers to overturn a 1995 decision that he believes hurt the alewife population.

"The time has come to remove the barriers and to allow alewives to access their native spawning habitat, the same waters that they have used for millennia," he said.

And finally, the coalition wants to make sure no existing environmental laws are weakened.

"The six issues that the Environmental Priorities Coalition have come

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together to champion during the short legislative session will take us one step closer to providing a healthy and sustainable environment for our children," said Maureen Drouin, executive director of the Maine League of Conservation Voters.

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