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An Act To Create the Maine Natural Resource and Environment Efficiency Commission

CONCEPT DRAFT SUMMARY

This bill is a concept draft pursuant to Joint Rule 208.

This bill proposes to create the Maine Natural Resource and Environment Efficiency Commission, referred to in this concept draft as "the commission," to methodically review the structure and operations of all state natural resources and environmental agencies and propose specific reforms to eliminate duplication and inefficiency. The specific elements of the commission are as follows.

1. The commission consists of 12 bipartisan members appointed jointly by the Governor and the leaders of the parties of each House of the Legislature with the largest number of members in each House and the second-largest number of members in each House. The members must be from the general public, be respected and known for their independent-mindedness and have expertise in natural resources, environmental policy, planning, administration, economics and engineering.

2. The goal of the commission is to ensure coordinated and unified natural resources conservation and environmental protection policies to support sustainable prosperity and quality locations in the State.

3. The commission is empowered to:

A. Hire top-quality expert staff to conduct and subcontract sophisticated program analysis, manage information flows and prepare reports;

B. Investigate and identify sources of administrative inefficiencies, program overlap and inefficiencies in the delivery of services;

C. Develop a coherent set of reforms to streamline, reconfigure and improve the performance of state natural resource and environmental agencies and programs to yield about \$2,000,000 to \$6,000,000 a year in budget savings; and

D. Develop criteria for evaluating state natural resources and environmental agencies with the assistance of the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability, including criteria for administrative efficiency, program quality and effectiveness, potential overlap within and between state natural resource and environmental agencies and other state or local agencies or programs and overall cost-benefit concerns.

4. The commission would receive an appropriation of \$425,000 with which to hire staff and carry out its purposes.

5. Savings from the implementation of commission recommendations must be apportioned, with 75% going to reduce property taxes and 25% going to the acquisition of lands for the protection and preservation of biological diversity and rare, unique or endangered species.