



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

PO Box 88  
Belfast, ME 04915  
Phone: (207) 761-5616  
[www.sierraclub.org/maine](http://www.sierraclub.org/maine)

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
From: Philip E. Mathieu  
Date: March 17, 2023  
Re: **Testimony in Support of LD 993: An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input  
Regarding Forest Policy in Maine.**

---

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry:

My name is Philip Mathieu. I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nationwide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. In support of that mission, **we urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 993: An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine.**

I was born in Portland but spent most of my childhood in the Sacopee Valley region of Maine and the Mount Washington Valley region of New Hampshire. Like so many Mainers, I grew up in the woods. I remember getting up for school a few minutes early this time of year to collect the sap buckets off of the maple trees before getting on the bus. While I don't do much maple sugaring living in an apartment in Portland today, I maintain my connection to the forest by taking walks in Baxter Woods, admiring the chickadees scouting for nesting sights in the front yard, and taking weekend hiking and skiing trips to Rangeley, Millinocket, and beyond. Forests are as central to my identity as a Mainer today as they have ever been.

I support LD 993 because I want to ensure that forests continue to serve Maine as sanctuaries of biodiversity, sources of sustainable forest products, sinks of carbon dioxide, and scenic expanses attracting tourists and recreators to our state. Creating a Forest Advisory Board would unite representatives from the public, commercial, and non-profit sectors in an advisory capacity that can help chart a course for the future of our forests.

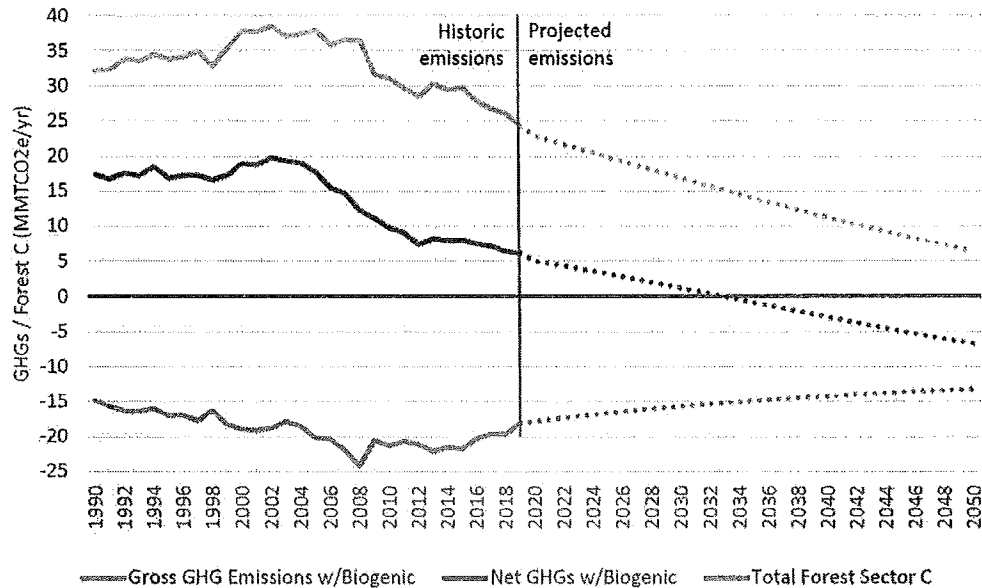
In particular, Sierra Club Maine believes this bill would help address the following threats to our forests:

- **Climate Change.** The figure on the following page shows the most recent projections<sup>1</sup> for Maine's carbon budget, which estimates statewide carbon emissions and sequestration. In order to "balance" the carbon budget, Maine is largely

---

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Air Quality, Maine Department of Environmental Protection. 2022. *Ninth Biennial Report on Progress toward Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals*. Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources 130th Legislature, Second Session. Augusta, Maine.

dependent on our forests to act as a net carbon sink, buying us time to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in other sectors and someday allowing Maine to reach carbon neutrality or better.



Recent research<sup>2</sup> has suggested that our forests could sequester upwards of 20 percent more carbon without reducing their value as working lands, but achieving such goals requires a forum for conversation between state regulatory agencies, representatives of the forest products industry, and conservation organizations holding easements on working lands.

- **Biodiversity Loss.** Maine’s forests form the heart of the Acadian forest. This forest is the largest continuous forest east of the Mississippi<sup>3</sup> and makes up the northern extent of the largest remaining interior temperate forest in the world.<sup>4</sup> Maine’s forest is home to over 139 rare plant and animal species.<sup>5</sup> This includes three old-growth forests, defined as forests that have been untouched for at least 150 years, including the beautiful forests on the shores of Eagle Lake, some of which may have been standing there when Henry David Thoreau visited the area in 1857.<sup>6</sup> Maine has been able to maintain this level of biodiversity in part due to the ongoing

<sup>2</sup> Walker, Tom, Adam Daigneault, R. Alec Giffen, Erin Simons-Legaard, Jeanette Allogio, Laura Kenefic, Aaron Weiskittel, and Zoë Lidstrom. 2023. *Can Northern Maine’s Commercial Forests Store More Carbon Without Reducing Harvests?* Forest Carbon for Commercial Landowners Report. Littleton, MA: New England Forestry Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> The National Wildlife Federation. *Northern Forest*. Wildlife Guide: Wild Places.

<sup>4</sup> Riitters, K., J. Wickham, R. O’Neill, B. Jones, and E. Smith. 2000. *Global-scale Patterns of Forest Fragmentation*. Conservation Ecology 4(2):3.

<sup>5</sup> McMahon, Janet. 2016. *Diversity, Continuity, and Resilience: The Ecological Values of the Western Maine Mountains*. Phillips, ME: Maine Mountain Collaborative.

<sup>6</sup> Bennett, Sheila and Dean. 1994. *Natural History Guide to the Allagash Wilderness Waterway*. Bureau of Parks and Land, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

willingness of the forest products community to work with scientists and conservation experts to protect the most important forest areas and reduce the impact of forestry activities in other areas. Nevertheless, a Forest Advisory Board would facilitate a broader, more open dialogue that can amplify these efforts.

- **Changing Economies.** Maine's forests have always been an important part of our economy, but the range of forest landowner groups has never been larger. Portions of our forests are still owned by the same families that owned them a century ago, while others have changed hands multiple times in the last decades, particularly during the real estate churn spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, Maine's 2020 Forest Action Plan notes "rapid demographic and generational change in family woodland ownership,"<sup>7</sup> a group that accounts for roughly 30% of our forest acreage. A strong Forest Advisory board could help to chart a course through growing development pressure and disruptive business models that could otherwise put both our forests and the communities they serve at risk.

While both the threats and opportunities are real and significant, it is important to keep in mind that this bill proposes not a drastic change in regulation or a fundamental shift in administrative responsibilities, but the creation of an overarching forum that can advise the Maine Forest Service, other state agencies, private groups, environmental organizations, and the public at large. The intent is not to belittle or duplicate the hard work of our state agencies, but to offer a place for stakeholder input that expands beyond the existing opportunities.

Maine has advisory councils for marine resources, fisheries and wildlife, and climate, but none of these have the scope necessary to encompass the breadth of services and values that our forests provide. As one of Maine's single most valuable resources, it is time that our forests had an advisory board of their own.

Sincerely,

Philip E. Mathieu

Portland, ME

30x30 Team Volunteer Co-Lead

Sierra Club Maine

---

<sup>7</sup> Mansius, Donald J. 2020. *Maine Forest Action Plan 2020*. Maine Forest Service, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. Augusta, ME.