



Senator Peggy Rotundo
Representative Melanie Sachs
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
5 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Senator Stacey Brenner
Representative Lori Gramlich
Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
100 State House Station
Augusta ME 04333

February 16, 2023

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, and the distinguished AFA Committee, Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and the ENR Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed biennial budget. The Appalachian Mountain Club wishes to express support for full funding of the vital work of the Department of Environmental Protection.

The DEP is charged with preventing, abating, and controlling the pollution of our air, water, and land; with preserving, improving, and preventing the diminution of the natural environment; and with protecting and enhancing the public's right to use and enjoy our natural resources. This is a solemn charge.

Today a rapidly changing climate threatens our livelihoods, from crop loss and disrupted growing seasons, to the rapidly warming Gulf of Maine and its impact on marine ecosystems and seafood landings, to less reliable winters that reduce opportunities for winter recreation. More frequent extreme weather events damage both personal property and public infrastructure. We must act.

At the same time, the globe is experiencing a dramatic loss of biodiversity, the variety of plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms that is the basis of life on earth. For example, the populations of both insects and North American birds have dropped dramatically since the 1970's. Pollution and habitat loss are two contributing factors.

Thus, the DEP's work is essential to our health and safety, our quality of life, our economy, and our future. To carry out that important work requires that the agency be both fully funded and fully staffed.

We understand that numerous staff vacancies hinder the department's ability to carry out its charge. For that reason, we support the numerous position reclassifications that we hope will improve the DEP's



ability to attract and retain qualified employees. We also urge you to fully understand the scope of the vacancies and to support measures to address them.

Climate change and biodiversity loss demand immediate action. For the sake of your constituents, Maine's economy, and all of our children and grandchildren, we ask that you do all in your power to ensure that the state agencies responsible for our natural resources are fully funded and staffed.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the people of Maine.

Sincerely,

Eliza Townsend
Maine Conservation Policy Director