

Maine



Rivers

**OUR MISSION IS TO
PROTECT, RESTORE AND
ENHANCE THE ECOLOGICAL
HEALTH OF MAINE'S RIVER
SYSTEMS**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LANDIS HUDSON

PROJECT MANAGER

MATT STREETER

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHUCK VERRILL
PRESIDENT

JEFF REARDON
SECRETARY

CURTIS BOHLEN
TREASURER

NICK BENNETT
DAVID COURTEMANCH
GREG D'AUGUSTINE
SUSAN P. DAVIES
DAN GAYER
DAN KUSNIERZ
RICK LAWRENCE
SHARRI VENNO

**P.O. Box 782
YARMOUTH, ME 04096**

PH: 207-847-9277

CONTACT@MAINRIVERS.ORG

WWW.MAINRIVERS.ORG

April 24, 2023

RE: LD 1621 An Act Regarding Environmental Justice

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and members of the Environment and Natural Resource Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to share our enthusiastic support for LD 1621. We support the goal of requiring fair and equitable access to Maine Department of Environmental Protection decision-making processes for environmental justice populations and frontline communities. We urge you to support and fund thoughtful and comprehensive efforts to make meaningful progress in this direction. We acknowledge that it will not be easy. The creation of an Environmental Justice Advisory Council could be a productive step in this direction and as well as creation of an Environmental Justice Community Engagement Plan.

Our neighbors in Massachusetts have been making progress to implement Environmental Justice goals into programs with measurable outcomes. We've seen that their work to translate ideas into actions has been assisted by the creation of maps that show how "environmental justice population" definitions translate into meaningful information for many aspects of Massachusetts DEP's permitting, siting and planning work. Similar efforts would certainly be useful in Maine. Information on MA work can be found these links:

<https://www.mass.gov/environmental-justice>

<https://masseoea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=535e4419dc0545be980545a0eeaf9b53>

In 2021 Maine Rivers wrote the following statement to share our thoughts on rivers, history and our common future:

Justice, Equity, Equality, Health

As we reevaluate the mission of Maine Rivers in this time of pain and turmoil, we recognize that the destructive impacts that colonization and industry have on our rivers also degrade and destroy human life. We recognize that these impacts have been more profoundly destructive on the lives of vulnerable and marginalized people, on the lives of Black people and Native Americans.

Many of the original pre-contact place names along our rivers and streams are how lost, changed during Maine's brutal colonial history. The Royal River that runs through Durham and Yarmouth retains that name of the Royall family whose grim legacy is bound

and tarnished by the wealth they made through the enslavement and trafficking of humans.

We see that the forces that dammed, diverted and polluted our rivers have also dislocated people from their historical lands, degrading and destroying lives. We remember the Abenaki Chief Polin who in 1739 walked to the seat Maine's government, then in Boston, to make a case for his people to have access to the Presumpscot River which he called "the river to which I belong." Promises were made but not kept. Chief Polin was later murdered by Europeans settlers and much of his history lost.

We aspire for our work to restore river health to benefit all. We believe that access to clean water and access to the natural world are basic human rights. However, we recognize that these basic rights that are not shared by all, even in Maine, a state rich in clean water and natural lands.

We realize that there is strength in working to work for a common future with clean water and restored fisheries. We know that the successes of the Penobscot River restoration work came about because of the vision and advocacy of the Penobscot Indian Nation. The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and the Passamaquoddy Tribal Governments of Indian Township and Sipayik are leaders in efforts to restore fish passage in their respective watersheds, the Meduxnekeag and the Schoodic/St. Croix.

While we work to bring back life to our waterways, we acknowledge that we are working within systems that have excluded the voices and experiences of many. We commit to advocating to reduce the impacts of climate change in a way that no community disproportionately carries the costs. We aspire to bring more diverse voices into our river restoration efforts, we commit to finding opportunities to advocate together for our rivers and for environmental justice.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our strong support for LD 1621. We urge you to support work in this important realm and make sure that efforts are funded at necessary levels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Landis Hudson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Landis Hudson
Executive Director