

RAY OWEN

Orono

LD 2007

To: Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Please accept my testimony in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for the Wabanaki Nations

I worked closely with the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy Nations as Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife under then Governor Angus King, and I saw firsthand their long tradition of conservation and stewardship of the land and waters we all share. I am glad to see increased emphasis among state lawmakers in restoring rights to our Wabanaki neighbors.

Indigenous people are the original conservationists of what we now call Maine. They are the original stewards of this land. Four hundred years ago they opened their arms to our ancestors. We lived and continue to live side by side with them as neighbors. Their heritage and our heritage are intertwined. The tribes are the ones who are our greatest allies in protecting our outdoor heritage.

I worked closely with the Penobscot Nation to restore the Penobscot River. If it wasn't for the Penobscot's then Director of Natural Resources, John Banks, the project would have failed. His calm, thoughtful leadership instilled a sense of community within the divergent parties. They began to think of themselves as part of the river system, not as the domineering force. The Wabanaki people consider themselves to be part of the forests and rivers, almost a spiritual relationship, when considering resource management options. We can learn much from them.

I don't question the motivations of those who negotiated the 1980 land settlement – but as times change, so should we and the laws that govern us. I urge members of the Judiciary Committee to enthusiastically support LD 2007. It's time for us to be better partners with our Wabanaki neighbors as they seek equal treatment under state and federal law.

Ray (Bucky) Owen

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