

Jeremy Sheaffer
The Wilderness Society
LD 2007

Testimony in support of LD 2007, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary From: Jeremy B. Sheaffer, 9 Union Street, Hallowell, ME 04347, The Wilderness Society

Senator Carney, Representative Harnett, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Jeremy Sheaffer, Maine State Director, The Wilderness Society (TWS). I am submitting testimony in support of LD 2007 on behalf of thousands of TWS Maine members and supporters. TWS has been active in Maine conservation for more than a quarter century, and during that time, we have rarely submitted testimony to the Maine legislature, preferring instead to provide the necessary education/resources for our members, supporters, local partners, and stakeholders to be the collective voice before this body. That said we believe there is a moral imperative to stand up, organizationally, and be counted as full-throated supporters of Wabanaki sovereignty and LD 2007.

The Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) not only relinquished title and legal rights to the Wabanaki's ancestral lands but it also, for all intents and purposes, removed Wabanaki sovereignty through MICSA's application of the municipality model. As a result of ambiguity in section 6206 of the MICSA the courts have issued multiple opinions that adopt varying interpretations of the "internal tribal matters" question. Because of the Court's inconsistent treatment of section 6206, no definitive precedent on what an "internal tribal matter" is has ever been established. As a result, the MICSA has disenfranchised and stripped the Wabanaki people of their bargaining power and ability to exercise tribal autonomy, and --for more than forty years --Wabanaki have been prevented from benefiting from over 150 federal laws designed to support tribal health and self-determination in addition to restrictions and complicated regulations imposed by the Implementing Act that are not experienced by the other 570 federally recognized tribes. It's time to remedy this injustice.

TWS strongly urges you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2007.