

Nels Liljedahl
Fryeburg
LD 138

Testimony Regarding :

LD 138 An Act to Exempt Airports from Certain State Endangered and Threatened Species Habitat Protections.

Greetings Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and ENR Committee Members,

My name is Nels Liljedahl, I live in Fryeburg, ME and I am testifying in opposition to LD 138 "An Act to Exempt Airports from Certain State Endangered and Threatened Species Habitat Protections".

I am very familiar with the town owned land that the Eastern Slope Regional Airport leases from Fryeburg, as I wrote the Open Space Plan for Fryeburg and have been serving on the Fryeburg Conservation Committee for many years. This land is 560 acres that is very rich in terms of habitats that are home to a very many threatened and endangered species. These include Pitch Pine/Scrub Oak Forest, Outwash Plain Pond Shore Community and Prime Wetlands. The two ponds on this site are of the type that are very rare, with only 5 occurrences in Maine. Please refer to the attached map produced by Beginning with Habitat.

Unfortunately, I am not surprised that this bill has been developed and being attempted to push forward, as the Eastern Slope Regional Airport Committee has been degrading this property for many years. The following is a brief synopsis:

- Attempts to work with Poland Springs to establish a plastic bottling plant on the site. This required town approval and was overwhelmingly rejected by Fryeburg voters in a very large voter turnout and was defeated at a ratio of 3 to 1 against.

- An illegal clearcut of the Pitch Pine/Scrub Oak Habitat of 9 acres, including degradation of the Outwash Plain Pond Shore Community surrounding Round Pond. They were eventually cited by DEP, and the only recourse was for the airport to have a Habitat Management Plan developed. They were not fined in any way for this illegal activity.

- Despite much public opposition, they received Planning Board approval to clearcut 40 acres of a very beautiful and rare white oak forest to construct a solar farm, despite many other areas in town that would be suitable.

- They were recently granted approval by DEP to do a runway extension that will destroy .99 acre of Prime Wetland and encroach on the buffer of the Outwash Plain Pond Shore Community, which is globally rare. I was on the field visit of this with many biologists working for the State of Maine and they all recognized the unique qualities of these areas but were not fully able to protect them and the permit was granted.

All of the above degradations have occurred even with environmental constraints established by law. It makes me shudder to think of what might happen in the future without these laws!

This Airport Committee has a very poor track record of stewarding this land. It appears that they are fully disregarding any recommendations of the Habitat Management Plan they were forced to adopt and are now doubling down by getting State Legislators and Senators to sponsor this bill that spits in the face of all citizens that value nature and especially threatened and endangered species. I do not think it is any coincidence that the sponsors are from both Sanford, Berwick and Fryeburg, as the Eastern Slope Regional Airport is the same one that manages the Sanford Airport. It is obvious that the few people that stand to make money from the outcome of this bill are behind it and are willing to sacrifice the common good for the rest of the citizens and the environment.

Please keep in mind the benefits to all the citizens in the State of Maine, and not just a handful of people.

Thank you,
Nels Liljedahl