



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

PO Box 3760  
Portland, ME 04104  
Phone: (207) 761-5616  
[www.sierraclub.org/maine](http://www.sierraclub.org/maine)

To: Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
From: Matt Cannon, State Conservation & Energy Director, Sierra Club Maine Chapter  
Date: January 27, 2025  
Re: **Testimony in Opposition to of L.D. 138: *An Act to Exempt Airports from Certain State Endangered and Threatened Species Habitat Protections***

---

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and the members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members and supporters nation-wide. We urge you to thoughtfully consider the proposal before you, and are opposed as it stands today.

L.D. 138 seeks to fix legislation that is not broken. The Maine Endangered Species Act (MESA or "the Act") has been successfully protecting endangered species in our state since its passage in 1975. Under MESA, the State has worked collaboratively with a diverse array of stakeholders to ensure that competing interests are weighed fairly as we seek to protect our state's most vulnerable wildlife. And as climate change and continuing habitat destruction place increasing pressures on Maine's threatened and endangered species, keeping preserving the integrity of MESA will be more important than ever.

Supporters of this bill are quick to reference anecdotes, but seem to lack any comprehensive proof that this is the only solution to our problem. For example, one testifier relayed a sequence of events that took place at Sanford Airport. While we acknowledge the legitimate concerns raised about deer management, we question the conclusion that the only possible solution to a conflict over mowing schedules is complete elimination of protection for all endangered species at all airports statewide.

While public safety is paramount, exempting airports from MESA protections is not a reasonable solution to addressing past or future human-wildlife conflicts. Maine can ensure safe airport operations through science-based wildlife management and collaboration, without sacrificing our commitment to protecting endangered and threatened species.

In fact, airports can still meet safety requirements without blanket exemptions from endangered and threatened species protections. Agencies including ME DIF&W and the USDA frequently work with landowners to mitigate these risks. Airports already have well-established programs to

manage wildlife hazards under the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations. The particular nature of the habitat on airport property is already tackled by federal programs. Exempting airports from MESA at large begins a dangerous conversation of what other special types of properties should be exempted from the Act. This bill may have severe consequences pertaining to the lasting integrity of MESA.

We encourage this committee to oppose this bill and instead focus on finding ways to support land managers in finding ways to comply with MESA, not exempt themselves from it. Now is not the time to weaken one of Maine's fundamental environmental laws, and for that reason **we strongly encourage the Committee to oppose this bill.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

Matt Cannon  
State Conservation & Energy Director  
Sierra Club Maine