

Erik Heumiller
Biddeford
LD 183

I do not support LD 183. With roughly 94% of Maine's land being privately owned, and I do not believe there is any need for this.

Much of Maine's economy is driven by tourism, and setting caps like this can deter or undermine large blocks of publicly owned land that serve as ecotourism destinations for angling, hunting, hiking, cycling, birding, paddling, and more. These activities not only bring revenue to communities, but they also provide access opportunities for residents.

As more and more of Maine is developed, we also see increased pressure on wildlife to seek large blocks of undisturbed land — which are commonly found in the form of publicly owned land.

And the other side of development is the need for more affordable housing in Maine — which the market has shown it will not provide on its own — meaning publicly owned land is a needed option for affordable housing considerations. Capping the amount of publicly owned land only seeks to create further conflicts between wildlife/habitat protections and housing by making public land a limited resource and putting them in competition for a capped percentage of such land.

We as Mainers have always cherished the woods and waters of this state, and as local municipalities and community groups seek to conserve more land through easements in the hopes of protecting key wildlife habitat and recreational access for all — we should not be installing roadblocks to that process by eliminating the opportunity to secure that land through any means — be it Federal, State, or other local acquisition.

This bill only seeks to create a roadblock and further muddy the waters with another calculation to consider when trying to solve the complex needs of wildlife protections, recreation, and housing. I ask that you do not support this bill.