



Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

March 11, 2025

RE: LD 596, Resolve, to Provide Legislative Approval of Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure

Dear Chair Lawrence, Chair Sachs, and Members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee:

My name is Ania Wright and I am Maine Audubon’s Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation nonprofit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members, supporters, and volunteers thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 596: *Resolve, to Provide Legislative Approval of Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure*.

This resolve provides that, pursuant to the requirements of the 35-A MRS § 53132-6C, the Legislature approves the construction and operation of a high-impact electric transmission line and pertinent facilities to interconnect renewable energy resources in northern Maine with the electric grid operated by ISO-NE.

In order for Maine to meet our ambitious and necessary greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, we must significantly increase renewable energy development. New renewable energy generation at a scale necessary to meet those targets will require additional transmission capacity and development. But like all development, including all energy production, renewable energy resources and transmission impart their own ecological footprint and can have negative impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat, as well as cumulative impacts across ecologically significant landscapes.

Transmission corridors can have significant negative impacts on wildlife populations and habitats. Linear habitat alterations, like transmission corridors, cut the natural landscape into smaller pieces, which is problematic for species that need large unbroken blocks of habitat to thrive. For other species, fragmenting features may cut them off from important pieces of their habitat like breeding grounds or high quality feeding areas. Some animals are unable to traverse the opening—such as salamanders that

cannot cross a dry, open right-of-way on a hot summer day—while other species will not cross the opening because it makes them vulnerable to predators. These are just some of the negative impacts of transmission corridors on wildlife.

But transmission is necessary; we need to move renewable energy from where it is generated to where it will be used. Thankfully, many strategies exist to avoid or minimize these negative impacts, including¹:

- Avoiding rare, sensitive, and high value habitats, including important wildlife movement corridors (used daily, seasonally, or over a lifespan) and highly resilient landscapes;
- Prior to development, in order to avoid or minimize site-specific impacts, conduct surveys to identify and understand site-specific wildlife habitats;
- Locating projects near existing development;
- Evaluating potential cumulative impacts, considering existing development and potential for future development at a site; and
- Co-locating new transmission lines into existing right-of-ways, roads, or other existing man-made linear features.

The Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program² indicates the intention of the legislature to “encourage the rapid development of renewable resources in northern Maine to achieve greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the State and realize direct and near-term economic benefits in northern Maine,” among other goals. Providing approval for a high-impact transmission line and pertinent facilities advances the policy established in 35-A M.R.S. § 3210-I. LD 596 does not negate the necessary environmental review and permitting required for the construction of a transmission line, and any proposed line will have to comply with the requirements of a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) and Site Location of Development (Site Law) permit. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright
Policy Advocate

¹ Read more in Maine Audubon’s report “Renewable Energy and Wildlife in Maine: Avoiding, Minimizing, and Mitigating Impacts to Wildlife and Habitat from Solar, Wind, and Transmission Facilities” -

https://maineaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MaineAudubonRenewables_Wildlife2019Report.pdf

² 35-A M.R.S. § 3210-I