

March 12, 2025

Senator Tepler, Chair  
Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
Maine State Legislature

**Re: Testimony Related to LD226 Sears Island in Searsport by Extending Conservation Easement Protections”.**

Dear Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

I am a resident of Jefferson and am writing to you today to express my strong support for **“LD226 Sears Island in Searsport by Extending Conservation Easement Protections”.**

Sears Island is a treasure along the coast of Maine. Not only does it boast significant beauty, coastal forested wetlands and important habitat, it is a heavily visited natural area where people from the region come to access the coast. It has been proven time and time again, as well as being recognized by the Federal Government, that Sears Island should not be developed. Over 600 acres of the Island are already conserved and this bill would ensure the protection of the entire island for the good of the environment and the people of Maine.

Intact forests and ecosystems are the best tools for mitigating climate change, according to many reports, including the International Panel on Climate Change. The State of Maine’s Carbon Budget, Version 2.0 identifies forestland as the most significant factor removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere through carbon sequestration. Maine is, as of June 2024, nearly reaching its carbon-neutral goals ahead of the 2025 projections. The bulk of the carbon sequestration measured and confirmed in the reduction data comes from Maine’s forests.

Because of their age and biodiversity, the forests and wetlands in 2025 sequester 88,750 metric tons of carbon, the equivalent of 74,000 cars per year. By 2050 they will sequester 96,685 metric tons according to the Nature Conservancy’s land use mapping tool. Destroying forested acres and carbon sequestering wetlands and soils for wind power is counterproductive. The late succession forests naturally cool stream and bay waters and support natural fisheries, including cod nurseries, lobster, clam beds, and migrating fish including Atlantic salmon and sturgeon. Decades of collaborative work have gone into restoring the native fish runs on the Penobscot River, and conserving the entire Island enhances and supports those efforts.

The State has attempted for decades to develop this coastal treasure and while the Mill's Administration continues to beat the drum for scarring this part of the coast with destructive development, the federal government and the citizens of the region do not. Efforts to develop Sears Island have cost taxpayers over \$24 million over the years. The State of Maine has already spent nearly \$6 million on the current wind port effort; a project which is not supported by a majority of the community, is unlikely to meet the regulatory hurdles, cannot attract federal money, and relies on technology that is untested.

There are many ways to reach our renewable energy targets, but developing Sears Island is not one of them.

Thank you for your time,

Pete Nichols  
Jefferson