



Seven Islands Land Company

**Testimony in opposition of LD870
An Act Regarding the Membership of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC)
March 31, 2025**

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Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pleucker, and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Hannah Stevens, a resident of Glenburn, and Land Use Director of Seven Islands Land Company. I am writing in strong opposition to LD 870 – An Act Regarding the Membership of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission.

Seven Islands manages approximately 820,000 acres of forestland in Maine, with over 99% of those acres under LUPC jurisdiction. Our family of companies include a hardwood sawmill and a hardwood chipping facility, both in Aroostook County. Building on a long history of owner stewardship dating back to 1840, Seven Islands was incorporated in 1964, prior to LUPC's predecessor, LURC. Since the transition in 2012 from a *Regulation* to a *Planning* Commission, LUPC has included representation from those that have a direct interest and connection to the region for which they have jurisdiction, and the counties with the most land in the Unorganized Territory (UT) have the task of nominating all but one of the commissioners.

It is common sense that a planning entity is comprised of those who live or work in a region and for that input to matter most. We are strongly opposed to LD 870 as it will dilute local representation by increasing Governor appointments from one to five and replace jurisdictional residency or work requirements with technical or scientific background requirements. While input from professionals with pertinent expertise and knowledge is undoubtedly important for the Commission to consider, there is already a public input process in place for those conversations to occur, and the Commission can consult additional resources as needed. LUPC staff are also available to provide further technical support and guidance and routinely do so.

Because Commissioners are directly connected to the UT, they can put issues in context of the larger overall planning needs of the region, and impacts of decisions are much better understood. Those with these important links to the UT and its people should be the ones who plan for its future. LD 870 is a step backward, in that regard.

We are also concerned about the shortened period that county commissioners would have to fill vacancies. Thirty days to fill *any* vacancy with proper due diligence and process seems unreasonable, and counties would lose the ability to name appointees and again increase the number of Governor appointed members.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 870. Thank you for your consideration.

Hannah E. Stevens
Seven Islands Land Company