

Testimony of Tim Glidden in **SUPPORT** of
LD 1529, An Act to Enhance the Protection of High-value Natural
Resources Stateside

April 17, 2025

Good morning. Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee. My name is Tim Glidden. I live in Topsham, Maine. I regret that I am unable to be with you in person. I'm retired after a fifty-year career in the public, private and nonprofit sectors conserving the forest and other natural resources of this great state for our children and grandchildren. It was my privilege to serve as the Director of the Land for Maine's Future Program for ten years between 2001 and 2011 during a period of highly successful conservation work.

I'm testifying today in support of LD 1529. While I support the entire bill, I'd like to focus my remarks on the portions of the bill pertaining to the conservation of older growth forest through the Land for Maine's Future Program. I strongly encourage the committee to give great weight to the excellent testimony submitted by the bill's sponsor, Senator Bennett which addresses the other important aspects of the proposal.

As outlined in Senator Bennetts' testimony, the fraction of Maine's vast forests that can be characterized as "old growth" is already tiny (~3%) and diminishing. These stands represent essential elements of the full range of habitat and ecological types across Maine's landscape. Given the ongoing trend toward younger and younger forests, the likelihood of sustaining what remains of Maine's old growth is low. LD 1529 proposes a **nonregulatory** mechanism to conserve these essential resources through **voluntary** conservation projects (willing buyer-willing seller) funded through the Land for Maine's Future program.

The popular Land for Maine's Future Program, established in 1987, has long been the State's preeminent tool for establishing conservation priorities backed by funding for land conservation projects. This funding is

provided by Maine citizens who have enthusiastically supported these efforts in a series to bond issues passed with strong bipartisan legislative support.

The core purpose of the program is best captured in the following legislative statement:

“The Legislature declares that the future social and economic well-being of the citizens of this State depends upon maintaining the quality and availability of natural areas for recreation, hunting and fishing, conservation, wildlife habitat, vital ecologic functions and scenic beauty and that the State, as the public's trustee, has a responsibility and a duty to pursue an aggressive and coordinated policy to assure that this Maine heritage is passed on to future generations.” (5 MRSA sec 6200)

Over almost 40 years, LMF, in response to legislative guidance, has fine-tuned a set of conservation priorities that guide its funding decisions. These priorities in turn provide direction to the agencies, municipalities, and other partners, who identify conservation opportunities and negotiate specific land transactions. These priorities are not set in stone but have evolved over time in response to the program's experience and changing awareness of conservation needs. For example, in addition to the initial focus on “natural areas”, the Legislature added water access sites, farmland conservation and working waterfront protection as priorities. Relatively recently, the Legislature established a “preference” for projects that would conserve deer yards.

My point is that the Legislature has regularly refined its conservation priorities over the years. The LMF Board and staff have substantial experience in adapting to these changes. In some cases, separate application processes have been established. In other cases, the LMF Board has adjusted its scoring system used in evaluating funding proposals.

LD 1529 proposes a preference for late successional and old growth forests. Such a preference could be easily integrated into the LMF funding

process. It would send a clear signal to the State Agencies and the State's conservation partners that such projects are desired and that the success of conservation proposals would be enhanced if they included older growth forest stands.

LMF has had enormous success in conserving Maine's natural heritage for future generations. Adding the explicit goal of old growth forest conservation will only enhance this priceless legacy.

Thank you for your attention and the opportunity to present this testimony.