



Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry committee, my name is Jeff Romano. I am with Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) providing joint testimony with Kaitlyn Nuzzo of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in support of LD 1661.

Collectively, our two organizations own and steward more than 300,000 acres in Maine. The management of invasive species is a challenge we face on many of these properties, as we balance this work with other priorities including maintaining recreation infrastructure, protecting critical habitats, ensuring water quality, and restoring important ecosystem functions.

The benefit of effectively managing invasive species cannot be overstated. Too often these plants and animals proliferate uncontrollably across the landscape to the detriment of native species as they undermine ecological balances that have formed over centuries.

While we have had some success managing invasive species across our preserves, our landownership is a small fraction of the state's more than 19.7 million acres. LD 1661 presents Maine with an opportunity to take a more active role to proactively address the problem of invasive species. Through the coordinated response outlined in the bill, Maine can build upon the positive invasive management already occurring, ensure adequate communication between all involved, and inspire additional landowners to take this issue more seriously.

MCHT and TNC encourage the committee to vote in favor of LD 1661.

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*Maine Coast Heritage Trust seeks to advance the conservation of lands and waters in Maine to ensure ecological wellbeing and foster thriving communities. Over the past five decades, we have conserved more than 185,000 acres, including over 160 places open for traditional outdoor recreation.*

*The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together.*