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LD 1882

Testimony in Support of LD 1882 – An Act to Protect Vernal Pools  
Submitted by Sarah Cowperthwaite~Gardiner, MAine  
Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and distinguished members of the  
Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

On this fittingly rainy spring day—when many of Maine’s vernal pools are alive with the chorus of wood frogs and the graceful movement of salamanders—I am writing in strong support of LD 1882, legislation that would establish a 100-foot no-disturbance zone around significant vernal pools and close loopholes that currently permit harmful development too close to these critical habitats.

Though vernal pools may only appear to hold water for a short window in the spring and sometimes fall—often drying out by mid to late summer—their ecological value is immense and irreplaceable. These temporary wetlands support a remarkable diversity of life and play a vital role in the broader forest and watershed ecosystem.

Many species—such as wood frogs, spotted and blue-spotted salamanders, four-toed salamanders, and fairy shrimp—are vernal pool obligates, meaning they rely on these pools to successfully reproduce. Studies consistently show that their breeding success is significantly higher in vernal pools than in permanent waters, which often host fish that prey on eggs and larvae.

Sadly, amphibian populations across the Northeast and around the world are in decline, due in large part to habitat fragmentation and degradation. Maine has a special responsibility to protect the species that rely on these ephemeral ecosystems—many of which return to the same pool year after year, navigating hundreds of meters through forest habitat that is just as essential as the pool itself. The current regulatory buffer is insufficient to protect these species from the impacts of nearby development, pollution, and disruption.

LD 1882 is a long-overdue step toward ensuring these precious wetlands are not sacrificed piecemeal to development. By extending protection to the surrounding upland habitat and eliminating loopholes, this bill reflects sound science and a clear-eyed understanding of the interconnectedness of Maine’s natural systems.

I urge the committee to support LD 1882. Let us do our part to ensure that the spring songs of amphibians continue to echo through Maine’s woods for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah Cowperthwaite  
Gardiner, Maine