



Testimony before the  
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

By Molly Payne Wynne, Conservation Scientist

February 14, 2020

**Re: LD 2094 – An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act**

Senator Carpenter, Representative Bailey, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Molly Payne Wynne and I am a conservation scientist for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to testify on behalf of The Nature Conservancy **in support of LD 2094, An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.**

The Nature Conservancy is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. We have been working in Maine for more than 60 years protecting land, restoring rivers and streams, rebuilding groundfish populations in the Gulf of Maine, and developing innovative solutions to address climate change. We are also part of a global organization active in all 50 of the United States and across the world in over 70 countries.

Too often when it comes to the decisions that affect their lands, waters, and livelihoods, Indigenous Peoples have been denied the opportunity to participate in meaningful ways, resulting in the exclusion of important rights-holders from decision-making processes and in management approaches that do not consider the lessons and solutions offered by Indigenous Ecological Knowledge. As an organization committed to creating a future of healthy lands, waters, and communities, we believe that one of the most effective and enduring actions we can take is to strengthen Indigenous Peoples' voices, choices, and actions in natural resource stewardship. This is a major focus of TNC's work around the world.

Here in Maine, we continue to learn about the historical and ongoing injustices faced by the Wabanaki Tribes. We acknowledge the urgency of addressing these injustices, and we value the work of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act in developing a package of recommendations aimed at doing so.

As a land and water conservation organization, we are not in a position to comment on many of the specific recommendations made by the Task Force. However, as a whole, these recommendations represent an important step toward recognizing the rights to self-determination and sovereignty of the Wabanaki Tribes of Maine, which The Nature Conservancy strongly supports.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.