



Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

March 20, 2023

RE: LD 933, *An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine*

Dear Chair Ingwersen, Chair Pluecker, and Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee:

My name is Francesca Gundrum and I am Maine Audubon's Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat” by engaging people of all ages in nature through a science-based approach to education, conservation, and advocacy. On behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members and supporters, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 933, *An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine*.

As the most forested state in the nation, Maine holds an invaluable treasure that provides not just timber and other forest products, but clean air and water, extensive habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, and a myriad of recreational opportunities. Every spring, the Maine woods come alive with color and song. Bright warblers return from points far south to sparkle like jewels in the trees. Sturdy woodpeckers and hardy chickadees that stay in Maine all winter look for nesting cavities in dead or rotting trees. Stealthy thrushes hide in dense vegetation, though their resounding flute-like songs give their location away. The Maine woods fill with more than 90 different species of birds, many here for just three short months, to do one thing: make and raise baby birds.

Maine forests are known globally as “baby bird factories.” They provide a variety of habitats – places where animals find what they need to survive, including food, water, cover from predators, and a place to raise young. For birds, long days, abundant food, and excellent habitat make the Maine woods an ideal place to raise baby birds. In fact, the Maine woods are so important for our breeding forest birds that much of northern and western Maine has been designated a globally significant Important Bird Area by National Audubon and BirdLife International.



Maine forests harbor other important wildlife as well, including iconic species such as Moose, Canada Lynx, Bobcat, and American Marten – all of which need large relatively intact forests for their survival. Maine forests are also the last stronghold for wild Brook Trout in the eastern U.S. and the only state that still has wild Atlantic Salmon, both of which depend on clean, cool waters filtered and shaded by our forests.

We cannot take our forests for granted. All Maine people and visitors benefit from the forest products, clean air and water, fish and wildlife, carbon storage, and recreation harbored in these forests. They are treasured by landowners both small and large, private and public, for-profit and non-profit. At the same time, Maine’s forests face multiple threats, including climate change, drought, and fire; insects and disease; changing ownership patterns and changing markets for wood products; and conversion to development. We have a responsibility to the birds, communities, and economies who depend on our forests to think critically about policies that keep our forests healthy, intact, and productive.

That’s why we support the idea of bringing a variety of stakeholders together to periodically review the state of our forests, help develop public policies and management strategies, and provide input into the decadal update to the State Forest Action Plan. Establishing a Forest Advisory Board is one of many important steps that could help Maine keep our forests as forests, mitigate and adapt to climate change, ensure a future home for both rare and common species, and protect and enhance overall biodiversity. We urge the Committee to support this bill. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francesca Gundrum".

Francesca “Ches” Gundrum
Policy Advocate