



## **Testimony in Support of LD 993:**

### **An Act To Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine**

C. E. (Mac) McGinley, Legislative Affairs, Maine Council of Trout Unlimited

**Senator Ingwerson, Representative Plueker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry:**

My name is Mac McGinley, and I am here today on behalf of Trout Unlimited (TU), a national conservation organization whose mission is to conserve, protect and restore North America's trout and salmon and their watersheds. I am testifying on behalf of our 6 Maine chapters and over 2000 members in support of **LD 993: An Act To Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine.**

Like Maine's wildlife and fish, Maine's forests are a state resource of enormous value, critical to Maine's economy and quality of life. We are the nation's most forested state. Maine's forest is the largest unfragmented forested block east of the Mississippi; is critical to supporting the nation's last populations of Atlantic salmon and landlocked Arctic charr and most robust population of Canada lynx; supports the east's stronghold populations of moose, marten, brook trout, landlocked salmon and lake whitefish; and the largest expanse of dark sky in the East. Through a combination of long tradition and hard work to secure conservation easements, Mainer's enjoy better access to hunting, fishing and other forest-based recreation on private land than any state in the country. And it supports one of Maine's oldest industries, serving as a wood and fiber basket for the world. According to the Maine Forest Products Council, Maine's forests support an \$8 billion industry and more than 30,000 jobs. (2016) Whether we are "Vacationland," "The Way Life Should Be," or the birthplace of Paul Bunyan, Maine's forests are central to our identity, our economy and our way of life.

Unlike Maine's wildlife and fish, Maine's forests do not have any advisory body to seek the public's input and expertise on policy and management. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has a 10-member Advisory Council. The Maine Department of Marine Resources has a 13-member Advisory Council, and 7 additional Councils that focus on specific resources (lobster, seaweed, scallops, aquaculture, etc.).

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection and Land Use Planning Commission each have citizen boards to oversee permitting and rulemaking. For Agriculture, we have an Agriculture Water Management Board, a Maine Milk Commission, a Nutrient Management Review Board, and a Pull Events Commission.

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There is no equivalent for the Maine Forest Service and it shows. Three years ago, TU provided comments on both the DIFW's Strategic Fisheries Management Plan and the MFS's Draft Forest Action Plan. Input on the Fisheries Plan started way back in 2016, with a comprehensive angler survey, public meetings, a dedicated website, a Steering Committee, and eight Advisory Groups for specific fish species. The fisheries management plan has since been approved and published. Literally thousands of people were engaged, and dozens provided extensive comments throughout the process. The final plan is a much better product in part because of that public input.

By contrast, for the Maine Forest Action Plan, the Maine Forest Service put out a draft report on December 2 and asked for written comments just two weeks later on December 16.

This bill will establish an Advisory Board. Its functions are clearly established and are purely advisory. Unlike the DIFW, DMR, DEP and LUPC Councils and Boards, it will not have a formal role in rulemaking or permitting. Its role is solely to engage both experts and the general public to provide input and advice to the Maine Forest Service.

Thank you