



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
22 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

JANET T MILLS
GOVERNOR

AMANDA E BEAL
COMMISSIONER

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST LD 1886

Resolve, to Construct a New District Headquarters Building for the Bureau of Forestry in Fort Kent

May 15, 2023

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry My name is Robby Gross, I am the Chief Forest Ranger of the Maine Forest Service (MFS) at the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF)

We appreciate Senator Jackson advocating for support of resources for the Maine Forest Service Over the last few years, our Forest Protection Division has undertaken a study of facilities management in the Northern Region to establish priorities and efficiencies for our agency facilities Our goal is to continue to provide excellent mission-oriented services to the people of the State of Maine by ensuring that our facilities are in readiness condition, are in strategic locations for forest protection response, and are open to the public for key stakeholder and cooperator assistance

MFS identified three regional or district facilities within 25 miles of each other (Masardis District Office, Ashland Regional Office, and Portage District Office) and made plans to identify a property in the Fort Kent area to improve response and capability to Northern Maine A property was located for this purpose in Fort Kent, and 10 acres were purchased in 2018 adjacent to the airstrip in Fort Kent off of Airport Road In 2021, we began development of the site with construction of a 60x40 cold storage building for housing heavy and light wildfire response equipment

In 2022, MFS issued an RFQ and selected the firm Oak Point Associates to complete preliminary design work to identify several design options and features for a low-carbon emitting facility Last month, MFS finalized a contract with Oak Point Associates to complete the final design and provide post-design services With construction costs escalating over the last several years, the estimated budget for the construction phase is currently \$1.6 million, however, Oak Point Associates will need to finish their work on building specs before a final estimate will be available

The Fort Kent District Office effort has coincided with other past and current building infrastructure projects across the State, which includes 28 regional, district, and unit ranger facilities with multiple buildings During the current final design phase of the Fort Kent District Office, the Department anticipates working to identify a funding strategy that would fully address the anticipated costs of construction

Thank you, I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have

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