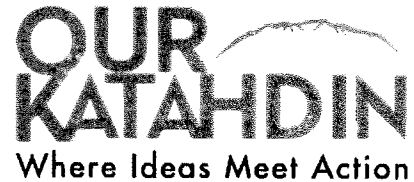


January 09, 2024

Our Katahdin
245 Aroostook Ave.
Millinocket, ME 04462



Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business
Cross Office Building Room 206

Re: Testimony by Our Katahdin in **SUPPORT of LD 1997: An Act to Implement Critical Reforms to the Department of Environmental Protection outlined in the State Covid-19 Reopening Plan**

Dear Senator Curry and Representative Roberts,

Our Katahdin welcomes the opportunity to express to Committee Members and legislators of the Senate and House our unreserved support of the efforts of the Department of Environmental Protection. We appreciate this opportunity to have our points noted and included in discussions emanating from this Committee meeting.

Over the years, Our Katahdin has worked closely with many professionals within DEP, including but not limited to, Brownfields; Water; Air and DEP's regional office in Bangor. In all cases we have found DEP personnel to be knowledgeable, professional, responsive and willing to engage in problem solving within regulatory boundaries. We sincerely appreciate the efforts made by DEP personnel to support projects bringing economic vitality to rural Maine.

Our Katahdin's economic development work brings us in contact with developers from overseas and all parts of North America, during engagements with developers, we hear contrasting experiences relative to the ease/difficulty of understanding environmental regulations from one jurisdiction to another. In the case of Maine regulations [**Note:** excluding actual statutory tolerances] a common concern is that there is uncertainty as to the length of time permitting will take from outline of a plan to final permit. A further expressed concern is the effect of multiple permit submissions pertaining to a single development, e.g., SLODA, Water Bureau permits, Air Bureau permits.

As with business in general, developers seek certainty to the degree possible regarding the likely timeframes from plan presentation to final receipt of all permits and the associated complexity and costs to proceed from start to finish of said permitting. We support LD 1997 because the draft legislation sets out to address issues that we believe will enhance the State's reputation of protecting the environment while not burdening developers of complex projects with unclear or variable timeframes and associated costs. We further support the establishment of a "ombudsman" within DECD or DEP to assist developers with coordinating and expediting the permitting process across all bureaus.

Finally, in small rural communities across Maine, towns like Millinocket, Bucksport, Lincoln, Sherman, Ashland, Jay and dozens of others spanning the state, local governments and economic development organizations need help to attract and facilitate commercial investment in former industrial areas – investments that can revitalize their communities and put people to work. Streamlining and facilitating the permitting process while continuing to strengthen the DEP is good for Maine's economy, its communities and its people. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Steve Sanders

Steve Sanders
Director of Mill Site Redevelopment
Our Katahdin