

## JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TECHNOLOGY

Sen. Mark Lawrence, Senate Chair

Rep. S. Paige Zeigler, House Chair

PUBLIC HEARING: Thursday, January 11, 2024, 1:15 PM, Cross Building, Room 211

(L.D. 1963) Bill "An Act Regarding the Future of Renewable Energy Transmission in Northern Maine" (SP0799) (Presented by President JACKSON, T. of Aroostook)

Testimony of Carl Wilcox, Minot, Maine

Dear Chairs:

Senator Lawrence

Representative Paige Ziegler

I'm Carl Wilcox of Minot, and previously 51 of my 61 years dating back to 1962 of New Gloucester where a transmission line constructed in 1967 passed through the family farm that became my farm in 1991 . I have nearly a half century of experience with a transmission line as my next-door neighbor slicing through the property I resided on.

I'm a professional engineer and until recently a farmer as well on the land that the transmission line bisects. I have lived nearly my entire life, as I currently do, in close proximity to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District line of separation – in the buffer zone. For years I commuted into Portland to work and on the weekend purchased farm supplies etc in greater Lewiston-Auburn. I have experienced both sides of the economic divide that exists in Maine.

Two miles through the woods from my former home of 51 years, which I sold 4 months ago, is the Surowiec substation the largest electrical station in Maine from which all power to the

west, north and east of Yarmouth going to or from southern Maine or southern New England must pass through. A 115 kv line, the Western Connector, was built through my then father's farm in 1967. It provides power to western Maine and a connection to New Hampshire. I have considerable experience living with a transmission line.

Prior to consideration of a new transmission line from northern Maine, the law passed 3 years ago banning offshore wind development in Maine's territorial waters that extend out 12 nautical which equal 13.8 statute miles should be repealed.

The Portland Press Herald January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 issue has an article discussing University of Maine's evolutionary biologist professor Tim Waring's recently published paper on the difficulty of the human race to address climate change.

Quote from Professor Waring's publication:

"humans will have to overcome the cultural evolution that has encouraged sub-groups of the population to pursue their own best interests while delaying action on shared priorities and avoiding the all out race for resources that can sometimes lead to war"

**There is absolutely nothing about Maine's energy policy that shares priorities.** The coastal wealthy elites, while benefiting most from energy do not share in the burden of providing energy. The 10% wealthiest result in 40% of all carbon emissions (Oxfam). Maine's energy policy is to shelter the coastal elites from the burden of providing their energy.

I have hiked the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Katahdin. In all the other states combined I recall seeing maybe two wind farms. Once you get to Maine you see a wind farm from every peak from the New Hampshire border to just south of Monson. Personally, I don't think they are yet at a level to be overly obtrusive. I'm sure others think differently. At what point they will become overly obtrusive to me I do not know.

Have you ever looked at a wind energy map of Maine? The sites on land that are suitable for wind farms look like ink dot art. Just specks spread across interior mountains and ridges.

Look at the same energy map at the coast of Maine. Close to coast within the 13.8 mile state waters shallow enough for fixed mount turbines (now going to a depth of 260 feet), from New Hampshire to Small Point at the east edge of Casco Bay the wind energy matches that of the Texas Panhandle which has over 40,000 megawatts of installed wind power. East of Small Point all the way to Jonesport the near shore, in shallow water (<200 feet), wind energy intensity increases to above the Texas high plains energy levels. The Maine coast has substantial near offshore area less than 200 feet deep for sea floor mounted wind turbines.

As of 2022 there was over 60,000 MW of offshore wind farms in the world. Of which 124 MW is floating wind turbines. Maine's energy policy to protect the wealthy coastal elites by pushing wind farms far offshore to make it too expensive to construct. It is a policy of ignore the bird in hand of near shore wind energy and go for the expensive two birds in a bush a mile distant.

Don't get me started on the phony lobster industry complaints about wind turbines. If they didn't participate in the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection for \$125 they can get a TWIC card (what is

required by truckers to make deliveries to ports or energy facilities) from the federal government and plop their traps at the base of the wind turbines and run the lines up the turbine tower. The right whales are not going to run into a wind tower and get entangled in the lines.

Shortly after 9-11 I worked a job strengthening the Portland Pipeline Pier in South Portland to allow larger tankers to off load. Being an energy facility, it is a restricted access facility. However, when the empty tankers left, we were told to look the other way when the lobstermen came to service their traps under the pier in the forest of piles. The divers working on the project said the area was crawling with lobsters drawn to cover provided by the pier piles.

Lobsters will love wind turbine towers for the cover from cod they will provide.

EMF (electric magnetic field) is bull shit. All Mainers with land abutting a transmission line should file a class action lawsuit against the Maine Lobsterman Association for perpetuating the myth about EMF. The earth's magnetic field is 300 to 500 milligauss. A 345 kv transmission line (the largest there is in Maine) produces about 60 milligauss EMF directly under the center conductor and about 20 milligauss at the edge of the ROW. The Maine lobstermen continue to falsely make claims that emf from wind turbine energy cables will destroy their industry.

It is not lost to me that it was just recently announced a new wind farm is going up in Columbia, Maine one town inland from the coast. The adjacent coastal town of Addison has twice the household median income of Columbia. There are plenty of places in Addison such

as its many small islands or shallow water to place wind turbines that would produce more energy than in Columbia. The burden of energy is placed on the backs of the poor.

The Record Hill energy project in Roxbury, a Rumford suburb, was initiated by Angus King. Through his political connections and help of Chellie Pingree he obtained a \$103 million federal loan guarantee for his project which resulted in a lower interest rate worth millions to his project. King sold the wind farm when he decided to run for the US Senate because politically it appeared unseemly that he was receiving a federal loan guarantee at potential tax payer expense worth millions. Record Hill wind farm is positioned 1.5 miles from year-round residences along state route 17. The turbines are on the ridge 1,200 feet above. The wind turbines themselves are 400 feet tall to rotor tip. The overall height of the wind turbines above the homes is 1,600 feet.

Repeal the coastal wind energy ban and replace it with the Angus King – Chellie Pingree set back rule of 1.5 miles from the closet year-round residence and limit the height to 1,600 feet. King and Pingree had no issue of foisting a wind farm 1.5 miles away extending 1,600 feet above the residences of hard working Maine income tax paying (unlike seasonal coastal homes of out staters) of Roxbury residents that work in the Rumford paper mill.

The current world largest wind turbines are 15 MW and extend 920 feet into the air. So the world's largest wind turbines 1.5 miles off the coast will be less obtrusive to coastal residents than the Record Hill turbines installed more than a decade ago.

The burden of renewable energy must be shared by all. We all float together or we all sink together. There is far more available near shore wind energy than all the suitable places on land in Maine. Coastal property owners need to pony up to the bar.

Repeal the ban and let wind turbines be installed anywhere outside of the 1.5 mile year round residence buffer and out of access ways to ports and let the free market capitalism decide if they want to create near off shore wind farms or wind farms in Aroostook County. There are two essentially unused major taps to the transmission line grid: Wyman Station on Cousins Island Yarmouth that is an oil fired plant that rarely runs and the closed Maine Yankee plant on the Wiscasset shore. Combined they have about 1,700 – MW of available transmission line capacity.

**Nearly half a century of Personal Experiences of living with a transmission line bisecting my property.**

1. There is no equality between the landowner and the firm acquiring the property by eminent domain to construct a transmission line.
2. Without representation, landowners are taken advantage of by transmission line developers.
3. There are many unforeseen future costs to abutters of transmission lines that result in unjust compensation to the landowner.
4. When a line is proposed, all the landowners should be able to sign on to a collective bargaining agreement with legal representation paid for by the transmission line

developer. The lawyers should be paid, like a restaurant's force gratitude tip, on the land sale, paid by the developer.

5. If the landowners feel the value of their remaining land will be devalued by the transmission line, which is a valid concern, the developer should be required to buy the entire property. Three independent appraisals can be obtained, and the developer required to pay the average plus 10 or 20%, and provide for free moving services within 25 miles. Provide a judicial appeal process for disagreements.
6. Currently the developer is only paying for raw land. All the transaction risk is placed on the current landowner. People do perceive EMF as a risk, how much they truly believe that or use that as a tool for their negotiating leverage varies. Having the transmission line developer required to buy the entire property transfers that risk to them.
7. The transmission line developer will team with a real estate developer to maximize their return. Probably the remaining land that the transmission line does not run across will be subdivided to some extent resulting in more housing which is currently greatly needed in both urban and rural Maine. With the professional real estate talent the transmission line developer will team with, they may well make a side profit on the residual land.
8. The EMF myth results in real fear. Four months ago I sold my 120 acre farm keeping 10 acres abutting the existing transmission line. During the sale of the farm, my broker coming up with the sales price using comparable properties of which being an old New England Farm with a lot of acreage in southern Maine there are not many, a comp was 2 miles through the woods near the North Pownal Surowiec substation transmission lines.

That home is 350 feet from a 345 kva line, you cannot see the transmission line from the home, that sold for \$95,000 less (13% less) than the asking price with a major issue brought up by buyers was the potential resale value reduction due to EMF concerns. That reduced farm sale price put downward pressure on my farm sale asking price and for the buyer's appraiser of my property which resulted in mortgage financing issues. The appraised value was modestly under the sales price. The buyer had to put more money down on my property to obtain financing.

9. I want to develop the 10 acres that I retained of my farm. In discussions with the code enforcement officer he joked, "what are you going to call it Power Line Acres". People see a transmission line and it strikes fear in their heart, or opportunity to low ball an offer. I'm not sure which.
10. The EMF myth is real. People are truly scared of EMF. How many feet away from a transmission line does it lower property values 100 yards a ¼ mile? The fear adversely impacts property values. At the option of the owner, make the transmission line developer buy the entire lot, or at least I don't know 100 yard, a ¼ mile, however far the public's irrational fear of EMF extends.
11. CMP and Versant spent \$41 million on their own self-preservation to prevent Pine Tree Power. They can spend a few million dollars on educating the public about EMF. Or, power line developers need to pay up front for the abutter's property value loss.
12. Transmission line owners cut over onto abutters property. Transmission line owners should be required to place a monument every 100 feet so their crews don't cut over onto abutters when doing vegetation control.



13. Transmission line owners purposefully promote the growth of invasive species under their lines. Invasive species do not grow tall. They are not a capable species to reach the overhead lines so CMP likes it when they are on their ROW and promotes their growth by never cutting them. But the seeds are carried by birds onto abutters property. Soon you have an understory of invasives that need to be controlled before you make a wood harvest otherwise after your harvest the invasives will take over and become a jungle of 15 foot tall worthless shrubs that are expensive to control. It is like your neighbor's dog comes over and takes a dump on your lawn every morning. In fact about 10-years ago I received a USDA grant to control invasive species on my farm. I didn't even know they were invasives. So you the federal tax payer paid about \$10,000 for a contractor to spray and cut the invasives on my farm. The highest concentration of invasives was in near the CMP transmission line. Now armed with the knowledge of invasive species I realize those shrubs under the CMP transmission line are mother nursery of invasives spreading seed on my property. Transmission line owners should be required to control invasives on their property for the life of the transmission line until a natural forest has been reestablished which will likely be never because once a transmission line always a transmission line. If you closely read CMPs New England Con Connect job operations plan, they deftly address invasives for four years and then it is no longer their responsibility. The transmission line can become an invasive nursery which it will eventually become.

14. When a transmission line comes through it bisects lots. The municipal authority will, due to the bisection, to generate more tax revenue, create a new lot. Two 50 acre lots are

- taxed more than a 100 acre lot. The town, at the option of the landowner, should be required to keep the two parcels separated by the transmission line as a single lot.
15. Often the lot bisection will essentially destroy the remaining lot value. A neighboring lot to mine in New Gloucester had their about 12 acre rectangular lot bisected into two remaining extremely odd shaped 4.5 acre lots that due to remaining road frontage and other issues are now worthless. The owner of the two residual pieces have been paying property taxes on that now worthless land since 1967. Frankly, they should just give the land to a land trust as a tax write off. The transmission line developer should have been required to buy the whole lot.
16. Trespass or inappropriate use by others. As a farmer, when a transmission line developer acquires your property, you retain farmer's rights. You can pasture livestock and grow crops on the transmission line ROW. However, by Maine law the transmission line ROW is open to public use. There is a conflict there. I pastured cattle the ROW in the 1990s and my father did as well before the transmission line was built. In the 1990s ATVs were a problem. They would come through cut the fence and continue on. One day a gang of adult ATV riders came through and then drove down the state highway in front of my house and gave me the finger and yelled fuck you as I was planting my vegetable garden in my yard. I don't need that bullshit! The ATV issues have greatly reduced after the legislature passed laws in the 1990s concerning ATV use. To my surprise the laws have been very effective.
17. Before the legislature passed the laws that greatly resolved the ATV issues, I brought up the ATV issue with CMP. CMP responded it was not their problem.

18. At the request of the landowner, the transmission line developer at a public road crossing should be required to place large boulders to prevent vehicle access. Small car size boulders to keep ATVs out. People on foot such as hunters can walk between the boulders. If a snow mobile club uses the ROW as trail, the developer can install a heavy steel gate that can be open during winter.

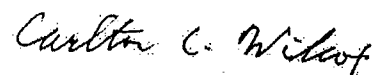
19. Fire. While I'm not aware of a transmission line causing a fire. My property is also bisected by a railroad. The transmission line and railroad cross one another. Due to poor engine maintenance the train caused a fire. Actually, over the years it caused several fires. A transmission line acts as a chimney funneling wind across the landscape. The fire along the tracks raced up the transmission line burning the junipers that like to grow under transmission lines. Junipers have a lot of resin and burn like a torch. The fire burned far hotter and traveled far longer due the transmission corridor than if the transmission line had never been built. So, the fire damage on my property was more extensive which I had to seek reimbursement through a threatened lawsuit against the railroad. My family had to evacuate our home during the fire.

20. All these complicating issues regarding having a transmission line as an abutter drive down one's property value.

If a transmission line is built south from Houlton, it should be built in the I-95 median from Houlton to Sydney. At Sydney it can go cross country to Whitefield or Albion or wherever and tie into the 345 kV grid that is being upgraded for the New England Con Connect project. Don't hide the transmission line on private property. Stick in the median for all to see. It benefits all. All need to pay to the price.

This past spring I went to my aunt's funeral (age 96) in western Minnesota. There is a relatively new high voltage transmission line that runs along the interstate for about 100 miles for all to see towards Fargo, ND. Then it runs cross country in a straight line to somewhere in central North Dakota. Where the transmission line runs along the interstate next to my aunt's farm it passes over a corner of her farm. No transmission poles on her farm. But due to the overhead lines she received an annual payment check for the aerial use of her property.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carlton C. Wilcox".

Carlton Wilcox. P.E.