



Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

January 27, 2025

RE: LD 65, An Act to Update the Definition of "Coastal Wetlands" Under the Natural Resources Protection Act

Dear Sen. Tepler, Rep. Doudera, and Members of the ENR Committee:

My name is Ania Wright 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, supporters, and volunteers, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 65, *An Act to Update the Definition of "Coastal Wetlands" Under the Natural Resources Protection Act*.

The Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA) is one of Maine’s most important environmental protection laws. “Coastal wetlands” are one of several protected natural resources under NRPA. Updating the definition of “coastal wetlands” to include the highest astronomical tide, as opposed to the highest annual tide, will enable more predictable and streamlined identification of these lands. Unlike the highest annual tide, which is determined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Ocean Service each year, the highest astronomical tide refers to the highest tide over 40 years, or two National Tidal Datum Epoch Periods. Each Tidal Datum covers 20 years¹. As we continue to experience more uncertain weather patterns and extreme tides, accounting for astronomical tide data will set boundaries for coastal wetlands that are not only predictable for longer periods of time, but also more accurate to the true extent of these protected natural resources.

We encourage you to support the Department of Environmental Protections recommendation to update the definition of “coastal wetlands” to include astronomical tide. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright
Policy Advocate

¹ NOAA, *National Ocean Service – Tidal Datums*: tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/datum_options.html