

Testimony of Jon Reisman in support of LD 183

An Act to Cap Publicly Owned Land Area at No More than 50 Percent of Any County

Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee:

My name is Jon Reisman. I am a University of Maine at Machias emeritus professor of economics and public policy and a Cooper Selectman. Thirty years ago, I worked for Governor Angus King and Maine implementing the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments and getting rid of car-testing. These days I am a retired widower and a Statler and Waldorf intern.

I strongly urge ought to pass for LD 183- for Washington County, for rural Maine, for the 2nd Congressional District and for a more unified, or at least less divided Maine.

LD 183 is a response to the lack of answers and attention to the following:

- How much of Maine is and should be in public conservation ownership?
- Are the benefits and burdens of public lands distributed equitably across the State?

In 2020, Maine adopted a Climate Action Plan goal of 30% of the State in Public Conservation ownership by 2030.

In 2021, LD 324, An Act To Limit Public Land Ownership in Maine was introduced by legislators from Washington, Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties. LD 324 called for a 33% overall State Public lands cap and no more than 50% of any County.

The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry opposed LD 324 and reported back to the committee that 14.2% of the State was in public conservation ownership, with Washington and Piscataquis Counties leading the State with 29.9%, closely followed by Somerset at 27.2%

ACF presented a county-by-county data table, which I belatedly made into a map, but we couldn't even get a roll call vote.

The 2024 Climate Action Plan Update reaffirmed the 30% Public Lands goal and reported that 22% of Maine was in public conservation holdings, an increase of more than 50% in under 3 years, more than a million acres. There was no County breakdown presented.

I am unaware of any major State or Federal acquisitions in Maine since 2021. Most of the change appears to be the result of opaque and near opaque changes in dataset definitions. Metrics ambiguity and a lack of transparency are not confidence building attributes.

Regardless of how much of Maine is actually in Public Conservation Ownership, the 30% goal cannot be achieved without continuing to emphasize acquisitions in the 2nd Congressional District, especially as it is abundantly clear that there is no prospect for significant acquisitions in the 1st Congressional District. Sagadahoc, the lead County in the 1st, is at 6.9%, which is less than half to a third of whatever the actual state average is.

There are benefits and burdens to public lands, subject to both increasing marginal costs and diminishing marginal benefits. Concentrating public lands in the 2nd Congressional District and rural Maine has an adverse disparate impact on our tax base and development opportunities. Three of the four lowest income Counties have the most of their economic opportunities clipped.

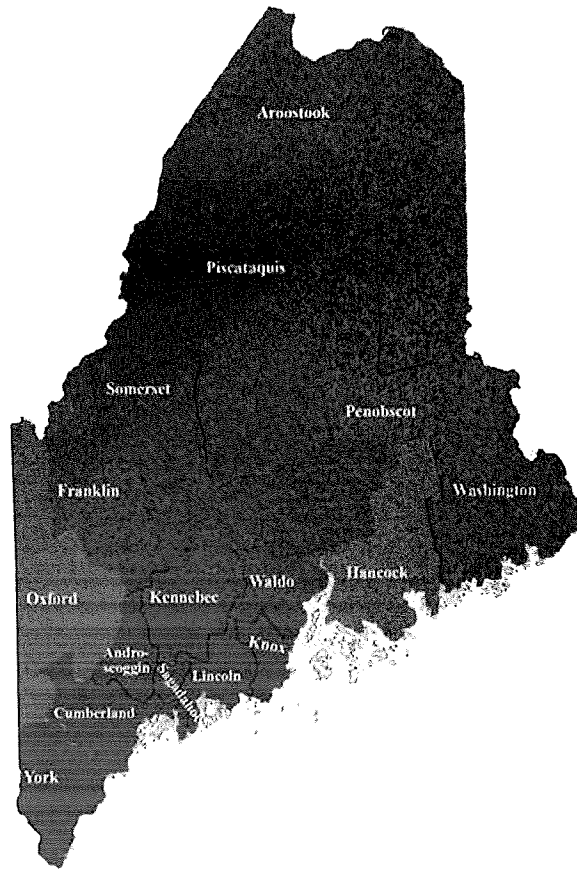
I was going to argue that approving the cap would be the most equitable thing to do, but that's problematic. The Climate Action Plan has a big component of equity, but in another metrics meltdown, the Governor's Deputy Legal Counsel has admitted there is no definition of equity in the Climate Action Plan. Indeed, it appears there is no definition of equity anywhere in Maine State Government or the University of Maine System. It's kind of hard to argue something is unfair when there is no definition of fairness, or one that is constantly mutating. It's actually... inequitable.

LD 183 is the first of three bills Leader Faulkingham has submitted in response to the climate alarmist policies being promulgated in Maine. I urge "ought to pass" to move our State towards honesty, transparency, efficiency, fairness and true sustainability.

**Percentage of Land in
*Public Ownership by County**

Blue, 0-10%
Androscoggin, Aroostook, Cumberland, York,
Franklin, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Penobscot,
Sagadahoc, Waldo
Purple, 10-20%
Hancock, Oxford
Red, 20-30%
Washington, Somerset, Piscataquis

**Public includes federal, state and
municipal holdings, as reported
in 2021 by the Maine Department
of Agriculture, Conservation and
Forestry*



Conservation Lands by Holder with Public Interests*

County	Federal (ac)	State (ac)	Municipal (ac)	Total Conservation (ac)	% of land area	County Land Area (ac)
Androscoggin	83	5,690	0	5,773	1.9%	299,659
Aroostook	4,977	142,279	11	147,268	3.5%	4,253,851
Cumberland	662	21,089	2,061	23,812	4.5%	532,541
Franklin	8,305	84,320	0	92,625	8.6%	1,081,898
Hancock	46,341	86,276	1,791	134,408	13.3%	1,010,473
Kennebec	0	13,425	370	13,795	2.5%	551,473
Knox	4,591	5,346	62	9,999	4.3%	232,829
Lincoln	105	4,212	51	4,368	1.5%	290,684
Oxford	59,247	82,309	280	141,836	10.7%	1,324,532
Penobscot	99,699	98,973	1,140	199,811	9.2%	2,163,813
Piscataquis	15,264	741,441	0	756,705	29.9%	2,528,005
Sagadahoc	11	10,317	195	10,522	6.5%	161,886
Somerset	13,199	667,757	39	680,995	27.2%	2,506,226
Waldo	1,033	15,363	0	16,396	3.5%	465,157
Washington	35,877	451,882	373	488,132	29.9%	1,633,217
York	9,142	26,155	2,202	37,498	5.9%	631,469
Statewide	298,535	2,456,833	8,574	2,763,942	14.1%	19,667,713

Source: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, submitted 3/16/21 in opposition to L.D 324.