



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION, AND FORESTRY
IN OPPOSITION TO LD 510**

An Act to Require the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands to Maintain the Weld to Byron Road in Township 6.

February 27, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Bill Patterson, and I am the Deputy Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL) within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF). I am speaking in opposition to LD 510, *An Act to Require the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands to Maintain the Weld to Byron Road in Township 6.*

The Weld to Byron Road is a frequently used public way that connects State Route 17 in Byron with State Route 42 in Weld Corner. As a seasonal gravel-based road, the road includes approximately 2 miles that pass through the Tumbledown Public Reserve Lands in Township 6 and is owned and maintained by Franklin County. The remainder of the road is owned and maintained by Oxford County to the West and the town of Weld to the East as shown on the attached map. The Weld to Byron Road is not maintained in the winter, but it represents an essential three-season public way connecting Oxford and Franklin Counties, and it is used by loggers, commuters, and other regional traffic to connect a thirty-mile stretch without another East-to-West road. Given the importance of tourism to the Rangely Lakes and Weld area, Weld to Byron Road makes an essential contribution to the economy of the region, including access to the famed Height of Land vista on Route 17, Coos Canyon, the Tumbledown Public Land trail system, and Mount Blue State Park among many others.

The resources served by Weld to Byron Road are vital to the community and economy of this region and ought to be served by a publicly maintained road system. While the Bureau maintains an extensive network of gravel logging roads for remote recreation and logging activity throughout Maine, that road network is specific to logging and recreational use on Public Reserved Lands. Requiring the Bureau to maintain a public way is beyond the scope of the Bureau's mandate and budget.

The Bureau has recently cooperated with Franklin County to repair storm damage to the Weld to Byron Road caused by extreme flooding in 2023. The Bureau mobilized one of our contracted

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road crews to complete some remedial grading. At that time, BPL's road engineer assessed the road and indicated that deferred maintenance and the absence of adequate culvert distribution meant the section of Franklin County Road in Township 6 needs approximately \$100,000 in immediate work to bring it up to management standards, which could then be maintained with annual grading and periodic ditching.

As one of two neighboring landowners to the County's Weld to Byron Road in Township 6, the Bureau is a willing cooperator and has offered to assist Franklin County with planning and maintenance of the road. However, the Bureau strongly opposes an unfunded requirement to maintain a public way vital to Oxford and Franklin Counties.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions now or at the work session.



PARKS & LANDS
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
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