



**APPALACHIAN
MOUNTAIN CLUB**
SINCE 1876

Testimony of Eliza Townsend, Maine Conservation Policy Director
In support of L.D. 593
An Act to Extend Funding for the Land for Maine's Future Program

Good afternoon, Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker and distinguished members of the Agriculture Conservation and Forestry Committee, I am Eliza Townsend. I live in Leeds and serve as Maine Conservation Policy Director for the Appalachian Mountain Club.

AMC is a people-oriented conservation nonprofit. Our mission is the protection, understanding, and enjoyment of the outdoors. We have 6,200 members in Maine and manage 130,000 acres of forestland in Piscataquis County for multiple use, including sustainable forestry, backcountry recreation, and outdoor education. We pay property taxes on all of our land.

For more than 30 years, the Land for Maine's Future program has contributed to the economic, physical, mental, and social well-being of Maine people by conserving more than 640,000 acres of land. Across the state, LMF has improved access to recreation for both residents and visitors, supported local economies, prevented the conversion of working farmlands, and maintained critical waterfront access for those who earn their living from the ocean. In keeping land undeveloped, it has ensured the continued "ecosystem services" provided by open space, i.e. flood prevention and cleaning our air and water.

LMF has helped Maine mitigate and adapt to climate change. including by conserving working forests. Maine's forests absorb 60% of our carbon pollution annually and could do more. Large and intact, they provide critical habitat for a variety of species, allowing them to move and survive in the face of warming temperatures. By preventing their conversion, LMF has supported an \$8.1 billion industry while protecting habitat and drawing down considerable federal funding through the Forest Legacy program.

We must not rest. The world faces a potentially catastrophic crisis of biodiversity loss¹. Here in North America, we have lost 3 billion birds, and eastern forest birds and boreal birds—both found in Maine—are among the hardest hit². That's one reason that both the state of Maine and the federal government have endorsed a goal of saving 30% of our land by 2030.

Maine's forest is of global importance and has an outsized role to play in addressing both climate change and biodiversity loss. It sits at the heart of the largest, most intact temperate forest in the world, and harbors at least 139 rare plants and animals, 21 of them globally rare³.

¹ <https://www.arcticwwf.org/newsroom/news/wwf-living-planet-report-2024-a-planet-in-crisis/>

² <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/bring-birds-back/>

³ <https://mainemountaincollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ecological-Values-of-the-Western-Maine-Mountains.pdf>



The Northern Maine Forest Block is the largest Globally Important Bird Area in the continental United States⁴. We should do all that we can to ensure its future, particularly in the face of the dynamics buffeting the forest products industry.

Four years ago, the legislature generously appropriated \$40 million to Land for Maine's Future, which has been put to work conserving an additional 80,000 acres, including 29,000 acres of working forest, 9,000 acres of deer wintering habitat, 12 productive farms, 7 working waterfront sites and 5 recreational access sites.

Two years ago, this committee unanimously endorsed an identical bill. I hope that you will do the same with LD 593.

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https://gis.audubon.org/portal/apps/sites/?_gl=1*3cu2d5*_gcl_au*MTgwNzE0OTIzMS4xNzQxMTk1Njg4*_ga*MzgyNTE3MzExLjE3NDExOTU2ODg.*_ga_X2XNL2MWTT*MTc0MTE5NTY4OC4xLjAuMTc0MTE5NTY4OC42MC4wLjA.#/nas-hub-site/pages/data-review