



Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

March 13, 2025

RE: LD 750, Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 27: Standards for Timber Harvesting and Timber Harvesting Related Activities Within Unorganized and Deorganized Areas of the State, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Forestry (EMERGENCY)

Dear Sen. Talbot Ross, Rep. Pluecker, and Members of the ACF Committee:

My name is Francesca “Ches” Gundrum and I am Maine Audubon’s Director of Advocacy. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation non-profit – we fulfill our mission to “conserve Maine 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 750, *Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 27: Standards for Timber Harvesting and Timber Harvesting Related Activities Within Unorganized and Deorganized Areas of the State, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Forestry (EMERGENCY)*.

Shoreland areas – those places adjacent to wetlands, streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes – are incredibly important for fish, wildlife, and water quality. More than 60 species of water-dependent birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles in Maine require shoreland areas for shelter or a critical part of their life cycle such as feeding or breeding. We know that roughly 85% of vertebrate wildlife in Maine use shoreland areas some time during the year for hiding, nesting, denning, feeding, and traveling, and that a dense cover of herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees within the shoreland area reduces pollution, erosion, and sedimentation into our waters and provides high quality habitat.

Fortunately, Maine laws and rules recognize the value of these shoreland areas and have a number of protections in place to help maintain good water quality and healthy habitat. **LD 750 is a vehicle to advance a multi-year, consensus-based effort that led to the development of Statewide Standards (SWS) for Timber Harvesting in Shoreland Areas that streamlined regulations that apply to timber harvesting around waterbodies.** The authorizing statute states that once a “critical mass” of 252 towns have adopted the SWS, the rules would also apply in unorganized territories. We are here today because more than 252 towns have adopted SWS outlined in Chapter 21: *Statewide*

Standards for Timber Harvesting and Related Activities in Shoreland Areas since the SWS were established in 2005.

Per the statutory trigger, these proposed rules will improve consistency across the state – reducing duplication of rules, making it easier to plan compliant harvests, and protecting water quality in Maine’s lakes, ponds, streams, and non-forested wetlands. In particular, several important standards that apply in most organized towns, but not in the unorganized towns of northern and Downeast Maine, will ensure better shade over our precious trout and salmon streams, require fish passage on all new and some temporary crossings, and require a 250’ buffer around non-forested (e.g., scrub-shrub and emergent) wetlands larger than 10 acres. The new standards also require better shading over small streams and tributaries draining 25-50 square miles.

The eventual application of the SWS in unorganized territories represents a longstanding agreement amongst the state and stakeholders. Having one statewide standard will help facilitate training and educational opportunities, mitigate confusion, improve compliance, eliminate duplicative regulations, support equitable enforcement across the state, and protect water quality.

More animals live where land and water meet than in any other habitat type in Maine, and hundreds of species depend on such habitat for survival. As this valuable habitat faces threats from development and recreational pressure, pollution, accelerated erosion, invasive species, amongst others, we must continue to protect this resource for both wildlife and human communities.

We thank the Maine Forest Service for their diligent work to brief the public and stakeholders about these changes. **We encourage the Committee to support LD 750.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Francesca “Ches” Gundrum
Director of Advocacy