

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you today in opposition to LD402, An Act to Move the Natural Areas Program from the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and to Amend the Law Governing Administration of the Bureau of Resource Management Within the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

The Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) has a very different mission and different funding sources than that of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW). While MDIFW has steadily expanded its scope of responsibility since its inception, its core mission remains the conservation and sound management of Maine's fish and wildlife resources. I am sure others will argue that the expanded scope of responsibilities of MDIFW have now included habitat, however if we are going to move MNAP over to MDIFW, why not the Maine Forest Service as well? After all, Maine is the most forested state in the nation and forests are habitat. While MDIFW has been getting some funding from the general fund, the majority of its funding remains from federal Pittman-Robertson Act and Dingle-Johnson Act funds, paid for by sales of firearms and ammunition. In addition, MDIFW gets funding from license fees for hunting, fishing, boat and snowmobile registrations, etc. As a constituent of MDIFW, I would not be happy with my dollars being split off to fund surveys of rare plants, much as I think that is important. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is just that: management and conservation of inland fisheries and wildlife. I oppose the dilution of that mission and the dilution of the funding going to that mission.

I hope you will join me in this opposition and vote "ought not to pass" on this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Amy McLaughlin
Chelsea, Maine