



Maine Forest Products Council

The voice of Maine's forest economy

Testimony in Support of LD 1210

“An Act Regarding Renewable Electricity Generation by Hydropower Projects”

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Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. I'm Krysta West of Readfield, Maine and I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Forest Products Council in support of LD 1210, “An Act Regarding Renewable Electricity Generation by Hydropower Projects.”

LD 1210 confronts a pressing challenge to Maine's renewable energy aspirations, climate commitments, and economic prosperity. Hydropower stands as a vital pillar in our state's pursuit of clean electricity, reduced emissions, and robust economic growth. Yet Maine has seen 50 hydropower facilities vanish since 1912.

State law, under 35-A M.R.S. § 3210¹, requires 80% of the retail sale of electricity in Maine to come from renewable resources by 2030, escalating to 100% by 2050. Hydropower, along with biomass energy, provides a stable baseline source of renewable energy that is necessary to offset the intermittent nature of other renewable energy sources such as wind and solar, making it critical to our ability to meet these ambitions goals.

The erosion of hydropower capacity undermines these ambitions. It slows our progress toward a cleaner energy future and eliminates the significant economic advantages these projects deliver. Regrettably, uncertainty surrounding permitting and WCQ decisions have the potential to jeopardize the survival of these facilities. In evaluating Water Quality Certifications (WQCs), the DEP has interpreted Maine's water quality standards, which call for waters to sustain fish and aquatic ecosystems, as barring certification for dams that restrict fish movement. Take the Shawmut Dam as an example: the DEP's hesitation to relicense it stems not from water purity issues but from concerns about its impact on fish migration, particularly for Atlantic salmon.

LD 1210 adds sensibility to DEP's decision-making process when considering permits or water quality certifications by requiring the Department to balance the downsides of failing to issue approval for a dam—such as losing a renewable energy source—against any ecological gains for fish populations. Often, these ecological needs can be met with affordable, effective fish passage solutions that align with water quality rules, preserving the dam's value. This perspective is critical to upholding Maine's clean energy targets and economic stability while still considering important wildlife values.

In addition to generating domestically sourced renewable energy that we desperately need, many of our remaining hydroelectric dams are necessary for Maine's remaining pulp and paper mills to survive. These diversified and modern facilities are the heartbeat of Maine's contemporary forest economy. For our industry and rural communities to flourish, we need certainty around the future of this important infrastructure.

¹ <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/35-a/title35-asec3210.html>

LD 1210 equips the DEP to make informed, balanced decisions that protect our renewable energy future, our environment, and our economic foundation. I respectfully urge your support for this legislation. On behalf of Maine's \$8.1 billion heritage forest industry, I thank you for your consideration and would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.