



JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



MICHAEL A. DUGUAY
COMMISSIONER

Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 1441 *Resolve, to Establish the Commission to Study the Future of Recreational Access in Maine* Submitted by: Jeff McCabe, Director, Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation Date: 4/28/2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and esteemed members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee,

My name is Jeff McCabe, I am the director of the Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation, and I am testifying today neither in support nor opposition to LD 1441. The **Office of Outdoor Recreation** established within the Office of Tourism, leverages Maine's assets and outdoor recreation heritage to grow the outdoor recreation economy and build Maine's outdoor recreation brand as part of a coordinated effort with partners from the public and private sectors.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony neither for nor against LD 1441, *Resolve, to Establish the Commission to Study the Future of Recreational Access in Maine*. I commend this committee for recognizing the pressing need to explore long-term strategies for ensuring that Mainers and visitors alike can continue to enjoy the recreational opportunities that define our state.

As Director of the Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation, I work closely with stakeholders across the public and private sectors to support Maine's thriving outdoor recreation economy. The *Maine Recreation Roadmap*—identifies key challenges and opportunities facing the recreation sector, including infrastructure, access, workforce development, and conservation.

Recreational access is at the heart of these issues. Approximately 95% of land in Maine is privately owned, and thanks to the longstanding tradition of "implied permission," more than 10 million acres remain accessible to the public for recreation. This arrangement is both a privilege and a responsibility, and we must continue to support landowners who generously open their land to the public.

Recreational access is vital not only for sustaining Maine's traditional outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling, but also for supporting fast-growing trends in areas such as paddle sports, ebikes, gravel cycling, marine recreational boating, trail running, ATVing and wildlife photography. As interests evolve, so too must our approach to access, stewardship, and investment.

Maine's outdoor recreation economy contributed **\$3.4 billion** to the state's GDP in 2023, representing **3.7% of total economic output** and supporting **nearly 30,000 jobs**. Sectors such as boating and fishing alone contributed \$384 million, while snow-based recreation grew significantly, reflecting Maine's year-round appeal and the importance of diverse access points to both land and water.

One program that exemplifies successful stewardship of this access is the **Outdoor Partners Program**, managed by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. This program plays a critical role in educating users, supporting landowners, and building trust across all recreational sectors. Initiatives like Landowner Appreciation Day, Keep Maine Clean, and the distribution of signage and access materials help maintain the respectful relationships that make recreation on private land possible. I would like to specifically recognize Wardens running the program for their leadership and strong outreach through this program.

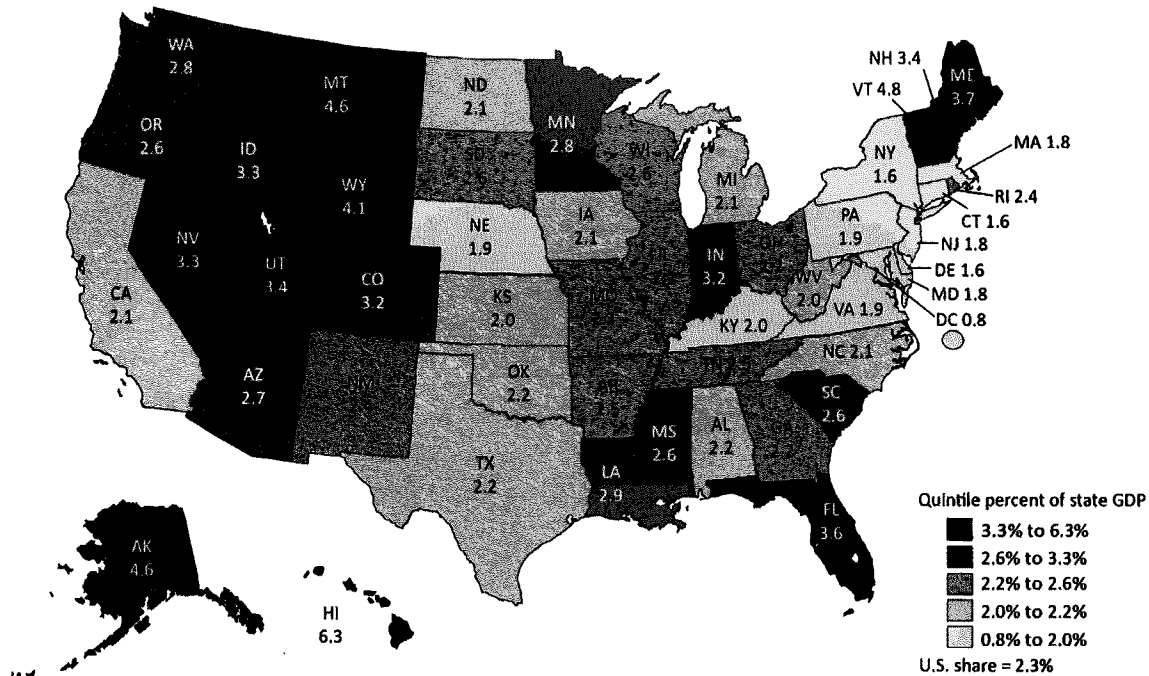
Should LD 1441 move forward, I strongly encourage the commission to work in concert with the *Recreation Roadmap* and to include perspectives from both traditional users and emerging recreation sectors. This is an opportunity to coordinate efforts across agencies and user groups to ensure access remains open, responsible, and sustainable for generations to come. Access for recreational activities in Maine on public and private lands will require ongoing dialogue and collaboration.

Thank you again for your attention to this important issue and for the committee's longstanding support of outdoor recreation and landowner relations in Maine. Thank you to all the landowners that make their land open for public access.

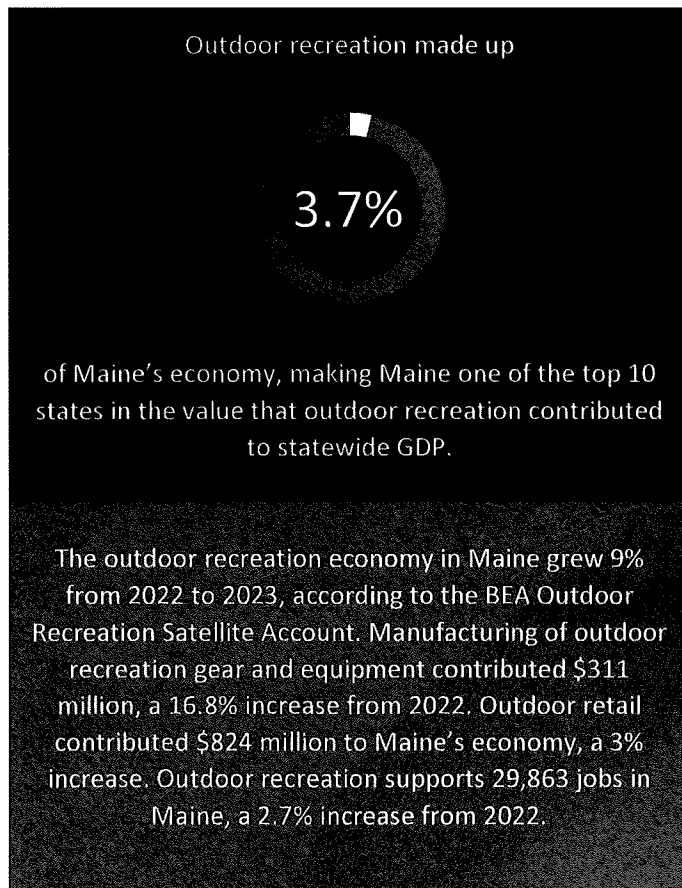
Jeff McCabe Director
Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation

By the Numbers

State Outdoor Recreation Value Added as a Percent of State GDP, 2023



U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis



The biggest activity contributors are:



Source: 2023 Bureau of Economic Analysis *Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account*