



Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

May 21, 2025

RE: LD 597, An Act Concerning Energy, Utilities and Technology

Dear Chair Lawrence, Chair Sachs, and Members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee:

My name is Ania Wright and I am Maine Audubon's Policy Advocate. Maine Audubon is a wildlife conservation nonprofit – 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 597, *An Act Concerning Energy, Utilities, and Technology*.

In 2023, Maine Audubon supported LD 1591, *An Act to Promote Economic Reuse of Contaminated Land Through Clean Energy Development*,¹ which passed out of this committee unanimously and subsequently into law under the hammer. LD 1591 established a competitive procurement for 5% of Maine's 2021 retail electricity sales – roughly 400 MW. The procurement was open to Class 1A resources – which include solar and terrestrial wind energy generation facilities – located on previously developed or impacted land, including brownfield sites, as well as agricultural land where the discovery of PFAS contamination has prevented agricultural activity.

However, even with competitive participation, the procurement established by LD 1591 failed to advance a single project on PFAS-contaminated land, as outlined in Chair Bartlett's letter to the Committee on April 4 of this year.² LD 597 aims to resolve statutory issues that led to these failures, and achieve the desired outcome of the original legislation.

Locating renewable energy infrastructure on PFAS-contaminated lands, as well as previously developed or otherwise impacted lands (including brownfield sites), is a leading example of thoughtful renewable energy siting that balances clean energy and natural resource conservation goals. New renewable energy

¹ See LD 1591 from the 131st Legislature, *An Act to Promote Economic Reuse of Contaminated Land Through Clean Energy Development*.

² See Public Utilities Commission April 2025 letter to the Legislature's Energy, Utilities & Technology Committee.



development – likely any new development – can displace wildlife habitat and otherwise negatively impact Maine’s natural resources, including agricultural resources if not thoughtfully sited. The natural resource values (i.e., habitat for vulnerable plant and animal species, large forest blocks, prime agricultural soils, etc.) of PFAS-contaminated lands, brownfield sites, or previously-developed lands are minimal. By incentivizing development on those lands, LD 597 would serve to help Maine achieve its clean energy goals, as well as its natural resource conservation goals.

Additionally, the program as originally intended creates economic opportunities for farmers who are unable to use their land for agricultural purposes due to PFAS contamination. Currently, there is no way to remediate PFAS contamination in soils. This has enormous implications for the financial stability of farmers and their families. Locating renewable energy projects on these lands would provide a revenue stream on otherwise unusable land.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright
Policy Advocate