



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## **Lori K. Gramlich**

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*Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich in support of*  
**LD 2171, Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 305:  
Natural Resources Protection Act - Permit by Rule Standards and Portions of  
Chapter 335: Significant Wildlife Habitat, Major Substantive Rules of the  
Department of Environmental Protection**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources*

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and distinguished colleagues of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Lori K. Gramlich, and I represent House District 131, which is the lovely seaside community of Old Orchard Beach. I am also honored to serve as Assistant Majority Leader. I am glad to be here today in my former committee to share my support of ***LD 2171, Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 305: Natural Resources Protection Act - Permit by Rule Standards and Portions of Chapter 335: Significant Wildlife Habitat, Major Substantive Rules of the Department of Environmental Protection.***

As you know, the world is experiencing a biodiversity crisis, and Maine is no exception. In fact, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife added eight new species to Maine's Endangered Species Act list in 2023 and anticipates potentially adding more in the next couple of years. Habitat loss and habitat degradation are the leading cause of wildlife population decline and species loss.

That is why I introduced LD 1246 in the 131<sup>st</sup> Legislature, which was signed into law by Governor Janet Mills in 2023. That bill, *An Act to Include Endangered and Threatened Species Habitat in the Definition of "Significant Wildlife Habitat" Under the Natural Resources Protection Act*, increased the circumstances in which DEP consults with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) on strategies to avoid or minimize impacts from development activity on endangered and threatened species habitat when such activity requires a permit from DEP.

By more comprehensively including endangered and threatened species habitat within the definition of Significant Wildlife Habitat under the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA), our state's natural resource agencies will more adequately mitigate impacts to these habitats during permitting.

Taken together with the proposed rule changes before you today, LD 1246 will significantly limit habitat loss and degradation for Maine's most vulnerable species from new development by closing a major gap in our environmental permitting laws.

It is my understanding that the changes proposed to both Chapter 305 and 335 in relation to LD 1246 are measured, science-based and consistent with recent law changes. Importantly, the law and rule changes were designed to not unduly burden DEP or landowners since they only apply to circumstances in which a landowner is already seeking a permit from DEP and that the habitat is already mapped by DIFW. In other words, if endangered and threatened species habitat is not mapped by DIFW, it would not be subject to these rule changes.

I am proud to continue to support this reasonable strategy for conserving Maine's most imperiled species – a strategy that is critical to saving species that are quickly dwindling. If that means shifting a road twenty feet to the left or putting a septic system on a particular side of a building, then that's what we should do. These rule changes will help make it happen.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to supporting the committee's work in any way I can.