

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE STANDING ON
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 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”

Reported by Representative DOUDERA of Camden for the Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Land Resources, pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 8072.

DATE OF HEARING: February 11, 2026

Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. I am Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in support of **L.D. 2171**.

This resolve provides for 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.

Maine is home to over 16,000 species of inland (nonmarine) wildlife species, of which 57 (<0.5%) are currently listed as state Endangered or Threatened. Only those species that have undergone a rigorous assessment process are considered for Endangered or Threatened status by DIFW, requiring an analysis of quantitative survey data and standardized threat criteria broadly accepted by the international scientific community. Additionally, Maine is one of the few states that requires legislative approval for the designation of any inland fish and wildlife as Endangered or Threatened.

By definition, most Endangered and Threatened species are rare, often occupying only small patches of specialized habitat such as pine barrens, saltmarshes, islands, and mountain tops, which in turn only cover a small proportion of land area in Maine.

Some of the state's listed species are well known, such as the Peregrine Falcon and Atlantic Puffin, while others are more cryptic such as the Spotted Turtle and Hessel's Hairstreak butterfly. All of Maine's Endangered and Threatened species are part of the state's natural heritage and serve potentially important roles in our natural ecosystems.

Maine's Endangered and Threatened species face a variety of threats to their existence including pollution, disease, predation, illegal collection, and climate change. Among these, the most important threat affecting the greatest number of species is habitat loss and fragmentation, usually due to land use conversion from natural and working lands to residential and commercial development.

We have been in close communication with staff from the Department of Environmental Protection throughout their rulemaking process and are supportive of the changes to Chapter 305 and Chapter 335. These rules help close a regulatory gap in the current environmental review process by permitting DIFW to offer recommendations to DEP, when warranted, for avoiding and minimizing impacts on state-listed species from development projects. They also increase protections for vernal pools, which provide critical habitat for several at-risk wildlife species.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.