



**Testimony of Sean Mahoney before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
in support of LD 785 – An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task
Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, I am the vice-president and senior counsel of the Conservation Law Foundation. I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 785, An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act.

CLF, founded in 1966, is a public interest advocacy group that works to solve the environmental challenges that threaten the people, natural resources and communities in Maine and across New England. In Maine for almost four decades, CLF is a member-supported organization that has worked to ensure that laws and policies are developed, implemented and enforced in a just and inclusive way that protect and restore our natural resources, are good for Maine's economy and environment, and address the climate crisis in a manner that recognizes its fierce urgency.

Six years ago, I provided testimony in support of LD 2094, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act. In that testimony I noted that “[t]here is much to be proud of as the State of Maine celebrates its bicentennial this year. But our history with the Wabanaki Tribes for whom this land was home long before Europeans first set foot here is a shameful one.” My organization joined many others in calling for enactment of the unanimous recommendations of the Task Force encapsulated in LD 2094 in order to create a relationship between the State and the Wabanaki Tribes that finally and permanently recognized their sovereignty and rights to self-determination.

Over the last six years, some progress has been made in moving toward such a relationship, to the credit of the leaders of the Wabanaki Tribes, Governor Mills and this Legislature. It is now time to complete the journey and enact those recommendations made by the Task Force in 2020 that remain outstanding.

The recommendations that my organization can speak most directly to are those that affect the land and waters of our state. Again, as I noted in my testimony from 2020, the difference between the treatment of natural resources during our relatively short period of statehood in comparison with the stewardship of the Wabanaki Tribes for centuries beforehand is a stark one. Over the past two decades I have had the privilege of working with the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation and/or the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians on issues ranging from river restoration, mining, solid waste management, water quality, clean energy generation and transmission, fishery management, and land and ocean conservation efforts. In all of those efforts, the Wabanaki Tribes and their professional natural resource staff approach the issues with a respect and reverence for our natural resources that is all too often lacking in those who look to harness or exploit those resources for their own benefit.

CLF continues to recognize and support the sovereignty and rights to self-determination of the Wabanaki Tribes and believe that enacting the remaining recommendations of the Task Force contained in LD 785 is another step in the long journey back from the place of injustice, bigotry, discrimination, and physical and spiritual harm that the Wabanaki suffered here in Maine.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.