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LD 276 "An Act to Modernize ATV Classification, Registration, Trail Access and Landowner Protections," *as amended*

Testimony In Opposition To
Amanda Egan, Executive Director
February 25, 2026

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, my name is Amanda Egan, Executive Director of Maine Woodland Owners, speaking today in opposition to LD 276.

Maine Woodland Owners is a statewide nonprofit that advances stewardship of Maine's small woodland resources through the encouragement of sustainable forest management, support for the state's 86,000 small private woodland owners, and a land trust that conserves working forests.

For years, Maine's private landowners have provided the backbone of the state's ATV trail system as a matter of courtesy. That courtesy, however, is not a blank check. It is based on a fundamental trust that the State will honor its pledges to protect our property. LD 276 is a direct violation of that trust.

Our opposition is based on four critical points:

1. A System with No Ceiling: LD 276 replaces clear, enforceable weight limits with a classification system that has no upper limit on size or weight. With already weak enforcement, a "no ceiling" approach leaves landowners completely vulnerable. There is simply no way to protect our trails from the massive infrastructure and soil damage these industrial-sized machines cause. Furthermore, this bill seeks to retroactively grandfather in all currently illegal ATVs, essentially rewarding those who ignored the rules while penalizing the landowners who expected them to be followed.

2. The Task Force Already Rejected This: The ATV Task Force considered a classification approach. It was rejected because it is too complicated and expensive to enforce. Before the ATV Task Force, landowners posted trails with size limits, only to have signs ripped down, gates cut, and new trails illegally cut around barriers. Signs do not work. We need firm, clear limits, not a tiered system that confuses users and empowers bad actors.

3. The Burden of Policing: This bill offers no meaningful enforcement. Instead, it places the entire burden of policing these oversized machines on the landowners themselves. To make matters worse, the bill proposes only warnings for the first year. The damage done to bridges, culverts, and soil in that time can be permanent and costly.

4. Insufficient Landowner Protections: This bill claims to support landowners, but without the inclusion of the thoughtful recommendations from LD 1308, those claims ring hollow. As written, LD 276 prioritizes the expansion of the ATV market over the stability of the trail system. By failing to include real enforcement and size caps, the bill ignores the needs of the people who actually host these trails.

Landowner generosity has its limits. We reached a fair compromise during the ATV Task Force negotiations to set a universal 2,000-pound cap for all new ATV registrations. That limit was a concession by landowners to accommodate modern machines, provided it remained a firm, enforceable ceiling. To return now and ask for more, with less protection and more complexity, is not just a breach of our agreement; it is a threat to the future of the network. **Landowners cannot be expected to continue hosting an ATV trail system that puts their properties at risk.**

We urge this committee to vote **Ought Not to Pass** on LD 276. Thank you for your time.