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Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich in support of

LD 2240, Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 10: Significant Wildlife Habitat, a Late-filed Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and distinguished colleagues of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife 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. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support of ***LD 2240, Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Chapter 10: Significant Wildlife Habitat, a Late-filed Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.***

The world is experiencing a biodiversity crisis. Wildlife populations are being lost left and right. And Maine is no exception. In fact, with this Committee's support, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) 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. LD 2240 proposes rule changes that pair with a bill I sponsored in the 131st that will significantly limit habitat loss and degradation for Maine's most vulnerable species from new development by closing a major gap in Maine's environmental permitting laws.

I introduced *LD 1246, An Act to Include Endangered and Threatened Species Habitat in the Definition of "Significant Wildlife Habitat" Under the Natural Resources Protection Act*, in 2023. LD 1246 increased the circumstances in which the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) consults with the 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 consider and mitigate impacts to these habitats during permitting.

It is my understanding that the changes proposed to Chapter 10 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 have helped spark the changes before you and to support a leading, reasonable strategy for conserving Maine's most imperiled species. The number of individual Black Racer snakes, Blanding's turtles and Rapids Clubtail dragonfly, for example, are dwindling. Conserving these individuals and populations is critical to saving these species. If all that might take is 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.