

Catherine Chapman
South Portland

I am submitting testimony in support of LD 471 for two important reasons. I would like to see the three violations of our Maine Constitution made right and I would like to avoid these violations setting a dangerous precedent, thus undermining not only the sanctity of our public lands but also our public trust. We need full transparency in our public officials.

I am a lifelong Mainer who now lives in Southern Maine but who for years, previously owned a camp in Caratunk which is located adjacent to the public lands discussed here. I am well aware of the location of this proposed CMP corridor and its threats to the local environment and economy which relies on the natural beauty and resources in the area. It is "wilderness" in the true sense of what we have left in this country. The Wild and Scenic River designation of the Kennebec River here is an example of what we are talking about in this area that the Corridor would denigrate. I personally have rafted, kayaked, hiked, photographed and swum in these beautiful lands. The number and diversity of plants and wild animals is incomparable. I am heartsick that this area is being treated in such an unlawful manner. This is our Maine brand; this is our way of life that may be forever changed.

Our public lands are protected in our Maine Constitution which was amended in November, 1993 under Article IX, Section 23, to mandate that any reduction or substantial changes to public lands be approved by the full Legislature by a 2/3 vote. Such a high bar codifies in law the high importance of our public lands to the State of Maine and its people.

In 2014, 2015 and 2020 the BPL violated our Maine Constitution by approving a lease of these lands requested by CMP for its Corridor that would cross lots in Western Maine, Johnson Mountain and West Forks Plantation. This 150' corridor is a massive project that would have immense effects on the environment. Such a wide area would be clear cut and would intersect current wildlife corridors, wetlands, streams and brooks and endangered trout habitats. Clearly this would create significant reduction of the lands. Erection of 100' high voltage unsightly metal electrical towers would substantially change these lands, scarring them for recreation and ecotourism. In addition these towers pose a real and present threat of wild fires such as occurred from similar towers in California.

I am asking that BPL right the previous wrongs by now doing what is mandated by our Maine Constitution: request that the Legislature take a 2/3 vote to be able to approve this currently unlawful project.

In the name of full transparency, I am additionally asking that the BPL issue a statement to the Maine people explaining their former actions and promising to follow the letter of the law in any future dealings with anyone or any business that requests a reduction or substantial change in public lands.

Thank you for your time.