

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

To: Members, Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
From: Karen S. Nadeau, Legislative Analyst  
Date: April 8, 2021  
Subj: **LD 700** An Act To Promote Economic Development and Outdoor Recreation through Investment in State Parks

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This bill requires all revenue in excess of \$4,500,000 from user fees from state parks, historic sites and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and other payments for certain services, after all other adjustments have been made, to accrue to a nonlapsing dedicated revenue account to be used for capital improvements at state parks and historic sites; this account may also be used to match federal allocations.

### TESTIMONY

**Proponents:** *Bureau of Parks and Lands; Appalachian Mountain Club; Natural Resources Council of Maine; Written only: The Nature Conservancy; Backcountry Hunters & Anglers; Maine Outdoor Brands; Maine Audubon; Resident of China*

- BPL manages 48 state parks and historic sites.
- In 2020, more than 3 million visitors flocked to the parks, setting a new record.
- The need is great: crumbling roads and parking lots; deteriorating bathhouses and other structures; inadequate staff housing; and numerous structures out of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- State funds could also be used as a match to draw down federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) dollars.
- Currently, state parks receive a biennial allocation from the General Fund. While that amount covers basic annual operations, it does not begin to address the estimated \$50 million backlog in maintenance and infrastructure needs.
- The passage of the federal Great American Outdoors Act will result in a significant increase in federal funds available for state parks through the LWCF, which requires a 50% state or local match. LD 700 could generate funding that could serve as LWCF match.

**Opponents:** *None*

**NFNA:** *None*

### NOTES:

**August 4, 2020 – The President signed the Great American Outdoors Act into law.**

- It establishes a National Park and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund that will provide up to \$9 billion over the next five years to fix deferred maintenance at national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and other federal lands, with \$6.5 billion earmarked specifically to the 419 national park units.
- Second, the GAOA guarantees \$900 million per year in perpetuity for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a flagship conservation program paid for by royalty payments from offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters. The LWCF was established in 1964 with an authorization level of \$900 million, but in most years Congress has appropriated less than half of this amount. (Source: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/07/the-likely-impact-of-great-american-outdoors-act/>)

**PRELIMINARY FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:** *Not yet received.*

According to DACF:

- This bill would cap the amount of undedicated GF revenue collected at state parks and historic sites at \$4,500,000.
- The current undedicated GF revenue for state parks is \$5,486,595.
- This bill would result in a reduction of \$986,595 to the GF and an increase of the same amount in a nonlapsing dedicated account for capital improvements at state parks and historic sites.