



Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

March 25, 2021

**RE: LD 700, An Act To Promote Economic Development and Outdoor Recreation through Investment in State Parks**

Dear Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony in support of LD 700, An Act To Promote Economic Development and Outdoor Recreation through Investment in State Parks, on behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members and supporters.

LD 700 requires that all revenue in excess of \$4,500,000 from user fees from state parks, historic sites, and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and other certain revenue flow directly to a nonlapsing dedicated revenue account to be used for capital improvements at state parks and historic sites. Maine Audubon supports this bill because we believe it is a sensible measure to meaningfully address state parks' existing \$50 million infrastructure investment backlog, as well as prevent such a significant backlog from accruing again.

The value of Maine's state parks is more apparent than ever. For the last fifteen years, the use of Maine's state parks has seen an overall increase of nearly one million yearly visitors. In fact, despite COVID-related closures and capacity limitations, Maine state parks set an all-time record for attendance in 2020, with over 3 million visitors. This trend appears to be continuing, with state park pass sales for 2021 already surpassing 2020 sales within the same period of time.

It is high time that more of the revenue that state parks generate be invested into the parks themselves. State parks have a maintenance back-log of \$50 million, including road and parking lot infrastructure, ADA accommodations, and restroom facilities. Like any other business, in order for the state park system to continue to be successful in the long term, it must continue to invest in its physical structure.

Maine Audubon values state parks for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the function they serve preserving Maine's natural resources. We believe that these resources will be better preserved by addressing the state park system's dire funding needs. We encourage the Committee to support this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eliza Donoghue".

Eliza Donoghue, Esq.  
Director of Advocacy & Staff Attorney