

Testimony in support of LD 736

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, my name is Jean Adamson (member of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 736.

The world is currently engulfed in a climate catastrophe! Change is progressing at a pace unparalleled in history, and we have only a short window of time in which to create a better path for humanity. Maine can contribute to that path by passing LD 736 to expand our Ecological Reserve System. Ecological reserves are crucial to preserve habitats for all plant and animal species not protected on lands managed for other purposes.

The United Nations has laid out a grim prognosis for the future of other life forms. The current rate of global species extinction is tens to hundreds times higher compared to the average over the last 10 million years, and the rate is accelerating. Up to 1 million species are threatened with extinction, many within decades. There has been a 30% reduction in global terrestrial habitat integrity caused by habitat loss and deterioration. An estimated 5.9 million terrestrial species have insufficient habitat for long term survival without habitat restoration. (UN Report, "Nature's Dangerous Decline Unprecedented") The passage of LD 736 would greatly contribute to habitat increase and protection in Maine.

Our governor Janet Mills has stated what we all worry about: "I wonder whether, in the not too distant future, my grandchildren will live in a Maine I would not recognize. Will they know the singsong call of a black-capped chickadee or the smell of asters and lilies?" (Introduction to A Dangerous New World)

Do we not have a spiritual/ethical obligation to be responsible stewards and respectful caretakers of other beings and all creation? Are we not called to acknowledge with grateful hearts the gifts that sustain our lives and that of all life? Spirituality and connection with the natural world are tightly entwined. More conscious consideration of and connection with nature can develop our sense of the sacred and affect our lifestyle choices. Stress, both individual and ecological, results when we act in ways that are contrary to our values, when disconnection from nature and spirituality take the place of what is really important.

**Will there be time to bid farewell
one by one, each by each –
to kiss the green hummingbird
on her veined, iridescent wings,
to stroke the cold trout's neon body,
to hold the dying frog in our open palm,
fold the white-spotted fawn into our arms,
plead with the thrush to trill one final note
into the cathedral of the slowly browning forest?
(Noah's Arc Redux, Kathleen Sullivan)**

We do not have the time to continue speculations about future planetary consequences. We must start to act decisively with investments to save what we can of our world. Ecological reserves create resilient habitats for all species both common and rare. The Bureau of Parks and Lands should be given the opportunity to expand the Ecological Reserve System to address the growing need for conservation of protected habitats. I urge the Committee to recommend passage of LD 736. Thank you for your time.