

Elaine Isakson  
Rockland  
LD 736

LD 736 TESTIMONY

January 25, 2022

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Elaine Isakson. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 736.

I have been to many of Maine's reserved lands, each unique and beautiful in its own way. But in learning about this bill, I now know that these lands make up less than 1% of our state's land area. Call me greedy, but I want more of them!

Maine's reserved lands offer important mature habitat for many species. When natural habitats are reduced or fragmented, as is happening in our state, species suffer from disturbances, disease, inadequate food, adverse weather patterns and pests. I've learned that we have not yet met our state's goal of protecting each of the habitats, which the existing law was designed to protect. This is especially important in southern Maine, where more reserved land would have both great ecological value and great benefit to humans.

Another very significant benefit of reserved land in Maine is that these lands help store carbon and reduce carbon pollution and thereby advance us toward meeting our state's pressing climate goals.

I've never given testimony before a legislative committee, but I feel strongly about this bill. I offer my testimony not as a scientist or someone with policy or natural resources expertise. I am a retired social worker for the State of Maine, having moved to Maine some 40 years ago for its beauty and wild places. I wasn't sure how long I'd stay, but I'm still here! I daresay spending time in Maine's reserves was a significant factor in my remaining in what was a psychologically difficult job for 25 years, because it allowed me a way of renewal. In retirement, these lands have continued to support my mental health and overall well-being, in addition to offering me outdoor adventures that I will never forget!

I want to see Maine's ecological reserve system strengthened by removing the arbitrary cap of 100,000 acres, so that Maine's Bureau of Parks and Lands will be able to evaluate and designate additional acres for ecological reserves, acres that will become as valuable to our state and the well-being of future generations as the existing ones have proven to be. Time and time again, we in Maine and the rest of the nation have been grateful for the foresight of those who protected lands.

My life experiences have taught me the value of the relationship between humans and the natural world. We protect what we love, and we are better human beings when we do. I have come to love Maine's reserved lands, so I ask you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD736.

Thank you for your time, your service and your careful attention to this bill.

Elaine Isakson, Rockland, Maine