



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

**25 January 2022**  
**Oral 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 Chris Schorn, and I’m the Senior Stewardship Manager for Midcoast Conservancy. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 736.

As a land trust and conservation organization operating in the watersheds of the Sheepscot River, Medomak River, and Damariscotta Lake, our organization is here today to add our voices in support of this important bill to enhance Maine’s ecological reserve system.

As a 1,700-member accredited land trust we steward over 14,000 acres of land conserved in perpetuity in Midcoast Maine. Our mission is to protect all vital lands and waters on a scale that matters, and to inspire wonder and action on behalf of all species in the Earth. We envision a world where our lands and waters are healthy and protected and where nature occupies a place of central importance in every person’s life.

Simply put, the work we do across our service area means nothing unless it is considered in the greater scale of conserved land across our state. The ecological connectivity we strive to foster across our watersheds will die without corresponding connectivity beyond our borders. The acres of healthy lands and waters we conserve represents only a drop in the bucket of Maine’s 35,000 square miles. And the biodiversity we protect in our midcoast community represents only a small subset of the astounding natural heritage that Maine has to offer, which characterizes our beautiful state, powers our outdoor recreation industries, and draws thousands to Maine each year.

The ecological reserve system in Maine has done an admirable job of preserving beautiful places and important examples of our natural heritage. But as Aldo Leopold, one of the founding fathers of conservation ethics said, “The first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all the parts”. As sea level rises, the global temperature warms, invasive species swarm our native landscapes, and development increases, we need to act to save ALL the parts of our native landscape, and so build an ecological infrastructure that is diverse, dynamic, and resilient. This bill would address that by expanding our state’s ecological reserve system, capturing valuable and rare habitat types currently unprotected in southern Maine, growing existing reserve blocks, and setting the state on a track to meet the climate goals set forth in our Climate Action Plan.

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We additionally add our voices to those of our colleagues at Maine Audubon, among others, for the committee to consider eliminating or raising all limits on ecological reserves, including increasing the cap on viable ecological reserves from 8% of BPL's operable timberland to 10%. Climate change will have, and is having, incredible and far-reaching effects on our native landscapes, and now is the time for ambitious action rather than conservative measures.

Passing LD 736 is a critical step in building the conserved landscape network that our native biodiversity depends on, and I therefore urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 736. Thank you so much for your time and consideration today.

Sincerely,

Christian A. Schorn  
Senior Stewardship Manager, on behalf of:  
Midcoast Conservancy

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