



Maine Coast Heritage Trust

A Statewide Land Conservation Organization

Testimony on LD 294: An Act to Include a Tribal Member in the Baxter State Park Authority

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and members of the committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, my name is Jeff Romano. I appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Maine Coast Heritage Trust in support of LD 294.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust conserves and stewards Maine's coastal lands and islands for their renowned scenic beauty, ecological value, outdoor recreational opportunities, and contribution to community well-being. We provide statewide conservation leadership through our work with land trusts, coastal communities, and other partners. Over the past four decades, we have conserved more than 150,000 acres in Maine.

The Wabanaki have a long connection to Katahdin and the surrounding lands that form Baxter State Park. Based on their unique relationship to this special place, the Wabanaki bring a voice to the table that would be a tremendous asset to the Baxter Park Authority as they make management decisions into the future. Inviting the Wabanaki to the table makes sense on many levels, a reality public land managers around the nation are discovering as they similarly reach out to Indigenous communities in their respective regions.

While we strongly support LD 294, we understand that there might be legal obstacles related to Baxter State Park's Trust documents. We further understand that Friends of Baxter State Park and perhaps others are looking into finding different ways to achieve the same desired outcome through other means. Should legal challenges to the current bill become insurmountable, MCHT would be happy help find another path forward that results in the desired goal. In the end, greater Wabanaki engagement in Baxter State Park is an outcome that would benefit all who cherish Katahdin and its iconic landscape.