



Testimony before the

Joint Standing Committee on Environment & Natural Resources

By Kaitlyn Bernard, Natural Resources Policy Advisor

February 28, 2022

Re: LD 1979 An Act To Sustain Good-paying Jobs in the Forest Products Industry by Ensuring Consistency between Comprehensive River Resource Management Plans and State Water Quality Standards

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Kaitlyn Bernard and I am the Natural Resources Policy Advisor for The Nature Conservancy in Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to testify **in opposition to LD 1979, An Act To Sustain Good-paying Jobs in the Forest Products Industry by Ensuring Consistency between Comprehensive River Resource Management Plans and State Water Quality Standards.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. Working in more than 70 countries, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

The Nature Conservancy has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 275,000 acres. We also work across Maine to restore rivers and streams, partner with fishermen in the Gulf of Maine to rebuild groundfish populations and develop innovative solutions to address our changing climate.

LD 1979 would be a significant step backward from Maine's current regulations around river management and water quality standards. The bill makes substantial changes to both hydropower and waste discharge regulations that would weaken Maine's ability to protect the health of our rivers and natural resources which are essential to healthy human communities and economies.

LD 1979 would severely constrain or possibly even eliminate the ability of Maine state agencies to advocate for and improve strong environmental conditions in both state and federal operating license for hydropower projects. It would also limit what tools the DEP and other state agencies can use to protect endangered species by setting a regulatory ceiling. Essentially, the state will be limited by what FERC requires in their relicensing and cannot act to better protect endangered

species, in this case Atlantic salmon, and other ecologically and economically important species that require adequate fish passage.

TNC has serious concerns about how this bill might jeopardize our existing regulations regarding water quality certifications and our state's ability to weigh in on hydropower relicensing. Creating loopholes for certain industrial uses like hydropower is bad public policy and sets a very bad precedent. We urge the committee to oppose LD 1979.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.