

Testimony in opposition of LD 1626, 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

To: Sen. Brenner, Rep. Tucker, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

From: W. Donald Hudson, Jr., 26 Mosquito Run, Arrowsic, Maine 04530
President Emeritus, Chewonki
President, Penobscot River Restoration Trust
President, Gulf of Maine Association

Greetings Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

I wish to submit testimony in opposition of LD 1979. In my working life as a biologist and teacher at Chewonki (1967-2010), and as a long-time volunteer with a wide range of state agencies and commissions (*e.g.* Baxter State Park Scientific Advisory Committee and the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment) and non-governmental organizations (*e.g.* Penobscot River Restoration Trust, University of Maine Sea Grant Policy Advisory Committee, and others), I have come to see the value of Maine's strong commitment to the restoration of aquatic ecosystems, including the freshwater breeding habitat of a dozen species of diadromous fish such as Atlantic salmon, alewives, river herring and shad.

LD 1979 would make it impossible for Maine resource agencies to advocate for more protective fish-passage standards and water quality standards than those that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) proposes. This would take away the ability of our resource agencies to protect Maine's clean water and fishery resources. Dam removals and strict fish passage requirements have resulted in highly successful river and fishery restorations throughout Maine. The language in LD 1979 would have made globally significant projects like the Edwards Dam removal in 1999 and the Penobscot River Restoration Project, completed in 2017, impossible. Projects like these that have delivered significant economic, recreation, and environmental benefits that might never be possible in the future if LD 1979 were enacted. Passage of LD 1979 risks EPA revoking Maine's delegated Clean Water Act authority and taking over enforcement from DEP. Proponents of this bill claim that that it would protect jobs in pulp and paper mills, but dam removals have never been a threat to jobs in mills. In fact, in the Edwards and Penobscot dam removal projects, mills that need to move their infrastructure did not have to pay to do so. The funds for new infrastructure came from the entities that bought and removed the dams.

In the end, LD 1979 is about turning back the clock on Maine's leadership role in the restoration of aquatic ecosystems. I urge you to reject this bill.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Don Hudson