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STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



MELANIE LOYZIM  
COMMISSIONER

TESTIMONY OF  
MELANIE LOYZIM, COMMISSIONER  
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

SPEAKING NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 1616

AN ACT TO ENSURE THAT MUNICIPALITIES AND MULTIMUNICIPAL REGIONS OF EVERY  
SIZE AND CAPACITY HAVE GUIDANCE ON CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE  
STRATEGIES FOR POLICY, IMPLEMENTATION AND INVESTMENT DECISION SUPPORT

SPONSORED BY REPRESENTATIVE BLUME

BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON  
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

DATE OF HEARING:

February 28, 2022

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Committee, I am Melanie Loyzim, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection speaking neither for nor against the proposed amendment to L.D. 1616.

Scientists have already predicted areas of Maine that will be regularly inundated in the future. Severe storms regularly cause private roads in Maine to wash out, or become impassable. Construction of roadways and stream crossings can have tremendous impacts not only on public safety, but also on the surrounding environment, including fish passage, water quality, and habitat. Maine municipalities have worked hard to upgrade stream crossings along Maine’s local roadways, sometimes greatly improving conditions in the surrounding watersheds.

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The proposed amendment would significantly expand the type of road projects that could be funded by municipalities. One source of funding for municipalities to improve stream crossings are grants issued by the Department.

Since 2015, the Department of Environmental Protection has been tasked with administering municipal stream crossing grants, funded through bond packages and most recently in L.D. 1733, which appropriated \$3 million from the American Recovery Act. There is no on-going funding source for these grants, appropriated amounts have varied, and each funding authorization has been written slightly differently over the years. But in all cases, only municipalities can apply for the funds.

The Department distributes the funds by soliciting competitive applications for municipal projects, and scoring applications based on selective criteria focused on water quality and fish passage. The Department encourages municipal applicants to consult with the Department of Transportation, particularly for any projects that involve a span large enough to trigger requirements for bridges. The Department has a website with information about each grant round since 2015, including each grantee and the amount awarded.

<https://www.maine.gov/dep/land/grants/OngoingAwardsList3.21.pdf>

The change proposed to Title 23 in L.D. 1616 would increase the number of projects that could qualify for municipal stream crossing grants, but would likely not change the number of grants issued each year by the Department unless additional funding was appropriated.

I would be happy to answer any questions now or at the work session.

Thank you.