



**Testimony before the  
Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife  
By Kaitlyn Bernard, Natural Resources Policy Advisor**

**May 10, 2021**

**RE: LD 883, An Act To Protect Endangered Species Whose Life Cycles Include Maine Land or Waters.**

Senator Dill, Representative Landry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, 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 support of LD 883 An Act To Protect Endangered Species Whose Life Cycles Include Maine Land or Waters.**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is an international 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 working in Maine for more than 60 years and is the 12th largest landowner in the state, owning and managing roughly 275,000 acres. We work across the state to restore the rivers and streams that support healthy fish populations, partner with fishermen to rebuild groundfish populations to benefit coastal communities across the Gulf of Maine, and develop innovative solutions to address the causes and impacts of climate change.

Our work includes projects targeted at restoring habitat and access for several species currently listed under United States Endangered Species Act (ESA). There are currently 16 federally listed threatened and endangered birds, mammals, reptiles, and fish found in Maine, 6 of which are not listed at the state level. We support LD 883 which would require the Commissioners of Marine Resources and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to recommend endangered or threatened listing under the Maine Endangered Species Act (MESA) for any species that is also federally listed as either endangered or threatened under the ESA, if those species currently or are historically documented to have used land or waters in Maine for any part of its life cycle.

We acknowledge that a challenge of this legislation is the need for additional coordination between state and federal wildlife agencies. This coordination ultimately creates opportunities and tools for more effective and efficient species protection and recovery. All of Maine's natural resource and related infrastructure agencies (e.g., for dams and roads) will need to collaborate on multi-jurisdictional solutions.

As an example, Atlantic salmon are listed as Endangered under the ESA, however, are not listed under the MESA. Maine harbors the last wild populations of this iconic species in the US and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service list Atlantic salmon as "among the most at-risk of extinction in the near future". The federally designated Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment (DPS) includes some, *but not all* of the rivers in Maine where this fish currently and historically occurred. Listing at both the state and federal levels for this species should expand recovery efforts for this species beyond the DPS to include additional remaining critical habitat in the St. Croix and St. John (e.g. Aroostook and Meduxnekeag) watersheds, thus affording important opportunities for species restoration.

The Nature Conservancy supports this legislation because we believe it would support coordination between state and federal wildlife agencies working on the protection and recovery of threatened and endangered species, would create more tools for species protection, and would increase the role that Maine plays to expand and recover species throughout their ranges.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I am happy to answer questions on this issue at any time.