

May 5, 2021

Senate Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and Marine Resources Committee  
Cross Building, Room 206  
c/o Legislative Information Office  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

*Sent via electronic mail to Linda Lacroix, Clerk, [IFW@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:IFW@legislature.maine.gov)*

**RE: Support for LD 883 – An Act To Protect Endangered Species Whose Life Cycles Include Maine Land or Waters**

Dear Senator Dill, Representative Landry, Senator Miramant, and members of the Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and Marine Resources Committees:

On behalf of myself, a professional with over 30 years of experience in conservation-related research of endangered and threatened species, I am writing in support of LD 883: An Act To Protect Endangered Species Whose Life Cycles Include Maine Land or Waters.

I am an evolutionary geneticist specializing in conservation biology and have worked with multiple federal- and state-listed species of fish and wildlife. I have served a long-standing role as an advisor to the Maine Atlantic Salmon Recovery Program and have been active in research on both Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon. I have helped author several species recovery documents and served as an expert reviewer for the Maine Atlantic Salmon Recovery Plan and as an expert panelist for a NOAA working group on defining complex conservation units in salmon. I also regularly provide technical advice to state natural resources agencies on matters related to fisheries, state species of special concern (e.g., Artic charr, brook trout), and environmental genetics. These experiences go a long way to underpinning my support for LD883, which serves the exceedingly valuable role of helping to ensure consistency and collaboration in efforts to protect and restore endangered species for the benefit of our state's natural heritage.

Maine is one of only ten states (and the only state in the Northeast) that does not mandate or highly recommend in statute the state-level listing of federally-listed species. LD 883 will require the Commissioners of the Departments of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and Marine Resources to recommend all species that are listed as threatened or endangered under the federal ESA, and inhabit Maine land or waters for any part of their life cycles, be listed at the state level under the Maine Endangered Species Act (MESA) or the Maine Marine Endangered Species Act (MMESA).

Although healthy differences of opinion can help to find unique solutions for protection and recovery of endangered species, that only tends to work when everyone at the table openly supports a shared recovery mission. While it is true that state and federal agencies can work together on recovery even if the state does not list a species, my experience is this does not happen as consistently. To appreciate this, it is important to put listing into its public context. Ultimately, state listing is perceived by the public as an endorsement of recovery efforts. When a state fails to list a federally listed species, that is perceived by the public, and potentially some public employees, as indication that the state fundamentally disagrees with the listing. While that may or may not be the intent, that messaging is almost inevitable and ultimately undermines public support for recovery. The outcome is mixed messaging, legal liabilities around inconsistent policies, reduced state-federal coordination, and protracted recovery efforts that are to no-one's benefit.

For these reasons, I urge you to support LD 883. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael T. Kinnison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Michael T. Kinnison, PhD (representing himself)  
Citizen of Orono, Maine  
Professor of Evolutionary Applications  
School of Biology and Ecology  
University of Maine