

February 6, 2023

Testimony - L.D. 57 An Act to Amend Maine's Endangered and Threatened Species List

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and ACF Committee members,

Thank you for considering my feedback regarding L.D. 57 An Act to Amend Maine's Endangered and Threatened Species List.

I oppose the language of this bill that removes the Eastern Box Turtle from Maine's endangered species list. I cannot imagine any good reason for this proposed update. The box turtle is still seriously endangered, a "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" and must continue to be protected.

According to the Department of Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's website:

"This is undoubtedly the state's rarest reptile, and it has probably never been common here. Box turtles are locally common but declining elsewhere throughout their range. No populations have been documented recently in Maine, but, if present would most likely occur in the southwestern part of the state. A few individual box turtles have been found in the last 20 years as far north as New Vinyard in Franklin County and Hermon in Penobscot County, although these may have been released pets."

Although there may or may not be any verified populations of box turtles of Maine, this should not translate into a decision to stop protecting their habitat and environment statewide. There have been recent sightings of box turtles in Maine which means that they do exist here and need to be protected.

Due to the impact of climate change, Maine is frequently recording non-native species within state borders and in our waters – species that have not historically existed here. It is our responsibility to align our policies with these changes and take every precaution to encourage these rare and declining species to survive and hopefully, thrive.

Please amend L.D. 57 to keep the Eastern Box Turtle on the state endangered species list.

Thank you for your consideration.

Susanna Richer
Portland, Maine

Source:

https://www.maine.gov/ifw/docs/endangered/boxturtle_74_75.pdf

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LD 57

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