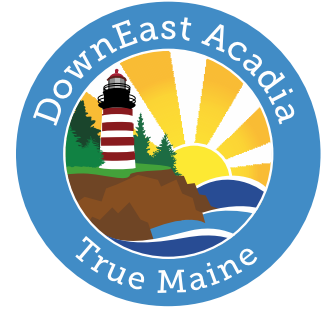




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Transportation Committee,

18 May 2021

I am testifying in favor of LD1370-Trails until Rails, as an advocate for outdoor recreation, healthy communities, tourism, and economic development in DownEast Maine. This Bill will support 4 regional trail systems throughout the State and can serve as a catalyst for a comprehensive statewide trail system. I am especially in favor of extending and improving the Down East Sunrise Trail as a multi-use trail through Washington and Hancock Counties to Calais.

The Down East Sunrise Trail, DEST, is the longest off-road section of the East Coast Greenway stretching from Key West Florida to Maine. The DEST currently extends from Washington Junction/Ellsworth 87 miles west to Ayres Junction, just past Dennysville. Passage of this bill will allow it to extend an additional 12 miles through scenic marshland that is home to moose, beaver, migrating birds, and wetlands as part of the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge before ending in Calais. This 99 mile multi-use trail can then connect to the Charlotte Coastal Recreational Trail network in St Stephens, New Brunswick creating an International East Coast Greenway. In addition to increasing opportunities for Maine citizens to get outside, enjoy the environment, and exercise, passage of LD 1370 will open the door to federal Infrastructure funds, private donations, and local funding opportunities.

As part of outdoor recreation, trails use experienced a dramatic increase in popularity during the COVID 19 Pandemic. Bicycles are in short supply and more people are out walking and hiking. Bicycle and Pedestrian access to our transportation infrastructure is increasingly important to our communities, citizens, visitors, and potential new residents. Bike/ped transportation creates healthier communities and trails play an important role increasing environmental awareness.

In addition to environmental and health benefits, recreational trails also provide economic stimulus to communities. People in the tourism business, especially lodging and restaurants, are in financial straits from the isolation required to counter the spread of COVID 19. Getting people outside and moving will increase appetites and help visitors enjoy a good night's sleep, at home or a few towns away. Passing LD 1370 will be a positive step in rebuilding our economy. Trails build community.

Sincerely,

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LD 1370 is good for the DownEast Acadia Region, especially Washington County.