



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

PO Box 1374  
Yarmouth, ME 04096  
Phone: (207) 761-5616  
[www.sierraclub.org/maine](http://www.sierraclub.org/maine)

To: Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry  
From: Matt Cannon, Sierra Club Maine  
Date: March 3, 2021  
Re: Testimony in Opposition of LD 324 **An Act To Limit Public Land Ownership in Maine**

---

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neill, and Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, thank you for allowing me to present our testimony to you. My name is Matt Cannon, and I am here today as a representative of Sierra Club Maine's more than 20,000 members and supporters. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nationwide to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet. In pursuit of that mission, we strongly oppose LD 324.

Public lands are beneficial to state and local economies by providing tax revenue and job creation, including forestry jobs on public reserve land.<sup>1</sup> Maine outdoor recreation value added as a percent of GDP, is one of the highest in the nation.<sup>2</sup> An arbitrary threshold on public land conservation would actually limit Maine's potential to benefit from public lands. It would also create an unnecessary rockblock to property owners who wish to convey their land for public purposes.

We know that public land conservation boosts local economies through recreation and tourism. Preserved lands, especially larger open spaces, boost property values, support good paying jobs, and retain Maine's rural heritage. Maine's outdoor recreation economy generates 40,000 direct jobs and \$548 million in state and local tax revenue, much of which is driven by access to these public lands. Visits to Acadia National Park generated \$380 million in spending in 2019, while visits to state parks were found to contribute \$100 million to the Maine economy ( and that was as of 15 years ago). That spending especially benefits rural Maine, where the majority of them are located.

Moreover, it is critical to preserve land, especially forests, that serve as a carbon sink as a means in moderating the impacts of the climate crisis. Maine's forest lands play a

---

<sup>1</sup> "Outdoor Advocacy." *Outdoor Industry Association*, <https://outdoorindustry.org/advocacy/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Outdoor Recreation Value." *BEA*, <https://www.bea.gov/news/2020/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2019>.



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

PO Box 1374  
Yarmouth, ME 04096  
Phone: (207) 761-5616  
[www.sierraclub.org/maine](http://www.sierraclub.org/maine)

significant role in carbon sequestration, which could provide much needed money for woodlot owners and ensure the forest is preserved. Existing programs like The Land for Maine's Future program are proven methods for preserving land, increasing recreational/outdoor opportunities, maintaining biodiversity, and keeping Maine's natural beauty.

The process for acquiring land and establishing conservation easements is deliberate, transparent, and well-functioning. We have in place a system that is public-facing, methodical, and involves review from state agencies, municipalities, and legislators. The process for acquiring properties through Land for Maine's Future is a good example.

There should not be a limit on land that is available to anyone for hunting, fishing, beach walks, paddling, hiking, or any other outdoor recreation.

We urge the committee to vote Ought Not to Pass.

Respectfully,

Matt Cannon  
Sierra Club Maine