



Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
% Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

March 21, 2023

RE: LD 924, Resolve, to Provide Legislative Approval of Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of LD 924, Resolve, to Provide Legislative Approval of Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure, on behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members and supporters. Maine Audubon supports this legislation as the next step among many to responsibly meet Maine's climate and clean energy goals.

In order for Maine to meet our ambitious and necessary greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, we must significantly increase renewable energy development. New renewable energy generation at a scale necessary to meet those targets will require additional transmission capacity and development. But like all development, including all energy production, renewable energy resources and transmission impart their own ecological footprint and can have negative impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat, as well as cumulative impacts across ecologically significant landscapes.

Transmission corridors can have significant negative impacts on wildlife populations and habitats. Linear habitat alterations, like transmission corridors, cut the natural landscape into smaller pieces, which is problematic for species that need large unbroken blocks of habitat to thrive. For other species, fragmenting features may cut them off from important pieces of their habitat like breeding grounds or high quality feeding areas. Some animals are unable to traverse the opening—such as salamanders that cannot cross a dry, open right-of-way on a hot summer day—while other species will not cross the opening because it makes them vulnerable to predators. These are just some of the negative impacts of transmission corridors on wildlife.

But transmission is necessary; we need to move renewable energy from where it is generated to where it will be used. Thankfully, many strategies exist to avoid or minimize these negative impacts, including:

- Avoid rare, sensitive, and high value habitats, including important wildlife movement corridors (used daily, seasonally, or over a lifespan) and highly resilient landscapes;
- Prior to development, in order to avoid or minimize site-specific impacts, conduct surveys to identify and understand site-specific wildlife habitats;
- Locate projects near existing development;
- Evaluate potential cumulative impacts, considering existing development and potential for future development at a site; and
- Co-locate new transmission lines into existing right-of-ways, roads, or other existing man-made linear features.

Maine Audubon is pleased that the legislation that called for new Northern Maine Transmission Infrastructure requires that new lines utilize existing right-of-ways. We're also pleased that those who are developing this infrastructure are already reaching out to environmental non-profits and natural resource agencies to receive recommendations on strategies to minimize the impacts of the new line. We are optimistic that this line, with due diligence, will minimize impacts to Maine's environment while maximizing Maine's energy production potential. It is with that optimism that Maine Audubon supports LD 924.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eliza Donoghue". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eliza Donoghue, Esq.
Director of Advocacy