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March 22, 2017

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
c/o Legislative Information
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 901, An Act To Amend the Laws Governing the Determination of a Wind Energy Development's Effect on the Scenic Character of Maine's Special Places

Senator Saviello, Representative Tucker, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for reviewing this important legislative document. The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust's mission is to preserve and protect the land surrounding the Appalachian Trail in Maine for public benefit. In 1973, the Maine Legislature enacted "An Act Relating to a State Trails System", in which the Appalachian Trail was defined as a *primitive trail* "providing for the appreciation of natural and primitive areas and for the conservation of significant scenic, historic, natural or cultural qualities of the areas through which the trails pass and offering primarily the experience of solitude and self-reliance in natural or near-natural surroundings." Maine is considered one of the last great places in the east where people can have such experiences of true wildness and solitude, and one of the prime locations for such experiences is the Appalachian Trail.

Like many conservation organizations operating along the A.T. in Maine, the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust is not opposed to wind energy development in the state. Indeed, the development of grid-scale wind power sites can be a beneficial renewable energy resource. Moreover, we support the development of wind power projects when they are properly sited to minimize environmental damage and when their construction is supported by studies showing that there will be a clear economic gain from their existence.

The experience of wildness and solitude in natural surroundings is integral to the A.T. and indeed is the reason people come to the state to hike it. Before any wind energy

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development is sited within 15 miles, it is important to consider its effects on the Appalachian Trail as defined above in "An Act Relating to a State Trails System". Visitors (Mainers, out-of-staters and international tourists alike) provide tangible economic benefits to the State. In protecting the A.T. experience, we are not only protecting a national scenic treasure, we are also looking out for the interests of the people of the State of Maine.

Additionally, since the passage of the original statute in 2007, turbine height has increased from 393 feet to 574 feet in Maine, with the potential for continued increase in height. There has also been an increase in the number of proposed installations in the vicinity of the Appalachian Trail. It is reasonable to align the statute with the changes in sizes and siting of wind energy development in order to protect Maine's scenic treasures, including the Appalachian Trail.

The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust supports the passage of LD 901. It will allow for the continued development of grid-scale wind energy projects in Maine in a way which protects our scenic, environmental and economic resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simon Rucker", written in a cursive style.

Simon Rucker
Executive Director
Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust