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March 23, 2017

Senator Saviello, Chair
Representative Tucker, Chair
Distinguished Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Gordon Gamble. I am a resident of Roxbury, Maine and a professional forester representing Wagner Forest Management, Ltd. and its clients. I am testifying in opposition to LD 901. While I can appreciate the scenic character of our state, I am concerned with protecting the value of the land which provides much of that scenic character, typically with no compensation.

Many years ago, I participated in a steering committee to develop Maine's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, known as SCORP. Some of you that may have served on the ACF Committee are probably aware of it. It is a 5 yr. strategic recreation planning report that is necessary to qualify for funding from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Since most of the sites identified in LD 901 are peaks accessible only by hiking trails such as the Appalachian Trail, I decided to look up the current SCORP prepared by the Bureau of Parks and Lands.

Allow me to identify some key points from that report:

- "Mainers and tourists alike still rely heavily on private lands for recreation." Pg.12
- "It is important to recognize that private lands play a major role in meeting Maine's demand for outdoor recreation. Hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, ATV and snowmobile trail use, wildlife watching, and many more activities occur on private lands." Pg. 48
- Implementation Strategies- "Foster awareness and appreciation for the perspective of private landowners engaged in trail projects and work to ensure landowner concerns are addressed." Pg. 68

In the spirit of Maine's SCORP, allow me try to foster some awareness and appreciation for our perspective in hopes the committee will work to ensure our concerns are addressed. Private landowners such as our clients subsidize a significant portion of Maine's recreation economy by allowing public access to their lands for most of the activities listed above. For instance, 95% of the State's snowmobile trails are on private land. Our clients' allow hundreds of miles of ATV trails as well as several miles of hiking trails. All of it open to the public and generally with no fee. I would submit that indeed public access to private land is critical to Maine's often cited, "Quality of Place". It is frustrating that such accessibility is "rewarded" with legislative initiatives such as this.

In Maine, like many of the trails mentioned above, the AT started out as a "by landowner permission" trail many decades ago. That is until it was felt it needed zoning protection; and then corridor protection by acquisition via eminent domain; and then visual protection from wind farms out to 8 miles; and now LD 901's proposed visual protection for 15 miles. Little did landowners know that even 15 miles away and 80 years after its completion, they would still be "engaged" in this project. While currently focused on wind farm development please pardon our clients' if they are less than

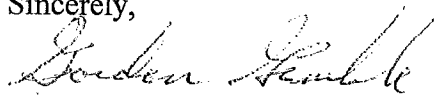
enthusiastic about the implications such a precedent would present to other management activities and types of development.

Others will or have already shown you maps demonstrating the tremendous size of the area impacted if a 15 mile visual assessment zone is approved. Our mapping staff has also done that exercise but I would like to share the impact it would have on lands that we actually manage. Currently, over 170,000 acres or 266 sq. miles of our clients' lands are within 8 miles of the sites specified in LD 901. There are 318,500 acres or 500 sq. miles of their land within the proposed 15 miles, almost doubling the acreage. While Wagner's clients do not have any plans to develop a wind farm, we nonetheless strenuously object to this legislation. If passed this would extract value from a huge amount of land in order to provide questionable additional social benefit to a relatively small group of people. Frankly, I am at a loss to understand the justification for the State to extend this much consideration to such a small component of the outdoor recreation economy at the expense of landowners whom play a significant role in two of Maine's largest economies.

While I fully appreciate the importance of scenic quality to the State of Maine, I believe the current visual impact assessment distance of 8 miles adequately provides the appropriate balance with regards to wind farm development. I would suggest that the equitable alternative is for interested parties to negotiate and purchase conservation easements as has been done on over 4.0 million acres in the state.

Please vote Ought Not To Pass on LD 901.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gordon Gamble".

Gordon Gamble