



March 23, 2017

Senator Thomas B. Saviello, Chair

Representative Ralph L. Tucker, Chair

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Appalachian Trail Conservancy's statement in support of LD901., 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 Environment & Natural Resources Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We serve as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's representatives in Maine and New England and are based in Farmington, ME and White River, VT respectively. We are submitting testimony in favor of 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.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is a private, nonprofit, educational organization founded in 1925 to coordinate private-citizen as well as public-agency efforts to design, construct, and maintain the Appalachian Trail and to conserve and manage adjacent lands and resources. ATC has a membership of 43,000 individuals and also is a federation of 31 affiliated trail maintaining clubs, including the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, each of which maintains an assigned segment of the Appalachian Trail.

The Appalachian Trail received Federal recognition in 1968 under the National Trails System Act as the nation's first National Scenic Trail. The Trail spans 2,189 miles from Georgia to Maine and approximately 281 miles of the Trail are in Maine. Thousands of visitors come from all over the world annually to use the A.T. to hike Maine's iconic mountains and ridgelines, enjoy the expansive views across Maine's forested and mountainous landscape, and contribute to the state's tourism economy.

ATC supports the development of renewable energy and recognizes that in some cases industrial wind may benefit society and the environment by reducing carbon dioxide and other harmful emissions in the production of electricity. However, we are concerned that if sited in close proximity to the Trail without thorough review, industrial wind development may adversely impact the premier national scenic resource we are charged to uphold and protect, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.



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ATC supports LD 901 because it acknowledges the importance of our scenic resources to the economy, environment, and character of the state of Maine and it provides for a practical method of determining and analyzing visual impacts of industrial wind to these scenic resources. It does not prevent industrial wind from being placed within 15 miles of scenic resources. Instead, it provides for a reasonable process for determining the scenic impacts of proposed industrial wind development through a visual impact assessment. The height of turbines has grown substantially in the past nine years since the Wind Act was passed. In 2008 the tallest wind turbine in Maine was under 400 feet, now the tallest turbine reaches 574' feet. Therefore it is both appropriate and prudent that the distance at which a visual impact assessment is prescribed should increase as well.

In closing, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy supports the passage of LD 901 and we also support the similar statements of our partners, the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, and the Appalachian Mountain Club.

Thank you for considering LD 901 and for the opportunity to provide comments. We are willing to provide additional information if asked by the committee.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Claire Polfus in cursive.

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Handwritten signature of Hawk Metheny in cursive.

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