

Congresswoman Chellie Pingree
2162 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2022

Re: Defend Expanded Funding for the Endangered Species Act

Dear Congresswoman Pingree:

Thank you for your exemplary leadership on wildlife, climate, and public lands issues. Your commitment to a healthy environment and stable climate are more important than ever as we are at a critical time for our nation's biodiversity. Taken together, habitat destruction, overexploitation of wildlife, climate change, introduction of invasive species, pollution, and other factors threaten the existence of more than one million species worldwide. The 31 undersigned organizations also greatly appreciate the expanded Endangered Species Act (ESA) funding included in the initial FY23 House Interior Appropriations bill, which would boost funding by \$77 million over existing levels and begin to reverse the ESA's long history of operating without adequate funding. We respectfully request that you remain steadfast in your support for these critical programs through the rest of the legislative process.

Wildlife is part of our identity in Maine, from moose to puffins to lobsters. Yet each of these iconic species is at risk, along with many others. The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than almost any other waterbody on Earth.¹ Modeling reports from the National Audubon Society predict that if the current rate of warming continues, more than 106 of Maine's bird species will lose habitat in the state by 2050, and some, like the iconic Common Loon, will be pushed out of their breeding range entirely.² But it is not just climate change—irresponsible development patterns, like sprawl, and investment-driven industrial forestry fragment and degrade essential fish and wildlife habitat. Nationally, one-third of terrestrial species in the U.S. are threatened with extinction,^{3, 4} and extinctions rates have accelerated in recent years.⁵

By protecting critical habitat and preventing harm to listed species, the ESA has proven to be the strongest and most effective wildlife conservation law in place to curb the loss of vulnerable species and aid in their recovery. The nation has seen the positive effects of the ESA at work, from the incredible recovery of the Bald Eagle and its removal from the list to the ongoing persistence of the Piping Plover, Least Tern, Canada lynx, Atlantic salmon, and others. Despite support the ESA provides, a chronic lack of funding has kept it from achieving its full potential.

On behalf of our tens of thousands of members and supporters across Maine, we request that you defend critical funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service required to protect, conserve, and

¹ <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2798/watery-heatwave-cooks-the-gulf-of-maine/>

² <https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees/state/us/me>

³ https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs_journals/2020/rmrs_2020_dietz_m001.pdf

⁴ https://www.manomet.org/wp-content/uploads/old-files/BwHSummary_021914.pdf

⁵ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

recover our nation's endangered species and natural ecosystems. Thank you for supporting proven conservation programs that protect plants and animals by increasing funding for the ESA.

Sincerely,

30 Mile River Watershed Association
Acadia Center
Appalachian Mountain Club
Atlantic Salmon Federation
Conservation Law Foundation
Downeast Chapter of Maine Audubon
Downeast Salmon Federation
Friends of Acadia
Fundy Chapter of Maine Audubon
Lakes Environmental Association
Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust
Maine Association of Conservation Commissions
Maine Audubon
Maine Conservation Voters
Maine Council of Trout Unlimited
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Maine Rivers
Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network
Maine Wilderness Guides Organization
Merrymeeting Chapter of Maine Audubon
Midcoast Chapter of Maine Audubon
Midcoast Conservancy
Natural Resources Council of Maine
Physicians for Social Responsibility – Maine Chapter
RESTORE: The North Woods
Sierra Club Maine
Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative
The Wilderness Society
Union of Concerned Scientists
Western Maine Chapter of Maine Audubon
York County Audubon