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April 21, 2015

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

**Re: LD 911, An Act Concerning the Review of Certain Projects under the Site
Location of Development Laws**

Senator Saviello, Representative Welch, 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.

In the context of the Appalachian Trail, we feel that an increase in the scenic impact provisions for expedited wind energy developments from eight miles to fifteen miles, and

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beyond under special circumstances, is clearly warranted. Turbine height has increased from 394 feet to 591 feet since the passage of the original statute in 2008 and there has been an increase in the number of proposed installations in the vicinity of the Appalachian Trail. 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. These visitors (Mainers, out-of-staters and international tourists alike) provide tangible economic benefits to the State. These benefits would be jeopardized if we allow additional wind power developments to be sited near the Appalachian Trail under the current statute. 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.

The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust supports the passage of LD 911. 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