

U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources

Elevating Local Voices and Promoting Transparency for a Potential Monument
Designation in Maine

East Millinocket, Maine

Testimony of Governor Paul R. LePage

June 1, 2016

Chairman Bishop and Congressman Westerman, thank you for this opportunity to address the House Committee on Natural Resources. Let me begin by welcoming the Committee to Northern Maine. I sincerely appreciate the Committee's thoughtful consideration of the Antiquities Act in general and this specific proposed designation in Maine. It is through meetings like this – not rallies with bussed-in supporters – that you have a real opportunity to hear from the Mainers who would be affected by this National Monument designation.

I have been a vocal critic of a National Park in Northern Maine for a long time and now a National Monument. I am proud to say I have some good company in opposing this proposal. As this Committee knows, the residents of East Millinocket, Medway and Patten have all voted strongly in opposition to federal control in this area. I have heard supporters from Southern Maine dismiss this local opposition, saying that it is common with any federal designation. The opposition in this area, however, is something more than that. Mainers have battled proposals for federal control of this region for more than 25 years. In an interview with Forbes Magazine, Roxanne Quimby called these Mainers old, obese, drug abusers and dependent on welfare. There is plenty of mistrust that has built up over the years.

There is also opposition to this proposal on the state level. In 2011, the Maine Legislature adopted a Joint Resolution opposed to the creation of a National Park. This year, the Legislature enacted legislation – which I proposed – to withdraw the State's consent for exclusive federal jurisdiction over a National Monument in Maine.

The Quimby family, however, will not quit. They have spent millions of dollars on lobbying, focus groups and polling in an effort to convince one man – the President – that this cut-over woodlot is worthy of being a National Monument. This is a good case study for reforming the Antiquities Act. The law should require some local or state-wide support for a National Monument designation. The way the law stands now, however, there is really no way to check the President's power by the people who would be affected.

This proposal also does not square with a plain reading of the Antiquities Act. It was intended to preserve threatened areas and artifacts in the smallest area compatible with this purpose. This proposal calls for 900,000 acres of land to be put under federal control to preserve Maine timberland – even though it is already under conservation and has been cut-over. I have said repeatedly that I would happily accept this property to be included in the State's public lands

system. There is no threat to this land. The real threat in this situation is from the ambition of a wealthy family seeking to create a legacy.

Again, thank you for traveling to Maine to hold this hearing. I strongly support a frank examination of the Antiquities Act. I will support the work of your Committee, including calling on the entire Maine delegation to support limiting abuses of this law.